

Students' perspective on online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

Irawaty Irawaty¹, Abdul Halim Momo¹, Sulfa Sulfa¹, Salimin Salimin¹, Nerlin Nerlin¹, Sri Y Mustar²

¹Department of Civics Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Halu Oleo University, Kendari, Indonesia

²Department of Early Childhood Teacher Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Halu Oleo University, Kendari, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received Dec 08, 2021

Revised Mar 24, 2022

Accepted Aug 31, 2022

Keywords:

Distance learning

Online assessment

Pandemic

Student experience

Student perception

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted changing the model of learning activities. Teaching and learning activities that have usually been done face-to-face have now turned into online learning. This study identified student perspectives on online learning activities for Department of Civics Education students at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Halu Oleo University, Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study used a survey method by distributing questionnaires in the form of Google Forms to students, and a total of 227 students participated in this study. Our study focused on online learning media, learning effectiveness, lecturers' abilities, obstacles, and student recommendations regarding online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data analysis in this study was carried out descriptively, presented in the form of frequency, percentage, and graph. The study results found that the most effective online learning media felt by students at the Department of Civics Education were Google Meet and Zoom Cloud Meetings. Besides, the majority of students considered online learning to be no more effective than face-to-face lectures. Lecturers need to provide two-way learning materials through discussion as well as question and answer. Furthermore, the main determining factors that cause online learning to be ineffective are network constraints and internet quotas. Therefore, students expected the lecturers to understand the network constraints experienced by students during online learning and recommend implementing learning activities for blended learning (combination of online and offline) while still complying with the health protocols.

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Corresponding Author:

Irawaty Irawaty

Department of Civics Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Halu Oleo University
Anduonohu, Kambu District, Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

Email: dra.irawaty@uho.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 disease emerged in late December 2019 in Wuhan, China [1]. The rapid spread of the coronavirus has caused governments in various regions in China to implement a lockdown policy to reduce the risk of further transmission [2]. In addition, several other countries have also taken the same action due to the detection of the COVID-19 virus in their territory, which will become a global threat [3]. Thus, this is what underlies various countries requiring their citizens to stay at home, prohibiting domestic and foreign travel, until companies allow their employees to work from home (WFH) to prevent the rapid transmission of the coronavirus [4], [5].

Furthermore, in March 2020, almost all of the world jointly announced the closure of all learning activities at the school and university level and made policies to conduct online distance learning by utilizing various learning media [6], [7]. Indonesia is no exception, which directly supports this policy through the circular letter of the Directorate General of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 1 of 2020 concerning prevention of the spread of COVID-19 in higher education to carry out the distance learning process and advise students to study at home respectively [8]. All universities quickly responded to the instructions, one of which was Halu Oleo University, which issued a circular letter on the precautionary and prevention of COVID-19 in the campus environment and appealed to lecturers in changing the face-to-face learning activities to online learning, which aims to provide students with access to learning that is not limited by space and time during the COVID-19 emergency period [9]. It aligns with Milman [10], which states that digital technology allows students and lecturers to conducted learning activities in different places.

The COVID-19 pandemic was not one of the causes for the first time universities introduced digital technology programs, but the rapid closure of learning activities forced universities to provide online programs on a larger scale [11]. Closing learning activities at various educational institutions has proven to be an efficient way to minimize the rapid spread of the coronavirus, but it poses many challenges [12], [13]. Harjanto and Sumunar stated that online learning transforms conventional education into digital form, each with challenges and opportunities [14]. The challenge is that universities, especially lecturers, and students must adapt to various media that support online-based learning activities [15], [16]. In addition, another challenge in online learning experienced by educators and students is that this space and time difference impacts the lack of verbal communication and connection difficulties [17]. Furthermore, distance learning is considered to have its challenges for educators because it takes the screen time activity longer than face-to-face learning (offline), and students may be less active in participating during the learning process [18]–[20]. However, the difficulty of internet connection is the main challenge of lecturers and students due to inadequate facilities or infrastructure in all regions [21].

