

## **Undergraduate Students' Views on the Use of Online Learning Platform during Covid-19 Pandemic**

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### **Abstract**

Technology-based online learning platforms have supported and helped Indonesian students to succeed the online learning education amid the novel coronavirus. They are allowed to access learning materials, learning activities, and learning practice for free. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the students' paradigms on how effective is online learning platforms for their learning process. A qualitative method in form of a case study design was applied to this present study which had a hundred and eighty-five undergraduate students as the subjects. A questionnaire consisting of twenty-five statements was distributed to them through Google Forms. A follow-up interview via WhatsApp video calls was also conducted with the forty students who were chosen randomly to strengthen the findings. The results of this study show that most students agreed that the online learning platform might provide some beneficial effects for them. They mentioned that online activities through this platform were easily followed and challenge them to strive for keeping their balance motivation and interest to accomplish the online learning process. They were comfortable communicating and interacting with classmates and lecturers electronically. Besides, they might also be able to manage their study time and self-disciplined. Therefore, an online learning platform is considered to be a beneficial tool to support online learning environments.

**Keywords:** Online activities, online learning platforms, self-discipline, study time

### **Introduction**

An interactive learning environment needs to be expanded in the process of teaching and learning as most learners in the millennial era are the center of the learning process and have active roles to enrich their engagement and interaction with the course instructor, other classmates, and course content (Saha, 2019; Sari & Putri, 2019). In this disruptive era, online education has increasingly been recognized as a well-accepted learning style in higher education. Most Indonesian students from rural and urban areas learn and get knowledge through online learning since online learning is initially considered as a flexible alternative to help students access full-time education. Besides that, online learners may have different perceptions, preferences, and attitudes on certain education settings, design, or methods, on the other hand, they are agreeable and satisfied in their online learning (Sun, 2014).

As stated by Ayu (2020), online learning in several universities in Indonesia may provide accessible and latest education information to all levels. Online learning alters students' characteristics into technology-addict learners that show their skill of computer literacy to compete with technology development (Addah, 2012; Oktaviani & Mandasari, 2020). They may also explore real-life online learning experiences to encourage students' autonomous learning (Sari & Wahyudin, 2019a). According to Kasworn (2011), online learning provides flexibility for students to learn and access interactive materials. With the technology-enhanced in the education sector, it may optimize the use of the internet as a supporting tool to help students find communicative learning sources since the internet provides students authentic materials that might help them to study online (Sari, 2016).

Internet is also considered as a beneficial way to contribute the opportunities for learners to meet their learning needs and learning styles (Elango et al., 2008).

In doing online learning, learners initially receive socialization by a course facilitator to obtain course information and establish connections among teachers and other peers, learning culture, social, and learning contexts. They also get instructions on how to finish their online activities from teachers. After that, they begin their online learning process by activating knowledge by reading e-materials such as e-books, articles, PowerPoint slides, or watching lecture videos that are provided by teachers. Furthermore, they continue to absorb knowledge by synthesizing, analyzing, and sharing information. These are called knowledge transmission and knowledge-building (Davenport & Prusak, 2000; Bereiter et al., 2003). Here, they may exchange their ideas and information to understand tasks and learning materials by asking questions and interacting with teachers and peers.

Studies on the implementation of online learning in Indonesia have been observed previously, especially in the field of online learning platforms use. The process of online learning utilizes several instructional learning tools that cover online multimedia (Aminatun & Oktaviani, 2019; Oktaviani & Mandasari, 2020), learning management systems (Putri & Sari, 2020), and social network sites such as Instagram (Sari & Wahyudin, 2019a; Sari & Wahyudin, 2019b), instant messagers (Sari & Putri, 2019), or vlog (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2019).

In the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than a hundred higher education institutions in Indonesia have conducted online learning by optimizing online learning education platforms as a supporting learning tool. Most students in the tertiary level education use their computer, laptop, or smartphone to access online learning contents that are provided and facilitated by lecturers. Based on this background, this paper aimed at exploring the students' paradigms on how effective is online learning platforms for their online learning process.

## Method

A qualitative method in form of a case study design was employed in this study. The subjects were a hundred and eighty-five undergraduate students from the English Literature Department who have joined and attended online learning through the learning management system moodle that is well-known as *Sistem Pembelajaran Dalam Jaringan* (SPADA). These subjects were chosen because they have online learning experiences using these platforms since the first year.

The data were collected from questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire consisting of twenty-five questions was distributed to all respondents using a Google form link. This questionnaire applied a 5-point Likert scale with the scale strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questionnaire data were analyzed by using the mean score and standard deviation (SD). The questionnaire itself was interpreted through the level of strongly disagree (1.00-1.80), disagree (1.81-2.60), neutral/moderate (2.61-3.40), agree (3.41-4.20), dan strongly agrees (4.21-5.00).

To strengthen the results, an open-ended interview through the WhatsApp video calls was conducted with forty students to explore their perspectives of the implementation of online learning platforms in their learning process. The interview data were transcribed into words to deepen the findings.

