



Online Teaching and Learning at Primary School During COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring Parents and Teachers' Voices

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ABSTRACT

This study intends to explore Indonesian primary school teachers' and parents' perceptions of online learning and teaching in the COVID-19 pandemic situations. Particularly, this study intends to identify the significant challenges encountered by the Indonesian teachers and students' parents during the sudden shift of teaching and learning. Semi-structured interviews with a series of open-ended questions were used to collect information. Eleven teachers and students' parents from public high schools in Gorontalo province participated in this study. The results indicate that lack of technological devices and the cost of internet data connections are among the problems faced by teachers and parents. Ultimately, several recommendations were suggested for better action and successful implementation of online learning, particularly in underdeveloped areas in the eastern part of Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19, also known as the Novel Coronavirus disease or SARS-CoV-2, has become a global public health issue. The disease that spread in early 2020 has adversely affected the health system, economy, education, and way of living of the world population. It has shifted normality to how people work, learn, and interact with one another. Countries worldwide have enforced orders and restrictions advocated by the World Health Organization, including physical distancing, working and learning from home, mandatory masking, and more, to control the spread of this deadly virus. These policies have been implemented in many countries, including Indonesia. In Indonesia, a large-scale social restriction (Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar) was launched in early March 2020 to control the spread of the pandemic in the country. This restriction means that all activities, including working, learning, and praying, will be conducted from home as much as possible. To this time, the restriction has been slowly lifted following the reduction of the spread of COVID-19. This pandemic situation clearly demanded global unity, humanity, and partnerships in all aspects. All actions and procedures taken by the authority, particularly in the educational field, are to protect students, faculty, academic staff, communities, societies, and the nation.

It has been approximately two years since educational institutions were instructed to close temporarily and conduct distance learning. UNESCO estimates that more than 1.4 billion students are affected by school closure in about 190 countries (UNESCO, 2020). Likewise, the Ministry of Education had to close all schools and universities across the provinces in Indonesia due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With technology development, students still can continue receiving education through

distance education ([Mc. Brian et al., 2009](#)). Advanced technology in communication and the internet permits educators and their students to connect virtually. In this scenario, teachers have to shift their teaching from face-to-face to online, and parents have a supplementary role in supervising and helping their children at home. Online learning has rendered a change from a conventional approach to the adoption of a techno-based approach, in-class to zoom, from personal to interactive, from seminars to webinars ([Mishra et al., 2020](#)).

The term online learning, e-learning, or remote learning is often used interchangeably and has been seen as a part of distance education ([Scagnoli, 2009](#)). In distance education, technological devices such as computers, laptops, smartphones, and wireless connections are required to deliver instruction, manage the classroom, and create educational material for e-learning ([Fry, 2001](#)). Distance education offers a solution to students and educators concerns physical distance and other factors that discourage students' attendance at school for in-person learning at all levels of education ([Kim, 2020](#); [Moore et al., 2011](#); [Singh & Thurman 2019](#); [Yilmaz 2019](#)). Online learning provides a learning experience for either synchronous or asynchronous attendance ([Hrastinski, 2008](#)). Asynchronous learning implies that the students and teachers are involved in learning and teaching at different times and from different places. Teachers must provide students with learning materials or topics that students can follow and complete in their own time. The student's participation in learning can be done by uploading their work through different media such as email, online tests, and more. The teacher then guides and checks the students' results and provides them with feedback, suggestions, and assessment.

In contrast, synchronous learning activities occur when teachers and students simultaneously engage in the lesson through video conference, live presentation, and communicating with others from different places ([Hrastinski, 2008](#)). Students can interact directly with the teachers in synchronous learning and receive direct feedback. Although, many people have also experienced different troubles students, parents, and teachers such as adaptability, technical issues, computer knowledge, and more.

