

Special Education Teachers' Perceptions Toward Online Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Distance learning or online learning is one of the impacts caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Many problems occur during online learning, including special education teachers. The purpose of this study was to see the perceptions of special education teachers towards distance learning or online learning carried out for children with special needs. This research uses descriptive analysis with case study method. The data were collected using questionnaire questions and the data were analyzed using inductive and thematic analytics. The results of the survey conducted showed that there are still many teachers with special needs who have difficulty with distance learning for children with special needs so that there is a need for the development of creativity from teachers in learning during the pandemic.

Keywords: Distance Learning, Special Education Teachers

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the Covid-19 pandemic is a threat to the global world because of confirmed cases and the high mortality rate (Walker et al., 2020). The impact of this pandemic can be felt as a whole, including in the world of education. Temporary closure of educational activities is conducted by most governments around the world in an effort to contain the spread of the virus (Abidah et al., 2020). UNESCO in states that approximately 107 countries have closed educational institutions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of closing educational institutions has an impact on more than 90% of the world's student population (Viner et al., 2020).

As one of the steps to fight against Covid-19, countries have replaced meeting education activity with distance education. The temporary suspension of face-to-face activities at school causes all teaching and learning activities to be shifted to distance learning where the teacher conducting online learning. Distance learning or distance education is training given to participants or students who do not gather together or students who do not gather together in one place regularly to receive lessons directly from the instructor (Prawiyogi et al., 2020). At this time, distance learning is emphasized more on internet based. The online learning can be divided into two that are synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning places students directly interacting with the teacher such as using online videos or other applications that allow students and teachers to directly interact even though they are online. Whereas the asynchronous form of online learning is a form of learning indirectly or not at the same time, this form of learning uses an independent learning approach such as some subject matter designed in such a way that it can be sent via email or various other platforms (Ogbonna et al., 2019).

Based on previous research, several problems and challenges have been found in online learning environments from various countries and levels of research, for example in (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007). And in the latest research conducted on early childhood education lecturers related to online learning, there are many variations, including network problems and connectivity that is felt by the lecturers themselves. Other obstacles related to student involvement are the lack of feedback from students and the quality of course content affecting the reliability of lecturer research on students (Diningrat et al., 2020). The basic perception of online learning itself for students is considered to be able to improve and

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facilitate collaborative learning that directs them in developing presentation competencies (Verdonck et al., 2019). Positive perceptions from students can increase the existence of feedback so that student competence can increase. Distance learning requires various preparations including school infrastructure (Beneke, 2020). One of the school infrastructures needed is the uneven internet network and other problems that need to be traced back.

Online learning in Indonesia still needs to be addressed even though the level of internet users in Indonesia is quite high at 60% (Kurniawan & Rofiah, 2020). As research conducted by (Muhdi et al., 2020) on online learning in early childhood education, it was found that the formulation of online learning policies in early childhood education was effective but still required more effective efforts in preventing a decline in learning such as constraints on teacher ability, parental ability, economic capacity, facility constraints and pedagogical constraints. This proves that there are still obstacles in online learning both from students, teachers and from parents themselves as facilitators in online learning. The problems that occur are problems that occur in Indonesia. Meanwhile in other parts of the world, online learning has become part of the formal and internal education system because the online learning system in the future will become a major component in higher education (Layne et al., 2013). The existence of technology has changed many aspects of life, one of which is in the field of education as e-learning (Syakur et al., 2020). Therefore, it has been conducted in a pandemic situation that requires all activities from home including learning activities.

Learning activities for children with special needs have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Children with special needs who attend inclusive schools and special schools must conduct learning activities from their respective homes. The implementation of distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic faced many obstacles. Distance learning for children with special needs has its own obstacles, especially children with special needs. According to research conducted by (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016) children with special needs need positive interactions in the learning process as well as varied and flexible activities in the classroom that meet the learning requirements needed by children with special needs. In a study conducted by (Mantzikos & Lappa, 2020) deaf people are increasingly difficult to learn due to changing conditions in the education sector. Research conducted (O'Hagan & Kingdom, 2020) on children with special needs and their families found three specific findings that are the collapse of external support for children and families. The second is reduction of support due to exacerbating stress and fatigue experienced by many families proving that it is very difficult to conduct learning activity in house with unsupportive facilities. The third is lack of attention from the government coupled with a lack of support for families. Children with special needs in inclusive schools based on research results have decreased interest and punctuality due to lack of interaction and innovation of online learning media (Balkist & Agustiani, 2020). Therefore, online learning for children with special needs itself still needs to be improved and analyzed for their needs. From the description above, it can be concluded that online learning during this pandemic has faced many obstacles, both from regular and special schools. This study aims to look deeper into the learning and constraints of special education teachers in Indonesia.