### Findings and Discussion

This section explores the findings of this current study by investigating the students' perspectives on how effective is online learning platforms for their learning process. Table 1 highlights the result of means, standard deviations, and interpretation of each item of the statements from the questionnaire. The detail is as follows:

Table 1. Students' Perceptions of Online Learning Platform Use

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1. <i>I can easily access the online learning platform as needed for my studies.</i>	3.59	0.90	Agree
2. <i>I am comfortable communicating with my lecturer and other classmates electronically.</i>	3.79	0.77	Agree
3. <i>I am willing to actively communicate with my lecturer and other classmates electronically.</i>	3.95	0.73	Agree
4. <i>I feel that my learning experiences will be beneficial to my studies using an online learning platform.</i>	3.93	0.86	Agree
5. <i>I am comfortable with written communication (for example via the chat box in an online learning platform).</i>	3.84	0.86	Agree
6. <i>I believe looking back on what I have learned in a course through an online learning platform will help me to remember it better.</i>	3.78	1.06	Agree
7. <i>In my studies, I am self-disciplined and find it easy to set aside reading and homework time through an online learning platform.</i>	3.90	0.94	Agree
8. <i>I can manage my study time effectively and easily complete assignments on time using an online learning platform</i>	3.91	0.96	Agree
9. <i>As a student, I enjoy working independently through an online learning platform.</i>	3.81	0.87	Agree
10. <i>As a student, I enjoy working with other students in groups through an online learning platform.</i>	3.80	0.86	Agree
11. <i>I like a lot of interaction with my lecturer/instructors through an online learning platform.</i>	3.59	0.90	Agree
12. <i>I possess sufficient computer/laptop/smartphone keyboarding skills for doing online work through an online learning platform.</i>	3.79	0.77	Agree
13. <i>I feel comfortable composing text on a computer/laptop/smartphone in an online learning environment.</i>	3.95	0.73	Agree
14. <i>I feel comfortable communicating online in English through an online learning platform.</i>	3.93	0.86	Agree
15. <i>I can ask my lecturer questions and receive a quick response during online learning activities outside of class through an online learning platform.</i>	3.84	0.86	Agree
16. <i>I feel that face-to-face contact with my lecturer is necessary to learn.</i>	2.05	0.87	Disagree
17. <i>I am motivated by the material in an online activity outside of class through an online learning platform.</i>	4.13	0.74	Agree
18. <i>I can discuss with other students during online activities through an online learning platform.</i>	3.99	0.84	Agree
19. <i>I can work in a group during online activities through an online learning platform.</i>	3.95	0.82	Agree
20. <i>I can collaborate with other students during online activities through an online learning platform.</i>	3.99	0.91	Agree
21. <i>Learning is the same in class and at home on the online learning platform.</i>	3.93	0.85	Agree

22. <i>I believe that learning on an online learning platform is more motivating than a regular course.</i>	3.91	0.87	Agree
23. <i>I believe a complete course can be given by the online learning platform without difficulty.</i>	3.98	0.86	Agree
24. <i>I could pass a course on the online learning platform without any teacher assistance.</i>	3.75	0.94	Agree
25. <i>I believe a course through an online learning platform is possible but learning English would be difficult.</i>	1.97	0.91	Disagree

Based on the results of the questionnaire, it showed that there were positive responses from the students. It also resulted in different means and standard deviation for each statement. The highest result was in statement 17 with a mean score of 4.13 points. It indicated that most students agreed to be highly motivated by the online learning materials that were given by the facilitator through the online learning platform. On the other hand, the lowest result was in statement 25 with a mean score of 1.97 points. Most students disagreed with this statement because they did not assume that learning English using an online learning platform would be difficult.

There were twelve statements that obtained mean scores in the range score of 3.90-3.99 points. First, statements 18 and statement 20 had the same results with mean scores of 3.99 points. Statement 18 showed the agreement from the students that they could discuss online learning activities with other peers through online learning platforms they use. Most students agreed that they also could collaborate with their classmates when doing online activities. Second, statement 23 gained a mean score of 3.98 points that indicated most students could complete the online course without difficulty. Third, three statements also got the same results with mean scores of 3.95 points. These are statements 3, statement 13, and statement 19. Most students agreed to communicate with lecturers and other peers through email or instant messenger applications such as WhatsApp and Line (statement 3). Besides, statement 13 showed that most students also felt easy to compose text from their computer, laptops, or smartphone during the process of online learning. They still did group work to accomplish online projects in the online learning platform (statement 19). Fourth, the mean score results of 3.93 points were achieved by statement 4, statement 14, and statement 21. For statement 4, most students agreed that their learning background and experience helped them to study online through an online learning platform. They also agreed to use English written and orally when doing learning through an online learning platform (statement 14). And, they assumed that it was the same to learn at home or in class because they still got the same treatment from the lecturers. Besides, two statements – statement 8 and statement 22 got the mean scores of 3.91 points. Most students agreed that they could manage their study time effectively because they still could accomplish the assignment punctually. They believed that learning using an online learning platform motivated them to study more. Lastly, statement 7 obtained the mean score of 3.90 which indicated the agreement of most students to have the self-disciplined to accomplish learning activities using the online learning platform.

