

THE PARENTS ROLE IN GUIDING DISTANCE LEARNING AND THE OBSTACLE DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to know the implementation of distance learning during COVID-19 cases in Pacitan and find out the obstacles in handling distance learning in Pacitan. This research is descriptive quantitative. The researcher used an online interview with parents to collect the data. There were 48 parents of kindergarten and elementary school students as the sample selected by using simple random sampling. There were five implementations of distance learning: doing worksheets from school (15 students), joining online class/ sources from the internet (7 students), completing the task from school (18 students), doing free activities without guidance (4 students), doing free activities with direction (7 students). Besides, there were eight obstacles faced by parents. First, the parents could not focus on guiding children in learning (4 respondents). Second, the children could not concentrate on their learning (10 respondents). Third, the children got boredom (4 respondents). Fourth, the children did not want to learn (10 respondents). Fifth, the children wanted to watch the television or play games (4 respondents). Sixth, the children asked to go to school (3 respondents). Seventh, the children could not do online learning (7 respondents). Eighth, and the children had limited understanding related to the material (3 respondents).

Keyword: Distance Learning, COVID-19, School from Home

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INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease, or simply called as COVID-19, is the most foremost health crisis nowadays. In December 2019, a cluster of patients with pneumonia was linked to a seafood wholesale market in Wuhan, China. It led to the discovery of a new betacoronavirus and named severe acute respiratory syndrome-coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) on January 7, 2020. It is known as the causes of coronavirus disease in 2019 (COVID-19) (Apoorva Bhushan, 2019). WHO declared that the Coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak becomes a pandemic around the globe on March 11, 2020 (Park, 2020).

It gives impacts many sides of human living systems. In responding to the COVID-19 epidemic, many countries issued travel restrictions to limit the spread, but the virus seems detected in several countries soon. By March 29, 2020, the virus has spread more than 177 countries around the world (Dempsey, 2020). Seeing this

crisis, the governments of countries issued several regulations, including travel restriction, the closure of many public places, or tourism objects. Movie theatres, swimming pools, coffee shops, malls, libraries, even the schools are closed temporarily.

Focusing on education, the decision to close the school for reducing contact and saving lives, or open the school for allowing workers to work and maintaining the economy becomes the dilemma for the policymakers (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). Many countries had instituted large-scale or national closure of schools by March 2020 (Viner et al., 2020). Bittler, MP, and Seifoddini, A (2020) added that school closure is based on pieces of evidence and assumption from influenza outbreaks that reduce social contacts between students and therefore interrupt the transmission (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020).

However, many types of research are urgently needed on the effectiveness of school closures and other school social distancing practices to inform policies related to COVID-19 (Viner et al., 2020). This finding shows a dilemma for policymakers seeing measures to protect populations because the scale and length of school closure cannot be predicted globally. High school closure has an impact on the quality of young people because not all people can “turn in” to the online learning system. Keeping students’ stay online in learning cannot be effective as in the classroom. And it cannot be denied that school is a determinant of a nation’s future. So, the quality of education must be maintained during the active teaching-learning process to reach the goal.

In March 2020, the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization estimated that 107 countries had implemented national school closures related to COVID-19, affecting 862 million children and young people, roughly half the global students’ population (Viner et al., 2020). The condition shifted the class from classroom to distance learning. The virtual course is built, and the online teaching-learning process becomes the norm. The teacher needs to organize the class and make sure that the children can get the material well. Assessments, evaluations, even the tests were brought paperless. As Brazendale and Brooks said that although those efforts can be implemented well, some reasons need to be concerned because prolonged school closure and home confinement during a

disease outbreak might have negative effects on children's physical and mental health (Wang et al., 2020).

During the outbreak, they are physically less active because they must stay at home. They have much time on their television and their gadget (both for entertainment and learning) and deal with boredom. This negative impact on health is getting worse without outdoor activities. Besides, school closure also gives students the psychological effects. As Brooks et al. state that stressor such as prolonged duration, fears of infection, frustration and boredom, inadequate information, lack of in-person contact with classmates, friends, and teachers, lack of personal space at home, and family financial loss can have even more problematic and enduring effects on children and adolescents (Wang et al., 2020).

Therefore, the government must increase the awareness of physical and psychological potential factors of school closure during the outbreak. At the top level, the government should make standardized guidelines in implementing online learning for students. These standardized guidelines must be accessed by the students around the country, derived from basic competence and standard competence for each level of education decided by the ministry of education. However, structured and well-maintained online learning will be achieved.

