

## Teachers' Constrains in the Learning Process at Junior High School during Covid-19 Pandemic in Banda Aceh

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### ABSTRACT

This research looks at the difficulties middle school educators face in Banda Aceh City, Indonesia, due to the covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of this investigation is to report on the challenges that emerged during the pandemic for a relatively new method of education: online study. Three public middle schools in Banda Aceh are the subjects of this study. Data is gathered through observation, interviews, and record-keeping, all hallmarks of qualitative research methods. The results show that teachers face a number of challenges when implementing online learning, including difficulties in adaptation because teachers cannot directly control their students' activities in order to assess them objectively; teachers' lack of understanding of technology, especially among older educators; teachers' encounters with passive students; teachers' less stable networks, which cause internet data quotas to become wasteful during online learning; and teachers' lack of control over their students' access to the internet, which makes it difficult to enforce strict rules and regulations.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 virus, especially in Indonesia, has had a major impact on all areas of human life, including education (Purwanto et al., 2020). The Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia responded to the pandemic emergency by issuing a Circular Letter on March 24, 2020, Number 4 of 2020, concerning the implementation of education policies in the emergency period of the spread of COVID-19 (Dewi, 2020). The contents of the letter explain that learning process activities at school are carried out at home through online or distance learning, which is implemented to provide a meaningful learning experience for students (Pratiwi, 2020). Teaching and learning activities that are usually carried out face-to-face or directly switched to online learning as it is considered an appropriate

solution during the pandemic (Aisyi & Rohman, 2022). It also provides new experiences in teaching and learning activities and supports government calls to limit activities outside the home.

Nowadays, online learning is an option during a pandemic that utilizes internet networks with flexibility, accessibility, connectivity, and capabilities to create various types of learning interactions (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020). It is in line with Mustofa et al. as well who asserted that online learning is one of the online learning methods done through the internet network (Mustofa & Iklil, 2019). Substantially, learning is defined as a process of interaction between students and students; students and teachers; and students and the learning resources (Pane & Dasopang, 2017). Learning activities become meaningful when they are carried out in an environment where students can feel safe and comfortable (Majid, 2014). The online learning process that utilizes information and communication technology (ICT) demands the readiness of appropriate and adequate ICT infrastructure and adaptation to the new learning culture paradigm from educators and students (Fira et al., 2021). Online learning is student-centred and emphasizes that students have their own activeness and initiative in learning (Pohan, 2020). They also need to understand lessons better so that they will be able to achieve the most desirable higher academic achievements (Rahmanta & Dwi, 2020). Online learning for teaching and learning activities is set as a teacher giving material to students via cellphone (HP) with WhatsApp application and Google Classroom as two of the varied practical available communication media. Learning readiness with a new culture requires active participation not only from teachers and students, but also from parents for successful learning. However, the facts in the online learning field encounter many obstacles, both from the teacher's and students' side (Hafiz, 2020).

All parties and elements involved in education are experiencing the same impact as the current pandemic situation. In conducting successful online learning activities, teachers must work hand in hand so that teaching and learning activities can be carried out continuously. Undeniably, the new learning system certainly requires adaptation and encounters several obstacles as well. For instance, in some cases at the junior high school level in several cities of Banda Aceh. Successful online learning certainly requires school readiness and consultation between students' parents and teachers. Parents are tasked with supervising, monitoring and assisting students in implementing the learning. However, the fact is that most of the parents and guardians of students at junior high school in Banda Aceh mostly employed, so they cannot monitor 24-hour student learning activities while they are at home.

Based on initial observations, there were some obstacles noticed and faced by the teachers. The teachers had difficulties in conveying material because of the internet network and their lack of understanding of mobile phones used as a medium of communication with their students, especially teachers who were aged. Material that has been compiled and specified in learning tools certainly has a deadline so that the material can be completed before the implementation of the Mid Semester Assessment (PTS) and Final Semester Assessment (PAS). However, the lack of discipline and active participation of students in participating in online learning means that the material cannot be delivered optimally. From these problems, researchers are interested in discussing and analyzing the obstacles faced by junior high school teachers in Banda Aceh City.

