The University Students' Perspectives on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning Due to COVID-19

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Abstract—**The purpose of this study was to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic from the university students' perspectives. This phenomenon is a stage for humans to adapt to the current situation and conditions so that they will find a new pattern of life or what is known as New Normal Life. During this pandemic, tertiary institutions have transformed the system through full online learning. At this moment, an analysis of online learning advantages and disadvantages based on the university students' perspectives as actors who directly feel the impact of these changes is needed. The method in this research employs a narrative approach. Data collection was done through interviews set online. This research was conducted on students at Universitas Negeri Malang. The informants were selected based on the representation of each department in the university. The research data were analyzed based on the results of studies and focus group discussions (FGD) related to the implementation of online learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The results showed that the flexibility of time and material filing, as well as documentation became more organized. Based on the perspective of the students, on the other hand, online learning has some shortcomings, including less interactive lecturers, excessive assignments given, frequently changing schedules, inadequate facilities, limited internet access or unstable internet networks, and constraints on practicum course. This article could contribute to the evaluation of online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic**

Keywords—*COVID-19, online learning, university students' perspectives*

I. INTRODUCTION

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has shifted various dimensions of human life. It is recorded that 200 countries in the world are fighting this deadly virus, as is the impact shown by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV) [1,2]. The virus can be transmitted in just a few minutes by droplets or simply by touching a metal surface or other objects infected by a person who has respiratory problems [3]. As a result, many dimensions of human life have undergone significant and rapid changes, especially in their life patterns and activities. In this case, humans enter a new phase to adapt to the current situation and conditions. In the end, they will find a new pattern of life, known as New Normal Life.

The term New Normal has been used in the economic field, which reminds economists of the belief that the industrial economy will return to normal after going through a recession [4]. Since then, the term New Normal has been widely used in different contexts. It describes a condition that undergoes intense changes that will then replace a state and must be accepted by humans to become a new habit. Changes in the current situation are also faced by the world of education. The great impact is that education providers are required to change the basic concept of learning which needs to be entirely carried out online.

Classes that have been switched to an online model enables educators and students to continue learning. In this situation, it is the teaching staff who have a significant role in administering the education [5] and a significant workload may be added for them. It is because they not only have to send content and materials to the online learning room, but they are also required to be able to operate the software needed in the distance learning process.

Each institution may face different impacts. For instance, a university previously implementing online learning before the COVID-19 outbreak may only need to develop at a greater capacity and improve their system. Meanwhile, other universities may experience considerable difficulties/obstacles with the implementation of online learning, when educators are adapting to what might become a "New Normal" in an uncertain timeframe [6].

The unpreparedness of educational institutions and their elements will give an impact on the concerned parties, namely educators and especially students. In India and other developing countries, educators are struggling to overcome this pandemic situation. Then what about practical-based subjects?

Many fields of study require practical experience, but the same teaching method cannot be implemented [7]. With such conditions, they finally realized that the challenges they faced had created new opportunities to improve the quality of education services [8,9]. Concerning the problems faced by Indonesian education, at this moment we should be able to maintain and improve the quality of education in the future [10].

The change of learning pattern that is normally carried out face-to-face in the classroom into an online mode requires a different learning set and teaching method. The learning set may include teaching guidelines for lecturers, the software/platforms used, and what kinds of learning media the lecturers can provide to their students [11]. Based on several requirements in the learning process, this shows that a lecturer will need time to adapt to the conditions, especially if it is not supported by strong soft skills in the use of technology.

There will be a new problem if the products (learning set) produced by the lecturers are less qualified. As a result, students will feel uncomfortable with the concept of learning applied because they usually can enjoy the facilities provided by the campus or lecturers, but now they have to be complicated by the situation. For instance, the references they need are only available in campus libraries, while there are strict rules of physical distancing and even large-scale social restrictions (PSBB). Consequently, they cannot come to campus to find the best references. Abundant reference sources are indeed available on the internet, yet have they been credible? It has not been confirmed. In a previous study, it was said that the facilities provided by educational institutions have a variable influence on the level of understanding of students. It is depending on the group, background, and other factors related to the facilities provided [12].

The uncertain situation and challenges we face today will cause problems in various conditions [13]. Thus, several difficulties and obstacles faced by the world of education cannot be avoided by anyone. On the other hand, many opportunities must be utilized for future life. Therefore, an analysis of online learning is needed in this situation to be used as materials of evaluation for educational institutions and universities in Indonesia.

This paper attempts to describe the student learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was conducted at one of the universities in Indonesia. Thus, the purpose of this study is to find out the advantages and disadvantages of online learning based on the perspective of university students as actors who directly feel the impact of these changes. Therefore, it is necessary to immediately review and find the right solutions, especially within the implementation of education in Indonesian universities after the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. METHODS

This study attempts to illustrate the student experience related to the advantages and disadvantages of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic through a narrative approach. Narrative research is a study that describes the part of a person's life, which is told through the meaning of the experience of each individual [14]. In this study, the results were obtained in the form of a description of the advantages and disadvantages of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is written systematically and logically based on the students' experience at one of the universities in Indonesia, Universitas Negeri Malang.

