

PROBLEMS WITH ONLINE LEARNING DURING THE CORONA PANDEMIC IN THE PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS

MASALAH DALAM PEMBELAJARAN ONLINE SELAMA MASA PANDEMI MENURUT PERSEPSI SISWA

Arjunina Maqbulin
MAN 2 Nganjuk
arjunina.aa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Since the Corona virus came, all aspects of human lives have changed. This also happened in the field of education. Due to this pandemic, both high school and university students have had to resort to online learning. They can not go to school or campus for health reasons. This research aims to find the answer to two research questions. The first is about the students' problems in the process of online learning during the pandemic, and the second is the students' point of view about the platform used in online learning. The data have been collected from the senior high school students of MAN 2 Nganjuk, East Java, in the academic year 2020/2021. The method of research used is qualitative. A questionnaire was used to collect the data. Descriptive analysis was employed to analyze the data. The result of this research reveals that the main problem that students encounter with online learning during the pandemic lies in understanding the material, as agreed by 59 % of the respondents. Moreover, 23 % of the respondents complained about many tasks that they had to finish. Furthermore, 10 % of the students mention that they have encountered economic problems related to the Internet fees or credit to be paid. The next problem for the students of MAN 2 Nganjuk concerns time. 6 % of the respondents complain about this aspect, and 2 % of the participants complain about the way to send in their completed task. The next result of this research reveals the students' point of view about the platform used in online learning. According to them, the most favoured platform to be used in online learning is Google Classroom, which is popular among 52 % of the respondents. 39 % of the respondents choose WhatsApp as their favourite platform to be employed in the teaching-learning process during the pandemic. These two platforms also happen to be the ones mostly used by teachers for delivering the materials. For the teaching-learning process during the pandemic, it is suggested that teachers give more motivation to the students so that they can become active learners and learn from the various sources currently available.

Keywords : Online Learning, Pandemic, Students' Problem.

ABSTRAK

Sejak hadirnya virus Corona, seluruh aspek kehidupan manusia berubah. Ini juga terjadi di bidang pendidikan. Karena pandemi ini siswa harus belajar secara online, mereka tidak bisa bersekolah seperti biasanya karena masalah kesehatan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan jawaban dari dua pertanyaan penelitian. Yang pertama tentang masalah siswa dalam melakukan pembelajaran online selama pandemi, dan yang kedua adalah tentang pendapat siswa tentang platform yang digunakan dalam pembelajaran online. Pengumpulan data dilakukan pada siswa MAN 2 Nganjuk tahun ajaran 2020/2021. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif. Kuesioner digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Analisis deskriptif digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa masalah utama yang dihadapi siswa dalam online pada saat pandemi adalah kesulitan dalam memahami materi, masalah ini disepakati oleh 59 % responden. Kemudian, 23 % dari responden mengeluhkan banyaknya tugas yang harus mereka selesaikan. Selain itu 10 % siswa merasa bermasalah tentang pembelian kuota. Masalah selanjutnya yang dihadapi siswa MAN 2 Nganjuk adalah soal waktu, 6 % responden mengeluhkan hal ini, dan 2 % dari responden mengeluh tentang cara pengiriman tugasnya. Hasil penelitian selanjutnya adalah pendapat siswa tentang

platform yang digunakan dalam pembelajaran online. Dari hasil questionnaire, platform yang disukai oleh siswa, pertama adalah google classroom, platform ini disukai oleh 52 % responden. Kemudian 39 % responden memilih whatsapp, itulah dua platform yang paling disukai siswa untuk digunakan dalam proses belajar mengajar pada saat pandemi. Selain itu kedua platform ini juga merupakan platform yang paling banyak digunakan oleh para guru dalam menyampaikan materi. Untuk proses belajar mengajar selama pandemi, disarankan agar guru memberikan motivasi lebih kepada siswa agar mereka menjadi pembelajar yang aktif dan dapat belajar dari berbagai sumber.

Kata kunci: Pembelajaran Online, Pandemi, Masalah Siswa.

Introduction

The presence of the Corona virus has affected all aspects of human life, such as economics, culture, social affairs, and even education. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global public health emergency of international concern on 30th January 2020 as well as a pandemic on 11th March 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). As this virus has caused a pandemic all over the world, many regulations have been made to adapt to the spread of the virus. This virus has forced many fields to adapt to leading a so-called new normal life.

At the beginning of April 2020, the government issued a regulation about strict large-scale social measures. This is done to reduce the effect of the spread of Covid-19. This regulation limits all Indonesians' movements. Therefore, many activities are done at home, even working (WFH) (Irawan, 2020).

