IMPACT AND VULNERABILITY OF DISTANCE LEARNING ON THE MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS OF STUDENTS

Raden Rachmad Aditya1; Zuhrotun Ulya2

Correspondence: raden_aditya@ub.ac.id
1Medical Student of Brawijaya University; 2Psychiatry Department Medical Faculty Brawijaya University

ABSTRACT

Background: Since the first cases of COVID-19 were discovered, various countries have sought various methods and ways to deal with the pandemic. Some adaptations also need to be made to avoid further adverse effect, such as lockdown which has an impact in learning for all students around the world. The face-to-face or offline learning system that has been applied as a learning method has also been changed to a distance or online learning method. This has the potential to have a negative impact on the mental health of students. This study aims to discuss the impact and vulnerability of students to distance or online learning methods.

Method: Researchers used 15 journals and literature that discuss the impact and vulnerability of distance learning on students’ mental health conditions.

Conclusion: Distance or online learning is one of the methods to reduce the spread of covid, but this has a negative impact on mental health especially on the students. The effects experienced by students include anxiety, mild to severe stress, social media fatigue, and depression. The things that underlie this impact have several factors such as unfamiliarity and time needed for adaptation, the ability to use technology, a heavy burden of responsibility, and concerns about the economic burden of parents to finance learning activities. In this pandemic condition, efforts from all parties are needed so that the bad impact on the mental health of students can be minimized.

Keywords: vulnerability, distance learning, mental health, students.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid 19 pandemic is an emergency condition by the World Health Organization and was declared a pandemic in March 2020, this disease has caused devastation to individuals and institutions in the world. The Covid-19 virus pandemic has also had a significant impact on the economy, society and psychology, and health is an important issue compared to other fields. Education data in Indonesia shows that the number of elementary schools in Indonesia is 148.673 with 25.238.200 students, 39.637 junior high schools with 9.981.200 students, 13.692 senior high schools with 4.845.100 students, vocational high schools 14.064 with 5.009,300 students. During the Covid 19 pandemic based on Ministry of Education and Culture official letter number 4 of 2020 concerning the implementation of educational policies in the emergency period of the spread of Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19), face-to-face learning will be transformed into an online or home learning system. Due to pandemic conditions that have caused changes in many fields, especially in school and learning method, which have the potential to have a negative impact on mental health, especially for students. So, we need knowledge of the impact and vulnerability how to deal with this condition.

METHOD

Researchers used 15 journals and literature that discuss the impact and vulnerability of distance learning on the mental health conditions of students.

DISCUSS

Student Perspective on Distance Learning.
Learning from an offline or face-to-face system to online certainly requires adaptation to the changes that occur. UNESCO said that a total of 39 country that closed schools during the pandemic with a total of 421.388.462 students. The total number of students who have the potential to be at risk from pre-primary to senior secondary education is
of anxiety and depression than first-year students. This happens because of the heavier burden of the curriculum, as well as the thought that isolation and online learning will only hinder the progress of their studies. This data from UNICEF from 4,000 students from 34 provinces in Indonesia also gave a similar statement where 38% of students said they lacked teacher guidance while 35% cited poor internet access. If distance learning continues, 62% say they need internet quota assistance. The survey results also indicated that students were eager to return to school. Where 66% said they felt uncomfortable studying from home and a majority 87% said they wanted to return to school immediately.

Impact of Distance Learning on Students.

Online learning is not easy for students. This difficulty is not only due to the ability and skills in the use of technology, but is also related to the large workload of courses that exist during the COVID-19 pandemic. This occurs because of the habit of students who do face-to-face learning regularly, whereas previous distance learning was only done incidentally. So that this change in learning patterns creates problems for students. The impact that arises because of this condition is in the form of pressure and stress on students who do distance learning. In this condition, certain pressures become heavier, so that students do a lot of coping stress, one of which is being involved with the use of social media which now actually causes social media fatigue. This is due to uncontrolled news about COVID-19 and also academic information being shared through social media. Social media fatigue is a subjective feeling of social media users feeling tired, irritated, angry, disappointed, losing interest, or reduced motivation related to the interaction of several aspects of social media use. Social media fatigue causes individuals to lose concentration and focus on what to do. There are several things that can affect social media fatigue, such as neuroticism personality traits that reflect an individual's tendency to experience emotional downturn, nervous tension, and stress. Neurotic people tend to feel insecure, and when their involvement in social media is too high they feel they lose their anonymity and intruded by the social media itself, which can lead to increased anxiety. Another thing that can affect social media fatigue is the invasion of life where the perception of individuals who feel that their personal life is disturbed by social media related to work and assignments. Information overload is also a factor influencing where there is an information condition that exceeds an individual's capacity to process information. The more intense the perceived information becomes a source of stress, the more difficult it will be for individuals to control their psychological burden.