2. Method

This research uses descriptive analysis research with a case study method. A case study can be defined as an intensive study that is used to examine more in-depth data related to variables (Heale & Twycross, 2018). In this study, the impact of distance learning on special education teachers is explored in depth during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia. Data collection uses instruments based on operational definitions which are divided into three main parts that are learning, psychological, and social. Data collection was conducted through online surveys coupled with secondary data in the form of interviews to obtain deeper data. The conducted data analysis followed established procedures for analyzing items and observation indicators. A total of 65 subjects who were special education teachers in both inclusive schools and special schools participated in this study.

Purposive sampling technique is used by distributing questionnaires via online using Google Form. These special and inclusive education teachers come from several areas in the Surakarta Residency. Descriptive data of demographic characteristics including gender, length of teaching experience, level of education, and linearity of graduate majors are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of Participants

	Frequency
Gender	
Male	18
Female	47
Special school or Inclusion school	
Special school	43
Inclusion school	22
Working years as a teacher	
1-5 years	38
5-10 years	15
10-15 years	8
15-20 years	3
20 years	1
Level of education	
Bachelor's	62
Master's	3
Others	-
linearity of majors	
Linear	56
Others	9

Data collection was conducted in two stages through a survey of special education teachers who used online learning during the pandemic as respondents. The survey consists of 10 questions in the form of short answers using Google Form. The second stage of collecting data was conducted using open-ended questions that were adjusted to the first stage data. Each teacher is guaranteed confidentiality and is given an alias. Data were analyzed using inductive and thematic analytics to identify and evaluate what was expressed by the participants

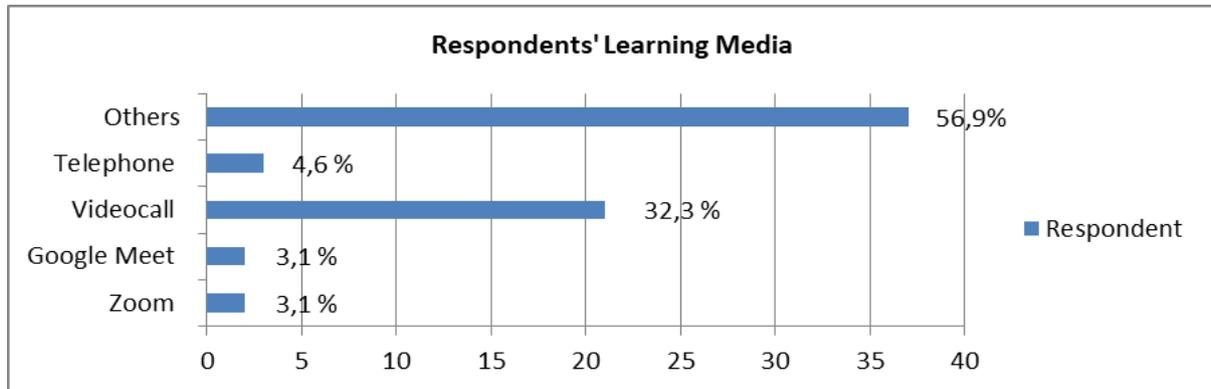
3. Result and Discussion

Learning strategies

The learning strategy is one of the most important parts of the learning process to achieve learning objectives (Pawlak, 2019). The results of this study found that learning strategies include objectives, learning steps, methods, media, time, and learning assessment. The use of learning media aims to make it easier for students to understand the subject matter and increase the effectiveness of learning media (Utami & Koesmijati, 2020). Children with special needs require special handling. Some teachers expressed difficulties in providing suitable learning media for children with special needs because they cannot meet face-to-face directly. Some teachers said that learning videos were one of the media that was easily accessed by children with special needs and assistants for children with special needs. Some teachers of students who are children with disabilities or mental retardation have their own difficulties. The challenge of providing explanations to the guardian or parent presents a different challenge that the teacher must do.