Even in education, as human motion is limited, the students activities to physically attend schools are also restricted. Therefore, students do their study activities at home. This is as stated by the Minister of Culture and Education that starting from March 2020 until today, the teaching-learning process is to be conducted indirectly or using an online system due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Nadiem Makarim also stated that he supported the policy of some governors or mayors that closed the schools to reduce the effect of the Corona virus or Covid-19. ("Pernyataan Nadiem Makarim soal Libur Sekolah Gara-gara Corona", 2020).

As students started to study at home many new adaptations have been made both by students and teachers. Face-to-face interaction cannot be

achieved or implemented for the teaching-learning process. This condition has implications for the effectiveness of learning process (Irawan et al., 2020; Fitria, 2020). That is why the government has offered a solution to face this problem by using online learning during the pandemic ("Pernyataan Nadiem Makarim soal Libur Sekolah Gara-gara Corona", 2020). However, online learning is not that easy, as there are several problems the students experience when they join online learning. First of all, students start to feel bored after a few weeks of online learning; secondly, in economic terms, some of the students' parents find it hard to afford Internet fees or credit, and the last concerns the students' mood when completing assignments (Irawan, 2020) as all of the subjects are presented online, so students think that they have so many assignments to finish, while another problem revolves around Internet access and signal difficulties (Giatman, 2020).

Feeling bored with the assignments is the first problem that the students complain about most. Since they have to read and try to understand those materials by themselves, problems encountered with the materials are hard to cope with when there is no helping hand around.

As far as economic problems are concerned, as students use up their Internet credit on a daily basis, they need a substantial amount of credit, so their parents need to prepare more money to support this need. Some parents feel reluctant to do this because the economic field is slumped as one of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Another problem is posed by Internet access. In many rural areas the Internet signal still presents a big problem for students, as they cannot easily find

the signal in order to complete their assignments. The Internet problem has especially affected the students living in the countryside.

The Internet connection problem makes students feel afraid that they will fail to attach and submit the materials, and another problem is that students feel it is difficult to download the materials, which takes up too much of their time (Mualim, 2019). This problem has also burdened the students as the Internet has absorbed the students' budget for Internet fees and credit (Irawan, 2020; Hamid, 2020).

Another problem for students during the online learning process is that some of them find it difficult to understand the materials, simply because teachers only provide the materials and tasks without much instruction (Mualim, 2019). Some teachers argue that giving instructions by using the platform can easily deplete the students budget for credit since some platforms need more than the others, especially the platforms that use direct interactive / virtual interactive modes. They simply require higher fees and more credit than the other platforms. Based on those problems, identifying the students preferred platform is needed to alleviate their problems. Those problems should also become a point of consideration for teachers when delivering the materials.

On the other hand, teachers encounter some problems in handling their students to study online. Actually by using online learning students are expected to be autonomous learners, that is to say, they can learn from any sources to support their understanding. In this way, active learning in the form of student-centered learning can be conducted (Mualim, 2019; Nagele, 2019; Al-Marroof, 2018).

However, not every student can adapt to this situation, for some students are passive learners who are accustomed to grasping the materials from the teacher's explanation (Mualim, 2019). As the technology grows rapidly, there are many choices that can be used by teachers in conducting online learning for the students.

There are various alternative platforms used by teachers in conducting online learning, namely *Google Classroom*, *Zoom*, *Google Meet*,

WhatsApp groups, and *e-learning* (Fitria; 2020). However, in choosing the appropriate platform to be used, teachers should consider the students' condition.

This is because students are not only burdened with the assignment given but also by their Internet access, especially for those who stay in the countryside like Nganjuk. Therefore, this research will find about the students' problems and also their point of view about the platforms used in the teaching-learning process.

From the background of the research, the statement of the problem is determined two-fold, as follows:

- What are the students' problems with online learning during the pandemic?
- What is the students' point of view about the platform for the online teaching-learning process during the pandemic?

Furthermore, the two purposes which form the aim of this research are:

- To find out the students' problems with online learning during the pandemic.
- To find out the students' point of view about the platform used for online learning during the pandemic.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Online Learning and its Characteristics

During the Pandemic of Covid-19, social interaction has been limited. Therefore, in almost all fields the human activities have followed suit (Irawan, 2020). Needless to say, this situation has also impacted the education field. These days, students cannot physically attend school. Dealing with this situation, the government proceeded to make a policy about online learning to replace the direct interaction-based learning.