Many scholars have argued that online learning has brought positive and different learning experiences ([Cigdem & Topcu, 2013](#); [Dhawan, 2020](#); [Oteng-Ababio, 2011](#); [Ward et al., 2010](#)). Effectiveness, convenience, flexibility, usefulness are some reasons for online pedagogy. It is found that e-learning can provide education for all people beyond geographical conditions ([Dhawan, 2020](#)). Online learning is relatively cheaper than traditional learning, which requires students to pay the full amount of tuition and spend on accommodation and transportation to attend school, particularly in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, the flexibility of the learning schedule also benefits students who have other responsibilities to schedule or plan their time to complete online courses. It is also argued that online learning can offer sufficient learning conditions as much as in-person learning ([Ward et al., 2010](#)). In their study, [Ward, Peters, and Shelley \(2010\)](#) observed educators' and students' perspectives on online learning. They concluded that both teachers and learners have a favorable opinion toward online learning. [Cigdem and Topcu \(2013\)](#) discovered that students perceived online education as effective and efficient, although the satisfaction is varied according to the program in which they were registered. Similarly, [Oteng-Ababio \(2011\)](#) stated that the students' positive perceptions were related to the usefulness, flexibility, and satisfaction, yet they showed a negative position regarding the exam.

Despite the advantages, online learning also has several shortages. The availability of technology and internet quality has become the major issue ([Dhawan, 2020](#)). The complexity of using technology such as smartphones and laptops includes errors in downloading programs or apps, installation, login, audio and video, bad connection signal, and more. The lack of affordable internet and technological devices makes students fail to engage in online education. In developed nations such as Switzerland, Norway, and Austria, where 95% of students have a laptop to support their learning, in third world countries such as Indonesia, only 34% of students have this privilege ([Li & Lalani, 2020](#)), although the majority of these students are in the urban areas. Likewise, the gap between students from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds is substantial in the US. While all 15-year-old students with privileged backgrounds confirmed that they owned a laptop or computer for studying, 25% of students from underprivileged groups did not have this facility ([Li & Lalani, 2020](#)). [Beaunoyer et al. \(2020\)](#) acknowledged that low-income families and those who live in rural areas often have inadequate access to digital technologies. Students with limited access to digital technologies and less knowledge about those technologies face problems in adapting to online education. Although digital partition has already occurred before the pandemic, the COVID-19 outbreak has worsened it ([Beaunoyer, Dupéré, and](#)

[Guitton, 2020](#)). [Aguilera-Hermida \(2020\)](#) added that students with limited spaces at home also encounter online learning problems. Some schools and governments, particularly in urban and developed nations, have been supplying digital devices for underprivileged students, such as in Canada and Australia, but this support might be challenging to render in developing countries. [Li and Lalani \(2020\)](#) stated that the Coronavirus pandemic had broadened digital gaps. The students who struggle to access the equipment and internet will ultimately lose substantial learning and be left behind by their privileged peers.

Younger students might feel tedious, uninterested, and easily distracted in terms of the learner. Therefore, the effectiveness of e-learning differs across age groups ([Li & Lalani, 2020](#)). Researchers have suggested that older and high-motivated students perceive e-learning easier than young students. It is said that young children need a more structured learning environment with teachers' scaffolding and assistance ([Cowden et al., 2020](#); [Li & Lalani, 2020](#); [Masters et al., 2020](#)). With younger learners, the physical presence of a teacher cannot be replaced with any form of technology. Another significant barrier is students' lack of socialization, communication, technical difficulties, and understanding instructions ([Song et al., 2004](#)). Students who require special attention from teachers might not obtain their needs and be noticed by the instructor ([Dhawan, 2020](#)). As a result, it may impact their learning achievement.

Because of the pandemic, the shift to online instruction has become the only primary teaching and learning option. Teachers who are the front liners in education have to deliver online instructions and learn how to cope with the development of technology. Meanwhile, in addition to their job and family obligation, parents must also turn themselves to be a technician and educators who guide and help their children at home. [Williams and Ritter \(2020\)](#) reveal that parents' role in ensuring that their children continue their education at home is significant. Parents are concerned about how children will manage and work together with them. The majority of them have found that the responsibility as an educator and a parent is formidable.

