

WhatsApp Group: Online Media for Early Childhood Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, learning is carried out from home through online system. This study aims to determine utilizing WhatsApp group as an alternative media of learning early childhood during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This research is carried out in an Islamic Kindergarten in Ciamis Regency. In this research, the writers then set forth two research questions: (1) How is the parents' response in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic? (2) What obstacles do the parents have in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic? To answer the research questions, the researchers employ a qualitative descriptive study. The results of the present research show that utilizing WhatsApp group by the early childhood parents during the Covid-19 Pandemic is categorized good. It refers to the average percentage of 78%. It means that the early childhood parents accept in utilizing WhatsApp group as an alternative media of online learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. In addition, the parents' obstacles in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic covers 3 points. Those are: 8% of the parents have obstacle in the internet access, 7% of parents have obstacle in the internet data, and 7% of parents have obstacle in the cell phone facility.

Keywords: *whatsapp group; online learning; covid-19 pandemic; Early Childhood Learning*

INTRODUCTION

Since March 2nd, 2020, the Indonesian government has reported 2 cases of Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19) in Indonesia. Furthermore, on March 16th, 2020 there were at least 10 Indonesian citizens stated positive by suffering Covid-19 (Dewi, 2020: 56). To mitigate the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic, on March 13th, 2020 the Indonesian government through Presidential Regulation Number 7 of 2020 concerning the Task Force of Acceleration to Handle Corona Virus Disease 2019, in the Article 2 states that the goals of this Task Force are (1) increasing national resilience in the health sector; (2) accelerating to handle Covid-19 dissemination through synergizing among ministries and local governments; (3) increasing anticipation on the escalation developments from Covid-19 dissemination; (4) increasing the synergy on operational policy maker; and (5) increasing readiness and ability to prevent, detect and respond Covid-19 (Presidential Regulation Number 7 of 2020).

In harmony with the above goals, the Ministry of Education and Culture immediately responds the Presidential Regulation Number 7 of 2020 through endorsing three regulations. The first regulation is the Circular Letter Number 2 of 2020 concerning the prevention and handling Covid-19 within the Ministry of Education and Culture environment. The second regulation is the Circular Letter Number 3 of 2020 concerning the prevention of Covid-19 in the educational unit. The third regulation is the Circular Letter Number 4 of 2020 concerning the implementation of the emergency education policy during Covid-19 which contains the issue of learning from home (*Kementerian Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional*, 2021; *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia*, 2021; Suardi & Pratiwi, 2022).

The three policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture aforementioned were actually endorsed to protect the whole school parties from the Covid-19 Pandemic. This policy was applied to overall educational levels from kindergarten to university levels. Based on the Circular Letter Number 4 of 2020, it emphasizes that learning process is carried out at home through distance learning. Distance learning for kindergarten level is done both online and offline. The online learning is carried out by utilizing WhatsApp group which is provided in a cell phone or gadget during the learning process. Meanwhile, offline learning is carried out by delivering the form of assignments and home-visit done by teachers to the early childhood's home. These home-to-home activities are undertaken by obeying the health protocols determined by the Indonesian Ministry of Health (Arifa, 2020: 13 -14; Suardi & Pratiwi, 2022: 103).

During online learning at home, the early childhood interacts with the teachers guided by parental assistance via WhatsApp group. WhatsApp group is the only application that is chosen by both the teachers and parents in one of Islamic Kindergarten in Ciamis regency. It is because only the WhatsApp group that is possibly available in the both teachers' and parents' cell phone or gadget. Besides that, WhatsApp is assumed more affordable for them to use as the alternative media for teaching and learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Through WhatsApp group, the teachers provide learning material for the early childhood which is delivered every morning before around 07:14 - 08:00 a.m. Furthermore, the learning material is explained to the parents in WhatsApp group, and it is also completed by the exercises that should be done by the early childhood at home. Then, the result of learning should be reported by the parents from at 03:00 – 06:00 p.m., or tomorrow morning before 7:15 a.m., through WhatsApp group.