This policy is chosen as it is thought to be the safest choice to conduct the teaching-learning activities required. Online learning is defined as learning that is completely or partially accomplished through the Internet (Meylani at al., 2015). Online learning's main component is the use of the Internet. Then, students can access it by using their smartphone or computer. As a consequence, students must have these gadgets available

to support their learning.

In online learning, students are asked to be independent students (Mualim, 2019) because direct interaction between teacher and students cannot be achieved, so they have to be active to find the material that they consider difficult by accessing the source of materials from the Internet. However, not all of the students can accomplish this. Many students are actually still passive learners (Mualim, 2019). They feel that it is hard for them to understand the material without the teacher's explanation as they are accustomed to this model. In this situation, teachers should keep on motivating their students to adapt to online learning.

Moreover, there are several characteristics of online learning; first of all, students should be independent, and secondly, this type of learning is computer-based. Thirdly, the use of electronic media must be mentioned, and lastly, the use of hardware, software and an Internet network (Yunus, 2019).

As for the first characteristic, in online learning students do not interact directly with teachers, so they have to be active to solve their own problem with understanding the materials. Next, the use of computer-based materials. In today's teaching-learning process, the computer is an important tool. In online learning, almost all of the materials provided by teachers are computer-based.

As regards the third characteristic, in online learning teachers need some tools to support them in delivering the materials to make the students understand better. The use of electronic media, such as video and Power Point presentation (PPT) will help them considerably.

The last characteristic concerns the use of hardware, such as a computer, projector, and digital camera as well as software, for example, Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel. In addition, in online learning, the Internet is a must because the material and the task given to the students can come to them when the Internet is used.

B. Students' Problems with Online Learning

During this pandemic time, students have to learn independently in their homes. They do not

receive the explanation directly from the teachers. All of the teaching-learning activities are done online. In online learning there are some problems faced by the students, namely Internet access, economic problems, and the lack of face-to-face interaction with teachers that causes the students' difficulties with understanding the material (Adnan, 2020).

The first problem is Internet access. The main condition in conducting online learning is having this type of access. However, some students complained about the difficulties in reaching internet access, especially for those living in the countryside. The second problem can be classified as an economic one. Some students think about their parents, too. As they have to spend a certain amount of money to buy Internet credit or fees so that they can join online learning, although during the pandemic many people have been facing economic hardship (Irawan, 2020).

The last problem is about the lack of direct interaction between teachers and students. As students are accustomed to receiving direct explanations from teachers, they find it hard to understand materials that are only sent without any comment, which means that students have to make sense of the materials by reading them on their own.

Furthermore, in online learning students feel a sense of increasing boredom. This is because they have watch the screen of their smart phone or computer every day without any face-to-face interaction. The next problem is about the money that they spend to buy internet credit. As for the last problem, students feel burdened with the overwhelming multitude of tasks given by teachers (Irawan, 2020). Overall, these are the common problems faced by students in the process of online learning.

C. Platforms Used in Online Learning

In online learning, there are several platforms commonly used by teachers, namely *Google Classroom*, *E-Learning*, *Zoom Meeting*, and *WhatsApp Groups*.

1. Google Classroom

Google Classroom is a kind of platform used to have online classes. It was first introduced in

2004 by *Google Apps for Education*. This platform is especially used for educational purposes to promote an interactive learning environment (Harjanto, 2019). This platform is a free web service for education managed by Google. By using this platform, teachers can create an online class, share files of learning materials, and manage evaluation (Okmawati, 2020). Many teachers use this platform as it provides punctuality, flexibility, and practicality (Mualim, 2019).

Punctuality means that students have to submit their assignment within a certain time limit. When the time scheduled is closed, students can not submit their assignment any longer. It means that this platform also teaches the students to be disciplined and able to manage their time. While flexibility means that this platform can be accessed at any time and any place as the users favour, and practicality means students can manage their tasks better. Students can check whether or not they have sent in their assignment.

Besides the strength mentioned, some students also complain about the technical problem with sending their assignment to this platform as not all of the students understand how to use the technology. While the next problem is really a network problem. Dealing with this problem, some students state that sometimes they find it hard to send their assignment because the signal is difficult to locate (Mualim, 2019).

Teachers feel that using *Google Classroom* is very useful for them. In other words, they have a positive perception of this platform. Therefore, it affects the students' learning process. They also believe that this platform is effective to promote collaborative learning, minimise problems, organise students' documents and save time (Harjanto, 2019). These are various reasons for many teachers to use this platform during this pandemic.

