Responses of Educators in South Sumatra Towards Distance Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This research used descriptive analysis method. The object of the study was 152 numbers of school and university educators randomly selected to fill the online questionnaire. Based on the result, the category of their responses is not positive. Based on the research results, several difficulties were generalized: the limited ability of educators and students in using technology, limited facilities, and low family role. Teaching strategies that are applied by educators: online learning, offline learning, and the combination of both.

Keywords: Responses, Educators, Distance learning, Covid-19 pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is being 'attacked' by Covid-19. Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered type of corona virus. Covid-19 has become a pandemic in many countries around the world. As of 01 September 2020, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia has reported 177,571 persons with confirmed Covid-19. There have been 7,505 deaths related to Covid-19 reported and 128,057 patients have recovered from the disease [1].

The spread of Covid-19 had many impacts in all aspects, including education. The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture implements distance learning to stop the spread of the virus. Distance learning is implemented to provide meaningful learning experiences for students, without students are feeling overwhelmed by the demands of completing all curriculum achievements [2]. Distance learning consists of two categories, namely online and offline learning [3]. Distance learning does not mean online learning.

Online learning is learning that uses an internet-based interactive model and Learning Management System (LMS) [4]. Examples of online learning: learning through e-learning, Zoom, Webex, Rumah Belajar, Ruang Guru, Quipper, and others. Offline learning is carried out by borrowing modules or books to students. Besides that, students can also learn by watching learning programs through the TVRI channel [4].

Distance learning will likely be possible in some forms in all areas affected by the crisis. There will be three kinds of solutions: a) high tech (such as the use of video conferencing); b) low-tech (such as the use of text-based reminders to parents); and c) no-tech (such as printed worksheet packets distributed to students) [5].

Distance learning is not easy to be implemented in Indonesia. Those two problems influenced distance learning, abstracting in the teaching and learning process for the use of proper gadgets and the availability of the internet was an essential part of distance learning (especially online learning). Furthermore, the next problem was the parents' support system [6]. Most parents have to focus on their work.

This learning raises quite complicated problems. It forces all elements of society (students, parents, teachers/educators, society, and government) must collaborate in minimizing the problem. Educators have an important role in distance learning.

Distance learning presents new challenges for educators. These challenges such as teaching methods, learning strategy, and learning curriculum. Many skills and techniques which were important in face-to-face settings are not applicable in distance learning and some educators must to learn new teaching methods as well as unlearn certain old ones [7]. Distance learning provides a different learning environment, this is new challenges for educators [8]. These challenges add a new task for the educators to do.

Several studies have shown the students' responses to distance learning. Then, how the responses of educators towards distance learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic? This study aims to see the responses of educators in South Sumatra towards distance learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. And also, to find out the teaching strategies and difficulties faced by the educators in distance learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

2. METHODS

This research used descriptive analysis method. Descriptive research describes a symptom, an event, and an incident that occurred in the present [9]. Descriptive research does not describe data – it uses data to describe the world for purpose of identifying and improving our understanding of socially important phenomena [10].

Focusing on the actions of educators that occur in distance learning, this research was to describe the responses of educators towards distance learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Educators 'responses in this study were educators' responses to the application of distance learning as seen through questionnaire answers. Questions on the questionnaire lead to a "yes" answer as a positive response. Then the general response of educators is seen from the average "yes" answer. This research also described the teaching strategies applied and difficulties faced by the educators.

The object of the study was 152 numbers of school and university educators randomly selected to fill the online questionnaire. To answer research questions about the response of educators, researchers used questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of 5 dichotomous questions ("yes/no") and 5 open questions. For dichotomous questions, the average of percentage interpreted by the following criteria [11] in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria of educators' responses

Persentage	Category
85% ≤ P	Very Positive
70% ≤ P < 85%	Positive
50% ≤ P < 70%	Less Positive
P < 50%	Not Positive

Furthermore, an online interview was also elaborated in gaining the information to support the findings of the research about teaching strategies and difficulties faced by the educators in distance learning. The data were analyzed by describing the data collected from the online questionnaire using Google Forms and the interview result. The following are some of the questions during the interview:

1. Explain your opinion about the advantages/strengths of distance learning?
2. Explain your opinion about the disadvantages/weakness of distance learning?