74 participants representing each department were selected as the initial informants of the study, then an FGD was conducted with 20 selected informants. Research data were analyzed from the results of studies and focus group discussion (FGD) of students related to the implementation of online learning during the pandemic. The data collection process began with the distribution of questionnaires. Data collection techniques through online instruments needed to be done because this research was implemented during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The selection of informants was based on the representation of each department at one of the universities in Indonesia. Data were analyzed through the results of the focus group discussion (FGD) study using the Google Meet platform. Also, secondary research data were obtained from the results of the literature review through search engines as well as some rules and policies of the institution. The literature review was used as a comparison between the student learning experience and the actual learning conditions. This comparison would be used to study the concept of online learning since the outbreak of COVID-19.

Through the interactive model, we could present what the advantages and disadvantages of online learning based on university student perspectives. Components of the interactive model are; (1) data collection; (2) data reduction; (3) data presentation; and (4) drawing conclusions.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analyzed, it shows that time flexibility in implementing online learning provides opportunities for students to manage their study time independently, without having to attend lectures on campus to receive material presented by lecturers. The use of Technology to facilitate better learning and training is gaining momentum worldwide, reducing the temporal and spatial problems associated with traditional learning [15]. Besides, the materials provided in online learning are well documented, so that they can access them outside the class hours. This is in line with the statement of Febry, one of the university students who said that online learning provides opportunities for students to take more initiatives to find and use other references independently to support their understanding of learning materials. Moreover, the videos accessed can also be played multiple times. Therefore, based on the students' perspectives, online learning is considered more flexible. Students can adjust their learning styles, and it is easier to discuss assignment methods with their lecturers. Unexpectedly, the implementation of online learning has a positive impact on student learning independence [16].

Apart from the advantages of online learning, there are still disadvantages during the implementation that must be evaluated by educational institutions and educators. In the beginning of face-to-face learning to online learning transition, students must be able to adapt to their new place of learning.

This is because on-campus learning and assignments must now be completely done at home. The mindset that had previously been grown in their minds is that the house was not a place for doing assignments, which then had to be transformed into a comfortable place for them to study. This situation will make them experience learning shock, and this atmosphere shift can have an impact on students' psychology and cause various problems that will be experienced while participating in online learning. This learning shock refers to the experiences of frustration, confusion, and anxiety experienced by students because they have to face unusual learning and teaching methods, bombarded by unexpected and confusing instructions [17].

The important point of learning is that it takes place in a two-way process so that there is reciprocity between lecturers and students [18]. However, there are still obstacles in online learning, one of which is that the lack of feedback received by students that will have an impact on their understanding of the material provided. Meanwhile, lecturers who are less interactive and only give assignments without clarity of instructions and reference sources will make it increasingly difficult for students to undergo a series of lessons. Additionally, lecturers who suddenly change class schedules unilaterally can affect student concentration and learning motivation. This reduced concentration can cause them to experience a decrease in memory and thinking power so that the learning process does not run effectively [19].

Other obstacles faced by students during online learning include the lack of available facilities, limited internet or network access that interfere with the implementation of online learning especially during video conferences, assignments given with tight deadlines, as well as problems with practicum courses that cannot be conducted directly in the laboratory [20]. Owing to the limited resources of educational institutions, only several institutions were able to introduce effective online classes [21].

Identifying obstacles and challenges in online learning should be the task of the university to evaluate the entire series of learning that has been implemented. The sudden and unexpected outbreak of COVID-19 required university lecturers and administrators to quickly adapt to a new situation. [22]. This obstacle is also often faced by Haidar, a student of Mathematics and Science faculty who pointed out that he had difficulty in learning to understand theories and concepts when there was no demo video related to practicum. Especially, subjects that should have a practicum in the laboratory must be taught using distance learning. Meanwhile, giving assignments to substitute a practicum is thought to be unable to replace the essence of the practicum itself.

With the implementation of online learning, lecturers are required to be more innovative so that learning can still run effectively even though it is done a long distance. Some of the platforms commonly used by these universities in online learning include the learning platform of the campus itself, Zoom, Google Meet, Cisco Webex, Google Classroom, and Whatsapp. Adam pointed out that WhatsApp is an effective platform for asynchronous online learning because it eases the students to get more responsive feedback from the lecturers. On the other hand, Nanda said:

> "We're usually better off with Google Classroom. But for face-to-face online learning, we would prefer to use Google Meet".

Apart from the easy-access and no-time limit, these two platforms are considered to be more efficient in terms of internet costs. On the other hand, there are internal factors that may affect the distance learning process. Self-motivation to achieve targets and fulfill learning objectives is one of them. A person's learning motivation can affect what they will learn, how the learning styles are, and when they choose to learn [23]. This is because students who are less motivated by the distance learning system will always feel hampered during the learning process. It is different from the students who have successfully adjusted their learning styles even though they have switched from face-to-face learning to online learning. Students with high motivation will always strive to maximize learning even with an online system. They will try to find various relevant sources to support the learning process, discuss with peers, or directly discuss it with the lecturer. Therefore, the students who have strong learning motivation will find adjusting to any learning conditions easy.