2. E-Learning

In online learning during the pandemic time, e-learning is an alternative platform that can be used by teachers in delivering the materials intended for the students. E-learning is a kind of education platform that is an interactive, attractive, and entertaining way of studying, and it also has replaced printed books (Goyal, 2012).

Moreover, this platform helps the students to do the task efficiently because there are many facilities that can be used by the students. This is why the Ministry of Religious Affairs has proceeded to conduct e-learning to be used by Islamic boarding-schools known as *Madrasah* in Indonesia.

This ministry has also launched an E-learning platform to support online learning during the pandemic time. The director of KSKK Madrasah, A. Umar explained that in 2020 the Ministry of Religious Affairs has used e-Learning for *Madrasah* in the teaching-learning process (Farikhah, 2020).

There are some features that can be used by *Madrasah* students in this platform, the first being online classes. In this feature, the contents are basic competency, a lesson plan, the materials, a teacher's journal, daily tests, computer-based tests and book reports.

The second feature is Teacher Share. In this feature, the teacher can share any kind of information. The teacher just posts the information on which anyone can comment or make suggestions. The third is the *Madrasah* community forum. In this forum, students and teachers can share the ideas as there is a social medium that can be used to communicate between teachers and students (Farikhah, 2020). As there are many facilities that can be used in this platform, many *Madrasah* teachers can develop the teaching-learning materials via this platform.

Apart from the facilities, this platform offers punctuality and practicality, as the time for delivering the materials can be scheduled based on the teachers' wishes and the students' time to finish their work. By emphasising this punctuality, this platform also teaches the students to be disciplined and work smartly to finish their task within the scheduled time. Furthermore, this platform provides practicality for the teachers for example, teachers can easily rearrange the schedule by revising the time.

Another practical aspect is that teachers can see the students' work just in one click, and teachers can find the students' scores for the Computer Based Test (CBT) easily. That is why many *Madrasah* teachers are currently using this platform as many devices and features are

provided by this platform to make their jobs easier and less time-consuming.

3. Zoom Meetings

Zoom is a *Cloud*-based video conference platform that can be used to have a meeting online such as video or audio conferences, webinars, recording meetings, and live chat (Bernazzani, 2020). This platform is one that provides a live meeting experience. Teachers and students can meet in a frame, discussing the materials and having their conversation online.

However, even though this platform offers an interaction between teacher and students, some researchers have proven that the use of *Zoom* meetings for learning is not effective (Haqqiem, 2020; Sajaril, 2020). The problems that arise when using this platform is the unstable internet signal and the higher fees or credit to be paid. The unstable Internet hampers the conversation during virtual meetings, and sometimes they even come to a grinding halt. Some students also complain that the material cannot be heard clearly (Sajaril, 2020). Meanwhile, the second problem is actually a source of complaint for the students' parents, as they have to prepare more credit/ fees for when this platform is used.

4. Whatsapp Groups

WhatsApp is a recent application available on every smartphone. This application allows the users to send messages or to have conversations with other users freely (Alsalem, 2014). In addition, *WhatsApp* is a mobile instant messaging application for smartphones. This application permits its user to send and accept messages, images, or videos to others as long as they have an Internet connection. Since for using this application the users only need an Internet connection, this application can be used as an alternative for teachers to have an online learning class.

Furthermore, Susilo (2014), Plana, et al. (2013), Jafari & Chalak (2016) have also conducted research into using *WhatsApp* for teaching. Jafari & Chalak (2016), for instance, focused their research on the *WhatsApp* application as additional material for teaching vocabulary in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. They noted that

WhatsApp can be a miniature classroom by holding a small class discussion in a chat group.

Another study about the use of *WhatsApp* in the teaching process has been made by Alsalem (2014) about using *WhatsApp* applications to enhance students' writing, speaking, vocabulary and word choice skills in English dialogue journals. The result of this research shows that *WhatsApp* can enhance students' writing, speaking, vocabulary and word choice ability.

This is mainly because students can freely share their ideas. This is in line with the research that using *WhatsApp* for the teaching learning process is already proven to increase students' reading habit and their confidence (Plana, et al., 2013) as it also improves students' mastery of vocabulary (Jafari & Chalak, 2016).

Moreover, this application can simply be used by the students, as they can receive the materials from the teacher and send their task easily without needing all that much credit. By using this application students feel that they were not learning but they felt that they were merely playing. However, even though they did not feel that they were learning in a formal sense, at the end the students' writing knowledge was improved as well as their vocabulary (Alsalem, 2014).