The implementation of learning from home has continuously faced many challenges, particularly for schools located in underdeveloped regions. Given the country's geographical and economic conditions, the disparity between regions exists. In Indonesia, Western regions have more developed compared to Eastern Indonesia. As a result, poverty measurement in the western provinces is statistically less than in the Eastern part. This inequality makes provinces in the eastern parts poorer than the west region ([Miranti & Resosudarmo, 2004](#)). This condition becomes one of the biggest challenges to implementing online learning, where the need for internet connections and decent technological devices is not affordable. In Indonesia, studies related to online learning during the pandemic were mostly conducted in the eastern parts, such as Java and Borneo ([Rasmitadila et al., 2020](#)), where the infrastructures and standard economy have developed. Moreover, these studies mostly focus on high school and higher education groups ([Amir et al., 2020](#); [Lie et al., 2020](#); [Fitria, 2020](#)). The sudden change to online learning has resulted in unforeseen challenges that influenced school-aged children and their parents and educators in primary school. Therefore, there is necessary to study online learning during the pandemic in the eastern part of Indonesia's primary schools, where technology development has been left behind. The following research questions guided study: 1. What challenges do teachers and parents of primary school students at the Indonesian public school encounter in implementing online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic? 2. What recommendations do teachers and parents suggest for the efficient and fruitful implementation of online learning?

METHODS

This qualitative study was designed as a case study research method. [Stake \(1995\)](#) describes a case study methodology as a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process of one or more individuals. For this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the challenges that primary school teachers and parents have during the implementation of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a large archipelago consisting of thousands of islands divided into 34 provinces, collecting data from all primary schools was not an option; therefore, a case study was chosen to construct the schools' stereotypes. Gorontalo province of Indonesia was selected for its location, accessibility, and a wide selection of primary schools. Gorontalo is the 32nd province of Indonesia located on Sulawesi Island, the eastern islands of Indonesia. According to Statistics Indonesia

(2020), Gorontalo province ranked 6th in poverty after Papua, West Papua, North Maluku, Maluku, and West Sulawesi.

Participants

This study's participants were six elementary school teachers and five parents from public elementary schools in Gorontalo province. The participants are selected based on their accessibility, availability, and district/sub-district representation. All teachers have been teaching online since March 2020; at the same time, parents have also started to monitor their children at home.

Table 1. Teachers background information

| Teachers Participants | Year of teaching | Teacher Qualification | Grade |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Teacher B | 6 years | Not a certified teacher | 4 |
| Teacher D | 30 years | Certified teacher | 1 |
| Teacher R | 22 years | Certified teacher | 6 |
| Teacher M | 13 years | Certified teacher | 2 |
| Teacher J | 36 years | Certified teacher | 5 |
| Teacher K | 15 year | Certified teacher | 3 |

*The names of the participants are anonymous.

Table 2. Parents' background information

| Parents participants | Employment status | Number of children in primary school | Total Number of children in school and university |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Parent A | Government worker | 2 | 4 |
| Parent B | Housewife | 2 | 3 |
| Parent L | Farmer | 2 | 3 |
| Parent C | Bentor* driver | 1 | 2 |
| Parent D | Housewife | 1 | 2 |

*The names of the participants are anonymous.

* Motorbike trishaw

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews with a series of open-ended questions were used to collect information. The interview's purpose is to allow the participants to talk about their online learning experiences as parents who helped the children at home and teachers who delivered the lessons. It also aims to gain in-depth insights into teachers' and parents' difficulties and their suggestions for the successful implementation of online learning. Interviews with each teacher and student's parents were conducted through a Zoom video call. With participant approval, the interview was audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription. Each participant was interviewed twice, and each interview for approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed following [Creswell's \(2009\)](#) guidelines in analyzing qualitative study. First, data was organized and prepared the data for analysis. We reviewed the audiotapes from the interviews and transferred them into word document transcripts during this step. Second, we read through the data and reflected on the overall meaning to gain a general sense of the information and ideas that the participants had taken. Then, a detailed coding analysis was performed by categorizing the text data and identifying the sentences within each category.

Furthermore, I labeled those categories in terms based on the actual language of the participants. In this sense, the coding process was implemented to generate a description of the setting or people and

categories for these for analysis. Next, the description of the themes was then represented in the qualitative narrative. For this step, I presented the emergent themes into narrative passages so that the findings emerged logically from the participants' responses. Finally, I interpreted the meaning of the data.

RESULTS

Major Obstacles in Conducting Online Learning

The interview revealed several main obstacles to implementing online learning that teachers and students' parents experience. They include lack of technical resources and competence, access to online teaching and learning materials, learning effectiveness, and physical and psychological challenges.

Lack of Technological Devices

The use of technology has impacted nearly all facets of human life. In online learning, having appropriate devices, such as laptops, computers, and smartphones, is required, yet the cost of these tools is often quite expensive. If this main problem cannot be overcome, students cannot attend the class, follow the instructions, and complete the assignment. Moreover, students from low-income families often experience a lack of technological tools. Therefore, the availability of technological devices has become the main challenge for e-learning during the pandemic, as it was recorded with some of the teacher participants. Below are some experts in the interview with teachers and parents.

