

ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN IMPLEMENTING ONLINE LEARNING IN KINDERGARTENS DURING THE PANDEMIC FROM TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstrak - Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kesulitan yang dihadapi guru dalam pelaksanaan pembelajaran daring di TK Satu Atap Sengir selama pandemi COVID-19, serta strategi yang digunakan untuk mengatasi kendala tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara mendalam, observasi langsung, dan dokumentasi terhadap enam guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesulitan utama yang dihadapi guru meliputi tiga aspek, yaitu teknis (100%), pedagogis (83%), dan psikologis (67%). Kendala teknis meliputi lemahnya sinyal internet, keterbatasan perangkat, dan kuota data yang tidak mencukupi. Kendala pedagogis muncul karena guru sulit menilai perkembangan anak secara langsung dan mempertahankan fokus anak selama pembelajaran daring. Untuk mengatasi hambatan tersebut, guru menerapkan berbagai strategi seperti penggunaan media visual dan permainan edukatif interaktif, komunikasi aktif dengan orang tua, serta penilaian berbasis portofolio. Hasil implementasi menunjukkan bahwa strategi ini mampu meningkatkan partisipasi anak dalam pembelajaran daring dan memperkuat hubungan kolaboratif antara guru, orang tua, dan siswa. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pembelajaran daring pada pendidikan anak usia dini membutuhkan inovasi metode, dukungan teknologi, serta kolaborasi yang kuat antara sekolah dan keluarga.

Kata kunci: pembelajaran daring, guru TK, pandemi COVID-19, kesulitan guru, media visual

Abstract - This study aims to describe the difficulties faced by teachers in implementing online learning at TK Satu Atap Sengir during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the strategies used to overcome these challenges. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method with data collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation involving six teachers. The results indicate that the main difficulties encountered by teachers fall into three categories: technical (100%), pedagogical (83%), and psychological (67%). Technical obstacles included poor internet connectivity, limited access to devices, and insufficient data quotas. Pedagogical challenges arose because teachers found it difficult to assess children's development directly and to maintain their focus during online learning sessions. To address these issues, teachers implemented various strategies such as the use of visual media and interactive educational games, active communication with parents, and portfolio-based assessment. The implementation of these strategies successfully enhanced children's participation in online learning and strengthened collaborative relationships among teachers, parents, and students. This study emphasizes that online learning in early childhood education requires methodological innovation, technological support, and strong collaboration between schools and families.

Keywords: online learning, kindergarten teachers, COVID-19 pandemic, teacher difficulties, visual media

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has become one of the most significant global phenomena that has had a tremendous impact on various sectors of life, including education (Redjeki & Muhajir, 2020). Since the first confirmed case in Indonesia, the government has taken strategic measures to prevent the spread of the virus by implementing the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) policy and shifting all levels of education to distance or online learning (Keeley et al., 2019). These policies were implemented abruptly, causing many teachers and educational institutions to struggle to adapt to the new learning system (Hermansyah et al., 2021; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021). The sudden shift from face-to-face learning to online systems has led to various challenges, particularly in maintaining students' motivation, parental

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involvement, and teachers' readiness to use educational technology (Rojabi, 2021; Almusharraf, 2021).

One of the institutions greatly affected by this policy is TK Satu Atap Sengir, located in an area with limited access to technology and internet connectivity. At the early childhood education level, learning typically adopts a learning through play approach, making the transition to online learning difficult for teachers to deliver lessons interactively (Nurmiyanti & Candra, 2019; Duck, 1993). The characteristics of young children—who are active, kinesthetic, and in need of direct interaction—make online learning challenging to implement effectively (Ainscow, 2020). Children at TK Satu Atap Sengir require concrete and visual learning experiences, whereas online learning tends to be abstract and heavily dependent on digital media (Keeley et al., 2019).

Limited facilities and teachers' technological skills were among the main obstacles encountered during the online learning process at TK Satu Atap Sengir (Darimi, 2017). Many teachers were not familiar with using digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or WhatsApp Groups as learning media, which caused many learning activities to be suboptimal (Wang & Coe, 2021). Moreover, the lack of internet infrastructure in the hilly areas posed a serious challenge. Teachers and parents often had to find specific locations to access a stable signal to participate in online learning (Luckin & Holmes, 2016). The combination of difficult geographical conditions and limited economic resources made online learning less effective than expected (Rojabi, 2021).

