

Boomers' Perception Towards the Implementation of Online Learning Amidst Covid-19 Outbreak

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 Outbreak has shifted the way education is delivered to students from conventional ways in the classroom to online interaction, requiring the use of ICT tools to assist teachers in online learning which can be a challenge for boomers as a generation who were born before the rapid development of technology. Using narrative approach, this study aimed at exploring the experiences and perceptions of eight boomer teachers who conducted online learning during this pandemic in three junior high schools in Klungkung regency. The findings revealed that from eight teachers, four teachers perceived that online learning in this pandemic was difficult to do as they admitted that they were not familiar with ICT tools; two teachers perceived that online learning as a chance to enhance the teachers' and students' technology literacy; and two teachers admitted conventional face-to-face meetings as the best teaching method. While all eight teachers deemed online class as a positive change, they admitted that there were challenges to tackle, namely students' accessibility, and adjustment of time allocation from conventional to online teaching. This implies that boomers need trainings on using ICT tools and how to choose and use online learning platforms, as well as strategies to adjust time allocation for each learning goals to improve the quality of online learning, so the learning objectives are achieved well.

Keywords: Baby Boomer, Challenge, Covid-19 Pandemic, Online Learning, Perception

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic that spreads around the globe has caused a large scale of social destruction. [1] has set social distancing and physical distancing as recommendations to prevent wider spread of Covid-19. With the advance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), both formal and informal sectors have shifted their activities to online modes, including the process of teaching and learning. In Indonesia, the instructional activities have been shifted to online learning through a formal instruction from the Ministry of Education Number 36962/MPK.A/HK/2020 in March 2020.

Despite the hope about the positive change in the innovations implemented in the learning process through the mandatory online learning, apparently left some generation behind. As the idiom says, "you cannot teach old dog new tricks", the mandatory online learning poses

a challenge for boomer teachers, who were born more or less between 1946 to 1964 [2]–[5]. This generation were born in a period before the advance of digital information technologies, and they only started to learn to use digital devices in their forties or fifties, hence they are called the 'digital immigrant' [4], [6]. As the generation that have to adapt into the use of digital technology, baby boomers are less attracted to technology as they are accustomed to the analogue technology, thus they pose resistance toward the adoption of the technology, arguing that think they do not need it, it is too complex and hard to learn, and it may affect to the lack of social interaction and communication, in addition to their reluctance in learning new things that require multi-tasking, complex, and non-structured procedures [4], [7], [8].

While online learning in general may pose problems for teachers in terms of learning style and culture, pedagogy, technology, technical training, and time

management are problems encountered by teachers [9], the emergency nature of the mandatory online learning in this pandemic brought along other limiting factors, namely lack of training among teachers, technical obstacles, resources, social interaction, difficulty in explaining the subject, and time management to communicate with students and assess students' works were several obstacles faced by teachers during the pandemic [10]–[12]. With the mandatory online teaching set at the wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic, baby boomer teachers' adaptation to the use of online application in the teaching and learning process would not be easy as they still rely on face-to-face communication with gesture and non-verbal clues [13], [14].

Thus, the present study aimed at investigating the baby boomer teachers' perception towards the use of ICT tools in online learning as well as the difficulties that they might encounter through narrative inquiry. It is important to identify the boomers' perceptions on online teaching and the problems they are facing as more than a third of the present teachers impacted by the mandatory online teaching are baby boomers. Identification of their perceptions and problems that they face may lead to solutions and proposal of alternatives how to deal with these problems.

2. METHODS

This study employed narrative research design, in which the researcher collects the story from individuals and write about their experiences [15]. The samples were chosen purposefully to select research subjects who understand the central phenomenon in order to provide the data needed to answer the problems under investigation [15]. Limiting the study only in one of the regencies in Bali, the study enrolled eight teachers who were born in 1946 – 1964, implemented online learning during Covid-19 outbreak in March, April, and May, 2020. The main technique of data collection was unstructured, open-ended interview in order to reveal the subjects' perceptions about online teaching, the platforms that they implemented, the problems that they faced, and their expectations about future teaching. To maintain the ethics of this research, the teachers' name are replaced by pseudonyms, and the schools where they taught are not revealed. The procedure of the study is adopted from [15] as the followings: identifying a phenomenon that address an educational problem, purposefully selecting individual(s) from whom the phenomenon can be learnt, collecting stories from the individuals that reflect their personal and social experiences by having them telling it, re-storying the experiences followed by collaborating with the participants in developing the story, report the story about the participants' personal and social experiences, and validating the accuracy of the report by using triangulation of data source.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Difficulties faced by boomers in conducting online learning

3.1.1. Lack of ICT skills

It was identified that all of the eight boomer teachers had lack of ICT skills. Teacher 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 had lack of ICT skills because they had nobody to teach them; Teacher 1 was taught and assisted by her team-teacher in delivering the materials and quiz through learning platform, and Teacher 4 tried to utilize the learning platform by himself but it was too complex and complicated for him.