From the results of the Google Form survey which were distributed to special education teachers, the media for the delivery of learning materials provided by the teacher were varied. WhatsApp videocalls are used by some teachers who have students with visual,

hearing and autistic disabilities. Meanwhile, teachers and students with intellectual disabilities other than WhatsApp videocall used video recordings that can be repeated by the companion. Nearly more than 50 % of teachers ask their parents to go to school once a week to take assignments and teachers provide briefings related to the lessons given. It was conducted due to lack of communication problems. The internet signal was one of the obstacles expressed by one teacher who lives in a mountainous area. Limited communication with parents or companions makes the delivery process limited and not optimal.



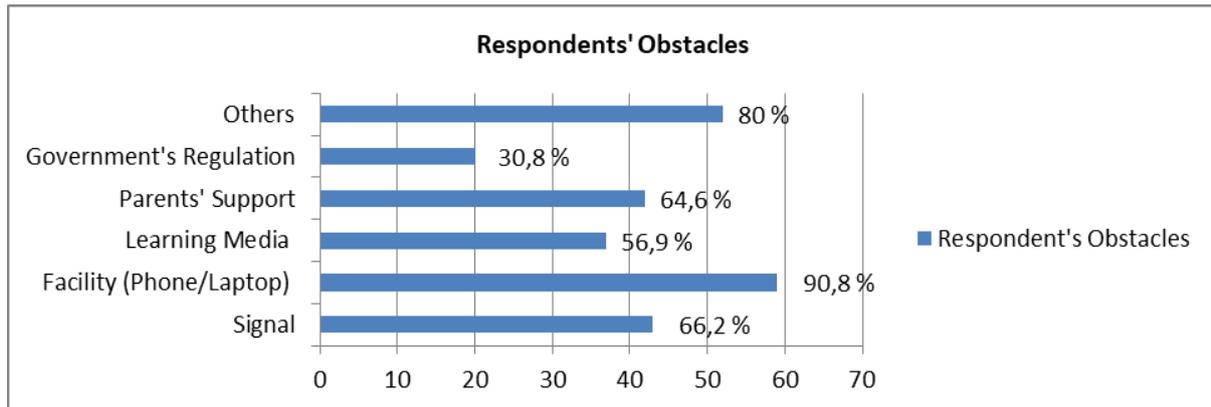
Picture 1. Respondents' Learning Media

In distance learning activities, apart from inadequate infrastructure problems, the absence of face-to-face activities makes the teacher run out of time in teaching one material to students. The students' aspect of psychomotor, affective, and cognitive are affected with activities generally conducted online. The learning strategies applied by the teacher during distance or online learning have an impact on changing learning objectives and learning methods. A teacher must be even more creative in designing learning methods in order to achieve learning objectives.

Obstacles

The challenges and constraints in distance learning activities are very complex, many factors influence the obstacles that occur. Based on the explanation above, there was mentioned a number of inadequate infrastructure. Communication with parents who are hampered is also one of obstacle in distance learning. Conditioning students to participate in distance learning is still difficult for the teacher. Nearly 90% of respondents chose facilities to be the most felt constraint. Special schools in the regions have problems in the economy of parents of students which affect the providing of learning media such as cellphones and laptops. The effect of the economic conditions of parents cannot be found a way out at this time because there is no assistance in providing cellphone facilities or other facilities even though the government itself has provided assistance in the form of internet credit to all students in Indonesia.

