Higher Education Students’ Perception on Online Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract
Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on higher education system in Indonesia where lecturers and students have to carry out online teaching and learning process. This study aimed to investigate higher education students’ perception on online learning during covid-19 pandemic and the supporting factors and constraints during online learning. This study used descriptive method. The total respondents were 103 students of Stikes Banyuwangi who joint Intensive English class in the academic year of 2020/2021. The results indicated that students have positive and negative perceptions on online learning. Online learning offers flexibility but it also presents various constraints such as unstable signal, some students were less motivated, more difficult to practice conversation, and high cost of internet. Most students (91%) prefer face to face learning to online learning. In conclusion the important factors in conducting online learning are the availability of supporting tools, stability of internet access, and applications of online learning must be easy to access, attractive, motivating and in the form of combination among several online learning media to provide the best way in delivering and accepting the material during teaching learning process.

Keywords: Students’ Perception, Online Learning, Covid-19 Pandemic.
INTRODUCTION

Corona virus disease (Covid-19) presents new challenges for higher education institutions. To fight Covid-19 the government prohibits the crowd, suggests social and physical distancing, wearing masks and always washing hands. Starting with the recommendation to stay at home then continued with Work from Home and learning from home to break the spread of COVID-19 virus. The circular letter from the Minister of Education and Culture Number 36962 / MPK.A / HK / 2020 stated that all teaching and learning activities at schools and colleges must be conducted through online methods as an effort to prevent the development and spread of Corona virus disease (Covid-19). Most schools and universities respond quickly to the government instruction, including Stikes Banyuwangi to conduct online learning although this decision certainly creates pros and cons in various circles among educational institutions, lectures, students as well as parents. In this circumstance there is the urgent need to keep the students, lecturers, staffs, faculty, societies, and nation save as a whole (Dhawan, 2020).

Covid-19 pandemic encourages the lecturers to teach at home and students to study from home, so online learning becomes a new alternative; the occurrence of new behavior changes in learning has a wide impact on various aspects of campus life such as the change of work system in which the lectures must carry out learning process from face to face learning to online. This phenomenon cannot be accepted easily by lecturers and students because they are not ready to adapt to the digital climate but it is inevitably. In the covid-19 outbreak, e-learning becomes a new trend and thought as the most relevant method in today’s teaching learning process where people are recommended to apply social distancing and avoid the crowds as a strategy in minimizing the spread of Covid-19 virus (Mardiah, 2020).

People behavior has changed during the pandemic, including WFH (Work from Home), everything is virtual, transport mode choice up to control access. The use of technology which previously had been mainly used as a secondary work support has turned into a primary work facility. This also has an impact on the education sector, for example, lecturers and students will be accustomed to conduct distance learning interactions. This sudden change becomes a challenge for the educators to upgrade their skill in using technology required for distant teaching and learning in very short time. The rapid development of technology makes distance learning easier (McBrien & Jones, 2009). E-learning enables students to learn more flexibly, in every situation without limited space and time. The use of online learning is crucial for higher educational institutions and realizes the fact in order to compete with others organizations and to enhance students’ learning experience and also improve the learning outcomes (Stefanovic et al., 2011).

Learning innovation by utilizing online media is needed in order that the learning process continues in which educators are required to design interactive and interesting online learning media. Online learning is still trying to find appropriate pattern in responding the challenges of education life development during this pandemic because it involves new habits for lecturers and students in implementing the distance learning model which become the biggest challenge for academics who are still not used to using blended learning or completely online learning. The use of learning technology that supports online teaching and learning activities is a major concern in maintaining the quality of learning (Rahman & Jamain, 2020).

Some previous studies concerned about online learning have been conducted. (Agung et al., 2020) investigated the students’ perception of online learning during covid-19 pandemic at STKIP Pamane Talino with the subjects were 38 English students. The result showed if students were not ready with the new style in learning and their gadget also did not support the sudden high technology changes, only 54.5% students could comprehend the material easily and some of them were more satisfied on offline class. The previous research by (Irawan et al., 2020) showed that students are bored after 2 weeks studying from home, the parents with low income feel anxious because of high internet cost, the learning is not effective because too many tasks for students.
Another study was carried out by (Adnan, 2020) about the higher education perspectives on online learning in Pakistan, he stated that online learning cannot create expected result in under developed students because they cannot access the internet. On the contrary (Sujawo et al., 2020) mentioned in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, students are interested in using online learning that can be accessed flexibly, anytime and anywhere and their perspectives on online learning have a positive impact amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Online learning is effective to help government minimizing the spread of Covid-19 because it prevents students go away from home, the main point is that the educators should use varied strategies to improve the quality of online learning so the teaching learning activities can run smoothly (Yulia, 2020).