In normal classroom before pandemic, the boomer teachers rarely utilized technology in their classrooms, such as laptop and projector that help teachers in presenting the concept of the topic being discussed, displaying pictures, charts, illustrations, or videos to strengthen the concept, and testing or evaluation [16]. However, Teacher 1 reported that she rarely used technology such as laptop and projector to teach as it was too complicated and time-consuming for her. Teacher 3 also reported that he never used any digital teaching tools and preferred to make use of whiteboard provided in the classroom because it was simple and it did not need any preparation. In addition, Teacher 6 stated that he preferred to use whiteboard to explain the teaching materials to his students.

As mandatory online teaching was instructed, boomers started to make use of their phone and laptop for teaching. For the online learning platform, Google Classroom was recommended as the main platform for online teaching because it is considered most user-friendly. However, the boomer teachers found difficulties in utilizing Google Classroom. Teacher 4 reported that he tried to use Google Classroom but he could not optimize some features in it because it was quite complex. Teacher 6 reported that he did try using Google Classroom, but it was too complicated for him. Teacher 1 stated that she was taught by her team-teacher on how to post materials, quizzes, and questions in Google Classroom. However, she found it was confusing and she decided to create a WhatsApp group for her students. From what reported by those three teachers, it was revealed that the teacher tried to learn to use Google Classroom, but they found it was complicated then decided not to stop using it.

Having difficulties in using Google Classroom and moving to WhatsApp was also experienced by Teacher 4. Unlike Teacher 1, he managed to post the material in Google Classroom on his own. However, he used WhatsApp to conduct discussion instead of using the discussion rooms provided by the platform. Teacher 6 reported that he could not use Google Classroom because he did not have anyone to teach him. Therefore, he

preferred to use WhatsApp to share the materials, tasks, and tests to his students.

As boomers are digital immigrants who were not exposed to ICT technologies until they were middle-aged, they generally have a lack of ICT skills [6] and these senior citizens cannot take advantage of what the digital era offers, with only 10% of them are familiar with ICT [17]. This is a sad fact because the use of ICT in teaching and learning activity would allow the boomer teachers in conducting the learning instruction while providing challenges to change, improve, and add a new dimension to the teaching learning environments, and increase the quality of activities assigned to students [18] that can facilitate instructional testing and assessment, educating culture, assisting students learning the academic content [19]. Moreover, utilizing ICT in education also gives positive benefits for students. [20] stated that using ICT can make students being motivated and engaged in the classroom. As cited in [21], the presence of ICT in education allows for new ways of learning for students and teachers, promotes students' higher-order thinking skills, encourages collaboration between students and teachers for the successful learning, develops ICT literacy and ICT capability both for teacher and students, motivates students' learning, improves students' attainment levels, prepares students for an integrated society dominated by ICT developments, and allow students to use ICT tool for lifelong learning. Thus, it is important for boomers to be more open about the use of ICT for teaching, with more helps should be provided by stake holders to facilitate this transition process for the boomers.

3.1.2. Lack of internet connection

The main advantage of online learning is that students can learn anytime, anywhere, with no need to directly meet with the teacher [22]. Moreover, it allows students to be engaged in most comfortable mode and manage their time efficiently [24]. Thus, online learning is the most effective way to be used in this pandemic situation as students can learn from their home to avoid the spread of the virus. Hardware, software and connectivity facilities are prerequisites that enable online teaching and learning [25]. Online learning cannot achieve its objective effectively if one of these prerequisites is missing.

It seems that the boomer teachers have sufficient hardware and software with them, such as laptop, PC, tablet, or smartphone. However, internet connection is a problem for them, especially those who live in rural area. This problem is mentioned by Teacher 2, 5, 7, and 8. They mentioned that the lack of internet connection hindered the teaching activity especially when they conducted online meeting using video conference platform like Zoom. However, as they had unstable internet connection, they prefer to share the learning

material through WhatsApp. In addition, they reported that lack of internet connection made them feel difficult to share material to their students, download their students' works, and reply their students' messages one by one.