Instead of the government, schools also play an essential point. The schools are not only in delivering educational materials to children but in offering an opportunity for students to interact with teachers and obtain psychological counseling (Wang et al., 2020). Schools have a significant role in implementing active online learning. School actors, the stakeholders, and teachers are hoped not to overburden students with heavy materials and tasks. They need to be the first closest parties for students that support healthy living systems. It includes the knowledge of coronavirus in detail (the possible transmission, the way to treat, the tips to avoid the transmission, etc.). If possible, they can integrate with the schools' curriculum.

The communities also can play an essential role in handling this situation—the parent board in schools and non-governmental organizations. Parent boards can be a bridge between schools and the students, especially for the primary school level. Since they have no communication tools owned by themselves, like a cell phone or computer set, and their less understanding to do online learning, parents board are

the mediator for them and the schools. Besides, Psychologists can provide online services to cope with mental health issues caused by domestic conflicts, tension with parents, and anxiety from becoming infected. Therefore, this group of people can be beneficial to support the families in handling online learning and being an information bridge with the government at the top level.

Among all explained above, in the case of school closure, parents become the main actor in the family. As the position becomes the closest person from the children for 24 hours, parents become the resources for children necessities related to their classes. National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China and WHO state that close and open communication with children is the key to identifying any physical and psychological issues and to comforting children in prolonged isolation (Wang et al., 2020). Since children see and children do, being parents means a direct example for children in everything. They are the role model behaviour for children in daily life. The condition does not mean that parents must always be perfect in everyday life, but they must act controlled behaviour for children.

The parents, especially mothers, handle complicated duties during the outbreak. Being a role model is only a small piece of their action. Parents need to fulfil the children's needs in their lives and monitor children's development. The development includes cognitive development, physical development, emotional development, and communicative needs.

Perrin (2016) stated that home confinement could offer a good opportunity to enhance the interaction between parents and children, involve children in family activities, and improve their self-sufficiency skills. With the right parenting approaches, family bonds can be strengthened, and child psychological needs met (Wang et al., 2016:946).

Discussing the parents as a vital role in handling the home education environment for children, not all parents meet the standard criteria to deal with learning at home. Ho states that today's parents are often preoccupied with the distractions and demands of daily life (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Burdened by low-income, inflexible work hours and language barriers, some parents are unable to attend school activities or participate in the schooling of their children regularly. Since the home turns into the classroom, some parents do not prepare their role as

teachers. Many parents struggle to perform this task, especially those with limited education and resources (Yan, 2020).

On the other hand, working parents tend to leave children unattended, which may lead to a different quality of learning or even risky behaviour. The condition warrants a close parent-school partnership as well as reliable and supportive parental education, which has never been essential to the learning system right now. There are four barriers to the involvement of parents: time poverty, lack of access, lack of financial resources, and lack of awareness (Williams & Sánchez, 2013).

However, the expectations do not meet the criteria. School closure is useful when the government has standardized guidelines and guidance to the students. Besides, the national portal of education is needed to help citizens in implementing online classes. Undeniably, some problems appear, including lack of access to the technology of good internet connectivity could also constrain access to learning for those from disadvantaged areas or families (Yan, 2020). It is necessary since the whole aspects of learning are delivered virtually, including the preparation, material delivery, tests, and assessment, even the graduation. Ideally, if competency standards from the government are set out, the students will have the guidance to fill out their necessities in learning. But, undeniably, some countries still develop these criteria. It seems that some states do not have enough preparation to adapt to online classes. Not all houses are set with current and suitable tools to access online material or join online courses.

Those who set in the countryside, as in several villages across Indonesia, cannot enjoy online classes due to lack of internet access. Their living places are mountainous with no cell phones or other digital tools to go to virtual courses. Other problems appear related to their economic status to support the home learning environment. Children with low-income families will have considerable obstacles in dealing with distance learning. Different from the students from high-income households, children from lower households are likely to struggle to compete for homework and online courses because of their precarious housing situations. Beyond the educational challenges, however, low-income families face an additional threat: the ongoing pandemic is expected to lead to a severe economic recession. Previous recessions have exacerbated levels of child poverty with long-lasting

consequences for children's health, well-being, and learning outcomes (Ayllón, 2017).

