



University Students' Perception of Academic and Non-academic Service During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected education at all levels. Higher education institutions and educators must change their educational activities in response to COVID-19. Consequently, teaching delivery models have had to shift from a traditional classroom to an entirely virtual one. During the virtual period, institutions and educators experienced challenges and difficulties. However, they also had an opportunity to rethink their roles, which triggered innovation and a new learning environment for future education. One hundred and sixteen students in an Indonesian state university participated in this present study aiming to investigating the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic and non-academic services. The data were gained from questionnaires using Google forms. The results indicated that the most effected of academic services variable was lecture process. Meanwhile, the non-academic services variable that most effected were facilities and infrastructure, and second was student activities. The challenges and expectations during the pandemic become the investment in rethinking the institution's roles in preparing the future education. In other words, many lessons learnt during distance education are useful for higher education institutions to increase familiarity of lecturers, students, and staff with distance education.

Keywords: Institutional responses · pedagogy · post-pandemic · higher education

1 Introduction

Higher education institutions, which have high value in society for developing students' knowledge, attitude, and skill, have been affected by the COVID-19 disruption. Its functions in all systems have been changed to adapt to the pandemic situation, including pedagogical, administration, technological, academic and non-academic systems. The situation has brought higher education institutions to encounter crises or emergencies. Consequently, students, educators, and the institution's staff need to change their activities into new forms of education [1]. In other words, higher education is required transition into new modes in distance education for an uncertain time.

The emergency or crisis period of the covid-19 pandemic has encouraged higher education institutions to rethink their education roles [1]–[3]. However, every emergency

also gives a chance for institution ‘to make long-term changes in the right direction [4] (Zhao, 2020). As Varma and Jafri [5] demonstrated, there is an opportunity in every crisis, so the covid-19 pandemic has presented an opportunity to create a new learning system that becomes more efficient and effective with new creativity and skills, insight and imagination. Therefore, institution and educators have switched their conventional education system to a virtual one as the solution for the initial responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Indonesia, higher education institutions have to obey the emergency policy of Indonesia’s government during the pandemic period. Accordingly, a wide range of institution activities, such as teaching and learning process, and academic or non-academic services, must adopt distance education [6]. The purpose is to decrease the COVID-19 outbreak and as a form effort to keep all campus activities running well. Therefore, teacher educators or lecturers carry out remote teaching in an emergency condition which is called emergency remote teaching or emergency e-learning [7]. This is a temporary solution to face of the COVID-19 pandemic [8, 9]. The emergency remote teaching just focused on how teaching was delivered move to online, they still use same curricula and course content as traditional [1].

The lack of preparation faced by students and academic staffs of institutions cannot be denied because they have not been as prepared for this situation before. Since the rapid move to remote teaching model, the necessity to establish the effective policy, acceptable pedagogical and administrative frameworks, methods, tools and processes for the independent educational programs cannot be overemphasized [5]. Previous literature has discussed the challenges and difficulties during distance education, such as poor online teaching infrastructure, teachers’ inexperience [10], and lack of mentoring and support [11] (Judd et al., 2020). Moreover, each higher education institution has different constraints of infrastructural capacities that potentially create asymmetries condition [12]. Low digital literacy of technology and communication also becomes a problem for teachers and students in Indonesia [13]. Meanwhile, there is no option for students at all disciplines and levels to avoid the migration into remote teaching.

The challenges and difficulties during the COVID-19 have been encountered almost all country around the world. Literature studies have shown that it is also faced by governments, institutions, and education stakeholders around the world [8, 11, 14–16]. However, a closer investigation of the impacts of academic and non- academic services at higher education institutions especially in Indonesia context should also be taken into account since the Indonesian researchers rarely concern on that investigation. For this reason, the purpose of this present study was to explore the students’ experiences in one of the higher education institutions in Indonesia during the pandemic which focused on investigating the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic and non-academic services.

2 Methods

This research used a quantitative approach which focuses on exploring certain phenomena during pandemic situation. This present study examined the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic and non-academic services in university sector. Using

quantitative approach, it would be studied and understood thoroughly and broadly [17]. This study was undertaken in a faculty of state university located in East Java. The participants of this present study were 116 undergraduate students. Furthermore, the researchers administered questionnaires using Google Forms to make available online and its link could be distributed to the participants through various social media. The questionnaires contain questions about academic and non-academic services for students at FBS who have been affected by COVID-19.