On the other hand, the success of online learning will also be strongly influenced by the ability of teachers to use technology when delivering learning materials to students [22]. Hence, the design of good and appropriate learning activities during the learning processes can lead to increased motivation, satisfaction, and student interest [23]–[25]. Additionally, higher education institutions that implement online learning need to ensure that the learning system implemented can provide the same level of knowledge and competence as face-to-face learning [26]. Therefore, it is imperative to identify student perspectives regarding the implementation of online learning to obtain feedback from students in improving learning activities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This was a quantitative descriptive study with a survey approach. A total of 227 students from the Department of Civics Education were sampled in this study. Data collection was carried out by distributing online questionnaires using the google form. The questionnaires distributed online consisted of questions regarding students' perspectives on online learning activities ranging from learning media, the effectiveness of online learning, the ability of lecturers in online learning, the obstacles, and students' recommendations for online learning. Data analysis in this study was carried out descriptively using the SPSS 25, and the results were presented in the form of frequency distribution, presentation, and graphs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Characteristic of the respondent

The sociodemographic data of the respondents showed that 70.04% of the students were women. The most age range of students is 16-19 years at 50.22%, with the majority of respondents currently in the first and third semesters. Data on the distribution of students clarified that Kendari is one of the cities that dominates the area of residence where students live, 42.73%. In addition, the latest education of parents starting from their father, generality was high school graduates (38.33%), with more than half of their father working as farmers (55.07%). Furthermore, the most recent education of their mothers was elementary school graduates and work as housewives 38.77%, and 43.17%, respectively as revealed in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

Sociodemographic characteristics	n=227	%
Gender		
Men	68	29.96
Women	159	70.04
Age (year)		
16–19	114	50.22
20–24	113	49.78
Semester		
1 st and 3 rd	128	56.39
5 th , 7 th , and 9 th	99	43.61
Area of residence		
Kendari	97	42.73
Baubau	3	1.32
Bombana	6	2.64
Kolaka dan East Kolaka	12	5.29
Muna and West Muna	51	22.47
Konawe, South Konawe, North Konawe, and Konawe Islands	25	11.01
Buton, North Buton, Central Buton, and South Buton	24	10.57
Wanci, Kaledupa, Tomia, Binongko (Wakatobi)	6	2.64
Enrekang	1	0.44
Morowali	1	0.44
Taliabu island	1	0.44
Education		
Father		
Do not have education	5	2.20
Elementary school	73	32.16
Junior high school	41	18.06
Senior high school	87	38.33
Bachelors and Masters	21	9.25
Mother		
Do not have education	4	1.76
Elementary school	88	38.77
Junior high school	58	25.55
Senior high school	67	29.52
Bachelors	10	4.41
Parents' profession		
Father		
Civil servant	19	8.37
Entrepreneur	18	7.93
Farmer	125	55.07
Does not work	19	8.37
Other	46	20.26
Mother		
Civil servant	12	5.29
Entrepreneur	9	3.96
Farmer	70	30.84
Housewife	98	43.17
Other	38	16.74

3.1.1. The effective online learning media

In achieving success in education, it is essential to involve all participants in learning activities [27]. In online learning, the role of the faculty is not only to provide learning materials but also to introduce various types of interactions that are part of the learning process [28]. Educators as leaders of learning implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to adapt quickly with the intention that the online learning process continues without reducing the essence of the learning [29]. Therefore, the use of learning media by educators is essential. Learning media are tools used to support the teaching and learning process implementation so that the online learning process becomes effective.

The results showed that the learning media used by lecturers at the Department of Civics Education in supporting online learning were very diverse. However, it can be seen in Figure 1 that most students rate online learning media to be highly effective through google meet (47.30%) and Zoom Cloud Meeting (44.80%). Furthermore, 5.3% of students use WhatsApp, while 1.3% use Google Classroom. In addition, 0.9% of students use the learning management system (LMS) developed by the university, and only 0.4% use Microsoft Teams application. This study is different from other researchers who revealed that most of their respondents chose to use the WhatsApp application because it has a more stable connection [30], [31], then, 55% of students stated that they prefer to use Email [32], and 47.05% use Google Classroom as an effective online learning medium [33]. Nevertheless, this study is consistent with Yundra *et al.* which states that most of the students believe that Zoom Cloud Meetings and google meet effectively accommodate the scientific

consultation process for students to complete academic writing as their final course during the COVID-19 pandemic [34].