Some studies stated if online learning is effective for the students because it can make students more independent and creative but some researches also mentioned the implementation of online learning is still not optimal and ineffective especially for those who are in rural areas and stuttering in using technology. This study aimed to know the students’ perception on Intensive English online learning during covid-19 pandemic and the supporting factors and constraints during online learning. This perception will be beneficial as an input and reference for the educators, lecturers, schools, and institutions to improve the model, strategies, and quality of online learning.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applied qualitative descriptive which focused on survey given to the respondents to know the students’ perception on online learning during covid-19 pandemic and the supporting factors and constraints during online learning. The respondents were the students of Stikes Banyuwangi who joint Intensive English class in the 2020/2021 academic year. There were 103 students as respondents from five study programs they were 16 students from diploma three of nursing, 42 students from diploma three of pharmacy, 13 students from diploma four of Medical Laboratory Technology, 15 students from bachelor in nutritional science and 17 students from bachelor of midwifery. The research instruments used were questionnaire by Google form and interview by zoom cloud meeting. A questionnaire is a data collection method that is carried out by providing a series of written questions to be answered by the respondents (Sugiyono, 2018).

The answers of respondent in Google form was analyzed descriptively to obtain the data needed and to know the students’ perception on online learning. The questionnaire asked and measured several things such as: 1) whether online learning simplify the interaction between students and lecturers, 2) online learning make students easier to convey opinions rather than face to face, 3) students have stable signal in their area, 4) online learning waste the internet quota, 5) online learning required discipline in collecting the task, and 6) miscommunication occurs with lectures and friends during online learning especially when the network is unstable.

For the interview by zoom cloud meeting asked some questions to know the information about 1) students’ opinion about Intensive English online learning during covid-19 pandemic, 2) students’ understanding about the material presented by lecturers, 3) the effectiveness of Intensive English online learning, 4) kinds of tools have by the students to support online learning, 5) the advantages and constraints during online learning, and 6) students’ preference between online and face to face learning.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Before pandemic happened in Indonesia, Intensive English class was conducted through face to face learning in classroom in which this program focused on speaking ability. This course gives the students opportunity to practice English in the real life situation to support their career as medical professionals. Intensive English program is packed with various fun methods such as games, songs, and role play which make students easier to practice their speaking English without feeling afraid and facilitate them to be more active, confident to speak, and brave to express their idea. But during covid-19 pandemic Intensive English
must be carried out through online learning to avoid the transmission of corona virus, so technology is badly needed in order that the Intensive English program can still run smoothly. Online learning is an effort to transform the teaching learning process in colleges or schools into digital form which is facilitated by internet technology (Munir, 2009).

In conducting Intensive English online class, the platforms used were zoom cloud meeting for virtual face to face learning and conversation practice, whatsapp group for discussion and sending the voice note related to the material, youtube video for explaining material and upload the students’ conversation video, Edmodo, Google classroom and quizizz for giving quiz and exercise to the students. We collaborate some online media so that learning is not monotonous, tedious and more varied. Activities in online learning should have learning activities and psychology that are at least close to face-to-face learning (Anhusadar, 2020). In this case we tried to package the learning model as in offline classrooms although it is still not optimal.

The survey results of the questionnaire given through Google form on 103 students of Stikes Banyuwangi who join online Intensive English class are summarized in figure1:

![Figure 1. The results of survey about online learning](image)

**Note:**
Question 1: Does online learning simplify the interaction between students and lecturers?
Question 2: Does online learning make students easier to convey opinions rather than face to face?
Question 3: Do you have stable signal in your area to support online learning?
Question 4: Does online learning waste the internet quota?
Question 5: Does online learning make you more discipline in collecting the task?
Question 6: Does miscommunication occur with lectures and friends during online learning?

Based on the chart in figure 1 about the interaction between students and lectures become more simple during online learning showed 45 (44%) students strongly agree, 31 (30%) students agree, 2 (2%) students are neutral, 20 (19%) students disagree, and 5 (5%) students strongly disagree. It indicated if students are easier to interact with lecturers every time during online learning by social media such as Whatsapp group for discussion. Most students also agree if online learning makes them more courageous to express their opinion especially for introvert students. They feel free to reveal their opinion through online chat. It is shown by the
chart that 67 (65%) students strongly agree, 33 (32%) students agree, and only 3 (3%) students disagree if online learning makes them easier to convey their ideas than face to face learning.