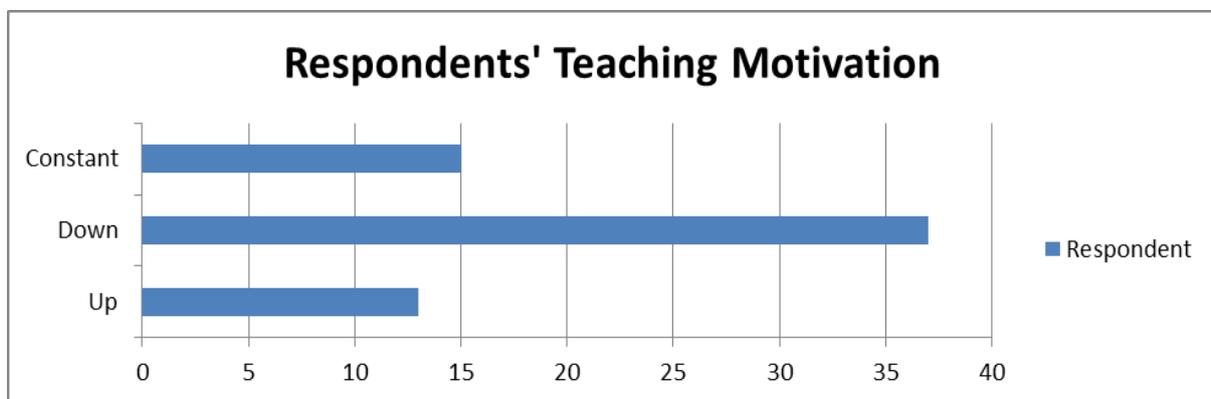
Some teachers also complained that the learning media given to students was difficult to convey because there was no face-to-face between the teacher and students. Teachers have to rack their brains a lot in delivering the learning material that will be given to students. These constraints affect each other so that the impact on the learning material conveyed is not maximal. As experienced in (Chick et al., 2020) who cannot replace direct treatment and must eliminate exposure to learning during this time. Another obstacle related to distance learning is the length of work experience and the linearity of the majors taken. Some senior teachers who have worked for more than 10 years experience difficulties in using today's technology. This is still very common for some special education teachers who are accustomed to face-to-face activities because of the obstacles the children have.



Picture 2. Respondents' Obstacles

Teacher motivation

The situation that has not yet provided a bright hope has made teachers' motivation to experience ups and downs that have changed during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Teacher motivation is strongly influenced by the enthusiasm of the teacher in providing learning to students online. From the results of the interview, it was found that the day the teacher experienced a loss of motivation due to confusion with the learning to be given and students who experienced delays in receiving material. Lack of physical interaction causes a decrease in teacher interest in teaching (Strunc, 2020). Special education teachers fully entrust all efforts to parents or companions of children with special needs at home because before distance learning the teacher has entrusted the first education for children with special needs to be from parents.



Picture 3. Respondents' Teaching Motivation

From the results of research on special education teachers, many obstacles experienced in online learning have made teachers' teaching motivation fluctuate. More than 50% of teachers experience a decrease in teaching motivation due to the obstacles they experience. Special education teachers are accustomed to real and face-to-face learning so these difficulties affect learning motivation.

Discussion

The Covid-19 pandemic has a significant impact on all existing sectors including school closures (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). This results in the learning process being shifted to distance learning or online learning. Almost all countries implement online and offline learning systems designed with health protocols. Seeing the conditions that are currently happening, the existing learning process must be changed so that learning

objectives can be achieved (Guo & Li, 2020). Changes in the learning process affect the performance and quality of learning by teachers, including in Indonesia. Although in fact distance learning activities themselves before the Covid-19 pandemic had been conducted in several educational institutions in several countries and had a positive impact on children's creativity (Sharma, 2016). Based on previous research conducted by (Agarwal & Dewan, 2020) online learning needs to pay attention to several things, including lesson plan that is suitable with online learning.

This study aims to analyze teachers' perceptions toward online learning for children with special needs. Children with special needs who attend inclusive schools and special schools need their own needs. Good teaching materials are created to the conditions and needs of students (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). The barriers that children with special needs have are very varied, so they require more individual handling and are created to their needs. This is related to mentoring students with special needs at home when the teacher cannot accompany them. Time, technical problems and a lack of simultaneity are some of the obstacles that must be addressed in meeting the learning of children with special needs (Alsadoon, 2020). Parents are the most important part of this activity so it is necessary to build a good relationship with parents. A good relationship with successfully achieving the desired results although it must be underlined regarding individual needs, compliance and sustainability of activities (Lendrum et al., 2015). However, from the results of research conducted (Greenway et al., 2020) parents are dissatisfied with the resources and support they receive for their children's educational and psychological needs. At present, once again everything is burdened on parents or family members in distance learning for children with special needs (Petretto et al., 2020). This is in accordance with the results of the study that more than 50% of respondents complained that parental support was an obstacle in the online learning process. The support of parents of students with special needs is needed in today's online learning process.

