
Students' Perceptions on Virtual Learning during The Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of ASM Santa Maria Semarang

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the students' perception of the effect of virtual learning during the covid-19 pandemic. The subject of this research is 40 students in the secretary program, consisting of students from urban and rural areas. The distribution course of the secretary program must be 70% of practice and 30% of theory. Therefore, this research reveals how they perceive virtual learning for those who have more training than theory courses. Employing an online survey using google forms, 12 qualitative questions in the questionnaire were delivered online. The result of the study shows that students' perceptions of virtual learning are positive. They realise that virtual learning is the only solution to helping the smooth teaching and learning process. However, students feel burdened with the internet quota and signal quality. They still understand the material provided by the lecturer though they find difficulties regarding communication with their lecturers and handling study virtually. Students also faced challenges finding references, doing the assignment, and collecting the assignment. Those difficulties can be caused by their limited internet access. Meanwhile, they can easily use virtual applications since they belong to the 'Z' generation, familiar with the technology.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, perception, virtual learning.

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1. Introduction

The covid-19 pandemic impacts whole sectors; economic, social life, cultures, education, etc. We are suggested to stay at home, work from home, learn from home, and even worship from home to decrease the spreading of the covid-19 virus. Those are new ways of life for us. We've never imagined it before; nevertheless, this condition forces us to design learning virtual by using technology. The sudden learn-from-home mode enacted on 24 March 2020 due to the covid-19 pandemic has forced all schools to shift to online education with little preparation regarding internet access, teacher capacity, and student-parent readiness. The pandemic disruption has shed light on the widening digital divide that seriously impacts human capital development in Indonesia (Lie et al., 2020). Therefore, although students and teachers are in different places, they can continue teaching and learning.

Years ago, the concept of blended learning was introduced in Indonesia. Technology allows educators to improve the quality of learning through a blended learning model (Resmiaty et al., 2021). Technology-based learning is the choice during epidemics. Almost all schools worldwide implement online-based learning (Oktaria & Rahmayadevi, 2021). Media technology benefits teachers and students to access the materials and interact in conventional face-to-face learning and outside the classroom through an online platform (Zainuddin et al., 2018). The existence of media technology makes it easier for teachers and students to access learning material anywhere and anytime through kinds of sites. Moreover, in the education sector, the internet is a perfect device for learning that indicates flexibility and expediency to students while offering endless opportunities for teachers in innovative teaching (Aji et al., 2020). The material is designed electronically using the internet, focused on encouraging and involving teachers and students to apply a blended learning system. Blended learning is learning that combines online and face-to-face learning. Therefore, the spread of the internet increased the popularity of distance education and created new terminologies like online learning, e-learning or web-based learning (Güzer & Caner, 2014). From those statements, blended learning is similar to virtual learning. The difference is that blended learning combines online and face-to-face learning, while virtual learning is fully online learning. In the current condition, virtual learning is suggested in the teaching and learning process during the covid-19 pandemic.

Virtual learning can be done using a gadget or cellular phone and computer. It is an approach to learning that allows students or learners to access learning materials remotely without being physically in the classroom (Moore et al., 2011). The rapid development of technology, communication and information, especially the internet, has become a demand for teachers in Indonesia to use it as a source of positive learning media in supporting the teaching and learning process (Zainuddin et al., 2018). Recently, many platforms have been provided to help this activity, such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Edmodo, Microsoft Team, etc. Through the internet, students can obtain instruction and learn easily at

home by simply clicking a few buttons on the computer to listen live or asynchronously to the teacher thousands of miles away, interact with the teacher or their classmates, and solve problems without having to physically be in a classroom (Armstrong-Mensah et al., 2020). It is in line with Güzer and Caner (2014). They stated that the spread of the internet increased the popularity of distance education and created new terminologies like online learning, e-learning or web-based learning.

Nevertheless, virtual learning can't be done smoothly when students in rural areas do not have internet access. This becomes a serious problem for students and teachers. Students can't follow the learning, while the teacher can't deliver the material in line with Yaseen et al. (2021). The latter conducted comparative research between the UK and Jordanian Universities on the effects of online learning on students' performance. The results of this research indicate that both UK and Jordanian have experienced a similar impact on student performance due to online learning. There have been technological challenges that have hindered communication between students and faculties. The survey indicated that students with good academics can easily adapt to the transition to online learning. Still, the semi-structured interview indicated that there have also been cases where academically good students could not perform at their best due to limited technological competence or access to the hardware required to continue performing as well as other students.