## 2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach in describing the learning process at the junior high school level in Banda Aceh City during the Covid-19 Era. To obtain data relating to the focus of the research, the researchers carried out observations, documentation and interviews. The observation method is carried out to ease the researchers in collecting data in reality from the field (Rukajat, 2018). Observation is aimed at obtaining data which describe detailed and accurate field conditions. At the observation stage, the researcher observes the learning process that occurs in the school/field to know the obstacles faced by the teacher in delivering teaching material. The interview method is in the form of questioning and answering activity using interview guidelines (Edi, 2016) which had been prepared by the researchers for 3 Middle School Principals and 3 Middle School Teachers. The context of the required interview data is information regarding the learning process in the pandemic era and the obstacles faced by teachers. And the documentation method is in

the form of data collection activities for research supporting documents such as lesson plans, syllabus, learning media/tools and photos of learning activities during the pandemic at junior high school in Banda Aceh (Arikunto, 2010).

The data analysis technique used is the interactive analysis technique modelled by Miles and Huberman. The interactive analysis technique for Miles and Huberman's model consists of three steps, namely data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification (Sugiyono, 2009). Reducing data is an activity of summarizing, selecting and sorting out the main things, focusing on the important things, looking for themes and patterns and removing unnecessary ones. Presentation of data is an activity of presenting data which can be in the form of short descriptions, charts, narrative text, descriptive and so on. Drawing conclusions and verification related to the activities carried out after the researcher collects data reduce data and presents data to answer the formulation of the problem he submits.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The learning process, which was initially carried out face-to-face, then switched to online learning due to Covid-19, making the various parties involved have to make some adjustments to make sure the learning process continues (Kadafi et al., 2022). Of course, online learning still has problems because most teachers and students have never done online learning before (Prawantia & Sumarnib, 2020). Obstacles are not only felt by teachers and students. Parents of student guardian participants also experience difficulties during the online learning process. This online learning has positive and negative impacts (Sulaiman & Wibowo, 2016). Lack of public knowledge and differences in knowledge about technological advances make a difference in the ongoing learning process in the community. The problem of online learning is not only concerned about the use of technology (Zaenullah et al., 2022). Indonesia, which incidentally has a vast territory and thousands of islands spread throughout the archipelago, makes education unequal, especially in underdeveloped, remote and outermost areas. The policy issued by the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia pays little attention to the conditions on the ground in underdeveloped regions, which are still far from the availability of technology and infrastructure to carry out this kind of learning.

The policies made by the Central Government were then followed up by the Aceh government for a new learning system culture through online learning. However, the breadth of Aceh Province and the large number of educational institutions makes the gap even more unavoidable. For example, the distribution of schools for the junior high school level in Banda Aceh City is as follows:

**Tabel 1. The name of the public junior high school in Banda Aceh City**

No	Junior High School	Location
1	SMP Negeri 1 Banda Aceh	Jln Majid Ibrahim 1, Blang Padang
2	SMP Negeri 2 Banda Aceh	Lampriet
3	SMP Negeri 3 Banda Aceh	Neusu Jaya
4	SMP Negeri 4 Banda Aceh	Jalan Ayani Peunayong
5	SMP Negeri 5 Banda Aceh	Lambung Ulee lhue
6	SMP Negeri 6 Banda Aceh	Lampinueng
7	SMP Negeri 7 Banda Aceh	Geucue Komplek
8	SMP Negeri 8 Banda Aceh	Darussalam
9	SMP Negeri 9 Banda Aceh	Peunayong
10	SMP Negeri 10 Banda Aceh	Pango/Lamteh
11	SMP Negeri 11 Banda Aceh	Lamjabat
12	SMP Negeri 12 Banda Aceh	Gampong Jawa
13	SMP Negeri 13 Banda Aceh	Cot Mesjid
14	SMP Negeri 14 Banda Aceh	Pante riek
15	SMP Negeri 15 Banda Aceh	Lam jamee