Various studies are available in relation to utilize WhatsApp as an alternative media of learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic such Arifa (2020); Hutami & Nugraheni (2020); Susilo & Sofiarini (2021); Wulandari & Mandasari (2021); Ramdhani & Nandiyanto (2021); Suardi & Pratiwi (2022); Apriani (2022); and Eka Prasasty (2022). Those studies become the underpinned references for the present study regarding the utilization of WhatsApp in teaching and learning process during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Meanwhile, the difference from the current research is the WhatsApp platform is utilized in a group of 13 early childhood's parents as an alternative learning media during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Based on the aforementioned background of the research, the writers are interested in conducting the research focuses on utilizing WhatsApp group as an alternative media of learning early childhood during the Covid-19 Pandemic in an Islamic Kindergarten in Ciamis Regency. In addition, the present research sets forth the research questions: (1) How is the parents' response in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic? (2) What obstacles do the parents have in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic? To gain the answer, the writers delineate them in the findings and discussion session of the study.

METHOD

In this current research, the researchers employ descriptive qualitative. In educational context, qualitative descriptive research is research refers to qualitative research that has the characteristic of explaining or providing a systematic description of a phenomenon occurs in the field of education. The facts of the population and the phenomenon are selected as carefully as possible in order that the description is easily understood (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012; Kim, Sefcik, & Bradway, 2018; Clifford, 2021; Hidayat, Herniawati, & Ihsanda, 2022).

In line with the participants of the present research, there are 21 participants consisting of 18 parents and 3 teachers in one of Islamic Kindergarten in Ciamis regency. The research was conducted from March 17th - May 16th, 2020 as the early time of the Covid-19 Pandemic. For the instrument of the research, the writers conducted observation through recording the early childhood's online learning activities via WhatsApp group. Besides that, the teachers also asked the parents if they gain the trouble not to send the results of the early childhood's daily online learning. Besides, the parent's trouble in joining the online learning was written by the teachers to be reported to the school management to seek the solution. The online learning activities and the parent's trouble were also noted by the writers in a fieldnote.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In analysing the data, the writers analysed the learning material delivered by the teachers via WhatsApp group. Then the learning material is done by the early childhood guided by the parents at home. After completing the material, it is reported by the early childhood's parents to the teachers via WhatsApp group. Learning in the even semester in the academic year 2019-2020 was carried out from March 17th - June 13th, 2020. Meanwhile, the effective time of online learning was only done from March 17th - May 16th, 2020. It is because on May 18th - 30th are the Eid Al-Fitr holiday. This periode of even semester also coincided during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

In line with the data, those are recorded in the fieldnote which only represented for April 2020, it is because the learning material given is repeated according to the lesson schedule every week. The online learning is started from 08:00 a.m., up to

10:00, a.m., from Monday to Saturday. For further schedule of the online learning materials, it is presented as follow.

Table 1. Weekly online Learning Materials

Time	Materials
08:00 – 08:30 a.m.	Learning schedule in TVRI
08:30 – 09:00 a.m.	Memorizing Juz Amma and daily prayers
09:00 – 09:30 a.m.	Sunbathing in the yard, then continue to read magazine
09:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Today learning thematic material

Table 2. The Online Learning Activities and Documentations

Time	Media	Materials/ activity	Documentation
Monday, April 13 th , 2020	Book/Internet	Various art tools	Reporting the video mentioning the tools of the arts
Tuesday, April 14 th , 2020	Painting book	Drawing art tools	Reporting the photo taking from drawing results
Wednesday, April 15 th , 2020	Used materials	Making musical instrument (free)	Reporting the photo taking from masterpiece
Thursday, April 16 th , 2020	Homemade musical instruments	Playing a homemade musical instruments	Reporting the video
Friday, April 17 th , 2020	The holy Qur'an/Juz Amma	Memorizing Q.S. Al-Qori'ah	Reporting the video
Saturday, April 18 th , 2020	Food materials	Cooking healthy snacks/ meals with mother and family	Reporting the photos of cooking activities at home

In addition, the data taken from the observation are recorded in a fieldnote during online learning process via WhatsApp group. The following data are taken during April 2020 which represented the overall data from March - May 2020. The data are presented as follow.