3. Explain the difficulties faced by educators in distance learning!
4. Distance learning consists of two categories, online and offline learning, which learning did you do?
5. What application/platform do you use for online learning?
6. What application/platform do you use for offline learning?
7. If you combine online and offline learning, explain how do you that!
8. Would you agree if distance learning is continued even though the Covid-19 Pandemic was over?

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting the data and analyzing them, some findings were obtained. The finding indicated in that Table 2.

Table 2. The questions in dichotomous questionnaire

No.	Questions	Percentage (%)	
		Yes	No
1	Is distance learning effective during the Covid-19 Pandemic?	15.1	84.9
2	Could distance learning be continued even though the Covid-19 Pandemic has ended?	16.4	83.6
3	Did you make learning videos so that students easily understand the learning material?	61.2	38.8
4	Did you develop printed teaching materials (modules, textbooks, etc.)?	71.7	28.3
5	Did you develop digital teaching materials (e-modules and others)?	66.4	33.6
Average of Percentage		46.16	53.84

The average of percentage "yes" is 46.16%. Based on Table 1, the category of the educators' responses to distance learning is not positive. The educators' response is in line with the results of the KPAI (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia) survey on students' responses towards distance learning. The survey results showed that only 23.3% of the 1,700 students were happy with distance learning [12].

It is considered reasonable, because distance learning is something new, although distance learning is already done in some institutions. Educators are not familiar with this learning. So that educators find several difficulties. Many people think that distance learning is easier to be implemented, even though distance learning has more challenges than traditional / face-to-face learning [13].

From the Table 2, more then 80% of educators think that distance learning is ineffective. They wish that distance learning will not be continued even though pandemic has been completed.

Educators realize that distance learning must be done to reduce the spread of Covid-19. The conclusion of the interview about the advantages of distance learning explains that this learning is flexible and has a high accessibility. This is in line with other literatures that explain that distance education was the most effective and perspective in the education system which does not take space and time [14-17].

However, the implementation of distance learning does not always run smoothly and effectively. Based on the results of the interview, the educators give the explain that there are more weaknesses of the distance learning than advantages. The following is a summary of some difficulties faced by educators in distance learning:

1. Educators' limited ability to access technology;
2. Students' limited ability to access technology;
3. The difficulties in explaining the material;
4. Internet and gadget problems;
5. Family economic background;
6. Parental support.

Through interviews, some educators argue that distance learning is not suitable in shaping student's character. Educators do not directly meet students, on the other hand, parents are not always able to assist students in distance learning. Even though character have to be taught to the students by an education at school and also at their house.

Distance learning consists of two categories, online and offline learning [3]. In conducting the online learning, the educators used several applications/platforms, such as Google Classroom, WhatsApp, and etc.

Based on Table 3, WhatsApp was the most used application to support online learning. From interview, the educators tend to choose WhatsApp because it's free and easy to use. Besides that, almost all students / parents have a WhatsApp application account.

WhatsApp is effective in learning and also applicable tool for improving the learning motivation of students [18 - 20]. Additionally, WhatsApp could be a valid tool for peer assessment [21]. The second place is Zoom. Zoom is platform for video and audio conferenci*ng*, chat, and webinars. The use of Zoom in learning is new. Therefore, the user is still having some problems. The use of Zoom in learning is new. Therefore, zoom users still experience several problems, including signal problems. But, using Zoom is considered practical for users [22]. The Table 3 below is a resume of using online learning:

Table 3. Resume of using online learning by educators in South Sumatra

Application	Users
E-Learning	7.1%
Google Classroom	17.6%
Google Meet	4.9%
Google Duo	0.3%
E-Mail	0.3%
WhatsApp	36.4%
Youtube	7.7%
Edmodo	0.9%
Zoom	19.4%
Webex	1.5%
Skype	0.3%
Schoology	0.3%
Rumah Belajar	1.5%
Ruang Guru	0.6%
Sismart	0.3%
Sumsel Cerdas	0.6%

The third The application or platform with more interest in third place is Google Classroom. Google Classroom is a free web service developed by Google for school or campus that aims to simplify creating, distributing, and grading assignments. The primary purpose of Google Classroom is to streamline the process of sharing files between teachers and students in Table 4.