This paper aims to know the implementation of distance learning during COVID-19 cases in Pacitan and to find out the obstacles faced by parents in handling distance learning in Pacitan.

METHOD

This research is descriptive quantitative. The data were gathered by implementing an online questionnaire through Google form and phone calls to 48 mothers of Elementary school (34 mothers) and Kindergarten students (14 mothers) in Pacitan as the sample. Those mothers were selected from six schools in Pacitan as the population. The mothers were selected as samples because of their close relationship with the children. Most of the fathers still go to work at the quarantine period. Most of the fathers are farmers or labourers who do not stay at home in the morning when the students have to do the task from the teachers. The mothers were classified into three levels of educational background: junior high school (6), senior high school (21), and college (21). The sample was selected by simple random sampling technique. There are ten main questions of the questionnaire: parents educational background, children education level, the implementation of home learning as the effect of COVID-19, students' task, parents help in answering students' task, the hours for learning each day, other tasks from school, facilities for online learning, the obstacles in dealing home learning, and other activities at home. After being collected, the data were analyzed by the following procedures: reading and counting the respondents' responses on Google Form, classifying the answers, bringing the results into a table, discussing the findings, taking the conclusion.

RESULTS

The Implementation of Distance Learning during COVID 19 Outbreak

From the online question by using Google form, the implementation of home learning during the COVID 19 outbreak was done by six techniques, as presented in table 1.

Table 1. The Implementation of Distance Learning during COVID-19 Outbreak

Activities	Number of Mothers
Doing worksheet from school	12
Joining online class/online sources from the internet	7
Completing a task from school	18
Free activities without guidance	4
Free activities with guidance	7

As could be seen in table 1, twelve students spend his/her home learning by doing worksheets from school. It is like supplementary materials for students with many portions of questions. The teacher just sends the message through parents WhatsApp group to explain what page they must do. The result also showed that only seven students who can join online classes, like Ruangguru, Ilmupedia, Rumah Belajar, etc. Those portals were available on several options of the package from the lowest price of the monthly package into the yearly package. Those seven students also could access other learning sources from the internet.

The results also showed that there were eighteen students did task given by her/his teachers. Parents got a task message in the morning that must be completed by the students. The tasks were taken from children's thematic books or other sources. Four students still had no regular schedule for learning. They did free activities without guidance due to several reasons: the time availability from parents because the parents went to work, the limitation of online sources, the willingness of students. The parents left the children to do whatever they wanted to do. The rest, there were seven students did free activities with parents' guidance. They did not have full-scheduled learning activities at home, but the parents let them learn other things for improving their skills in life. The parents asked them to help them in doing daily house works or doing experiments.

The Obstacles Experienced by Mothers in Implementing Distance Learning during COVID-19 Outbreak

The questionnaire also identified nine obstacles in implementing home learning during COVID-19 faced by the mothers, as presented in table 2.

Table 2. The Obstacles Experienced by Mothers in Implementing Distance Learning during COVID-19 Outbreak

The Obstacles	Mothers
The parents could not focus on guiding children in learning.	4
The children could not focus on their learning.	10
The children got boredom.	4
The children did not want to learn.	10
The children wanted to watch the television or play games	4
The children asked to go to school.	3
The children could not do online learning.	7
The children had limited understanding related to the material.	3

As seen in Table 2, there were only five parents who did not get the obstacles in dealing with home learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. The first problem said by four parents who could not focus on guiding in learning. This problem was experienced by them who have many houses works, and they could not maintain the time well. They had two or more kids at home. Ten mothers said that their children did not focus on learning because of several external factors, including the inconsistency of time learning. Four parents answered that their kids got boredom with their daily activities. The other obstacles faced by parents were the limited willingness of children to learn. They could not stay focus on doing the tasks.