Virtual learning is the best way for teachers and students in the teaching and learning process during the covid-19 pandemic; even so, when compared to face-to-face learning, the effectiveness is different. Lie et al. (2020) argued that during the global pandemic, online learning is essential to facilitate students' learning access since it gives students a broader chance to access learning materials independently. Meanwhile, Muhammad and Kainat (2020) revealed that online learning helps safeguard students' and faculty's health amid the covid-19 pandemic. However, it is not as effective as conventional learning because they stated that online learning produces desired results in underdeveloped countries where most students cannot access the internet due to technical and monetary issues.

Meanwhile, Hariyati et al. (2021) investigated virtual learning on students' learning outcomes in urban and rural areas. The result showed that when compared to two different geographical characteristics, students in rural areas tend to be more motivated to carry out virtual learning. Even though students from urban areas have little motivation, the motivation among students in urban areas remains to contribute to improving students' learning outcomes. Furthermore, it ensures that motivation plays an essential role in the process of virtual learning implementation.

Those previous studies examined the concept and benefit of virtual learning during covid-19, the development of technology that supports virtual learning, and the comparison of virtual learning for students in urban and rural areas. Meanwhile, this research focuses on students' perception of the effect of virtual learning during the covid-19 pandemic. Simpson

and Weiner in Amir et al. (2020) identified perception as one's understanding or comprehension of a phenomenon being captured by their mental impression. Meanwhile, Morgan et al. in Ermawati (2020) defined perception as how the world looks, sounds, feels, tastes, or smells. Therefore, this research considers perception a student's intuition toward virtual learning. It is in line with Ridho et al. (2019), who stated that perception is the experience of objects, event, and relationships acquired by resuming information and interpreting a message. They added that after knowing students' perceptions, the lecturer could change what is not liked by students and improve what has been selected by them. Thus, the student's perception is critical, especially for the lecturer. Students' perception is necessary to investigate since by understanding their perceptions. A lecturer can gain information from students' points of view. Studying students' perceptions will be essential for the lecturer to evaluate the result of the treatment which had been done.

The subject of this research is 40 students in the secretary program, consisting of students from urban and rural areas. The distribution course of the secretary program must be 70% of practice and 30% of theory. Therefore, by doing this research, it can be known how they perceive virtual learning for those who have more practice than theory courses.

2. Method

The research method used was qualitative descriptive by focusing on a survey to investigate the students' perception of the effect of virtual learning during the covid-19 pandemic. The subject of this research is one class of the secretary program for the academic year 2021/2022, which consists of 40 students. The survey method is appropriate since the researcher distributed questionnaires to the subject research to be answered. The survey was done in the google form and then was shared with students. The questionnaire provided 12 questions that covered students' perceptions, which were arranged by adjusting the virtual learning conditions by adopting Nasution and Ahmad's (2020) work. Then, the collected data was analysed and described to obtain the answer to the question.

3. Finding and Discussion

The researcher distributed questionnaires to gather the answer to the research problem. It was conducted to investigate students' perceptions related to the effect of virtual learning during the covid-19 pandemic. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions describing students' perceptions during virtual lectures in one semester. The indicators of questionnaire comprised four indicators: (1) virtual learning and the current situation, (2) the internet quality, (3) the learning material, and (4) students' difficulties in following virtual learning. The following are the results of the questionnaire.

Table 1. The result of the questionnaire

No	Question	Answer Frequency				Number of Responses
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
1.	Virtual learning is following current conditions	2	3	22	13	40
	Percentage (%)	5	7	55	33	
2.	Virtual learning helps the smooth process of lectures	5	5	20	10	40
	Percentage (%)	12	13	50	25	
3.	I'm burdened with the quota for virtual lectures	6	4	15	15	40
	Percentage (%)	15	10	37	38	
4.	Signal quality hinders me in virtual lectures	1	2	10	27	40
	Percentage (%)	2	5	25	68	
5.	The suitability of virtual course material with the RPS	0	9	19	12	40
	Percentage (%)	0	22	48	30	
6.	I understand the material provided by the lecturer during virtual lectures	1	6	24	9	40
	Percentage (%)	2	15	60	23	
7.	I find it difficult to handle the time to study virtual	8	8	15	9	40
	Percentage (%)	20	20	37	23	
8.	There are difficulties communicating with lecturers during virtual lectures	3	6	22	9	40
	Percentage (%)	7	15	55	23	
9.	There are difficulties in finding references or reading material during virtual lectures	6	9	13	12	40
	Percentage (%)	15	22	33	30	
10.	There are difficulties in doing assignments during virtual lectures	3	14	12	11	40
	Percentage (%)	7	35	30	28	
11.	There are difficulties in using virtual applications	7	15	6	12	40