To achieve the effectiveness of learning, it is necessary for the lecturers to carefully consider the learning methods and media that will be used. Besides the material deliverance that must be understandable, giving assignments must be done with some introductory material or prior explanatory instructions. Faricha explained that the readiness of the lecturers with the media used greatly influences the learning process, and the evaluation or assignment given by the lecturer needs to be well-considered. Furthermore, Faricha suggested:

> "It is better for the lecturers to provide the materials in the form of cases to be analyzed first before finally being discussed synchronously through video conferencing, instead of having to do synchronous learning for two full hours but the learning objectives are not optimally achieved".

When students are asked to choose online learning or face-to-face learning, there are several different learning options that they want to take. Panji said that he prefers face-to-face learning because it makes him easier to access various sources, and will be more effective for subjects that require a practicum. Meanwhile, Fauzi prefers to consider blended learning – some courses that can be studied theoretically through online learning do not need any face-to-face lessons. Face-to-face learning is only conducted to carry out practicum, which has limitations if it is done online. Fauzi's statement was further supported by Amalia, that learning can be carried out by blended learning as long as online learning media can support the student learning process well, for example, the use of instructional videos, pre-tests, and clarity of teaching schedules from lecturers. Blended learning as a combination of online learning methods and face-to-face learning can help students learn well and improve their self-direct learning skills [18].

The reason for the students who choose face-to-face learning is because they have high motivation and full

concentration to follow the lesson, and also the ease of accessing reference sources that can support their learning. The conditions of online learning during the pandemic have certain limitations, this is what makes some lecturers often give course assignments, even students think that the number of assignments given during the online learning period is much more than the one given during face-to-face classes.

A face-to-face lecture in the classroom usually requires a continuous focus of attention. Meanwhile, online learning activities that must be simultaneously done with daily activities can affect an individual's attention [24]. If the student's attention is lacking in following learning instructions, meaning that their thoughts are wandering. Then, the learning objectives cannot be maximally achieved both in terms of material and learning sequences. Thus, it has become a special challenge for educators because learning activities involve teaching goals and analysis, while it is also depending on the students' attention.

To optimize online learning, the lecturers must be able to find innovations to apply appropriate learning methods and media because after all, technology is the only bridge in transferring knowledge from lecturers to students in such situations or different conditions in the future. Understanding the factors of online learning adoption, continuation use intention, and learning outcomes are vital for an e-learning platform providing organization because the success of the platform depends on the successful adoption, continuation use, and finally achieving the desired outcomes [15]. According to several informants, learning media are the main factor that can determine how learning materials can be successfully conveyed. Delivering materials through demo videos or discussions stimulated by giving cases at the beginning of the lesson is considered to be able to support students' thinking processes. It is better if the assignment is given after the essentials of the material have been well conveyed because some students feel that the assignments cannot make them understand the material well, especially with a tight deadline. It can even make them commit cheating during completion. The success of online learning is also determined by the interaction between lecturers and students, how discussions can be developed and learning continues meaningfully [25].

To mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world issued severe restrictions like social distancing and lockdown measures. This forced people to change their habits and pushed them to online services for learning process [26]. On the other hand, the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic has advantages in the aspect of flexibility. Students are not bound by time and space to carry out learning, so they can adjust themselves according to their learning styles. Through this online learning, lecturers can provide learning methods and materials that can be accessed freely and improve students' independent learning abilities.

However, the implementation of online learning must be supported by adequate facilities. But in fact, there are still obstacles related to the availability of infrastructure, the ability to access the internet, limited interactions with teaching lecturers, and also the workload given by the lecturers as a

substitute for practicum which cannot replace the essence of the actual one.

Responding to these various obstacles, the campus needs to review it immediately to overcome various problems in the implementation of online learning. Lecturers who have an important role also need to consider appropriate learning methods so that they can deliver material in accordance with the learning objectives. Using the various technologies \for online learning, make lecturers provide a more interactive distance learning experience by delivering real-time, synchronous video conferencing [27]. Lecturers can give evaluations or assignments that adjusted to the essence of learning, especially for subjects that require a practicum.

IV. CONCLUSION, SUGGESTION AND LIMITATION

Online learning that has been carried out at one of the universities in Indonesia shows that there are advantages and disadvantages in its implementation. Time flexibility and well-organized material documentation are the positive sides that students obtain while studying during the Covid-19 pandemic. This allows them to set their study time, so they can determine their learning style. On the other hand, they will not miss the materials because they can be accessed outside of the lecture hours. Meanwhile, the downsides of online learning from the students' perspectives include less interactive lecturers, excessive assignments given, frequent changing schedules, lack of learning facilities, limited internet access or unstable internet networks, and constraints on practicum courses.

The suggestion for the university is that it is necessary to have adequate facilities that can support the student learning process, not only internet data but also the availability of accommodated learning resources although they are accessed online. For educators, it is necessary to consider the methods and learning media used to deliver material in accordance with the objectives, mainly related to the essence of learning material.

This research has limitations because it is only carried out at one university in Indonesia and only focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of learning. Therefore, it is hoped that the next researchers can conduct a further study of online learning and add certain aspects that can be used as study materials.

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