Another obstacle faced by mothers was the difficulties of children in forgetting television and games. They tended to watch television or playing games. Surprisingly, there were three mothers said that their children beg to go to school. In the morning, they asked her mother to drive them into the school. They even wore the uniform. Seven parents said that they could not access online learning for several reasons: the limited connectivity, the tools, and the understanding to join the online class. Three parents said that their kids have limited knowledge to learn at home without the guidance from teachers. Some responses from parents were captured in this following picture:



Picture 1: The Respondents' Responses on Google Form

DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Distance Learning during COVID 19 Outbreak

Doing worksheet from school

There were twelve students did the worksheet at home. Worksheet book is the supplementary material for students decided by the schools with a considerable portion of questions. The form of worksheet book is related to the thematic book from the schools or the compulsory book from the government. The workbook usage is useful to give students exercises and additional clear material related to the subject. It is in line with Celikler & Aksan (2012) finding that teaching by using worksheets was found to be more successful than teaching by using the traditional teaching method. However, the number of materials in the worksheet book was limited. The children could finish the whole book if they complete it for an entire day. Therefore, parents became the key to making them want to learn more than doing the worksheet book from the teachers. Since doing workbook is a monotonous activity, the parents could add with the quiz or other material related to the portion from the internet. As an example, when they learn about “numbers” in their

workbook, the parents could ask the children to count the vegetables of fruits at their house. The parents can use all things at their home as the sources of learning. Therefore, the children could learn the material as the portion without opening the book.

Joining online class/online sources from the internet

As seen on the questionnaire, there were only seven students can access online classes. Their schools did not set the fixed online courses, but the parents initiated to buy the online material through the portals available on the internet. The parents bought the learning package on the learning platform Ruangguru. Based on the questionnaire, there were 21 parents have access to join some online classes on the internet, but only seven students who consistently participate in the classes. Some parents said that stable internet connection availability becomes a problem. They live in a mountainous area without easy internet access. However, cost and coverage become the main problem in joining the online learning platform. It is supported by Marcial et al. (2015) finding that the most severe barrier is the issue of cost and access to the internet.

Completing a task from school

Many schools give online tasks for students. It is not the online classes that students can respond to the teachers through virtual aids. The teachers just provide direction through the message for the parents, and the children complete the task at home through Whatsapp. Whatsapp is used because of simple operation, low cost, availability, and immediacy (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). After completing the tasks, the parents captured the tasks and sent the result for the teachers. Therefore, each morning, the parents waited for the tasks from the teachers. Eighteen parents experienced this method of learning for her children. This process can set the material in line with the goal of the schools, but it dealt with monotonous activities.

The students would get boredom by doing this method of learning every day. As a result, they had no exciting learning process. They said that they preferred to learn at school. There, they could meet their friends and did exciting activities. In this case, parents played a vital role in making them fun. The parents could rearrange the schedule for children. They could complete their tasks from school in the morning.

Then, parents could ask them to do play together, to do the quiz, to do a puzzle, to play hide and seek, or to watch the video. Therefore, they could learn and play together. The various learning method aims to make them enjoy their stay at home because children dealt with playing outside. Being at home for a long time made them frustrating.

Doing free activities without guidance

Four students did free activities at home without direct guidance from parents because their parents went to work. Besides, their siblings also needed their parents' care at home. Parents would spare their time to take care of two or more children at home. The condition made them cannot focus only on one child. The mothers said that their kids still do the tasks from their children at home, but the mothers cannot be by the children's side in completing their tasks. The mothers gave the instruction and the children by themselves. After completing the tasks, the children did whatever they want to do, including playing or watching the television.

Doing free activities with guidance

Seven mothers said that their children did free activities during home learning with their guidance. They made a schedule for everyday activities. They arrange the plan together with their children. But there are no fixed daily activities every day like completing the task or doing workbooks because of their kids' study at the kindergarten level. As explained in many theories, the primary point in-home learning implementation is conducting enjoyable and exciting learning activities. The parents asked the children to help them in doing house works, did science experiments, played a game, went into the fields (because the harvest time), cooked meals, watched television, etc.

The Obstacles Experienced by Mothers in Implementing Home Learning during COVID-19 Outbreak

As seen on the results, there were eight obstacles faced by the mothers in dealing with home learning, as described below:

The parents could not guide children in learning

Four mothers said that they could not guide the children in learning. It related to their limited time to help the children in education or to maintain their schedule in learning. The other reason said that they had no capabilities to help their children to learn at home. As mentioned by Davies (1996) stated that many parents suffer from low self-esteem, and others did not experience success in school themselves and therefore lack the knowledge and confidence to help their children (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). For the elementary school level, the Indonesian education system uses thematic book material with complete skills in one chapter. It is the mixture of math skills, language skills, even the character-building material. Some parents said that this material is above their expectations.

The children could not focus on their learning.