Table 3. Observation results

Day/Date of Observation	Time	Number of parents reporting their early childhood's activities	Observation results	Obstacles
Friday, April 3 rd , 2020	08:00-10:00 a.m.	13 parents	13 parents reported the results of their early childhood's online learning. The rest of 5 parents did not. It means that only 72.2% of participants submitted the results of their early childhood's home learning activities.	5 participants did not submit their early childhood's learning results because of (1) the obstacle in the internet access, (2) the obstacle in internet data, (3) the cell phones did not have WhatsApp facility.
Saturday, April 4 th , 2020	08:00-10:00 a.m.	14 parents	14 parents reported the results of their early childhood's	4 participants did not submit their early childhood's learning

Monday, April 6 th , 2020	08:00-10:00 a.m.	14 parents	learning. The rest of 4 parents did not. It means that there are 77.78% of participants submitted the results of their early childhood's home learning activities. 14 parents reported the results of their early childhood's learning. The rest of 4 parents did not. It means that there are 77.78% of participants submitted the results of their early childhood's home learning activities.	results because of (1) the obstacle in the internet access, (2) the obstacle in the internet data, (3) the cell phones did not have WhatsApp facility. 4 participants did not submit their early childhood's learning results because of: (1) the obstacle in the internet access, (2) the obstacle in the internet data, (3) the cell phones did not have WhatsApp facility.
Tuesday, April 7 th , 2020	08:00-10:00 a.m.	15 parents	15 parents reported the results of their early childhood's learning. The rest of 3 parents did not. It means that 83.33% of the participants submitted the results of their early childhood's home learning activities.	3 participants did not submit their early childhood's learning results caused by: (1) the obstacle in internet access, (2) the obstacle in the internet data.
Wednesday, April 8 th , 2020	08:00-10:00 a.m.	14 parents	14 parents reported the results of their early childhood's learning. The rest of 4 parents did not. It means that there are 77.78% of participants submitted the results of their early childhood's home learning activities.	4 participants did not submit their early childhood's learning results because of: (1) the obstacle in the internet access, (2) the obstacle in the internet data, (3) the cell phones did not have WhatsApp facility.
Thursday, April 9 th - Wednesday, April 22 nd , 2020	08:00-10:00 a.m.	15 parents	15 parents reported the results of their early childhood's learning. The rest of 3 parents did not. It means that 83.33% of the participants submitted the results of their early childhood's home learning activities.	3 participants did not submit their early childhood's learning results because of: (1) the obstacle in the internet access, (2) the obstacle in the internet data.

Discussion

Based on the data obtained from the table of observation results aforementioned, at least 72.2% of the participants submitted the results of their early childhood's home learning activities via WhatsApp group. In another meeting, there are only 77.78% of

participants submitted the results of their early childhood's online learning activities via WhatsApp group.

In the other meeting, there are 83.33% of participants submitted the results of their early childhood's home learning activities via WhatsApp group. Referring to the achievements of 72.2%, 77.78%, and 83.88%, utilizing WhatsApp group by the participants shows in the average of 78%. The average of percentage aforementioned asserts that most of participants accept WhatsApp group as the media of learning process during the Covid-19 Pandemic. To understand the detail data towards the participants' response of utilizing WhatsApp group, the writers present the data in the following diagram.