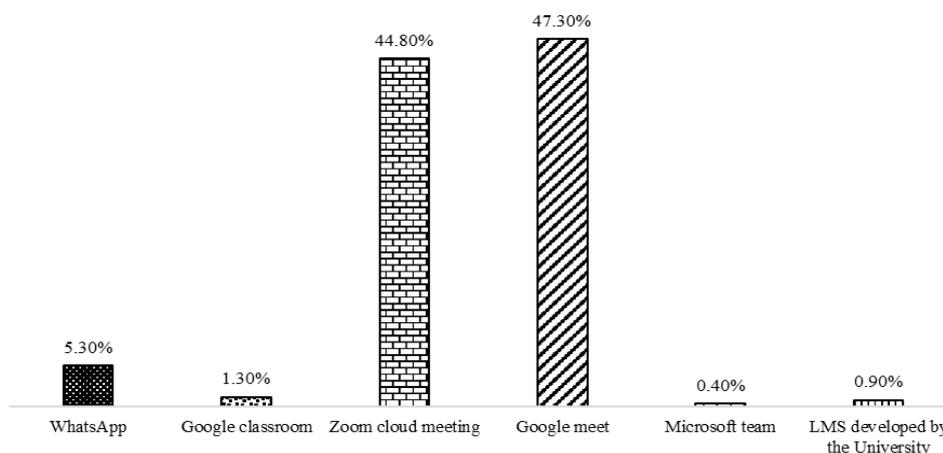


Figure 1. Online learning media that are considered effective by students

3.1.2. The effectiveness of online learning

The research results on the effectiveness of online learning at the Department of Civics Education in Table 2 shows that most students said that learning activities were not carried out structured, on schedule, and well-coordinated (56.8%). Moreover, the majority of the students assessed that online learning was not more effective than face-to-face lectures (85.9%). This study is in line with research conducted by Wiratama, which proved that online learning is less effective due to unstable signals as well as uncertain weather factors [35], and 91.3% of students find it more challenging to understand the material when learning online [36]. Furthermore, 54.6% of students assessed the duration of the lecture according to the schedule during online learning, and 57.3% of students felt that the system or support media used to carry out online exams met the needs during the appropriate exam. However, 81.9% of students prefer to do face-to-face learning. It is also conformable with a study conducted by Dewantara and Nurgiansyah that 79% of students prefer to undertake face-to-face learning [32]. However, this study is not relevant to the research attempted by Hapsari and Fitria, who reported that students prefer online lectures because it is more flexible than face-to-face lectures [36].

Table 2. Student perspective on the effectiveness of online learning

Question	The effectiveness of online learning	n=227			
		Yes		No	
		n	%	n	%
1	Learning activities are conducted properly (structured, on schedule, and well-coordinated)	98	43.2	129	56.8
2	Online learning is more effective (easy to understand and follow by students) than face-to-face lecture	32	14.1	195	85.9
3	The duration of the lecture is according to the schedule at the time of online learning	124	54.6	103	45.4
4	Supporting systems or media used to carry out online exams accomplish the students' needs during the exam	130	57.3	97	42.7
5	Choosing online or face-to-face learning (Yes=Online, No=face-to-face)	41	18.1	186	81.9

3.1.3. The ability of lecturers in online learning

Online learning must be well-prepared, especially in the use of technology. If the lecturer's ability to use technology is not qualified, this can certainly have implications for the limited variety of teaching media and can have an impact on learning outcomes. Student assessment of lect in online learning at the Department of Civics Education at Table 3 explains that most of the students assessed that lecturers were quite innovative in online learning compared to face-to-face lectures (57.27%) and lecturers explained the material comprehensively during online learning well (59.47%). It is in line with Astuti, which showed that 76.47% of students assessed that the teaching materials provided by lecturers during online lectures were

delivered well [33]. However, this is different from the research conducted by Mulyono, who explained that the student response to the teaching materials provided by the lecturers in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was considered sufficient [37].

Furthermore, most students considered that the lecturer conveyed the material clearly during the online learning (59.03%). Anwar also conformable this study which revealed that through online learning, students could understand the materials provided by the lecturer [38]. Additionally, 72.25% of students considered learning materials from their lecturers in an exciting way was considered good by students. Then, most students considered that lecturers' ability to provide an understanding of lecture material online was in the sufficient category (59.03%). This study contradicts other studies that revealed that most students are less satisfied with understanding materials provided by lecturers [39]. Moreover, most students assessed that the lecturers effectively implemented two-way interactions by facilitating discussion, along with the question and answer sessions during the learning activities (79.30%), and the communication between students and lecturers during online learning activities runs smoothly. It is in line with other researchers who explained that 80.88% of students interacting with lecturers went skilfully during online learning [33].