RESEARCH METHOD

The method of this research can be categorised as descriptive-qualitative. According to (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 6), "qualitative research is designed to understand the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives". Meanwhile, descriptive research is a research method that attempts to describe the object or the subject of the research in the way it is, which also means that this research reports something that is happening or has happened (Rasyid, 2015). This research discusses the students' problems with online learning during the pandemic. This topic has been examined for a year. That is why this research is going to describe these specific problems.

The instrument used for this research is a

questionnaire. This questionnaire uses a kind of close-ended questions that will make it easier for the respondents to answer the questions. The questions are divided into 2 sub-topics, the first is about the students' problem while doing online learning, and the second is about the platform used. The questionnaire proceeds by using *Google Forms*, therefore this process can be completed online.

The population in this research consists of the students of MAN 2 Nganjuk in the academic year 2020/2021, amounting to 803 students.

Because there are many students in this school, purposeful sampling has been used. In this research, the researcher has selected a certain population that is thought to be representative or having a considerable amount of information about the research topic (Rasyid, 2015).

The sample used in this research comprises the students of MAN 2 Nganjuk, represented in three classes, namely Grade 10, 11, and 12. Grade 10 is represented by the Science 1 stream that consists of 28 students, Grade 11 is represented by the Social sciences 1 stream that consists of 36 students, and Grade 12 is represented by the Religious Studies 2 stream that consists of 36 students. The data of this research have been gathered by distributing a questionnaire to those three sample classes by using *Google Forms*, and the result of the questionnaire is analysed by using a percentage analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The purpose of this research is to determine the problems faced by the students of MAN 2 Nganjuk while being involved with online learning during the pandemic in the academic year 2020/2021. The samples used in this research are 28 students of Grade 10 Science 1 stream, 36 students of Grade 11 Social Sciences 1 stream, and 36 students of Grade 12 Religious Studies stream 2.

However, not all of those Senior High school students proved willing to fill in the questionnaire. From 100 students who should fill in the questionnaire, there were 88 participants who did so. They are 24 students of the Grade 10

Science 1 class, and from Grade 11 there were 30 students, and 34 students from the Grade 12 Religious Studies 2 class.

There are some points asked in the questionnaire, namely about the students' problems encountered in having online classes during the pandemic, and the platform used. The result of the questionnaire shows that the main problem faced by students in online learning during the pandemic lies in understanding the material. This point can be seen in the figure below.

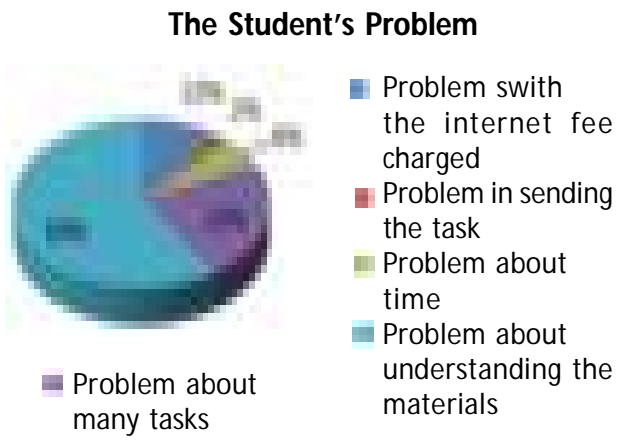


Figure 1
The Students' Problem

In the figure above, the major problem faced by students in the process of online learning during the pandemic is a problem with understanding the materials as 59 % of the students find it difficult to grasp the materials from the teachers. In addition, 23 % of the participants think that the problem they face during the pandemic is the multitude of tasks that they have to finish. Furthermore, 10 % of the students mention that they have problems affording the fees/credit required.

As we know that not all of the students' parents come from wealthy families, affording the Internet fees or credit is sometimes hard for them. Meanwhile, the financial assistance with the fees or credit offered by the government is rarely distributed. The next problem faced by the students of MAN 2 Nganjuk revolves around time, though only 6 % of the participants complain about this aspect, and finally 2 % of the participants complain about the way to send in

their completed tasks.

The problems that arise in online learning during pandemic are caused by various reasons that can be seen in the figure below.