The questionnaire of academic services consists of eight variables: 1) course programming), 2) lectures, 3) academic supervision, 4) thesis supervision, 5) thesis examination process until the scores are completed), 6) issuance of graduation determination certificate, 7) process of administering the judiciary, and 8) guiding student community service, internships. Meanwhile, the questionnaire of non-academic services consists of ten variables: 1) certificate legalization service, transcripts and accreditation certificates, 2) service for processing letters notifying status of a student, 3) internship cover letter preparation services, and Freedom of Learning and Campus Freedom (MBKM) activities, 4) certificate of graduation, 5) management of graduation documents, 6) management of student activity assignments, 7) condition of facilities and infrastructure (learning facilities, canteens, mosques, toilets, libraries), 8) implementation of student activities (competition/, organization student affairs, and reasoning activities), 9) implementation of counseling services for students, and 10) implementation of tracer studies. The data gained from the questionnaires were calculated and it was shown in the form of percentage.

3 Results and Discussion

The results of the first questionnaire investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic services. The results demonstrated that the participants only experienced problems in five variables during the pandemic which are shown in Fig. 1. Based on the variables that mentioned on the first questionnaire, those variables refer to numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8, namely 1) Course Programming, 2) Lectures, 3) Academic supervision, 4) Thesis Supervisor, and 8) Student Community Service, Internships. Furthermore, the results of the first questionnaire showed that the academic service most affected by Covid 19 was the lecture process. A total of 98 respondents stated that lectures conducted online turned out to be an obstacle for some departments at the university considering that certain majors have practical courses which according to respondents were not optimal when taught online. Then, the lack of direct monitoring from lecturers during online lectures was also considered to lower student discipline.

In addition, other variables that affected by Covid 19 pandemic on academic services were related to the thesis mentoring process and academic guidance. The reason why students had problem with those variables because of online communication. The students considered that mentoring by online communication less optimal so that academic information cannot be understood properly by them. Then, the students also had constraints when they were conducting course programming, it experienced by seventy students. This obstacle was especially experienced by the students of the 2019 cohort who ran the MBKM curriculum. Information about MBKM courses and conversion of

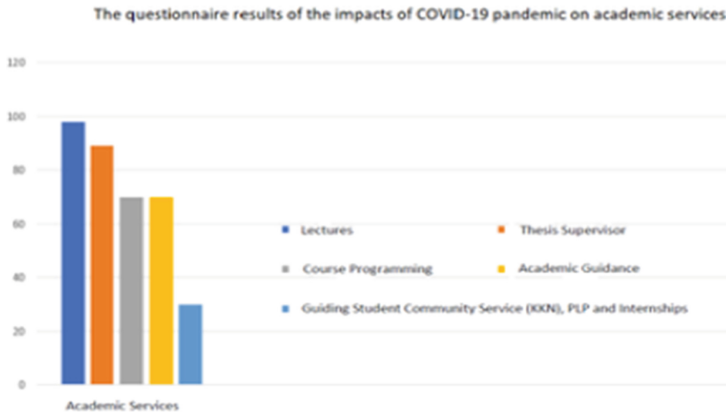


Fig. 1. The questionnaire results of the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on academic services

course grades has been provided by each academic supervisor through online meetings, but students were still confused about choosing courses outside the study program. Meanwhile, eighty- nine students also complained about the problems with thesis supervision with their thesis supervisor during the pandemic which was deemed less than optimal and made students take longer to complete their thesis. Online thesis guidance is different from offline where students can interact well with thesis supervisor. The obstacles faced by students with online supervising experienced were difficulty in making appointments with lecturers, internet connection problems that make zoom meetings often disconnected, and explanations from the supervisor that were difficult to understand during online supervising. Besides, non-academic services at the faculty have also been affected by Covid-19. The results of the non-academic service questionnaire affected by COVID-19 can be seen in the Fig. 2. Based on Fig. 2, it can be seen that the conditions of facilities and infrastructure were considered as non-academic services that were most affected by Covid-19. Eighty-nine students stated that the facilities and infrastructure had not been used for too long so that they seemed to have been neglected during the pandemic. The conditions of online learning and also WFH (Work From Home) made the facilities and infrastructure not used. The students revealed that the lecture facilities were not well maintained.