Table 4. Resume of using offline learning by educators in South Sumatra

Media	Users
Printed learning material	38.5%
Digital learning material	55.5%
Watching TVRI	4.9%
Small group	0.1%

The distance learning is not only online learning. There is offline learning that use low-tech and no-tech, such as digital and printed material learning [5]. Table 4 is resume of using offline learning. According the table, digital learning material was the most used by educators. Several types of digital learning materials that educators make are e-books, e-modules, and instructional videos.

Researchers are interested in finding information related to what digital teaching materials are used by educators. From the interview results, it was found that the digital teaching materials used by the educators were:

1. Teaching materials from internet searches in pdf format;

2. Teaching materials from the internet are then revised according to students' abilities;
3. Teaching materials from the internet without revision.

There are still a few educators who make adjustments to the material from the search results on the internet to the abilities of their students. Some educators also make their own learning videos. The learning video contains an explanation of the teaching material which is arranged creatively. Then, the video is uploaded on the YouTube page or shared via WhatsApp.

The results of the questionnaire showed that there were still more than 40% of educators who have not made digital material. Even though, digital learning materials are the most effective part of online learning [14-15, 23]. So, it is recommended for educators to make creative and innovative digital materials. Digital materials have many advantages, including: making the learning atmosphere more flexible, interesting, and less boring, so that students are motivated to learn independently [24].

It cannot be denied that there are families who have limited access to the internet, perhaps because of their economic and geographic location. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the 'Belajar dari Rumah' program which has been broadcast on one of the national television stations of TVRI, starting April 13, 2020.

"Belajar dari Rumah' Program is prepared for all levels of education. Starting from early childhood education program until high school. There are also guidance materials for parents and educators and also cultural programs that can be watched on weekends, Saturdays and Sundays. The schedule from Monday to Friday was used for learning with a total duration of three hours per day for all shows.

Based on the interview, it was found that the educators combined online learning and offline learning. The educators create digital learning material. Then, they share the material to students through an online learning application.

However, there are also educators who still use printed learning materials. They distributed the materials through students' parents. Parents are asked to school to take the printed material.

In addition, there are also educators who divide the students into small groups. They study at school face-to-face. The school allows this activity only a few times a week following the health protocols.

To support the implementation of distance learning, the government has made efforts to reduce the various problems faced by educators, students, and parents. The government has been committed to improving the competence of educators in the use of learning technology. Efforts are made simultaneously. The government has also provided internet quotas for online learning for educators and students. However, there are still problems with the high level of educator anxiety in using learning technology. It can not be denied because not all educators, students, and parents are accustomed to using technology in the learning process.

Then for parents and students, distance learning in the Covid-19 Pandemic can be a way to reconnect the relationship between them. Parents should also provide non-formal education for children such as religious and character education which is not taught in schools, especially during distance learning. The role of parents can indeed be minimized but still cannot be eliminated because during distance learning like this, parents actually interact more with their children.

However, it is necessary to adjust the time and activities for parents so that office work or homework can still be done while helping children follow the learning process. Cooperation between schools, educators, and parents to design and prepare the best learning for children is needed. So there is no reason for the decline in the quality of the learning process or the quality of learning output even though it is carried out within current limitations.

The new era in the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic has changed various aspects of life, including teaching and learning activities in the education system. This change is expected to become a momentum to improve the quality of education by utilizing technology. The distance learning process has become a new habit, although it is still not perfect.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the result, the responses of educators in South Sumatra towards distance learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic is not positive. This is because the implementation of distance learning is not easy for educators.

Based on the research results, several obstacles or difficulties were generalized:

a. User difficulties: the limited ability of educators and students in using technology and the difficulties of educators explaining material through distance learning;
b. Limited facilities: internet and gadget problems;
c. Low family role: the family economic background and the support of parents.

Teaching strategies in distance learning that are applied by educators:
a. Online learning through:
   1) Chatting rooms such as: WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Edmodo, & e-Mail;
   2) Video conference applications such as: Zoom, Youtube, Google Meet, Google Duo, Webex & Skype;
   3) Educational websites such as: e-learning institutions, Rumah Belajar, Ruang Guru, and many more.

b. Offline learning through providing printed and digital learning materials, watching TVRI, and small groups.

c. The combination of offline and online learning.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Pitriani contributed substantially to the conception and design of the study. Pitriani & Pratama, P. collected the data and contributed data or analysis tools. And then, Pitriani performed the analysis, wrote the paper, and revision the article.

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