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Online Teaching Performance and the Aftermath of COVID-19: Results and Reflection from the Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic of COVID-19 that has been running for more than two years has changed the face of higher education. Various obstacles and challenges in teaching forced the entire academic community to adapt to the biggest health crisis. The research is a pilot study or introduction that aims to see how lecturers interpret their teaching performance during the pandemic and how they reflect on their teaching as an evaluation material. The method used here is a focus group discussion with eight lecturers from UPN Veteran Jawa Timur, Jakarta, and Yogyakarta, using thematic analysis to process the data. Three major themes were found, namely, mental wellbeing, knowledge transfer, and creative pedagogies. It is recommended to conduct research with a larger scale of participants to be able to compare the performance of lecturers at UPN. The pandemic condition makes mental health a priority not only for the students but also the lecturers. Therefore, the combination of teaching creativity and the enhancement of technology are expected to reduce stress and burnout for both parties. It is recommended to further and scale up the number of research participants to have a more comprehensive understanding of how the pandemic impacted the learning process in higher education institutions.

1. Introduction

The pandemic has lasted for more than two years, and during that time, our educational system, especially in higher education, has experienced extraordinary challenges, either for the lecturers, students, or the administrative staff themselves. The change in the teaching and learning process from offline to online at the beginning of the pandemic

suddenly made the entire academic community change their teaching and learning methods, forcing lecturers of all ages and students to adapt quickly to the new situations.

This paper reports the results of a preliminary study of university lecturers in 3 cities: Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta. The universities targeted were UPN Veteran Jawa Timur (UPNVJT), UPN Veteran



Yogyakarta (UPNYK) and UPN Veteran Jakarta (UPNVJ). The focus of this paper is to find out how the lecturers at the universities interpret their performance in online teaching and how they reflect on that during the pandemic.

2. Literature Review

Teaching and learning process and higher education during a pandemic

Various kinds of literature have spotted challenges for higher education during a pandemic, both in terms of lecturers and students (Rahmawati, 2020; Southwick et al., 2021). One of the most highlighted in these studies is technological barriers and psychological aspects, such as students experiencing burnout and so on. Several studies have stated that daily interaction with technology (video conferencing) makes students experience what is known as technological burnout (Arribathi et al., 2021). The same thing is also experienced by the lecturers in various countries who state that the demand for teaching using virtual technology media makes the teaching process feel distant and often creates psychological problems for teachers (Kidd et al., 2020). Specifically, research conducted in the Indonesian context details several obstacles encountered by lecturers and students during the pandemic, dominated by technological and communication barriers (Rahmawati, 2020). Technological barriers are related to the inability of lecturers to adapt to new forms of teaching technology. On the other hand, interaction through technological intermediaries also creates communication barriers in which the delivery of messages and the transfer of knowledge face a lot of disturbances.

Similar results were obtained from research conducted in Chile, showing that the teaching and learning situation which suddenly changed caused many psychological problems for teachers (Sepulveda-Escobar et al., 2020). Various studies also highlight that self-efficacy is the main factor that makes both

lecturers and students able to survive and carry out their educational tasks as great as possible. But unfortunately, not all lecturers and students have this ability (Putri et al., 2019; Saputra et al., 2021; Tønnessen et al., 2021).

3. Methods

This research is qualitative and is a description of the pilot study process with eight lecturers from 3 UPNs. The research team invited three lecturers, each from UPNVJT, three from UPNVJ, and two from UPNYK, to join the virtual FGD via Zoom video conference. FGD was deliberately chosen because it is a practical data collection method in addition to its advantages that allow discussion to be focused, dynamic, interactive, and allow debate (Kitzinger, 1994; Bryman, 2004; Carmichael, 2008). There are two questions in this paper, namely how lecturers evaluate their teaching performance and how they reflect on online teaching after two years of the pandemic, which are described to roll out new topics. The nature of the pilot study is as a prelude before jumping into research and recruiting more participants. The use of the pilot study is also as a test for the list of questions asked, as well as to provide guidance for further research paths (Pickering, 2008). It is possible that the research team will decide to revamp the design or make changes after evaluating the results obtained from the pilot study.