Then, seventy-four students demonstrated that the implementation of student activities (competitions, student organizations, and reasoning activities) were also affected by Covid-19, so that the implementation was not optimal. For instance, the students, who involved in the management of student organizations, felt that challenges and difficulties appeared when they were doing online activities in making coordination and management of student organizations. They had experienced that miscommunication regarding the implementation of activities was more common when compared to offline activities. Although many students' competitions could easily be followed by students because it was held through online mode, the students face challenges. They complained that their internet is not always good and smooth at their domicile location. Meanwhile, thirty students experienced problems in making cover letters for internships, and MBKM activities. The students judged that the time to wait for a cover letter was too long, while

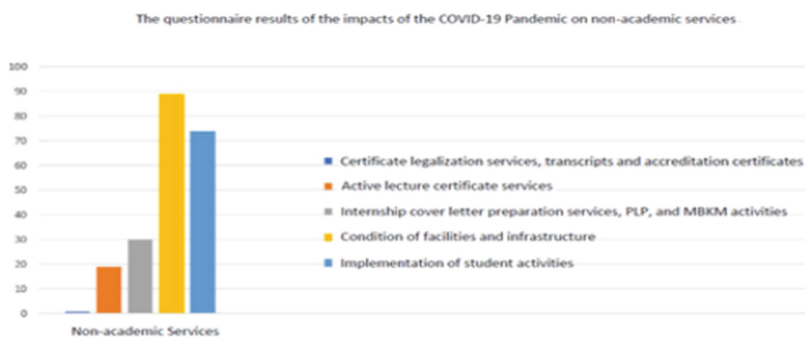


Fig. 2. The questionnaire results of the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on non-academic services

they needed the letter quickly for the purposes of internships, and ongoing MBKM activities. The service for managing an active lecture certificate was also considered too long for 19 students.

This current study was to investigate the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic and non-academic services at the Faculty. In the results on academic services, the Course Programming, Lectures, Academic Supervision, Thesis Supervisor, Guiding Student Community Service and Internships were the problems that the students experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the findings, it cannot be denied that every higher education institution encounters their own challenges during the pandemic situation. Especially for the students who become part of academic activities, they will have negative effects on their academic performance that caused their teachers were not effectively ready to conduct online teaching and learning modes [18].

The findings also showed that the most affected variable on academic service by the pandemic COVID-19 was lectures process, which is in line with the research findings of Judd et al. [11] that lack of mentoring and support by the teachers became the challenges faced by students during the pandemic. Especially for teacher who had not never engaged with online learning they will find difficulty to deliver any online learning to their student [19]. The students of this present study revealed that online mentoring communication become less optimal so that academic information cannot be understood properly by them. It proves that studying alone at home to be highly ineffective since learners may have difficulties that can hinder their understanding [6] It implies that the online lecturer during pandemic become the major issue in the pandemic situation [6, 20].

The findings of this present study also indicate that the facilities and infrastructure were considered as the most affected variables on non-academic services during the pandemic. The students demonstrated that those variables were neglected by higher education institution staffs because it is not used for long duration. Therefore, they believed that all facilities and infrastructures were not well maintained. It happened because they have not prepared to face the sudden shift to virtual education. They have to manage non-academic service and make long-term changes in the right direction in limited time. Thus, the results of this study suggest that there is a need for stakeholders to make temporary decision and consider how to maintain the facilities and infrastructure

in the pandemic situation. The decision made by the institution might not be the effective way but rather be seen as emergency decision [18].

Also, the students stated that their non-academic activities, such as competitions, student organizations, and reasoning activities were also affected by the pandemic. They conveyed that the internet connections become their problem since they were not optimal to make coordination in their organization activities. They prefer to use offline rather than online mode. This finding supports what Lie et al., [19] have stated that most students in Indonesia did not have access to internet or they did not have adequate device for communication. The students stated that their internet connection sometimes was unstable so that they had experienced in miscommunication. The findings addressed the suggestion by Adedoyin et al., [18] that to support students' internet connection during pandemic, 'education institution can collaborate with telecommunication industries to either subsidize the cost of internet subscriptions or provide free browsing data to the students and instructors as part of their corporate social responsibilities'. Thus, based on the findings above, it can be implied that the COVID-19 pandemic become a serious issue faced by either academic services or non-academic services that need particular strategy to gain successful implementation of online education during the pandemic.

4 Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion above, it revealed that the lecture process was the most affected variable on academic service by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also showed that online learning was considered as the problem encountered by the students, it was to be less than optimal so that the learning material could not be understood well by the students. Furthermore, non-academic services that were considered as the most affected by COVID-19 were facilities and infrastructure, including learning facilities and infrastructure. During practical online learning, learning facilities and infrastructure were not used optimally so that they are poorly maintained. This present study emphasized that higher education institution have experienced many lessons learnt during distance education which are useful to develop their online learning for successful implementation to be more effective in facing post-method era.

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