I have 29 students in my class (in grade 4). Only two students have laptops, and about 15 students use their parents' smartphones for online learning. The rest of my students do not have laptops or smartphones to learn. What can I do? Although I know there is a lockdown, I asked students who do not have a smartphone and the internet to visit those who have the facilities (Teacher R)

Almost all students have at least one smartphone in their family. However, it (quality) is not good, like the screen is too small or has already cracked on it and so on. I use a laptop. In this difficult time, I cannot ask my students to get a laptop because many of them are coming from low-income families (Teacher B)

If I can say, it is not easy to teach reading and basic math concepts to little children through technology. Many do not have a laptop. Others use their parents' phone because it is available and more affordable (for most students) than a computer (laptop). (Teacher D)

Furthermore, 3 out of 5 parents are also concerned about a learning device for their children. Since not all parents have a smartphone or a laptop, providing one for the children increases the burden that the family has experienced, particularly during the pandemic, where most of them have lost their work. The situations were explained by the parents below.

To do online learning, I had to use our little savings to buy my kids a smartphone. I have three children: grade 3, grade 7, and grade 11. Each of them needs a smartphone to learn online. It is too much to handle (parent L)

If there is no laptop or mobile phone, my children cannot study (parent D)

It is better to use a laptop (for online learning), but it costs a lot. My older kids share one laptop because they are in university, but I had to buy smartphones for the two children in elementary school (parent A)

The Cost of Reliable and Affordable Internet Connection

Another barrier to online learning is access to an affordable and stable internet connection. Successful e-learning requires a decent internet speed for an optimal learning experience. In some regions of Indonesia, particularly in the eastern part, the connection is not always stable, and the data package can be costly. Some areas might have a better signal, while others have a weak connection or

even do not have it. These conditions have forced teachers to conduct online and offline learning. Offline learning is delivered by visiting the students' houses, which increases the teacher's and students' probability of being infected by the COVID-19. Teacher D and Teacher K voice their opinion as follow:

The internet data is not cheap, and the signal is not good in many places. Many students' parents cannot afford them because they are already struggling to provide food on the table with a smartphone, and now they also need to think about how to purchase internet data. (Teacher D)

I have to visit students' houses because many students do not have the internet or phone. Sometimes three of five students who live close to each other gather in one student's house. It is dangerous, but I have no other way, they have to study (Teacher K)

As for the parents, the urgency to provide children with internet data has put parents in more trouble. This pandemic has become the worst condition for them because they have already lost their job or reduced their working hours; at least three parents mentioned that getting the internet data has cost them extra spending.

My husband has lost his job. He cannot provide for my family now. We have to buy them a phone and internet data for my children. How funny. I feel this pandemic is not going to kill me, but my financial responsibility is (Parent B)

I spent so much on the internet data, and sometimes if their data have finished, and I do not have money to buy, I have to ask them to find a free WIFI outside (Parent C)

Data. It was expensive. I do know what to do. I do not have it (WIFI) in my house. So I have to buy for my children, and each needs their own.

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has instructed that all schools use their operational assistance funds (Bantuan Operasional Sekolah). Still, the procedure is too complicated, and the funds often come late ([Nurfitriyani, 2020](#)).

Lack of Competence in Managing Technology

Computer or digital literacy was essential for teachers, parents, and students to attempt online courses. More importantly, for teachers, the ability to deliver instruction and create meaningful online learning materials can be achieved if they have sufficient knowledge of technology. Unfortunately, data revealed that both parents and teachers lack training in operating technological devices. In addition, many participants acknowledged that they did not have any online learning experience and instruction before the pandemic.