For the availability of internet access, some students access the internet using cellular networks, and only a few student use WiFi services. There were 14 (14%) students have very good internet connection, 31 (30%) students have stable internet access, 6 (6%) students in medium internet connection, 29 (28%) students have bad internet signal, and 23 (22%) students get poor internet access. This condition due to some students lives in rural area where internet is difficult to be accessed. But they have high spirit in following the online lectures. Sometimes they must find any places outside their houses like in garden, city area and even have to find family home to get stable internet connection in order to be able to join online class. It becomes one of obstacles during online learning. It is in line with (Astuti & Febrian, 2019) who stated that the obstacles experienced during online learning are inadequate internet connections and lecturers' instructions that are not well understood by students.

Then most students (69%) strongly agree if online learning waste the internet quota, 20 (19%) students agree, 10 (10%) students disagree, and 2 (2%) students strongly disagree. The problem of internet quota also becomes an obstacle for students; this situation of course adds to the additional expenses for students and parents in responding to online learning. Even though the institution and government have provided internet quota but they still need to buy more internet quota in order to join online learning especially if online lecture is conducted via video conference consumed much data quota as has been revealed by (Nasely, 2020) if online learning using video conference is quite expensive. So in implementing online Intensive English class, the lecturers combine video conference and other quota-friendly online learning applications so it does not burden students in purchasing internet quota.

The fifth question about the students’ discipline in collecting the tasks during online learning 39 (38%) students strongly agree, 47 (45%) students agree, 10 (10%) are neutral, and 7 (7%) students disagree. Most of students agree because there is a deadline for submitting assignments that have been set by the system in online application where if the students are late, they cannot longer collect or access the assignments that have been given by the lecturers, so it encourages the students to do the assignments on time although there were those who disagree but the percentage is small.

And the last question about miscommunication happened during online learning 28 (27%) students strongly agree, 49 (48%) students agree, 5 (5%) students are neutral, 19 (18%) students disagree, and 2 (2%) students strongly disagree. Most of students agree if online learning cause miscommunication between students and lecturers and among the students especially if the internet connection is trouble or other factors such as less focus on the lecture explanation. Online teaching strategy is badly needed in order to create a reciprocal relationship between students and lecturers to avoid miscommunication.

Besides giving questionnaires, the researchers also collected the data by interviewing the students through zoom cloud meeting with several questions. The result showed all students (100%) have smart phone to support online learning, but only 67(65%) students have laptop. Online learning is the best alternative to break the chain of corona virus and offer flexibility for both students and lecturers because the schedule can be easily set and carry out lectures anywhere. It is in line with (Alchamdani et al., 2020) if online learning ease the students to participate in the learning process everywhere and provide them security in order not to be affected by Covid-19. The students’ ability in ICT increased because they must learn new applications related to online class. Online learning also makes students more creative, independent, and become autonomous learners.

Some students think if online learning is boring because students cannot interact directly with friends and lecturers like in offline class; they got tired eyes staring at the smart phone or laptop screen every day from morning to evening. Online learning is more complicated because the assignments from lecturers
increase; the students get additional work to create and send photos, videos, download materials, and upload tasks that have been done which need long time in the process.

During Intensive English online class 29 (28%) students can comprehend the material presented by lecturers well, 34 (33%) students can understand the explanation and instructions from lecturers although sometimes misunderstanding occurs, and 40 (39%) students are difficult to comprehend the material. It happens because students’ perceptive power and abilities are not the same. Students mentioned if direct explanation from lecturers in offline classroom is easier to be understood and avoid the possibility of misunderstanding.

The other problem is bad internet access for the students in rural area. It often causes miscommunication due to the lecturer’s voice falters, it cannot be heard clearly even some students are difficult to join the zoom class and often suddenly come out of the classroom because of the poor signal. But fortunately the materials shared in Whatsapp group and explanation in YouTube videos shared by the lectures keeps students from missing the explanation. They can read or watch video many times to see the explanation. It is in accordance with (Simamora, 2020) the material given by lecturers can be read or seen repeatedly so that students can play back material that has not been understood.

The result of interview also indicated that 89 (86%) students stated Intensive English online class was less effective because the material presented may not be understood by all students and it is still new experience for students and lecturers to do totally online learning. During online learning, the students are more difficult to practice the conversation in pairs or in group directly like in a real-life context with full expression and action because they can only see their friends directly through screen when zoom meeting was conducted, no face to face like in real class whereas Intensive English more emphasis on conversational practice. Some students are not enthusiastic following the online class because of boring only seeing the mobile phone/laptop screen. Mostly students (91%) preferred face to face learning than online learning, and 9% students required blended learning (combination between face to face and online learning).

Some benefits of online learning for students are they can attend lectures everywhere without coming to the campus. This is in line with the opinion from (Alchamdani et al., 2020) who stated that the implementation of online learning is a new experience which presents flexibility and easiness in learning without going to campus. Students can attend lectures whenever and wherever they want as long as they have a good internet connection. Students do not need to regularly come to campus as an effort to comply with government recommendations not to gather in crowds to break the chain of coronavirus spreading.