Table 3. Student assessment of the ability of lecturers

Question	The effectiveness of online learning	n=227					
		Good		Enough		Not enough	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1	Online learning makes lecturers more innovative in providing knowledge compared to face-to-face lectures	53	23.35	130	57.27	44	19.38
2	Lecturers explain the comprehensive material during online learning	135	59.47	87	38.33	5	2.2
3	The lecturer conveys the material clearly during online learning activities	134	59.03	91	40.09	2	0.88
4	The lecturer presented learning material in an exciting way	164	72.25	56	24.67	7	3.08
5	The ability of lecturers to provide an understanding of lecture material online	25	11.01	134	59.03	68	29.96
6	The lecturer applies a two-way interaction (providing discussion and question and answer sessions)	180	79.30	32	14.10	15	6.61
7	Communication between students and lecturers during online learning runs smoothly	145	63.88	50	22.02	32	14

3.1.4. The obstacles and students' recommendations in online learning

Online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has various obstacles. Figure 2(a) presents that one of the biggest obstacles is the internet network felt by 56% of students. It corresponds to other researchers who stated that the internet network is the main obstacle in online learning [33], [40]–[42]. Meanwhile, 37% of students experienced limited internet quotas. Mustakim also revealed in his study that 53.3% of students experienced limited internet quotas [42]. Furthermore, 4% of students stated that the problems that arise are still acceptable, and 3% have inadequate computer/mobile devices. Other researchers explained that another obstacle experienced by students in online learning was that students' activeness in participating during learning activities tends to decrease over time [43]. Orlando and Attard stated that teaching by using technology is not the only measure that fits all learning approaches; it all depends on the curriculum content used [44].

Additionally, this study also accommodates several important notes that universities must consider in learning activities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students pledge some recommendations regarding online learning in Figure 2(b) shows that most students, with a total of 23%, expect learning to be done face-to-face, of course, by implementing complete health protocols. Furthermore, 21% of students expect lecturers to understand the network problems experienced by students, and 14% of students also need additional internet quota from campus. In addition, 12% of students supposed online learning to be more innovative, and 10% aspire that online learning to continue with a note that the quality of learning needs improvement. It is lined with other studies that reveal that students expect learning activities to be conducted face-to-face [45]–[47] because some students complained that online learning is overburdened for students in purchasing internet quota, which costs quite a lot of money each month [41].

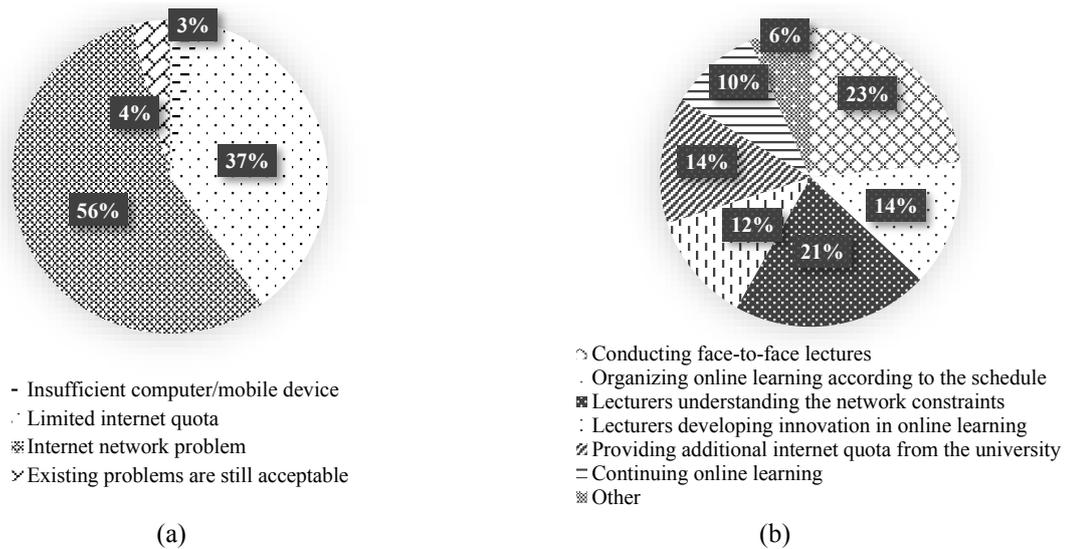


Figure 2. Student responses based on (a) an obstacles and (b) recommendations in online learning

4. CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the most effective online learning media felt by students at the Department of Civics Education were Google Meet and Zoom Cloud Meetings. Besides, the majority of students considered online learning to be no more effective than face-to-face lectures, and lecturers provided two-way learning materials through discussion and question and answer. Furthermore, the main determining factors that cause online learning to be ineffective are network constraints and internet quotas.