Previous research which was also conducted by (Putri et al., 2020) on elementary school teachers who identified teacher challenges in online learning was that there were several limitations in the choice of teaching methods that usually apply in face-to-face classes, insufficient coverage of curriculum content, lack of skills in technology which hinders the potential of online learning, takes longer to create electronic learning content and provides longer corrections about student work, more intense and time-consuming communication with parents, challenges to better coordination with other fellow teachers, chief schools and as well as higher internet cost. This is in line with the results of research found in teacher of student with special needs that the learning methods used during online learning cannot be varied so that it affects the scope of material to be provided to students with special needs. Even though students with special needs who have special needs and need special handling are very important to interact directly. This is in accordance with the research conducted by (Köse & Güner-Yildiz, 2020) that children with special needs need real learning. In addition, with the research results that many of the students still do not have the tools or do not have the tools to conduct online learning. This is something that is sensitive to discuss because the government has not been able to provide a solution in this case. Although the government has provided assistance in the form of internet credit, there are still many students with special needs who are born from families with low economic levels so that it is still very difficult to buy tool in order to implement online learning.

More than 80% of elementary school teachers in West Java are not satisfied with the online learning that is being conducted (Fauzi & Sastra Khusuma, 2020). It also affects the teaching motivation of teachers, the results of the conducted research show that more than 50% of special education teachers experiencing a decrease in teaching motivation. It is based on the obstacles experienced, including communication with parents that is not going well. However, this cannot be emphasized on the lack of communication between teachers and parents. There are several things that can be the basis for parental anxiety in online learning. Parents' anxiety about learning at home is based on parents' unpreparedness and disbelief that absence from school will adversely affect their children's education and mental health. From the results of a survey conducted by (Toseeb et al., 2020) on three hundred

and thirty-nine parents with children with special needs, the majority with autism spectrum conditions, provided a detailed explanation of the challenges they faced and requested that educators and policy makers to provide clear arrangements and mental health support for their children. It can be concluded that the relationship between parents and educators in conducting online learning is necessary because the role of parents must be followed by a clear instruction from the educator in providing learning programs. Teacher-family partnerships play an important role in the education of students with special needs because a strong partnership will improve children's academic performance and the quality of life of children with special needs (McKenzie et al., 2020). In addition, parents who work and cannot accompany children in the online learning process are one of the results obtained from this study. Their anxiety also affects the level of parental trust toward teachers in the online learning process.

Several studies that have been explored on parental participation in online learning cannot be focused on parental mistakes because some parents have different arguments and understandings about online learning. When combined with the results of research that lack of parental support becomes an obstacle for teachers in online learning, a deeper study must be conducted therefore teachers and parents can work together to achieve learning goals. Research on teacher perceptions of online learning has been conducted by several parties with various subjects. Research conducted by (Mulenga & Marbán, 2020) states that teachers who conduct online learning produce excellent performance on mathematics subjects with the concept of learning in a technology-rich environment in order to prepare for the future. In addition to the results of research (Auma & Achieng, 2020), teachers who were randomly assigned themselves had positive perceptions of online teaching despite the many challenges that hindered its effectiveness. However, this is inversely proportional to what happened to special education teachers, the perception of online learning in Indonesia for children with special needs is still very low. Hampering challenges affect the teaching motivation of special education teachers. It is affected by many factors both from students, parents, and teachers themselves. With this research, researcher hope that it can make some parties support online learning conducted by special education teachers where in terms of special characteristics of children require special teaching as well. Support from parents, teachers, and government is needed in this learning process (Gurer, 2019). One of the supports that can be conducted according to (Alrefaie et al., 2020) is training for teachers in using technology and designing and monitoring online learning. Peer support and collaboration of all parties can be a determinant of the success of online learning to find solutions adjusting learning material in order to help teachers. In addition, teachers can share their ways in which they motivate students and overcome student boredom during teaching by sharing online learning experiences (MH et al., 2020).

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

From the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the perception of special education teachers about online learning is still low because there are still many obstacles that cannot be resolved such as underprivileged children who cannot have cellphones or laptops to be able to communicate online with teachers, problems with parental support in online learning assistance process for children with special needs, material that is not absorbed optimally because a lot of material cannot be conveyed through the online system, and feedback is constrained by distance both from the teacher and the students themselves. Therefore, this study concluded that the teacher's perception is still low or negative on online learning for children with special needs. It is hoped that with this research, all elements that support the learning process for children with special needs can straighten up for the next semester and are still in the pandemic period. In addition for further research, it is hoped that it research more in-depth toward the understanding of special education teachers.

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