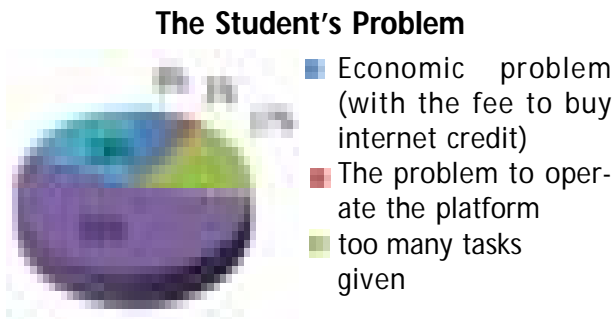


Figure 2
Reasons for the Problem

From the figure above, it can be seen that the problems faced by the students with online learning are caused by first of all, 55 % of the respondents state that because the materials given by teachers are not explained, it is hard for them to understand the contents. Second, 18 % of the respondents state that the reason of their problem with online learning is when teachers explain the materials in a *YouTube* or *Zoom* meeting, for example, it takes up much of their credit. The third reason dealing with the students problem with online learning has to do with the overwhelming multitude of tasks, 17 % of the respondents state that every teacher gives tasks that all must be finished. Furthermore, 8 % of the respondents state that the reason of their problem with online learning is about the fee to buy the internet credit, as during the pandemic the economic problem has arisen nationally. Finally, 2 % of the respondents state that they find it difficult to operate the platform, to see and to send in the completed task as there are some platforms used by the teachers at MAN 2 Nganjuk for delivering their subjects.

According to the respondents there are several platforms that are predominantly used by teachers in MAN 2 Nganjuk, namely *Google Classroom*, *E-learning*, and *WhatsApp Groups*. The result can be seen in the figure below.

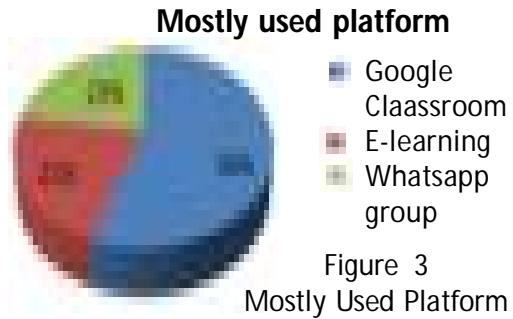


Figure 3
Mostly Used Platform

From the figure above, it can be seen that according to the students, the platform that is mostly used by teachers in the online teaching-learning process during the pandemic is *Google Classroom* as 56 % of the respondents mention it. Furthermore, 23 % of the respondents state that the teacher uses a *WhatsApp Group*, and 21% of the respondents show that teachers use *E-learning*. Those are the three platforms used by teachers at MAN 2 Nganjuk.

Students have their own choice about the platform that they think can help them to support their learning. The platform that is popular among the students to be used in the learning process can be seen in the figure below.

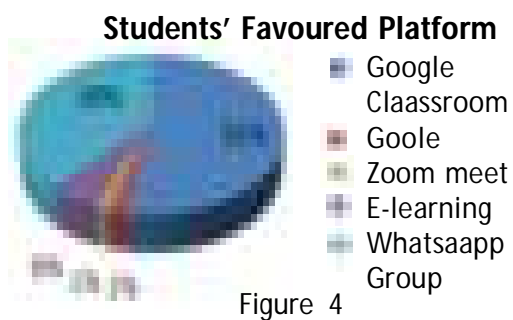
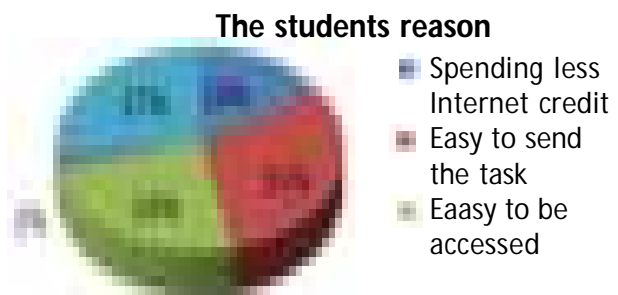


Figure 4
Students' Favoured Platform

Based on the figure above, 52 % of the participants like to use *Google Classroom*, while 39 % of them love using *WhatsApp Groups*, 6 % love *E-learning*, 2 % like to use *Google Meet*, and 1 % like *Zoom Meet*. The reasons why they appreciate that platform can be seen in the figure below.



- Easy to understand the material
- Easy to operate

Figure 5
Reasons for Choosing the Platform

From the figure above, students have various reasons for using their platform of choice. 31 % of them favour the platform because it facilitates sending their completed task. In addition, 27 % of them appreciate the platform because it is easy to operate, so they do not need special information to operate it. Next, 24 % of the participants choose the platform as it is easy to be accessed. 16 % of the participants choose the platform that make them spend less Internet credit, so it will be more economical. Finally, only 2 % of them who choose the platform that makes them understand the material.