16	SMP Negeri 16 Banda Aceh	Peuniti
17	SMP Negeri-167 Banda Aceh	Blower- Blang Padang
18	SMP Negeri 18 Banda Aceh	Gampong Pinueng
19	SMP Negeri 19 Banda Aceh	Komplek Lamlagang

The data above shows 19 state junior high schools in Banda Aceh City (*Ministry of Education and Culture Data, 2022*). This further emphasizes that the number of schools and the vast area in Aceh Province shows that the policies made by the government must consider all aspects. This study focuses on three junior high schools in Banda Aceh City, namely SMP Negeri 1 Banda Aceh, which is located at Jalan Masjid Ibrahim, SMPN 2 Banda Aceh located in Lampriet, and SMPN 3 Banda Aceh located in Neusu Jaya. Based on observations in 3 junior high schools in the city of Banda Aceh, related to obstacles in implementing online learning in the pandemic era, teachers need to adapt to the new learning system and the use of the technology. The use of technology in the sense of using mobile phones as a medium of communication between teachers and students as well as being a medium for conveying material. According to the teacher of SMP Negeri 1 Banda Aceh, namely Mr. RB, in his interview, gave the following explanation:

"I teach mathematics for grades 7 and 8 at this junior high school; since face-to-face learning has switched to online learning, all teachers need to adapt. However, the problem is that I am not technology savvy, so I am often confused. Whatsapp application is a link between students and me for learning, nevertheless, mathematics subjects which use a lot of formulas, examples and practice questions, yet, cannot be optimally applied easily since many students do not understand the material" (RB, 2022).

Based on the interview above, the obstacle faced by teachers is the difficulty in adapting to the online learning system, considering that not all teachers were born in an era of sophisticated technological developments. The inappropriate signal network strength required to support the implementation of learning is also another obstacle faced because the students' houses are in different regions so teachers need to give more tolerance to students. Students who understand the material only via cell phones and WhatsApp applications find it difficult to understand the material, especially for exact subjects such as mathematics that require direct explanation. This is due to the application used by the teacher, which does not provide a discussion forum to explain material or ask questions about it, even if there is a forum menu provided; many students do not use it properly. Student independence during distance learning cannot be fully implemented properly because there is no face-to-face contact between teachers and students. The routine attendance list every 07.30 WIB is a must for starting online learning activities via WhatsApp. Often, only a few students fill it in on time. According to some students, the delay in filling out the attendance list and taking part in online learning was because they were still doing homework and their parents' cell phones were being used by their parents since some students did not have their own cell phones.

In line with teachers at SMP Negeri 2 and SMP Negeri 3 Banda Aceh, there were quite similar obstacles faced by SMP Negeri 1 teachers as well in the learning process during the pandemic with online learning. Teachers have difficulty in monitoring and supervising students directly because learning is carried out online and evaluating the results of student assignments which are often done by their families so it is difficult to assess objectively. This condition caused by the assessment mechanism carried out by the teacher is the same as face-to-face learning with 3 aspects of assessment, namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects that lead to the teacher's doubts in giving value to the results of student assignments.

During the implementation of online learning, the teacher has difficulty assessing students' affective and psychomotor aspects because this type of assessment requires real changes and is witnessed directly by the teacher. Learning during a pandemic through the WhatsApp application only focuses on cognitive aspects. Assignments given by the teacher are collected through the WhatsApp application by taking pictures of them and then sending them to the class WhatsApp group by putting

their identity on. Some teachers also use the Google form application to submit assignments. Teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Banda Aceh also expressed that online learning requires data quota and a stable network to send material to students via the WhatsApp group application. Teachers complained that there was no quota assistance at the start of the pandemic, so they had to use personal money because many large files, such as videos, were sent through the application that led to the use of the quota, which was more wasteful. Some students also often complain about wasteful data quota during online learning and the lack of stability of the internet network at the student's home area so that assignments are late for submission.