Online learning can also increase the students’ learning outcomes while combating the resources reduction especially in higher level education (Nguyen, 2015). In online learning the students are trained to be more responsible, creative, independent, and confident learners. Online learning provides benefits and conveniences with the support of discussion room platform to face-to-face which can be done virtually (Herliandry et al., 2020). Discussion, questions and answers in lectures are flexible because they can be asked via chat either to lecturers or classmates. Discussion is not limited only during lectures, but after class the lecturers facilitate students to interact and ask whatever they do not understand about the material.

Online learning seems easy but it is not as easy as imagined. There are several things that need to be thought and considered such as learning models, methods, strategies, learning outcomes, and the availability of facilities that support teaching learning process for both students and lecturers like smart phone, laptop, and availability of internet access. (Setiawan & Iasha, 2020) uttered some obstacles during online learning especially in rural areas are learning innovation, the access of internet, and the facilities used to support online learning.

The constraint of online learning is the availability of internet service. Some students access the internet using cellular and some of them use WiFi services in their house. Students who live in rural area often get unstable connection; the bad signal causes trouble when joining the online class. Besides students revealed
that to take part in online learning, they had to pay for the internet data quota. It is also declared by (Jones & Sharma, 2020) if online learning cost more expensive than face-to-face learning. Students stated if learning in the form of video conferencing consumed a lot of data quota, while online discussions through Whatsapp group do not require much quota.

Some students think that online learning is boring because they only listen explanation from lecturers in front of zoom screen and conversation practice was done virtually by zoom, Whatsapp video call, making video or sending voice note. It is less interesting and makes them less enthusiastic in online class. Poor level participation from students also happened because sometimes it is difficult for them to focus on the screen of zoom meeting when the lecture gave the explanation, moreover when they are not in a conducive atmosphere and many disturbances such as the noise from the motorbike, his/her younger sibling is crying, and people in the house are screaming.

The teaching methods, media, and the platforms used in online learning process in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic have not been fully effective. One of the causes is the availability of internet access. The institutions and educators still try to adapt in this new condition and find the most appropriate and efficient strategy/model in creating quality online learning and making meaningful learning for continuing of teaching learning activities in this pandemic era. The results of this study are expected to be very useful for educators and students who have the same problems in managing learning during the Covid19 pandemic, where we are limited in space to meet directly in real class namely by applying online learning by utilizing various platforms which support online learning such as Zoom Cloud Meetings, Whatsapp, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Google Meet, Quizziz and others application.

This research results supported the previous study conducted by (Wijayanengtias & Claretta, 2020) who revealed that students’ perception on online lectures are good enough but they are less satisfied with its implementation due to supporting facilities like internet quota. The differences of this study with the previous one were this study was conducted at Stikes Banyuwangi, the campus which is on the eastern tip of Java island, while the previous one was conducted at 10 best universities in Surabaya, the area which has the highest case of covid-19 in East Java and located in an urban area with minimal signal interference, while in Stikes Banyuwangi, many students live in rural areas which cause signal constraints. On the other hand most of students in Surabaya get facilities in the form of additional internet quota with different amounts from each campus and get discount of tuition payments ranging from three hundred to six hundred thousand, while in Stikes Banyuwangi rely on internet quota assistance from the government only.

Based on the researchers’ experience in this research process, there are several shortcomings in order to be concerned by future researchers in order to further refine and improve their future research such as the number of respondents is only 103 people, of course it is still insufficient to describe the real situation. This is a new experience for students in implementing full online learning; they are still not familiar with some online learning models so that the lecturers must pay extra attention in managing students in learning. Besides, in the process of data retrieval, the information provided by respondents through questionnaires sometimes does not show their actual opinion, this happens because sometimes there are differences in thoughts, assumptions and different understandings of each respondent as well as other factor such as honesty in filling out the respondents' opinions in the questionnaire.

CONCLUSION

In order to break the chain of Covid19 spread, the implementation of Intensive English class in Stikes Banyuwangi must be conducted in online learning as the best solution in this pandemic era. The research result indicated that students’ perceptions towards online learning are various both positive and negative. It can be concluded that the important factors in conducting online learning are the availability of supporting data like smart phone or laptop, stability of internet access, and the use of various online learning media so
that teaching earning activities also more varied so that students are more enthusiastic and do not feel bored in participating the online lectures. This research results can be used as reference for educators, lecturers, schools, and institutions to improve the model, strategies, and quality of online learning and other researchers to do other research related to online learning in this pandemic era.

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