Internet connection is one of the technical issues in conducting online learning [26]. Without sufficient internet connection, the teaching activity cannot achieve its goals effectively. Boomer teachers found it was hard to teach online as they had lack internet connection in their area. This finding is supported by [27] that found almost half of the teachers in their research (48.1%) got disturbed in online learning because of internet problems, while 42.3% because of electricity problems. Further, [28] pointed out the main factor of obstruction in online education is low sources of teacher's internet connection. It was seen that internet connection is a serious problem experienced by the teachers during conducting online education, and this problem needs to be taken consideration.

3.1.3. Time management

Time management was another problem reported by the teachers. Time management refers to the maximum use of time for productivity and achievement [29]. It is closely related with the management of scheduled work with preliminary planning, organizing and implementation which aimed to achieve a certain goal. Time management concerns with the application of the most efficient methods of completing certain work within a required time.

Teacher 7 reported that it was hard for her to adjust the teaching activities with the time allocation as the time allocation of all subjects were reduced. This time reduction makes the teacher struggled in delivering the materials and activities to achieve the learning objectives. The same problem was experienced by Teacher 3, 4, and 8. Similar to Teacher 7, their time allowance was reduced and they needed to adjust the time allowance with their learning goals and teaching activity. It was a quite hard job for them since they must suddenly change their planning for the rest of the semester. As a result, they just asked their students to read the materials and assign some exercise test for students. They also let their students to contact them through WhatsApp if they need any assistance.

In the case of time management problem faced by the teacher, the Indonesian government has mandated a policy related to the curriculum. As what stated in [30] that teachers can stick on national curriculum, use emergency curriculum, or simplify the curriculum independently during this pandemic situation. Emergency curriculum is a simplification of basic competence based on curriculum 2013. The basic competences in each subject is simplified so that focus on

essential competence and prerequisite competence for the next learning. Thus, the teachers are not forced to achieve all learning goals; they can teach essential and prerequisite competence which are important for students' advanced learning.

3.1.4. Students' accessibility

Boomer teachers did not only have problems in their internet connection, but also in students' accessibility to online classes. As argued by [31], the main supporting factors of the effectiveness of online learning are the network access and the device's ability to access internet. It is obvious that internet access and sufficient device are needed in online learning. However, boomers mentioned that most of their students did not have sufficient internet connection; while some of them did not have phone, laptop or PC to follow the online learning. Teacher 8 and Teacher 1 mentioned that their students did not have sufficient internet connection. It was hard for their students to do online meeting using video conferencing platform. Some students often unintentionally left the meeting because they lost their connection. This finding is similar to [32] that 52 per cent of 1,416 surveyed English students had lack of internet connection and it affected their learning. [33] also found that the availability and sustainability of internet connection is one of the obstacles faced by students during online learning along with the accessibility of the teaching media and compatibility of tools to access the media.

The lack of internet connection was not the only issue faced by students. It was revealed that some students do not have their own phone because of their economic condition. This finding is similar to [34] who found that economic constraint was one challenge faced by students besides of internet access and ability to use online application as the result of this problem, the Indonesian government has distributed internet quota subsidies for students every month that can be used to access various learning application and platforms. In addition, the students who did not have phone were registered as "luring (luar jaringannya)" or offline class students. They were allowed not to follow the online classes and took the materials and assignments to school every week. By doing this way, students who did not have access to online classes were still able to follow the lessons.

3.2. Boomer's perceptions towards online learning

3.2.1. Lack of internet connection

Teacher 2 and 5 thought that online learning is an effective way to be used in teaching their students during this crisis situation. They stated that online learning was an effective way to conduct education in this situation where students could not meet people to avoid the spread

of virus. Moreover, they thought that online learning could improve both teacher and student's ICT literacy. [27] found that teachers perceived online classrooms as a useful alternative in difficult and unanticipated situations; it is believed as the most direct and effective way to maximize the learning opportunity for learners and minimize the learning problems. Similarly, [35] revealed that teachers had good motivation and enthusiasm toward online learning as the way to teach their students in pandemic situation.