Field observations revealed that many parents of TK Satu Atap Sengir students experienced difficulties assisting their children during online learning. Most parents did not fully understand how to use digital devices effectively to support their children's education (Mavilidi et al., 2015). Parental involvement became crucial, as online learning for early childhood education requires direct assistance at home (Nurmiyanti & Candra, 2019). Unfortunately, not all parents had the time, resources, or technological literacy needed to support their children (Beaty, 2013). As a result, online learning became a burden for both teachers and parents (Cortázar et al., 2021).

Beyond technical issues, psychological aspects also became a major concern. Teachers at TK Satu Atap Sengir reported that children were more easily bored and lost focus during online classes (Lemay et al., 2021). The lack of direct social interaction between teachers and students hindered the development of children's character and moral values (Taylor & Leun, 2020). In fact, early childhood education does not only focus on cognitive aspects but also includes social, emotional, and motor development, which are difficult to foster through online learning (Piaget, 2013).

Teachers at TK Satu Atap Sengir also faced challenges in designing digital learning media suitable for young learners (Ardena & Fatimah, 2021). Most teachers only sent worksheets to parents via messaging apps without conducting live interactions, making the learning process passive and monotonous—failing to reflect the essence of “learning through play” (Sherine et al., 2020). Some teachers attempted to use simple media such as video recordings, audio clips, or interactive images to attract children's attention (Nurrita, 2018). However, the lack of equipment and digital literacy remained major barriers to implementing these innovations effectively (Ng, 2021).

Although the online learning policy during the pandemic aimed to protect public health and safety, its implementation required adequate preparation, training, and infrastructure support (Hermansyah et al., 2021). Interviews and observations at TK Satu Atap

Sengir revealed that most teachers had never received formal training in online learning technologies (Castro & Tumibay, 2021). Teachers learned independently by experimenting with various applications according to their abilities. Nevertheless, the teachers demonstrated strong enthusiasm and commitment to continue providing the best learning experience for their students (Sharma et al., 2019).

From the issues described above, it can be concluded that the implementation of online learning at TK Satu Atap Sengir still faces numerous challenges—technically, pedagogically, and psychologically. These challenges include limited digital facilities, weak internet connectivity, low teacher technological competence, insufficient parental involvement, and minimal student interaction. This study offers novelty by providing an in-depth exploration of the needs and challenges faced by kindergarten teachers in implementing online learning in areas with limited digital infrastructure (Jordan & Bratsch-Hines, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to identify the difficulties encountered by teachers in implementing online learning at TK Satu Atap Sengir, analyze the contributing factors, and formulate strategies for teachers' readiness in adapting to the digital learning system in the post-pandemic era (Seckel et al., 2022).

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Approach and Type

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, aiming to provide an in-depth description of the phenomena observed in the field regarding the challenges faced by teachers in implementing online learning at TK Satu Atap Sengir during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach was selected because qualitative research allows the researcher to understand social realities comprehensively and deeply, based on the experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The type of research used in this study is a case study, focusing on a single institution — TK Satu Atap Sengir — as the main research subject. This study explores how teachers encountered difficulties in implementing online learning, the contributing factors, and the adaptive strategies used to maintain effective teaching and learning processes. According to Daflizar, (2021), a case study is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundary between the phenomenon and its context is not clearly evident.

2.2 Research Subjects and Objects

The subjects of this study were teachers at TK Satu Atap Sengir who conducted online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were four participants involved, consisting of:

- 1 principal,
- 2 classroom teachers, and
- 1 assistant teacher.

The object of the study is the teachers' difficulties and strategies in implementing online learning, encompassing technical, pedagogical, and psychological aspects.

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Table 1. Research Participants.

| Code | Position |
|-------------|-------------------|
| G1 | Principal |
| G2 | Classroom Teacher |
| G3 | Classroom Teacher |
| G4 | Assistant Teacher |

2.3 Research Instrument

The main instrument in this study was the researcher himself (human instrument), who played an active role in designing, collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data (Sugiyono, 2021). To support systematic data collection, several supporting instruments were also employed:

- Observation Guide – to record teaching activities, learning media, and teacher-student participation during online learning.
- Semi-Structured Interview Guide – to explore teachers' experiences and perceptions of challenges encountered during online learning.
- Documentation – including screenshots, photographs, and digital teaching records related to online activities.

