Optimization of Online Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Rural Areas

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Article Info	Abstract
	The Covid-19 pandemic has forced us to carry out all activities, including teaching and learning. The appropriate learning model in this situation is the distance learning model. However, the distance learning model is a new learning model that needs to be socialized and reminded to teachers and student guardians. This community service research aims to conduct distance learning training for teachers and student guardians in Gudung Negara village. The method used was door-to-door socialization to avoid crowds and prevent the spread of Covid-19. Teachers and guardians understood to do activities indirectly and adapted to carrying out learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. This community service activity resulted in student guardians supporting schools in conducting learning activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, teachers could design lesson plans, and student guardians could use the Google Meet platform. Based on this community service activity, as a follow-up, it is hoped that policymakers and relevant institutions will take part in mentoring and supporting teachers in managing learning as well as monitoring and evaluating the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 began to spread in Indonesia at the end of March 2020 until it was declared a pandemic or national disaster (Samudra & Madjid, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affects various aspects of life, including education (Maulyda et al., 2021; Mosleh et al., 2022). All educational institutions, from elementary schools to universities, have implemented massive restrictions by not allowing activities that invite large crowds, such as face-to-face learning. This policy automatically eliminates direct learning activities (Adnyana & Yudaparmita, 2021). Thus, all agencies implement distance learning activities (Mar'ah et al., 2020). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) noted that in 2020, there were 39 countries implementing school closures which affected around 421.4 million students. Therefore, UNESCO provided inclusive distance learning solutions (Purwanto et al., 2020).

One of the policies issued by the government is learning from home through distance learning (Kemendikbud, 2020; Santoso & Sari, 2020). Distance learning has become a new life habit referred to as the new normal (Wibowo, 2020). In its implementation, distance learning is divided into two approaches: distance learning in the network (online) and distance learning outside of the network (offline). With this policy, all aspects of education, including student guardians, students, teachers, and other education personnel, must be prepared mentally, financially, and spiritually (Gholaini, 2021).

This extraordinary condition lasted no less than a year and harvested various responses from the point of view of both teachers and students. Online learning has a positive impact by providing experience and technology to face the challenges of the 21st century (Sudarisman, 2015). Online learning changes the education system, where the learning materials are delivered without obstacles. Besides stopping the spread of Covid-19, online learning is expected to be an alternative to overcoming the problem of independent learning by enabling students to learn more extensive knowledge via the internet; thereby creating student creativity in science and implementing 2013 curriculum policies (Darmalaksana et al., 2020).

However, instead of guaranteeing the quality of the learning, on the other hand, the distance learning model is not easy for teachers to implement due to the uneven competence in managing the model (Azzahra, 2020; Suhendri et al., 2021). Based on the results of interviews with several student guardians, the support system for the distance learning model has not yet been optimal because most of the student guardians in Gedung Negara village work as farmers who cannot always monitor their children during online learning. The main problems are the lack of student guardians' awareness of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and understanding of designing online lesson plans. Furthermore, most teachers and student guardians could not use video conferencing applications like Google Meet in teaching and learning activities.

Video conferencing during the pandemic has become a substitute for face-to-face meetings. According to Rop & Bett (2012), Video conferencing applications can be used to interact effectively, communicate in virtual classroom meetings, provide good video and audio quality, provide access to file sharing, and various other collaborative services. Leveraging video conferencing applications for teachers can provide a more interactive online learning experience and provide real-time, two-way video, voice, and data communication with students (Rop & Bett, 2012; Santoso & Sari, 2020). One example of video conferencing is Google Meet. Google Meet can help with distance learning activities. The Google Meet application can be accessed and updated automatically from the online store easily and quickly (Al-Maroof et al., 2020; Habes et al., 2020).