Google classroom and zoom are new things for me. I do not know how to operate them. After teaching for almost 30 years, this is the first time I have to learn to use these new things (Teacher D)

Others (apps) are difficult to learn, so I use only WhatsApp because that is the only app that I am familiar with my students and me and of course, it is a burden (Teacher J)

Teaching innovation is required during this pandemic. Since most teacher participants are only familiar with face-to-face lessons, they have to shift to a new pedagogical skill. However, due to a lack of skills in operating proper programs, they found it challenging to deal with the change. Senior teachers have found it even more difficult to operate the devices and use appropriate teaching applications. Almost all teachers were forced to use WhatsApp (video call), limiting the participants to only eight without screen sharing options. To keep students interested and engaged in the virtual classroom, teachers must create an interesting e-learning plan that can be gathered from YouTube and different websites. Some parents argue that although teachers have shown them how to use specific programs

for learning, most of them require more complex procedures for installation, login, and more internet data.

The teacher offers us (the parents) to choose one app compatible with our kids' smartphones. I have trouble opening the (Google) classroom and Zoom. So, I decided to go with the easiest one (Parent B)

I have a problem running the program on my kid's phone. I think because it is too big and requires more data. So, they are using only WhatsApp (parent L)

Lack of Learning Background and Environment

Schools, teachers, and learners can promote effective learning in their classrooms. According to the teachers and parents, factors such as age and experience of the students, home environment, size of the class, and support from parents on the student's learning impacted learning effectiveness.

It is difficult, I am teaching grade 2, and many of them still cannot read or do the math correctly. I cannot blame anyone. Last year, I did online learning too, so it was not maximal. Additionally, if the parents do not supervise them at home, I do not know what will happen with their learning (Teacher M)

When I am teaching, often another sibling joins the conversations or people in the household talk too loudly. In the end, the student loses his concentration (Teacher K)

My students are easily distracted. Some of them do not complete the required assignment, and if they do, I do not know who did the homework (the parents or the student) it makes the assessment hard (Teacher R)

Lack of learning spaces at home is faced by students conducting e-learning. Many live beyond the standard of livable houses for children from disadvantaged socio-economic groups. Moreover, the intergenerational household culture, where a house is often shared with two or three extended families, limits living spaces. Disruptions from the family members, such as little siblings/cousins or older adults, can easily interfere with the lesson. In addition, young children, particularly in lower grades, cannot always focus and follow instructions precisely. Like teachers, elementary school students also never experience e-learning so they can be unmotivated, tired, and boring because of a lack of interaction with peers and teachers. Teachers discovered that online assessment could be challenging in assessing the student's learning. Intervention by parents and older siblings in completing the test and homework is always possible. Parents also argue that e-learning is not effective for their primary school children. They found a lack of improvement in their children's learning since the lessons were online.

It is very ineffective. My son is in 3rd grade, and he has trouble with math and writing. I had not seen any improvement from when he was in grade 2 (Parent A)

We are Javanese, in local language subject, we cannot help our daughter to do her assignment because none of us speak the language (parent B)

None of us (parents) are good at Math. I feel guilty and ashamed to tell my grade 6 son that I cannot help him with his Math (Parent L)

E-learning required parents' support to lead their children at home because interactions and the learning schedule at school were reduced. Parents who did not excel at school and lacked formal education found it difficult to help their children with homework. Low-income families who had to work full time had difficulty managing their job responsibility, family duty, and children's school assignments on a tight budget. Finally, family members from different cultural backgrounds struggled to assist their children at home in certain subjects, such as local language subjects.

Physical and Physiological Constraints

Online learning has undoubtedly increased students', teachers', and parents' spending on the screen. Primary school teachers and parents have all concerns about children and their mental health, including tiredness, headache, and digital eye strain. With learning being moved online, the instructional time has also been reduced to 35 minutes per subject. However, since the students were divided into several study groups, the teachers must be online until all groups have been taught. As a result, anxiousness increased among the teachers for different reasons, such as feeling that they have not done enough to help the students and being watched by parents while teaching.

I cannot look at my laptop screen for a long time. My eyes start to feel itchy and dry. I am exhausted, and inside, I feel guilty for not giving them (the students) what they should have learned (Teacher M)

Since the online learning started, I have had dizziness and trouble sleeping. Somehow, I think this (online learning) takes more time to prepare than an in-person class. I always need to be in front of my laptop from morning until evening because some students can only join the discussions or learn after their parents come from work to use their parents' phones. Therefore, I need to check my phone all the time (Teacher K)

I feel pity for my 6th-grade students. I want to teach them better because they are going to junior high school next year, but they have not learned well even for the 5th-grade subjects. I wish I could do more (Teacher R)

I feel nervous because I am going to teach online, and this time it is not only my students and me, but parents are also there to listen and watch every word that I say and every movement that I make. (Teacher B)

For some parents, a lack of patience in dealing with their children's education while working full-time or doing household chores is also problematic. They are overwhelmed by the work and responsibility of being an educator for their children. Parents are also concerned about the children's social interaction with other children. With a limited time of synchronous learning, students were given some homework that they needed to complete, and parents were expected to guide their children.