The children cannot focus on their online learning experienced by ten mothers. When the mothers gave them the tasks from school, in several minutes, in the beginning, they could do it well. But, five or ten minutes later, their concentration would be distracted from many external factors. Even the elementary students could move away from their book when they heard the sound outside the home or even the phone ringing tones. Therefore, if one task could be completed in 30 minutes in the school, they could do it for two hours at home. According to Bijeesh (2017:84), with no faculty around for face-to-face interaction and no classmates who can help with constant reminders about pending assignments, the chances of getting distracted and losing track of deadlines are high (Sadeghi, 2019). However, learning at home needs focus and high motivation both from children and parents.

The children got boredom.

Four children experienced boredom during online learning due to monotonous activities at home. In the daily activities before the pandemic, they could go to school with friends. They could play with their neighbours. Kids had a close relationship with physical interaction and activities. However, staying at home and doing home learning made them bored. However, the combination of parents and schools to manage student's activities was essential. Schools did not give many tasks beyond children's abilities. Most of the students live in outside coverage of internet

connection, and they could not do online virtual class. At home, parents might support the children in learning. They might use activities combination to avoid children boredom during the pandemic. The pandemic is infrequent but potentially devastating crises that are likely to affect the lives of many children and their families physically, socially, and psychologically (Sprang & Silman, 2013).

The children did not want to learn

Since many distractions at home, they did not want to learn. Ten children have this problem because of several factors: unsuitable home learning situations, limited material, monotonous learning, and less support as well as forces from parents.

The children wanted to watch the television or play games

Television and games could be children's friends for 24 hours without complaining or being tired. The programs were also interesting for children. There were many movies shown on television during the pandemic outbreak. However, this could become an obstacle for children to do home learning. They knew that the tasks from school could not be interesting anymore because the teachers asked them just to complete the tasks. They could not do interactive classes due to limited internet coverage. Therefore, the key to this situation was their parents. They might handle several other exciting activities at home. Even though the television could give them the material based on their level, but the duration is limited. As an example, on TVRI or Indonesian Republic Television, the content for grade 2 elementary school level was only around 30 minutes each day.

The children asked to go to school

Undeniably, with various activities at school, both learning and playing, students said that going to school was much better than home learning. Before the pandemic, they sent her children to school, and she went to the office. During home learning, they found the maids to keep her children because the mothers' office did not implement working from home. Learners will often be studying alone, and so they may feel isolated and miss the physical interaction that comes with attending a traditional classroom (Sadeghi, 2019).

The children could not do online learning

Brown (2017) stated that any student seeking to enroll for a distance learning program needs to invest in a range of equipment, including a computer, webcam, and stable connection (Basilaia, 2020). Therefore, seven students experienced this problem. They had two main obstacles: the internet signal and the understanding of the online system. All the sample in this research told that they had no opportunity to do a real online class with direct communications between students and teachers. Online, in their experience, means that their children did not enter the course, and the teachers gave them the tasks from another place without face to face interaction.

The children had limited understanding related to the material.

Some students need guidance during the teaching-learning process in the classroom, especially for those who sit at the elementary school level. When they got the difficulties, they could directly ask their teachers, and the teachers instantly gave the answers. But, during home learning, not all the parents had capabilities to answer the children's problems related to the material. Seen in the questionnaire, the background of the parents is various. Some of them have difficulties to help children task since the curriculum changes. K-13 curriculum with thematic material covers four aspects, including religious personality, skills, social attitudes, and knowledge. It makes the questions and tasks are not directly stated. It encourages the students' high order thinking skills. However, through online learning, they get difficulties in connecting directly with their teachers. They can send a message, but the teacher cannot answer it directly. It takes time to answer any questions from students.

CONCLUSION

There are many obstacles found, including the parents could not focus on guiding children in learning, the children could not concentrate to their learning, the children got boredom, the children did not want to learn, the children wanted to watch the television or play games, the children asked to go to school, and the children could not do online learning. The children had limited understanding related to the material. However, parents become the key here. They must set the right parenting style. They must place their children in good condition, both

mentally and psychologically. Boredom and frustration can danger their immunity during a pandemic outbreak. Therefore, the mothers, first, must be happy to raise the children happy too. Then, start being a teacher by focusing on their children's need based on the material given by school is necessary. Besides, the mothers must be helped by fathers to make home learning enjoyable. By these formulae, home learning, with some limitations and obstacles, will be more effective.

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