Discussion

1. The Students' Problems

Based on this research, there are several problems faced by students in the process of online learning during the pandemic. This research shows that these problems are actually related to one another. The students' main cause for complaint is their problem with comprehending the material. Before the pandemic, students and teachers would meet each other in a classroom setting, and the teaching-learning process would be conducted by interacting with each other (Mualim, 2019).

This is also related to the reason why the students find it difficult to understand the materials. The result of this research reveals that the students find it difficult to understand the material because many of the materials are not explained by the teachers. It shows that 52 % or slightly more than half of the participants feel this problem is important enough to be raised.

However, during the pandemic, the teacher cannot easily explain the material as there are many factors that keep teachers from doing so, such as showing consideration for the students' high Internet fee or credit (Irawan 2020). As not all of the students have sufficient credit at their disposal, the teacher chooses the easiest way to get in touch with the students to deliver the material.

Another research outcome shows that 18% of the participants stated that when the materials are explained by using *YouTube* or *Google/Zoom Meet*, it will easily deplete the students' budget allocated for Internet fees or credit.

From the description above it is clear that the students' problem with understanding the material is not only the problem of the students themselves but also that of the teachers. In this respect, teachers actually are willing to teach as well as possible, however some barriers hamper this willingness.

Moreover, the main barrier is the students' financial condition. This is in line with the research conducted by Irawan in 2020, that one of the effects of online learning during the pandemic is the daunting obligation for low-income parents to buy the Internet credit to be used by their offspring for online learning.

Therefore, it is only natural that teachers think about the most economical way to deliver the material. In this way, teachers give the simple instruction while delivering the material, by considering that students can be actively reading their own material whether it is from their book or from Internet sources, and then the teachers just give simple tasks for the students to complete.

This problem is also encountered by university students in Malang, where by using the *Google Classroom* platform, teachers just give simple instructions and tasks for the students (Mualim, 2019). By giving the tasks, the teachers think that students can simply complete the task and send it in, so it will not require any insurmountable Internet credit.

The second problem for the students in this context is posed by the number of tasks given. As stated above, teachers have to choose the most economical way to deliver the material so that all students can receive it easily. Therefore, the teacher gives some kinds of tasks to be completed by the students. So students can read and learn the material by themselves, and in other ways the teacher still controls the students' understanding based on the tasks completed by them.

This fact is also supported by the research

result that 18 % of the participants complained that when teachers explain the material by using *YouTube* or *Zoom* or *Google Meet*, they feel worried about the amount of credit that they have to spend to use those platforms. Since almost all of the teachers involved entertain similar thoughts about this problem, they give tasks to the students and this is why students think that they are burdened with many tasks for online learning during this pandemic.

The complicated problems that students face can actually be solved when teachers and students realise their proper role. Especially nowadays, when the student-centered approach is being practised. Students can be autonomous learners, so they can learn from any sources to support their understanding. In this way, the concept of independent "freedom" learning (*merdeka belajar*) whose main concept consists of giving students the freedom to learn independently and creatively is as stated by the Indonesian Education and Culture minister (Kamil, 2020).

On the other hand, the result of this research reveals that students complain about their problem with understanding the material because the teacher just gives simple instructions via a certain platform. This fact shows that students today still overly rely on the teacher. This point is in line with the result of the research conducted by Hamid in 2020, which shows that the limited interaction between students and teachers in online learning decreases the students' interest to participate in the teaching-learning process.

Some students even stated that they do not understand the material because it is not explained directly by their teachers (Hamid, et al., 2020). His research shows that they still see the teachers' explanation as the main source in getting the knowledge, and that is why they find it hard to understand the material when they do not receive the explanation from the teachers.

From this point onwards, teachers need to prepare their students to be independent, and give more space for the students to develop their curiosity about the material. For when they feel curious, they will try to come up with the answer by using many sources.

The concept of the independent freedom of learning (*Merdeka Belajar*) mentioned earlier should also be recognised by the students. Students should find their own competence without thinking or obsessing too much about scores (Kamil, 2020), so they can truly develop themselves inspired by the thought that they need to learn instead of having to learn just because the teacher or parent asked them to do so.

Once they have their inner motivation to learn, they will improve themselves to acquire the knowledge that they are after. In this way, the teachers should accompany their students by answering and helping their students when the students encounter problems in the process of learning.