There were four statements that achieved mean scores in the range score of 3.80-3.84 points. Two results of statement 5 and statement 15 got the same mean score results of 3.84 points. For statement 5, most students agreed that they felt comfortable by doing written communication with lecturers and other students using the chat box in the online learning platform. They also could ask questions and get quick responses from their lecturers. On the other hand, statement 9 got a mean score of 3.81 points that showed the students agreed to do individual work using the online learning platform. Then, statement 10 indicated that

most students also enjoyed doing group work with their classmates through an online learning platform.

Moreover, the other four statements received mean scores in the range score of 3.75-3.79 points. Statement 2 and statement 12 gained a mean score of 3.79 points. Most students believed that they had computer literacy skills to study online using an online learning platform. Statement 6 with a mean score of 3.78 points showed that most students agreed to review what they had learned in an online course to help them remember the learning material. Lastly, statement 24 with a mean score of 3.75 points indicated that most students could finish their online learning without any teacher and other peers' assistance. On the other hand, there were two statements gaining a mean score of 3.59 points. These were statements 1 and statement 11. Most students agreed to be able to access the online learning platform easily for their study online. Then, they showed to do a lot of interaction with lecturers during the online learning process.

From the interview, the results showed some benefits of the online learning platform. The uses of online learning platform from the students' view are to challenge the students to balance their motivation and interest, easy to follow the learning process, and comfortable to interact with classmates and lecturer electronically. The details could be seen in the following extracts, as follows:

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- S1 : *Experiencing online learning using SPADA is quite challenging. I have to take a note and write a reminder of my course schedule on my phone. But, I think that's the art of online learning. I like it. Very motivating...*
- S8 : *Most courses that I attended have clear instructions so I can follow them easily. If I don't understand, I ask for any assistance from my friends.*
- S14 : *From my experience when joining online learning through SPADA on my campus, I feel easy to communicate with my lecturers and other classmates through the chat box in SPADA or I text them a message via WhatsApp group.*
- S21 : *I have good opportunities to get knowledge through online learning in SPADA. It challenges the level of study motivation and my learning interest.*
- S23 : *So far, I can follow the online process by doing what information my lecturer said.*
- S27 : *The best part of online learning is to engage in online discussion and I'm comfortable with this activity.*
- S30 : *I need to balance my motivation to study online and keep on my interest in doing online learning.*
- S31 : *I can virtually do interact with my lecturer and my classmates. I'm also thinking that online learning in SPADA is easy to follow as long as we read the instruction from the lecturer.*
- S39 : *It's easy to attend the online class because we use SPADA. It's quite different from a face-to-face class. I prefer online.*
- S40 : *I like doing interaction virtually with my friends and also my lecturers.*
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Regarding the findings of this study, most students reveal that their learning strategies are beneficial, interactive, motivating, and challenging to their online learning experiences. They receive some easiness while using the chosen online learning platforms by the lecturers. The learning management such as their effective study time, self-disciplined, and learning motivation seems easy to set aside finishing all online activities through the online learning platform. Then, they easily access, obtain, read, and review all learning materials for their studies through this platform. This finding is supported by Okmawati (2020) who stated that online learning platform leads students to be independent, engaged, and motivated learners to adapt to new technology and global challenges. Besides, it challenges them to do

interaction through online communication. On the other hand, they are eager to use written communication through chatting box or discussion forum to discuss their online learning activities with their peers and lecturer since they are comfortable composing texts on their laptops or smartphones due to their great keyboarding skills for doing all online works. It is in line with Sun's study (2011). She asserted that online learners altered their use of learning strategies and approaches to learning in the online environment. Thus, online learners have numerous attitudes, perceptions, and preferences on certain learning settings, design, and method, but they are contented and delightful in their online learning (Sun, 2014).

Furthermore, the other finding also finds out that there are some advantages of using online learning platforms. This finding is supported by a study from Oliver (2014) who found out that the benefits of online learning for students side are to help them share information and access the learning materials on any occasion and repeatedly. It is suggested by Saha (2019) that teachers as a course facilitator may interact with their learners to help them with learning feedback or evaluation for bridging the gaps between learners' understanding and the course content in online higher education. As stated by Gentry et al., (2002), there are four basic elements for learners' perceptions of learning activities. These cover interest, challenge, choice, and joy. Therefore, students' perceptions of the use of online learning platforms are strongly interrelated with the available supportive and beneficial environment that can enrich their motivation for learning.

### Conclusion

The findings of this current study can be understood as the success of implementing online learning using the online learning platform. From the results, it can be concluded that most students accepted almost all statements with positive responses. It also showed some beneficial impacts of using an online learning platform for their online learning process. They could manage their study time and self-disciplined to accomplish all online learning activities through an online learning platform. Future research should consider the potential effects of online learning platforms use more carefully. This is an interesting issue for future research to explore. Thus, an online learning platform is considered to be a useful learning tool to support online learning environments.

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