I feel more tired teaching my son at home. He does not listen to me and often sneaks out to play with his toys or play games during the lesson. Sometimes I shout or pinch him spontaneously. It is just so hard to be a teacher (of my children) (Parent B)

My son spends so much time on his device during the lockdown because he cannot play with other children, even with our neighbor's children [...] less active and too much homework (Parent L)

Recommendation For a Better E-learning Program

Following the challenges that both teachers and parents encounter during online learning and teaching instruction, they were asked to provide recommendations to overcome the barriers of online instruction in elementary schools. Their suggestions include providing technical support such as access to electronic devices and the internet, training in running software and related programs, pedagogical support such as teacher training or workshop in creating e-learning materials, and mental and psychological support.

Providing Technological Supports

All teachers and parents who participated in this study stressed the importance of having suitable devices and internet access for online learning. During the pandemic, where people struggle to provide basic needs for their family, they have to face the reality of attending e-learning; they need to provide a laptop or smartphone and internet data. Unfortunately, the devices and internet are not cheap, and many parents cannot afford them. Therefore, there is a need to support these families with financial

assistance to purchase a decent gadget and internet package for the children who attend online education. Alternatively, the school or government agency needs to support these learners with a proper electronic learning tool to help them attend the class. Moreover, the cost of internet data also needs to be lowered if not provided.

I hope the government will provide at least a smartphone, if not a laptop, for teachers and students who do not have it. They also need to reduce the cost of internet data because everything is online now. We need it now not only for learning but also for entertaining (Teacher K)

I have to spend extra money to buy internet data. Moreover, sometimes the connection is not good. It would be better if the government and TELKOMSEL (network provider) fixed the internet connection in our area and provided free access to it, at least to the students during this pandemic (Parent A)

Using online platforms is new for many teachers, particularly those who live in the suburbs and attended the teacher college before emerging technology. They are only familiar with face-to-face learning with the traditional method of teaching. This pandemic has forced them to transform how they teach and create the lessons. Consequently, they request regular training in operating laptops and running online learning programs, such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and more.

Teachers need to be given constant training and workshops to run an application such as Zoom, but basic skills of using a laptop installing necessary programs also need to be taught. Because in college, we were trained only on how to educate humans, but with technology development nowadays, we need technology to be able to teach humans (Teacher J)

Providing Pedagogical Supports

Pandemic has altered the way teaching and learning originally existed in school. Teachers are experiencing a lack of pedagogical strategies in delivering online learning within limited skills and resources. Considering the students' age who are only between the ages of 6 to 12, teachers must develop a new online pedagogical approach that can keep the young students interested and engaged with the lesson.

I can no longer stand in front of the class and teach. With teaching hours reduced, I have to depend on online resources such as YouTube videos to explain some topics to the students. It is possible to send a screenshot of an assignment and ask the student to do it by themselves at home, but I know it is boring. I have to look for online activities on the internet, and it takes time and more data to find a good one. So, we need online teaching resources that are appropriate for each grade (Teacher R)

Providing Mental and Physical Supports

Isolation, lack of social interaction, heavy workload, and constant work on the screen has significantly impacted teachers' psychological and physical conditions. Working parents are overloaded with their job responsibilities and parents at home. They echo the need to have support groups to connect. Moreover, support from the high-level authority to continue teaching online despite the limitations can lessen their anxiety. The support can be done by providing necessary technological devices for teachers, including internet packages, online workshops and seminars related to e-learning, and funding to access teaching resources online. Additionally, colleagues and principal encouragement are also important to stay positive and help each other. They can help one another overcome challenges such as reassuring words, helping in operating the computer, installing the programs, and more.

Sometimes, I need someone to talk about any problems. In school, I can walk to another teacher's room and discuss it, but now it is different because talking on a phone is not convenient (Teacher M)

We support each other. I learn a lot from these young teachers on how to run my class online (Teacher J)

Moreover, parents' support in e-learning also significantly impacts students' learning and teachers' motivation. Although most parents believe that their children's learning has not improved since e-learning started, they acknowledge that they need to educate their children. Obviously, without a commitment from parents to be part of their children's learning, online learning will not be successful.