Based on interviews with the Principal of SMPN 3 in Banda Aceh, it was noticed that the school's readiness for online learning continues to be pursued, bearing in mind that learning and teachers must continue providing subject matter to students. The principal as a policy maker for the school must have a good synergy with the teacher because the teacher is the executor of learning. The Principal of SMP Negeri 2 Banda Aceh, namely Mr. TR, gave the following explanation:

"In my opinion, the existence of this pandemic has surprised all parties, and of course, the readiness of each different school to follow up on government circulars regarding studying at home or online. However, like it or not, schools must continue to run even though they are implemented online. Students who are used to face-to-face school with approximately 8 to 9 hours of activities carried out at school now must be carried out in full at home. Actually, the condition of this pandemic has had an impact and constraints on everything, starting from schools that have to be closed, teachers who teach online, and student learning activities that are carried out fully at home" (TR, 2022).

According to the explanation from the Principal of SMP Negeri 2 Banda Aceh above, online learning requires the readiness of all parties. Teaching and learning activities which are usually carried out in person from 07.00-14.00 WIB are changed to online learning, which means that all learning activities are completely at home. Parents, as a substitute for the existence of teachers, are asked to work together to supervise their children to learn because teachers cannot monitor them directly. Supervising student learning as a parent's task means reminding students to fill in the attendance list, taking part in online learning via WhatsApp application, and submitting assignments. Parents as student learning companions at home must provide a conducive environment for learning so that students in the online learning process can concentrate. The Head of School explained the same thing at SMP Negeri 3 Banda Aceh: parents must fully support online learning activities and supervise students while studying at home. The different learning climate prior to the pandemic meant that parents were expected to spend time and pay attention to the learning activities.

The unclear ending of the pandemic means regulations changed due to the ups and downs of cases of Covid-19 in Indonesia. The government, through a circular letter, only explained new learning, namely online, without any detailed explanation regarding the curriculum implemented during the pandemic. The curriculum as a guideline in the implementation of the educational process must certainly adapt to the conditions during the Covid-19 period (Abubakar, 2021). The teacher, as the executor of learning becomes confused about the lack of solutions and the obstacles faced by them. There is a need for reflection on online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic so that learning is not only just going but also meaningful and the material delivered by the teacher is received by students optimally (Mahmudah, 2021).

According to the Aksipedia Online Daily, some reflections on online learning in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic are the need for self-evaluation of each and every role played. First, evaluation as an educator in the sense that teachers have to learn a lot and improve in the use of technology. There is a need for training for teachers so they can add insight and expertise in using applications on the internet to support online system learning. Input from fellow subject teachers in creating an online system learning model so that learning material is conveyed properly to students. Second, evaluation as a student since many students are not serious about participating in online system learning, so students need to be aware that learning must continue during a pandemic, not school holidays. Some

students do not have smartphones due to economic factors, namely the parents' limitations in providing funds to purchase internet data packages. This needs attention from schools and the government so that the online learning system properly works. Third, evaluation as a parent where parents are expected to provide support and provide assistance to their children while doing online learning, so that the learning carried out by the teacher is well conveyed to the students and children are controlled in using internet media since there are some children who take the chances to play games online while online learning is carried out. Fourth, evaluation for the government as a policy maker to make a breakthrough so that the online learning system can be applied in cities and villages since the internet network has not reached all rural areas. The learning system via television broadcasts is good but does not yet include learning for all levels of elementary, middle and high school (Aksipedia, 2021). In conclusion, online learning requires reflection and awareness from all parties so that education continues, teachers continue to carry out their duties as educators, and students get their right to education even during the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The massive spread of the coronavirus has limited human activity and reduced activities outside the home. The government is responding to the Covid-19 emergency by changing the new learning system, namely online learning, as in 3 Public Middle Schools in Banda Aceh City, implementing online learning according to a government circular. However, the facts in the field, teachers encounter various obstacles, including difficulty in conveying the material, determining applications that are suitable and adequate for all students, conducting evaluations that are less objective because teachers do not monitor students directly, facing a lack of participation from students for various reasons such as internet data quotas and home areas that are less stable for internet networks so that material cannot be delivered optimally, and completing the assignments which is not done on time. Education must continue even in the midst of a pandemic. Online learning, which is not clear when it will end due to the Covid-19 pandemic, needs to be reflected on the condition that all parties involved are fully aware of their roles and self-evaluation.

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