There are complaints about purchases and quota requirements. Students feel anxious about their parents income due to policies to maintain physical distance, while the learning activities continues. Access to online learning is dominated by students whose parents are economically well off. On the other hand, students who come from below-average family economic conditions feel restless because they are unable to buy internet quotas which have an impact on their final grades. In this study all subjects depend on the income of parents. In a study conducted on 70 undergraduate nursing students where this study measured stress levels using a questionnaire with the categories of mild stress <56%, moderate stress 56-75%, and severe stress> 75% of the total questionnaire score. Existing stressors are related to concerns about contracting
Covid-19, boredom while doing social distancing, difficulty understanding online lecture materials, and the burden of lecture assignments. Most of the respondents experienced moderate stress levels (38.57%). Data was obtained that the highest average score contained questions relating to the difficulty of understanding the material when lecturing online. This shows that the question item is the thing that causes the most stress to students during the Covid-19 pandemic. In other studies showing the impact of online learning on students, such as online learning still confuses students, students become passive, less creative and productive, students experience stress. Whatsapp, e-learning, and also Zoom applications are still confusing for students. There are new reports that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, in which there was an increased need for counseling for Generation Z students due to increased stress and moral distress. This can occur as a result of drastic changes in the learning system and environment, as well as thoughts about their future career prospects.

**Intervention.** Several interventions can be carried out to ease the psychological burden on students through distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This intervention can be carried out on teachers, students, and also the environment. Students themselves can adjust learning methods that are more effective in dealing with this pandemic situation such as plan-making where students are expected to be able to sort out things that are more specific and need to be resolved first. This plan-making intervention is expected to change the mindset of students so that they think more procedurally in doing their assignments. Students can also use value relevance interventions, which are interventions in the form of motivational activities to increase students' understanding in finding important values following learning and the need for knowledge gained for the lives of students. In addition, students can also intervene with mental contrasting with implementation intentions (MCII) where this intervention encourages students to reflect on things that can support or help achieve their goals and also plan how to overcome obstacles that will be faced in the future. Cultural factors influence the success of MCII interventions because students in non-individualistic countries can benefit from interventions through a social environment that encourages making and realizing plans that have been made and also monitoring the progress achieved by these students.

**RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

Apart from the individual student perspective, intervention can also be done to the teacher or educator. There are 5 points proposed to improve performance and also help students adapt to online learning in the conditions of the COVID 19 pandemic:

1. Instruction: it is very important that online instructions are explicit, orderly, and neat, especially on material that is considered difficult.
2. Content: in addition to clear instructions, selective use and delivery of learning content is also very important. Given the large amount of content that is not precise and can provide wrong information on the internet. Prioritize the use of literature in textbook form.
3. Motivation: providing encouragement and also support is important because it becomes an energy for students to learn. Discussion of hours or learning schedules can be done so that students have time to work on tasks and other activities as well as daily activities that have fixed hours (such as waking and sleeping time).
4. Relationships with students: interpersonal relationships are important to note because humans are social creatures. Maximize interaction with students such as using applications that allow for face-to-face meetings, videos, social media groups, etc.
5. Mental Health: if mental health is impaired then learning will also suffer. Pay attention to students who have special needs such as students with dyslexia, ADHD, etc. Give understanding to students and families to be able to contact the right person (school counseling guidance, support unit, or similar) in case of mental or mental health problems. It must be understood that in a pandemic, students can have high anxiety because they will lose loved ones or get infected by the disease.

Social guidance and counseling had a good impact on studies conducted on students who undertook distance learning from the University of Nairobi. Positive impacts that can be given include helping to have and increasing self-confidence, interpersonal skills, self-sensitivity, and helping to overcome disturbing feelings due to isolation, etc.

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