We (teachers) depend only on parents, so they have to help children with homework at home and not just let them play all day because they are not on a school break or holidays (Teacher B)

They learn only some hours a day in e-school. If I do not tell him to study, he will not do it. I have to pay attention to his school work (Parent D)

However, parents' lack of involvement is mainly because of low technology literacy, lack of collaboration and patience to educate, lack of formal education, and economic disadvantages. As a result, mt of them have lost their income and are forced to stay at home. These mental and physical barriers need to be addressed for the fruitful learning of the students.

DISCUSSIONS

A sudden shift in teaching from face-to-face to online methods has significantly impacted teachers, students, and parents ([Alfarizi, 2019](#); [Cheng, 2020](#)). This study investigated the primary school teachers' and parents' perspectives on online learning during the pandemic in Gorontalo province of Indonesia. The study identified certain obstacles that have been declared by teachers and parents of primary school students related to the implementation of online learning. Technologically, the lack of electronic devices, the internet, and competency in operating the technology in both teachers and parents have obstructed the teaching and learning process. [Grishchenko \(2020\)](#) asserted that access to digital technologies is a prerequisite for online learning.

Due to the lack of appropriate digital appliances, many students were driven to use a smartphone to watch lessons for hours instead of using a laptop or computer. In the eastern part of Indonesia, where there are still many underdeveloped regions, and most live within the poverty line, technology devices such as computers, laptops, and even a smartphone are still considered a privilege. Geographical conditions, infrastructures, and economic development have led to costly internet yet poor and slow connections ([Alfarizi, 2019](#)). With the unsteady network and electricity connection, videos and audios of teachers and students often stop, blur, or mute, leaving teachers with hesitation to continue talking or give an assignment for the rest of the meeting. In addition, since interaction did not occur directly, teachers cannot see the students' facial expressions, whether they understand the instruction or not.

A digital gap appeared significantly because most students did not have the necessary resources to enroll in online learning. Therefore, the regional and national government needs to provide financial assistance in providing basic needs for technology, at least a smartphone for students who cannot afford to purchase one. The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Indonesia has instructed all schools in provinces to spend the School Operational Funds (BOS) to support online learning. However, the implementation has not been fully executed because some schools have not received the instructions. In addition, the fund often arrived late due to the complexity of the procedure and lack of transparency ([Nurfitriyani, 2020](#)). Moreover, collaboration with private sectors, primarily with internet providers and electronic communication companies, is necessary to ensure affordable and quality services.

The finding also revealed that teachers lack competence in operating basic skills of operating technology, connected to the internet, installing programs, and using appropriate software or programs for teaching and learning. Many of them preferred to use social networking apps such as WhatsApp and even Facebook. Although the training was given on operating appropriate software such as zoom and google classrooms to record, present, and deliver the instruction, teachers, and parents found it was too complicated and took more space and internet data on their smartphone. This finding confirmed the study of [Mishra et al. \(2020\)](#) online teaching-learning turns out to be a huge challenge because stakeholders are not ready to adapt to the sudden transformation. Teachers and parents are not technologically skilled enough to adapt to the current condition. [Mishra et al. \(2020\)](#) suggested that recommendations from the stakeholders should be addressed to execute educational transformation

from in-person to online classroom effectively. Providing technology access and online or offline learning materials are essential to success in e-learning mode. Both technical training and e-learning teaching workshops must be provided regularly, and attendance is required for all teachers.

In the meantime, the teachers' lack of technical training from the institutions can be overcome by preparing and training independently or with more knowledgeable colleagues or peers to be familiar and comfortable running the equipment required in online teaching. In addition, at the school level or school subdistrict groups (*gugus*), there is a necessity to hire an information technology expert to provide necessary assistance to stakeholders such as principals, teachers, students, and parents on managing the technology. This expert can provide short online training on essential tools and programs and must be ready to be called at any time during school hours.