Based on these problems, it is necessary to disseminate information to teachers and student guardians. Previously, socialization regarding distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic had been carried out through socialization to student guardians about distance learning in Jombang (Gholaini, 2021), socialization of teachers' roles in the distance learning process in Samarinda Ulu (Khairunnisa, 2022), socialization of distance learning for students at Bina Darma University (Taroreh et al., 2021), and socialization of student guardians' roles in online learning (Mawar et al., 2020). However, no socialization has been carried out for teachers and student guardians simultaneously. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to disseminate distance learning to teachers and student guardians to provide learning references that can be done during distance learning and provide understanding to student guardians regarding factors that must be considered during distance learning.

METHOD

Qualitative research is concerned with the process of a situation to get the desired result. This type of research was field research with the qualitative research method. The qualitative method tries to holistically understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior and perception, through word description in a special natural context and various natural methods (Moleong, 2013). In implementing this socialization activity, the door-to-door method was carried out to avoid crowds and prevent the spread of Covid-19 by utilizing cell phones as learning media. This socialization activity was implemented on July 29, 2021, at the homes of each teacher and student guardian. The participants in this community service research were five teachers and five

student guardians in the Gedung Negara village. The participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique by considering the population's homogeneity. The stages in the implementation of distance learning training are presented in Figure 1.
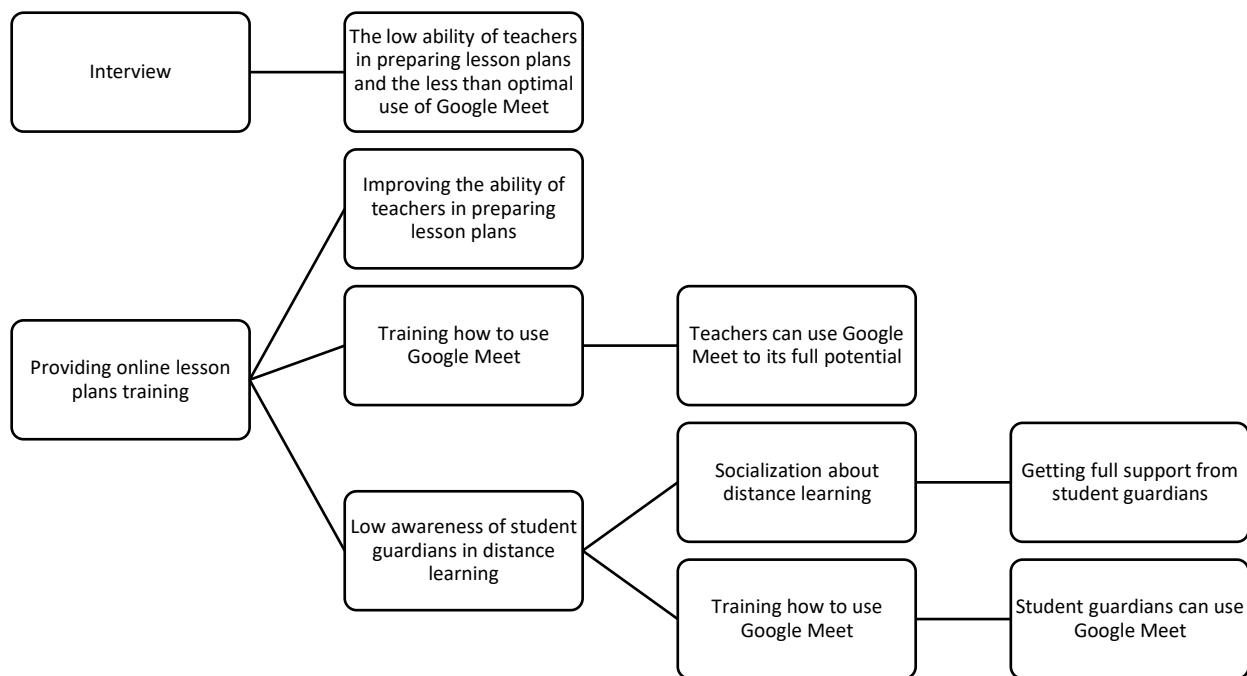

Figure 1. Distance Learning Training Stages

1. Interviewed the teachers and student guardians regarding the obstacles experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Overcame the low support system from student guardians to support the distance learning model by socializing the distance learning model so that student guardians could provide learning assistance for the distance learning model.
3. Increased teacher competence in managing the distance learning model by training the teachers who live in Gedung Negara village. This training was carried out to improve the competence of teachers in Gedung Negara village and its surroundings using the distance learning model. The material given to the teachers was how to construct practical lesson plans.
4. The results of this community service activity show that student guardians supported the schools in conducting distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers could design lesson plans, and teachers and student guardians could use the Google Meet platform.