No	Question	Answer Frequency				Number of Responses
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
	Percentage (%)	17	38	15	30	
12.	Trouble collecting assignments during virtual lectures	6	13	11	10	40
	Percentage (%)	15	32	28	25	

SD: Strongly Disagree

D: Disagree

A: Agree

SA: Strongly Agree

In the first question, virtual learning follows current conditions, and most of the students answered agree. 7% answered that they disagree, 5% strongly disagree, 55% agree, and 33% strongly disagree. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of the students decided that virtual learning is following the current condition; at this time, which refers to the covid-19 pandemic, in line with Aji et al. (2020), who stated that the pandemic coronavirus is forcing educational institutions to shift rapidly to distance and online learning. It forces teachers and students to apply blended learning even though they may not be ready to teach and learn in fully online contexts.

In the second question, virtual learning helps the smooth process of lectures. The result shows that 12% strongly disagree, 13% disagree, 50% agree, and 25% strongly agree. Based on the data, the students who answered agreed and disagreed with the significant difference 75% of students agree that virtual learning helps the smoothness of lectures in current conditions. It can be said that the students realize that the teaching and learning process must continue even in a pandemic situation. Digital competence also impacts the virtual teaching and learning process, in line with Omotayo and Haliru in Yaseen et al. (2021). They stated that digital competence is required when classes are conducted virtually. They added that students' and teachers' abilities to utilise a digital setting, such as using the graphical user interface, understanding audio-video settings, and compiling their assignments in the necessary software.

The third statement is, "I'm burdened with the quota for virtual lectures." There are 15% answered strongly disagree, 10% disagreed, 37% agreed, and 38% strongly agreed. From the data obtained, it can be shown that 75% of students have a problem-related quota for virtual learning. It can't be denied that the internet quota has become a problem for students, as we know that virtual learning needs a quota to access learning platforms. Therefore when the

students are burdened with quota, they can't follow the teaching and learning smoothly even though both lecturer and students have high competence in using a digital platform. As stated by (Aji et al., 2020), in the education sector, the internet is a perfect device for learning that indicates flexibility and expediency to students while offering endless opportunities for teachers in innovative teaching. The material is designed electronically using the internet, focused on—d involving teachers and students to apply a blended learning system. Thus, when students are burdened with the quota, it becomes a serious problem since the learning process can't be done smoothly.

In the fourth question, signal quality hinders me in virtual lectures, a surprisingly 93% of students answered agreed. The data shows that 2% strongly disagree, 5% disagree, 25% agree, and 68% strongly agree. Most ASM Santa Maria students live in rural areas. As a result, they answered agreed with this question. Nowadays, not all areas have been reached in Indonesia by internet access. According to research conducted by Dube in Kusuma (2022), teaching in rural areas during the pandemic faced challenges, such as unavailability of internet connection, shortage of devices to support online learning, closure of internet cafes, and lack of computer skills for teaching.

In the fifth question, the suitability of virtual course material with the lesson plan, none of the students answered strongly disagree, 22% disagreed, 48% agreed, and 30% strongly agreed. Most of the students answered agree. In ASM Santa Maria Semarang, each lecturer must deliver the lesson plan for the semester forward at the beginning of the semester. The purpose is to give students information about the material that will be discussed and the assignment they will do. The lesson plan is customised to the current condition when doing virtual learning.

In the sixth question, I understand the material provided by the lecturer during virtual lectures. The data obtained 2% responded strongly disagree, 15% disagreed, 60% agreed, and 23% strongly disagreed. Most students decided since the lecturer uses digital media or platforms that can be accessed easily. The material, assignment, and even the examination were uploaded to platforms. Hence, the students downloaded all the material and discussed it when teaching and learning. The lecturer chooses Google Classroom and Google Meet for virtual learning since those platforms can be easily accessed and free. Google Classroom is one of the free services by Google in the Gsuite for Education plan. It promotes paperless instruction for streamlining assignments, boosts collaboration and fosters seamless communication to make teaching more productive and meaningful (Joy et al., 2018). Nevertheless, students said that quota and signal become their problems in virtual learning, but they still understand the material during virtual learning.

In the seventh question, I find it challenging to handle the time to study virtually. 20% of students answered strongly disagree, 20% disagreed, 37% agreed, and 23% strongly agreed.