The implementation of online learning requires qualified resources, especially human resources to make it effective. Therefore, it requires technology literacy not only for teachers but also for students [36]. It requires teachers and students learn to utilize the technology and update their skills so that they are not left behind. In online learning, teachers are required to have sufficient skills to provide interesting learning material and sources as well as to deliver the materials. Teachers need to be able to utilize the features in the learning platform to provide effective learning experience for students as the main factor of online learning success is teachers' well-equipped preparation with ICT tools and facilities, along with professional development training programs for teachers [37].

3.2.2. Online learning is hard for boomers

Teacher 1, 4, 6, and 7 proclaimed that online learning application was a difficult thing to master since they are not familiar and cannot utilize the online learning platform sufficiently. Teacher 4 experienced that he was not literate enough in using a learning application like Google Classroom. Teacher 4 was one and only participant who tried to use Google Classroom by himself. According to him, he was able to use Google Classroom during the online learning, but still he suffered teaching the students with a lot of struggle. He could not use some of the features in Google Classroom. He just could post materials and assignments in Google Classroom's stream, then asked students to collect their works through the other application.

Nonetheless, the teachers found their own solution. The solution was selecting a more simple application like WhatsApp. Just like what have done by Teacher 4, he posted the materials and tasks in Google Classroom stream and asked his students to collect their works through WhatsApp chat. It was also done by the other teachers in which they shared the materials and assignments in WhatsApp group, and instructed their students to collect their tasks through WhatsApp personal chat. However, it leads teachers to another problem that teachers often miss student's task since there are a lot of messages that they received in one day. As a result, they need to check all received messages to make sure that their students have submitted their tasks.

Boomers thought online learning was hard because they were not familiar with it and did not have enough skill of utilizing ICT tools that actually could assist them in teaching online. This finding is supported by [38] that teachers faced difficulties in conducting online classes due to a lack of proper training and development for doing online classes. In addition, [40] revealed that teachers perceived online learning is more stressful and brings more workload for them.

3.2.3. Boomers prefer face to face interaction

Even though online learning was the best way to be used in this crisis situation, the participants thought that direct meeting was much better as they could see their students' faces, expressions, and much easier in assisting their learning. This finding is supported by [41] that states baby boomers are called as the "show me" generation and put body language as an important matter for them; moreover, they appreciate open, direct, and honest interactions. Although in some cases online learning seems to give many benefits, on the other side it seems to reduce the value of face to face interaction. They have to judge someone through their impression in order to make a bond. Unfortunately, they cannot get this since the pandemic requires teachers and students learning from home. Yet, at the end, they deliberately prefer talking in class rather than implementing online learning.

3.2.4. Boomers expect training on utilizing ICT tools

All participants realized their lack of ICT skills. Therefore, they need training on maximizing the online tools to be used in online learning in order to make their lesson effective. As mentioned by Teacher 1, 5, 7, and 8 that they need training to utilize the learning platforms as well as in browsing on the internet. Teacher 2, on the other hand, thought about using face to face interaction learning, but she was not able to. Meanwhile Teacher 6, 3, and 4 said even though they were very poor in using online applications, they want to learn more about online learning applications.

[42] revealed teachers in Indonesia did not utilize ICT optimally in their teaching activities because of lack technical support and ICT knowledge and training; whereas their willingness to learn more about ICT is affected by their experience in ICT training. Training on the use of ICT tools in online learning is essential for teachers as it provides up-to-date information that is important for teachers' professional development. Moreover, [43] stated training is important in order to make teacher becomes a confident user of ICT on their teaching. [44] added that teacher training can help teachers to move faster and adopt technology while they show more enthusiastic ways in implementing ICT into their profession.

Insofar, boomer teachers have tried to adapt with the present situation. They have positive belief about online learning even with the obstacles they face. They might lose the value of face to face interaction during the online learning in this pandemic, and they have no other choices. Besides to learn some skills and ask for support from the younger generation, boomer teachers need to be actively involved in the new way of education. It will help them to improve their skills so they will not be left behind in this fast-changing world.

4. CONCLUSION

The study identified four main challenges of the online learning conducted by boomers during Covid-19 Outbreak. The challenges range from the participants' ICT skill, internet connection, time management, and students' accessibility to the online learning. The study also found that although boomers have positive beliefs about online learning during this crisis situation, they still prefer direct interaction in classroom to teach. Moreover, considering the lack of ICT skills that they possess, boomers expected training on ICT tools for their future teaching. These findings imply that improvement in personal quality in conducting online learning is needed through several training. Future research might be directed to evaluate the effectiveness of ICT Tools used by boomers in their online learning activity.

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