The FGD was held for approximately 90 minutes, where each participant actively responded to each other. The research team also asked participants' willingness to be recorded for research purposes only and to use pseudonyms in publications. Some of the participants know each other, thus allowing friendly and intimate interaction. The results of the FGD were then typed in the form of a transcript, and the analysis was made based on the thematic that emerged and dominated the data analysis process. Thematic analysis is a method of data analysis and reduction where data is read repeatedly to find dominant



patterns that appear (Guest et al., 2012; Jofee, 2012). The thematic results of this process will be described further in the results and discussion in the next chapter

4. Results and Discussion

A total of 8 respondents from UPNVJT, UPNYK, and UPNVJ have participated in this study. Thematics are obtained through reading and re-reading the FGD

transcripts, grouping things that are similar, unique, and acquired during the interview process. Because the FGD was conducted using Zoom video conferencing, the research team decided to use initials to maintain the confidentiality of the participants' identities. All participants have been informed about this and given permission to the research team to record the FGD process. The thematic is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Thematic analysis from FGD with participants from 3 UPNs

Theme	Interpretation
Mental wellbeing	Burnout, technostress, psychological challenge
Knowledge transfer	The lack of direct interaction, the gap of knowledge between the students before and after COVID-19
Creativity (creative pedagogies)	Innovation and creativity in adapting to crises and the variety of teaching methods

Mental wellbeing

Dominantly, lecturers at 3 UPNs revealed that stress, burnout and technological stuttering were the toughest challenges in the online learning process. Simultaneously, the lecturers said that online teaching brought a higher level of stress than before. Previously, it was informed that the research team decided to use initials to maintain the confidentiality of the informant's identity. Some excerpts from his interview are as follows:

"At the beginning of the pandemic, I felt stressed as I am a kind of lecturer who prefers direct interactions with my students. Technologies used at that time did not give the same feeling. I suppose the students also felt the same. They missed their college, their friends. There are habits formed for years, and suddenly they change. It was the hardest part for me." (SKM, 53 years old)

"Well... I am a senior lecturer, or old, to be honest. And, of course, the use of technology became an obstacle for me. I needed more and more guidance in using Zoom. In addition to that, I had to convert the whole and all teaching materials into e-learning. I

admit that I am really tech savvy, and probably my students felt disappointed with me. It is like I have paid high for the tuition while my lecturer is so poor in using Zoom" (QM, 58 years old)

"We all experienced moving from one Zoom room to another. Every single meeting, we were on the screen. Tired eyes, tired body, while we didn't go anywhere. At first, I liked to push myself all day long. Now I don't. Because the mental health of lecturers is also important. No human can work continuously in front of the screen from morning to night" (DD, 29 years old).

The same findings were obtained through various studies in various countries, that fatigue or burnout is one of the toughest challenges faced by lecturers and students during the pandemic (Mustafa et al., 2021; Sepulveda-Escobar et al., 2020; Syah et al., 2020). Due to the same findings, universities in many countries have begun to evaluate their learning strategies to avoid imposing too much interaction in real-time and prefer e-learning strategies where lecturers can record learning videos so that students can manage their study time well and be more flexible.



Knowledge transfer

Through the FGD, the lecturers also complained about a clear gap between the level of understanding of students in the pandemic era when compared to their seniors before the time. Ironically, Zoom technology allows the teaching and learning process to be carried out according to a predetermined schedule, but boredom with technology and burnout (as described above) makes many students not focus on learning (Rahmawati, 2020; Arribathi et al., 2021). Most students simply join online classes without paying attention to the lecture. If the lecturer insists on turning on the video camera, other students complain about the limited internet quota.