Educators lack new pedagogical knowledge and innovative teaching in designing attractive and efficient online learning. The teacher participants acknowledged that online education is a new thing during their career as an educator. Therefore, they are only familiar with in-person teaching and learning experiences for many years. To keep the students engaged in the lesson, teachers need to utilize various instructional methods to foster more enthusiastic online learning participation ([Rasmitadila et al., 2020](#)). Moreover, children easily get bored, distracted and yearn for teacher attention; specific teaching strategies and activities are needed to keep students focused and engaged. To answer the global challenge, teachers should be digitally prepared. Therefore, online learning should be integrated into teacher education programs (Program Pendidikan Profesi Guru) ([Azzahra, 2020](#)).

Moreover, online educational resources associated with the national curriculum must be provided by the ministry of education. Additionally, easy access to download, print, and share those resources must also be given. The availability of these teaching materials will reduce teachers' responsibility in producing e-learning materials, and parents will save their expenses. In addition to e-learning resources, teacher video conference recording, TV education programs, and social media posts might be used as learning tools. The Indonesian government launched an education TV program called *Belajar Dari Rumah* (learning from home) in April 2020 through TVRI (Government TV channel). This program is intended to facilitate Indonesian students' learning from home during pandemic situations. The program is available from preschool students until junior high school.

The pandemic has shaken teachers' and parents' emotional and physical conditions. It was found that teachers are concerned about their physical health for staring in front of the computer and smartphone for creating e-learning or teaching students. Headache, eyes burn, back pains are associated pains that they have. They also feel guilty for not being able to do their responsibility in teaching the children at the utmost. They expect parents to be their partners in educating children, helping with homework, and communicating with the school. However, they feel that parents have less support and are not involved. Although they acknowledged that many families struggle to provide basic needs for the family and at the same time supervise the children's learning at home. Parents experience anxiety, emotional imbalance, and fatigue as they are overloaded with the financial burden and school demands. At this time, teachers and parents need to collaborate. [Calarco \(2020\)](#) suggested that teachers need to be mindful of the heavy loads that students and their families encounter—in other words, recognizing that not all parents will support their children's learning amid this troubling moment. For both teachers and parents, proper counseling and peer support groups must be provided by the school or regional education ministry. [Sahu \(2020\)](#) recommended that counseling service is crucial to guarantee the teachers' mental health and well-being.

The finding also indicates that online learning in primary school has been viewed as an inefficient form of teaching and learning. However, the effectiveness changes across learners' age ([Li & Lalani, 2020](#)). Young students require a more structured learning situation than the adult one, and the first graders have different needs than the fifth-grader and more. Children actively utilize their different senses to learn; therefore, taking the benefits of technology creating fun and interactive activities is essential. The use of games in education can be considered a way of learning because games have been proved to increase motivation for learning ([Li & Lalani, 2020](#)). However, the use of games must be chosen by teachers and observed by the parents. Last but not least, both teachers and parents need to be informed of the dangers of exposing children to the screen for an extended period.

The COVID-19 pandemic devastated the educational system. However, a collaboration between teachers and parents to implement online learning might save the children's education and their lives.

All challenges need to be overcome by the parents, teachers, authority, and community for the sake of the students. This pandemic time is not the time to blame each other for all the flaws and difficulties. Instead, it is time to collaborate, support each other, be mindful, and forgive ourselves as educators and parents.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 outbreak devastated traditional learning methods in educational institutions all over the world. Students from preschool until university were forced to transform from in-person classes to online classes as a safer option to keep themselves and their families safe from the deadly virus. In the context of Indonesia, this study is perhaps the first study to report the challenge experienced by primary school teachers and parents. This study addressed the challenges teachers and parents have undergone during online learning instructions. Teachers and parents are concerned about the availability of technological devices, internet access, and competency in operating the technology. In addition to technical barriers, teachers also reported pedagogical difficulty in delivering online learning. Many are only familiar with an in-person class where teachers and students directly occur. Both teachers and parents have seen that e-learning has not been seen as an effective way to teach elementary students, particularly in underdeveloped regions in Indonesia. Participants also experience mental and psychological constraints such as tiredness, headaches, eye burns, anxiety, and patience loss during online education. Several recommendations were provided to overcome the obstacles of e-learning. These suggestions cover technology, pedagogical training, e-learning resources, and mental and psychological support from the authority, counseling experts, leaders, school principals, and peers. As the study is only based on teachers' and parents' perceptions, the inclusion of students' opinions in the future study might support the understanding of the problems teachers and parents face in underdeveloped locations regarding online learning.

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