Table 2. Interview Instrument Blueprint

| Aspect Investigated | Indicators |
|----------------------------|--|
| Teacher Readiness | Preparation, digital literacy, and teaching adaptation |
| Technical Barriers | Internet access, device use, and platform familiarity |
| Adaptive Strategies | Problem-solving, creativity, and resource utilization |
| Environmental Support | Parental involvement and institutional support |

2.4 Data Collection Techniques

- Observation : To observe teacher-student interactions in class.
- Questionnaire : Distributed to 100 students to assess their perception of their relationship with teachers.
- Academic Records Documentation : Taken from semester report cards to measure language learning outcomes.

2.5 Data Collections Techniques

Data were collected through three main techniques:

1. Direct Observation – conducted both online and limited offline visits to observe learning activities, teacher-student interactions, and the use of digital media.
2. In-depth Interviews – carried out with six teachers individually, either face-to-face or through Google Meet, depending on the accessibility and field conditions.
3. Documentation Study – involving the collection of lesson plans (RPPH), photographs, and screenshots of online learning sessions.

2.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using the Miles & Huberman (2019), model, consisting of three major stages:

1. Data Reduction – selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing raw data from interviews and observations to obtain relevant information.
2. Data Display – presenting the processed data in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, and diagrams to reveal patterns and relationships among variables.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification – interpreting data meaning and verifying findings through member checks to ensure validity.

Table 3. Stages of Data Analysis (Miles & Huberman Model)

| Stage | Description |
|----------------|---|
| Data Reduction | Coding and categorizing key themes |
| Data Display | Visual and textual presentation of findings |
| Verification | Cross-checking and validating interpretations |

2.7 Data Validity

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher applied the four criteria proposed by (Guba & Lincoln, 1989):

1. **Credibility** – ensured through *member checking*, source triangulation (teachers and principal), and methodological triangulation (observation, interview, documentation).
2. **Transferability** – achieved by providing a detailed description of the research context so it can be applied to similar early childhood education settings.
3. **Dependability** – maintained through a research audit process under the supervision of the academic advisor to ensure procedural consistency.
4. **Confirmability** – guaranteed by grounding all conclusions in the actual data rather than researcher bias or assumptions.

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2.8 Research Procedure

The research was conducted through four main stages, as outlined below:

Table 4. Research Procedure

| Stage | Activity Description |
|-----------------|--|
| Preparation | Designing instruments, obtaining permissions, and conducting preliminary studies |
| Data Collection | Conducting observations, interviews, and documentation |
| Data Analysis | Applying Miles and Huberman's model to process qualitative data |
| Reporting | Writing research findings, discussion, and final conclusions |

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

a. Teachers' Challenges in Implementing Online Learning

Based on interviews with six teachers, it was found that the main challenges were categorized into **technical**, **pedagogical**, and **psychological** aspects.

Table 5. Types of Teachers' Difficulties in Online Learning

| Aspect of Difficulty | Description |
|----------------------|---|
| Technical | Internet connectivity, device limitations, and digital literacy |
| Pedagogical | Difficulty maintaining student engagement and adapting learning materials |
| Psychological | Decreased motivation and increased stress during online teaching |

Horizontal axis represents three aspects of difficulty (Technical, Pedagogical, Psychological), while the vertical axis represents the percentage of teachers. The graph indicates that technical difficulties were the most dominant (100%), followed by pedagogical difficulties (83%), and psychological difficulties (67%).

Interview excerpts supporting the findings:

“Our main problem is the internet connection. The signal often drops, especially since many students don't have Wi-Fi at home. Sometimes I have to send the materials through WhatsApp instead.”
(G2, interview, April 25, 2022)

“Kindergarten children find it hard to focus on screens. They get bored easily, so I have to find ways to keep them interested — for example, by using simple animated videos.”
(G3, interview, April 27, 2022)

b. Teachers' Strategies in Overcoming Online Learning Challenges

Despite the numerous challenges, teachers at *TK Satu Atap Sengir* developed several **adaptive strategies** to enhance the effectiveness of online learning.