To succeed in the community service activities, the community service team as partners actively participated by:
1. Providing the locations/places in the homes of each teacher/student guardian to support the implementation of the training program while still referring to the health protocol and ensuring that all teachers and student guardians are actively involved in training activities.
2. Providing gadgets and internet access for teachers and student guardians during the training activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This distance training is a mentoring activity for teachers and student guardians in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the main focus is to find solutions to problems in managing learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of community service activities can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Distance Learning Training for Teachers

First, the team conducted training for teachers in managing distance learning. This activity provided knowledge and learning management techniques, both online and offline. Also, it taught teachers and student guardians the importance of open-mindedness and awareness in accepting the changing situation due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. The goal is open and accepting attitudes and the ability to adapt to these changes into a spirit to do positive things to support the activities needed to improve individual performance. The socialization of the distance learning model for student guardians increased knowledge, technical skills, awareness, and involvement.

Second, the one-page lesson plan is a policy of the Ministry and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. The Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia issued circular letter Number 14 of 2019 concerning simplifying lesson plans. Therefore, the mentoring was carried out for teachers so that they could compile concise lesson plans needed. In the training activities for service implementers, the focus was on the ability of partners to compile teaching materials, methods, and assessment of learning outcomes.

Learning during the Covid-19 pandemic must emphasize the teaching materials, methods, and assessment. All three must be carried out effectively and efficiently by teachers during learning, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Even if implemented with distance learning, appropriate teaching materials and methods will make students feel comfortable in learning (Mustakim, 2020). This implies that every educational institution must be willing and able to make breakthroughs in managing learning during the pandemic (Herliandry et al., 2020). Another thing that should not be ignored is the assessment of learning outcomes. In conducting the assessment, the teacher should focus on mastering the attitudes, skills, and knowledge as a whole from the students by holding the principles of continuity, comprehensiveness, objectivity, and goal-oriented (Suhendri et al., 2021).

Third, helping teachers and student guardians in using the Google Meet application. This application can replace face-to-face meetings during teaching and learning activities. Google Meet is a virtual meeting application because it is easy to download and use compared to other applications. Besides, this application is stable in the Gedung Negara village, Hulu Sungkai District. After the distance learning training, teachers and student guardians began to understand how to use the Google Meet application, such as how to download the application through the application store, register an account, join online meetings, and create closed meetings on the application. The documentation is contained in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Distance Learning Training for Student guardians

During the Covid-19 pandemic, student guardians' involvement is vital (Lisyani, 2021; Nurhasanah, 2021). Student guardians are expected to strengthen their spiritual spirit, uphold love and appreciation for children, provide a safe, healthy, and friendly environment and be exemplary student guardians. If this is done consistently by student guardians in the family environment, it will benefit the students and overall family resilience.

Although successful, this socialization has its limitations, especially in the facilities owned by the student guardians. Most guardians did not have smartphones, and only a few providers had a strong network in the village. The internet provider fee is considered by some of the guardians of the student to be quite expensive.

CONCLUSION

Teachers of Gedung Negara village adapted to the changing situations due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The implementation of community service activities resulted in student guardians increasing their knowledge, technical skills, awareness, and involvement by actively assisting students in the learning process at home. They could design lesson plans both online and offline. Furthermore, teachers and student guardians could utilize the Google Meet application.

Furthermore, it is hoped that the policymakers and related institutions will assist and support teachers in managing learning and monitoring and evaluating the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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