Virtual learning becomes something new for them. Therefore it's normal if students to feel challenged to manage time to study virtual since it differs from their previous habits.

There are difficulties in communication with lecturers during virtual lectures in the eighth question. Students responded that 7% strongly disagree, 15% disagree, 55% agree, and 23% strongly agree. From the data obtained, it can be concluded that students are not ready to communicate virtually with the lecturer. Some factors can be affected, and one of them is their internet access. Kusuma (2022) states that not all individuals can participate in virtual communication due to infrastructure constraints such as a lack of technical tools, internet connections, bandwidth, and internet restrictions. However, internet access still becomes an obstacle.

In the ninth question, there are difficulties in finding references or reading material during virtual lectures. There are 15% of students answered strongly disagree, 22% disagreed, 33% agreed, and 30% strongly disagreed. Most students face difficulties in finding references can be caused by the limited digital libraries and limited quota.

In the tenth question, there are difficulties in doing assignments during virtual lectures. Students responded that 7% strongly disagree, 35% disagree, 30% agree, and 28% strongly agree. From the data obtained, 58% of students agree with the statement above. Their readiness faced virtual learning can be the reason for this. We know that in virtual learning, we can't do face-to-face learning, thereby it caused students who lack the understanding to feel challenged to do the assignments.

In the eleventh question, there are difficulties in using virtual applications. 17% of students answered strongly disagree, 38% disagreed, 15% agreed, and 30% strongly agreed. The total answer for disagreeing is 55%. In ASM Santa Maria Semarang, virtual learning was achieved using Google Classroom and Google Meet. In using those virtual applications, students did not feel difficult since those application was easy to be used. Furthermore, the students belong to Generation Z, which is growing up in the current era of technology (Tafonao et al., 2020). It is also in line with Ahmed (2019), who stated that the Z generation is already using smartphones, social media, and other technologies at a young age.

In the twelfth question, trouble collecting assignments during virtual lectures. Students responded that 15% strongly disagree, 32% disagree, 28% agree, and 25% strongly agree. More than half of the respondents answered agreed. Thereby, it can be analysed that their unstable connection or limited internet access can cause trouble collecting assignments since they can use media or platforms for virtual learning.

The finding reveals that students' perception of virtual learning is very good since, during the covid-19 pandemic is suggested to make virtual learning instead of face-to-face learning. Even though the learning effectiveness is different, the teaching and learning process is forced to implement virtual learning. This result is in line with Dawi (2021), whose research

showed that students could accept virtual learning. The finding of this research also manifests that virtual learning is the only solution in helping the smooth teaching and learning process since there are so many platforms that can be used recently, such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Edmodo, etc. Through those platforms, the teaching and learning process can be done without physical interaction. Similar to the research of Aji et al. (2020) that in the education sector, the internet is a perfect device for learning that indicates flexibility and expediency to students while offering endless opportunities for teachers in innovative teaching. The material is designed electronically using the internet, focused on encouraging and involving teachers and students. Thus, technology provides an opportunity for educators to improve the quality of learning through a blended learning model (Resmiaty et al., 2021). Furthermore, Zainuddin et al. (2018) stated that technology has played an important role in higher education in the 21st century and will continue to play a greater role in the future at all levels and educational disciplines. However, students faced some obstacles in doing virtual learning.

The finding reveals that students feel burdened with the internet quota and signal quality. This finding is similar to Siradjuddin (2020), who found that students have negative factors such as lack of financial support and internet access. As we know, not all areas in Indonesia have distributed internet, especially in rural areas. Therefore, students find difficulties in finding references, doing an assignment, and collecting selections due to their limited internet access. Nevertheless, they still understand the material provided by the lecturer and can also easily use virtual applications since they are Z generation familiar with the technology.

4. Conclusion

Based on the finding above, it can be concluded that this research found that students positively perceived virtual learning during the covid-19 pandemic. It is in line with some previous research that reported similar results. The rapid development of technology has a good impact on all sectors, including the education sector. The internet plays an essential role. Therefore, students in rural areas with limited internet access faced difficulties following teaching and learning during the covid-19 pandemic, including finding related references, collecting assignments, and communicating with their lecturers. Virtual learning is something new for both lecturers and students. Still, this teaching and learning system can support students to interact physically in the classroom and with virtual connections outside the classroom. Accordingly, future researchers can examine the effectiveness of virtual learning or technology-based teaching ESP.

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