2. Students' point of view about the online platform

Based on the result of this research, 52 % of the respondents like to use *Google Classroom*, while 39 of the respondents appreciate *WhatsApp Groups*, 6 % choose e-learning, 2 % favour *Google Meet*, and 1 % prefer *Zoom Meet*. Among the platforms used by teachers in delivering the material *Google Classroom* become the students' favoured platform.

This result is in line with the result found by Mualim et al. (2019), that students enjoyed using *Google Classroom* as it helps the students to be punctual and autonomous. This platform is also popular among students as many of the teachers at MAN 2 Nganjuk use this platform as well, and so students are accustomed to using it. Because they are accustomed to this platform, they can easily operate and send in their completed task. Furthermore, 31 % of the respondents choose it as their favoured platform because it can help them to send the task easily, 27 % of the respondents choose the platform that is easy to operate, 24 % choose the platform that is easy to be accessed, 16 % choose the platform that charges less credit, and only 2 % of the respondents choose the platform that facilitates understanding the material.

The second platform favoured by the students is *WhatsApp*. This platform is the simplest platform among the others. This is because students commonly use this platform not only for the

learning process but also for daily life. As a result, students are already familiar with this platform. Better still, this platform makes it easy for students to send in their completed task.

Apart from this, it is easy to operate, to be accessed and charging less credit as this platform is the most economical because students still can use this platform even though their budget has been spent when they opt for the unlimited credit package. That is why this platform is so well-loved by the students.

The result of this research indicates that the students' biggest problem lies in understanding the material because many materials contain less instruction. However, this result reveals a contrast: when students are asked about the reason for choosing their favoured platform, only 2 % of the students choose the platform that helps them to understand the material. This means that they find it hard to understand the material but at the same time they do not want to use the platform that helps them to understand the material.

Of course, these problems do not stand by themselves. Students also show empathy for (or solidarity with) their parents' condition as during the pandemic many people have been facing economic problems - for example there are 10,6 million people in our country who have lost their job (Rachbini, 2021). Besides, 16% of the respondents in this research choose the platform that requires less Internet credit or lower fees. Therefore, even though students are willing to achieve a higher level of understanding in their class, economic problems keep them from choosing the platform that can solve their problem.

CLOSING REMARKS

A. Conclusion

In the online learning process during the pandemic, the students' main problem consists of difficulties with understanding the materials, the second problem is about there being too many tasks assigned by the teacher. The third problem revolves around the Internet fees and credit required, the next problem is about managing the study time as they have to finish the task given to meet the deadline, and the last problem is the students'

problem with operating the platform to send in their completed tasks.

These problems have several causes. The first is because the material is not explained by the teachers. The second reason is that even though the students have problems with understanding the materials because the material is not explained by their teacher, they feel worried when the teacher explains the material by using *YouTube* or *Zoom* or *Google Meet* because those platforms tend to consume much of their budget for their fees and credit. The third reason is they have many tasks to finish. The next reason revolves around the economic problem of the students' parents who may not be able to afford the daily Internet fee or credit required, while the last reason concerns operating the platform.

Another aspect of dealing with online learning during the pandemic is about the platform used in the teaching-learning process. According to the students, *Google Classroom* is a platform that is mostly used by teachers at MAN 2 Nganjuk, followed by *WhatsApp Groups* and the last is *e-learning*. In addition, the platform used most by teachers at MAN 2 Nganjuk is in line with the students' most favoured platform, namely *Google Classroom*. They argue that it is easy to send the task and to operate.

Besides *Google Classroom*, *WhatsApp* is the second platform that is favoured by the students and last comes the *e-learning* of the Ministry of Religious Affairs platform. Therefore, it is clear that these three platforms are used most by teachers and the most beloved by students of MAN 2 Nganjuk.

B. Suggestions and recommendations

The result of this research shows that students' main problem with online learning during the pandemic is their difficulty in comprehending the material as they have become accustomed to having direct interaction with teachers in the classroom and receiving the explanation of the material directly from the teachers.

A further study of how to motivate students to be active learners by learning from any sources is obviously needed, so students will not only rely

on the teachers' explanation when coming to grips with the material but also learn from any sources as they have already become used to the Internet where any explanation can be found.

This study also implies that during this pandemic, teachers should pay attention to the

students' problems by refraining from giving them tasks that seems to be too demanding and give more space for students to use the platform that is easier for them in terms of operating and of charging affordable fees and credit charges. [a]

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