This gap is commonly used by students who are actually capable but do not have the motivation to learn. As a result, many lecturers complain that the transfer of knowledge is not achieved, or there is a large gap between the planned learning outcomes and what is happening in reality. However, the lecturers also acknowledged that the pandemic condition required various sympathy and empathy for students. Some of the quotes can be seen below:

"Maybe we should understand that they are students from the "pandemic class." So, we really can't have the same expectations as their seniors. Understandably, students may also have different conditions. There are those who can and those who cannot. Maybe some of them have to work, too." (ARA, 39 years old)

"If there is a gap of understanding between cohorts, it is actually students' loss as they got nothing from the learning session. How could they possibly understand the materials when they just joined Zoom to sleep, watch movies, or chit-chat with their friends. If we asked them to turn on the camera, they complained about the internet quota. Lots of them were like this, unfortunately. We cannot put the blame only on the lecturers. We teach, we prepare all the materials, and we check students' assignments. We have done all of the duties." (IND, 45 years old)

"I think we cannot have the same expectation as there are external factors like the pandemic. We definitely cannot expect the outcome to be the same as the previous cohort because during a health crisis like this, what was concerned more was our health and not academic performance. Being great at school is not a

priority in my opinion" (AL, 40 years old)

Creativity and creative pedagogies

Although admitting that online teaching during the pandemic has many challenges and obstacles, the lecturers also agree that the pandemic is actually promising in terms of teaching creativity. Lecturers can leave the old mindset assuming that teaching is only in classrooms. Various learning methods are available, and lecturers can apply these to their students with the help of technology. Here are some of the quotes:

"If I may reflect, the pandemic provides chances for lecturers to try new things in teaching. Teaching is not only about classrooms, Zoom or Google Meet, or e-learning portals. There are plenty of learning methods which are creative and stimulate students to explore more." (MN, 34 years old)

"I learned new things. It was surprising that I could record my voice, and students were also happy as they could re-play the recording while learning the materials. I could also use other methods as if I only relied on Zoom. Both lecturers and students were burnout. Even worse when we had evening learning sessions. The point is, the lecturers must be creative." (SKM, 53 years old)

"It could be that the pandemic is a momentum for universities to be more creative in finding solutions. Learning can come from anywhere. However, the learning method needs to be more varied, creative, and dynamic. There is no need to sacrifice the mental health of both lecturers and students. Do not get stressed or even burnout. College should be a life experience that is both fun and insightful for students. Lecturers need to be more communicative to students so that they can find solutions together. Because the courses are different from one another, perhaps the appropriate teaching method may also be different. It needs link and match." (ARA, 39 years old)

"Now that we have been in the third year of the pandemic, the previous challenges should have solutions. Lecturers are more creative, while students must be used to this kind of learning. There are definitely pros and cons, whether it's offline or online. We just don't have a choice because we are in a crisis. Just do our best. We are not alone. Universities all over the world face the same challenges." (WLM, 30 years old)



Regarding the various challenges faced in the pandemic era, universities periodically evaluate their learning strategies. World-scale universities have started to apply "wellbeing" criteria to measure stress and burnout levels for lecturers and students. In line with research on students majoring in music during the pandemic, online learning turned out to be able to produce approximately the same outcomes and achievements when compared to before the pandemic by considering three factors: teaching creativity, attention, and interaction among students who were maintained even in a virtual environment (Schiavio et al., 2021). The same thing can also be an evaluation for university management, considering that the end of the crisis cannot be predicted.

5. Conclusion

This preliminary research is a trial for large-scale research on the creative performance of lecturers at 3 UPNs in Surabaya, Jakarta, and Yogyakarta, which sought to answer the following questions, first how do University lecturers evaluate their teaching performance and second, how do they reflect their teaching during the pandemic time. Through FGDs with eight lecturers from UPNVJT, UPNYK, and UPNVJ, three major themes were found that could be explored. Further, they are mental wellbeing, knowledge transfer, and creative pedagogies. It is recommended to conduct research with a larger scale of participants to be able to compare the performance of lecturers at the three UPNs. The pandemic condition makes mental health a priority not only from the student's point of view but also from the lecturers. Various methods and solutions coming from teaching creativity and technology are expected to reduce stress and burnout for both parties. Limitation in this pilot study is acknowledged in that the sample is fairly limited. It is recommended to further and scale up the number of research participants to have a more comprehensive understanding of how the pandemic impacted the learning process in higher education

institutions.

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