Online learning is a solution in maximizing teaching and learning activities during the pandemic. Our research provides insight and information regarding student perspectives in online learning, which explains that online learning must be well-prepared because it is related to the readiness and mastery of lecturers in utilizing technology and the availability of the internet at student locations. In addition, the ability of lecturers to compile more interesting material also needs to be improved to diminish student boredom during online learning. Furthermore, lecturers also need to increase student involvement during learning activities by using two-way learning methods to create a more productive lecture atmosphere. On the other hand, online learning will not have a better effect than face-to-face learning, considering the challenges faced during the learning activities. Concerning this, lecturers need to understand the various obstacles faced by students, attempt to solve problems students related to learning materials and increase their innovation in maximizing the use of technology, which will positively impact increasing student knowledge competence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the Institute of Research and Community Service (LPPM) Halu Oleo University, which fully supported our research.

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BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS



Irawaty    is a senior lecturer at the Department of Civics Education, Halu Oleo University. Her research interests span both preparation and the development of learning models in Civics and character education. She actively writes and is a speaker at several national and international seminars. She served as the head Department of Civics Education from 2010 to 2014 and, from 2015 to 2019, the head Department of the Social Sciences concentration. Currently, serves as the Head of the Department of Civics Education laboratory. She is the part member of the Indonesia Association on Pancasila and Civic Education Profession (AP3KnI) and the Association of Indonesian Social Sciences in Southeast Sulawesi. She can be contacted at email: dra.irawaty@uho.ac.id.



Abdul Halim Momo    is a lecturer at the Department of Civics Education, Halu Oleo University, Kendari. He actively conducts research and community service focusing on multicultural education, leadership, and civic education, as well as being a speaker at several national seminars. From 2015 to 2019, he has been selected as Head of the Department of Civics Education laboratory. Currently, he serves as the secretary of the Department of Civics Education at Halu Oleo University and as the Chair of The Indonesian Teachers Association of the Republic of Indonesia (PGRI) for Southeast Sulawesi. He can be contacted at email: momoabdulhalim@gmail.com.



Sulfa    was born in Masaloka (Southeast Sulawesi) in 1965. He is a senior lecturer at the Department of Civics Education, Halu Oleo University. His research interest covers several aspects of learning models, civics education, and international politics. From 2005 to 2009, he served as the Head Department of Civics Education. Furthermore, from 2014 to 2016, Vice Dean for Academic Affairs at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Halu Oleo University, Kendari, Indonesia. He is a member of the Indonesia Association on Pancasila and Civic Education Profession (AP3KnI). He can be contacted at email: sulfa@uho.ac.id.



Salimin    received his bachelor and master’s in legal studies at Universitas Hasanuddin. He is a senior lecturer at the Department of Civics Education, Halu Oleo University. He actively conducted research and community service focusing on crime, human rights, and civic education. He served as Head of the Center for the Study of Pancasila, Law and Human Rights at the Institute of Research and Community Service (LPPM) Halu Oleo University from 2011 to 2015. Moreover, he is a member of the Indonesia Association on Pancasila and Civic Education Profession (AP3KnI). He can be contacted at email: salimin_fkip@uho.ac.id.



Nerlin    was born in Bungi, Southeast Sulawesi in 1978. She completed her bachelor's in Public Administration at Halu Oleo University and master's in Administration Science at Makassar State University, Indonesia. She has written several papers in social studies education, including administration education, the teachers' ability, and learning models. She also has been participated in training to strengthen the capacity of the village family empowerment team. She is a member of the Indonesia Association on Pancasila and Civic Education Profession (AP3KnI). She can be contacted at email: nerlin@uho.ac.id.



Sri Y Mustar    obtained her master's degree in 2016 from Yogyakarta State University (UNY), Indonesia. She has written several papers in child development, assessment, learning media, and character education in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Her current research is situated in curriculum and pedagogical innovation in ECE. In 2012 she has been selected as one of the delegates for the Indonesia-Australia Youth Exchange Program (AIYEP) and she also taught Language Courses for foreign Elementary Students at Point Cook College in Melbourne. She is currently part of the Indonesian Association of Early Childhood Teacher Education (APG-PAUDI). She can be contacted at email: sriyulianimustar91@uho.ac.id.