Table 6. Teachers' Strategies in Overcoming Online Learning Challenges

| Strategic Aspect | Example of Implementation |
|------------------|---|
| Use of Media | Integrating interactive games and videos |
| Communication | Maintaining regular contact with parents via WhatsApp and phone calls |
| Evaluation | Conducting portfolio-based assessments |
| Motivation | Providing verbal rewards and virtual recognition |

One of the most widely used media was the See and Say Talking Game, a visual-based learning game featuring pictures and sounds to help children recognize words, improve speaking skills, and expand vocabulary. This method proved effective because it integrates visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning elements (Paivio, 1991; Mayer, 2009).

Teacher G3 stated:

“I used a simple *See and Say Talking Game* with pictures of animals and household objects. The children would say the names out loud, and I gave them stars as rewards. They became more enthusiastic.”
(Interview, May 1, 2022)

This finding aligns with Sari & Prasetyo (2022), who emphasized that the integration of visual-auditory media can improve focus and speaking abilities among young learners during online learning.

c. Parental Support in Online Learning

In early childhood education, parental involvement plays a crucial role in the success of online learning (Epstein, 2018; Hornby, 2019).

Table 7. Levels of Parental Involvement in Online Learning

| Type of Support | Description |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Technical Facilitation | Providing internet access and devices |
| Learning Assistance | Guiding children during online sessions |
| Communication with Teachers | Sending student work and coordinating learning activities |

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Teacher G4 emphasized:

“Parents play a very big role. They are the ones helping their children with assignments and sending me photos of their work. Without them, online learning at our kindergarten would not be possible.”(Interview, May 2, 2022)

3.2 Discussion

The findings indicate that the primary challenges faced by teachers in implementing online learning at TK Satu Atap Sengir stem from technical and pedagogical factors. Limited internet access and inadequate devices were identified as the most significant obstacles to effective teaching. This result supports findings by Mustakim (2021) and Dhawan (2020), who reported that digital infrastructure limitations are the main barriers to successful online education at the elementary level.

Moreover, teachers encountered difficulties managing classroom engagement, as young children have short attention spans and become easily bored. Teachers therefore needed to design interactive and stimulating approaches. The use of media such as pictures, songs, animated videos, and interactive games — particularly the See and Say Talking Game — was found to be effective in enhancing students’ motivation and speaking skills. This aligns with Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development theory, which posits that children learn best through social interaction and concrete visual support.

Another critical finding is the significant role of parental involvement in early childhood online learning. As confirmed by Morrison (2021) and Rahman (2022), the success of online learning in early childhood education depends greatly on active collaboration between teachers and parents, especially in facilitating technology use and assisting children during lessons.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study on teachers’ difficulties in implementing online learning at TK Satu Atap Sengir during the COVID-19 pandemic, several important conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. The implementation of online learning at TK Satu Atap Sengir faced complex challenges. The major obstacles stemmed from technical issues, such as limited internet connectivity, weak signal strength, and the lack of technological devices. All teachers (100%) stated that technical difficulties were the most severe challenge in implementing online learning. The hilly geographical conditions of the Sengir area further exacerbated the limited internet access.
2. Pedagogical challenges emerged due to the lack of direct interaction between teachers and students. Teachers found it difficult to assess children’s cognitive, social, and language development since learning activities could not be conducted face-to-face. This finding, who emphasized that early childhood learners require concrete, experience-based learning, rather than mere digital instruction.
3. Teachers sought to overcome these difficulties by implementing innovative learning strategies and media. One of the most effective innovations was the use of visual media and interactive games, particularly the See and Say Talking Game. This game combines images and sounds, thereby increasing children’s engagement in learning activities while stimulating their speaking and verbal thinking abilities. Such innovations support the principles of Dual

Coding Theory, which assert that information presented through both visual and auditory channels is more easily understood and retained by learners.

4. Parental involvement played a decisive role in the success of online learning at TK Satu Atap Sengir.

Parents acted as facilitators, motivators, and mediators between teachers and students. Their support in providing devices, internet access, and guidance during learning activities was crucial to sustaining the learning. Without active parental participation, children struggled to follow online learning effectively.

5. Online learning in early childhood education requires a collaborative and adaptive approach.

Teachers must continuously innovate using simple yet engaging media, while the government should ensure equitable internet access, especially in rural areas. Moreover, digital literacy training for early childhood teachers should be strengthened to prepare them for the transition toward technology-based learning systems.

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