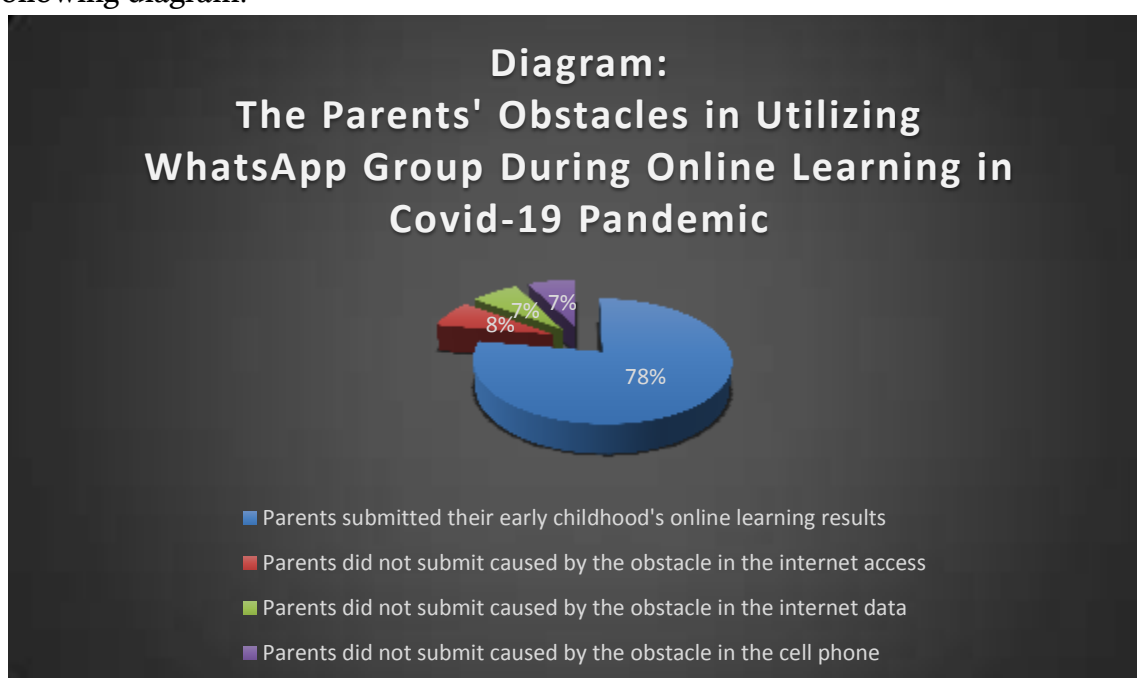


Figure 1. The Parents' Obstacles in Utilizing WhatsApp Group

After showing the findings of the present research, the writers then answer the first research question: **How is the parents' response in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic?** Based on the data presented, the aforementioned data lead the writers to answer that utilizing WhatsApp group by the the early childhood parents during the Covid-19 Pandemic is categorized good. It refers to the average percentage of 78%. It means that the early childhood parents accept to utilize WhatsApp group as the alternative media of online learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. In addition, WhatsApp group is used as two-way communication media between the teachers and the early childhoods' parents during the online learning from home. This result is in harmony with the research conducted by Susanti, Hidayati, Anggreiny, & Maputra (2020); Apriani (2022); and Eka prasasty (2022).

After answering the first research question, the writers then answer the second research question: **What obstacles do the parents have in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic?** Based on the data presented in the aforementioned diagram, the data lead the writers to answer that the parents'

obstacles in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic generally cover 3 obstacles. Those are 8% of the parents have obstacle in the internet access, 7% of parents have obstacle in the internet data, and the rest of 7% of the parents have obstacle in the cell phone facility. This result is in harmony with the research conducted by Susanti, Hidayati, Anggreiny, & Maputra (2020); Apriani (2022); and Eka prasasty (2022).

Based on the results of the present research, those are in line with the results of previous research conducted by Hutami & Nugraheni (2020) with the title learning methods through WhatsApp group as anticipation of Covid-19 at TK ABA Kleco Kotagede. Thus, the results of the present research not only focus on utilizing WhatsApp group as the online learning media during the Covid-19 Pandemic, but also investigating the obstacles gained by the early childhood parents in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This additional angle of the present research becomes the novelty of the research at which the school management report these obstacles to the regional government in order to get subsidy of free quota data for internet access. In the next semester, the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture provided the subsidy of free quota data for internet access for both teachers and students to support the online learning process during the Covid-19 Pandemic (Sajida & Ranjani, 2020; Dahiya, et al., 2021).

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CONCLUSION

Regarding the results of the present research, the writers come into two conclusions. The first is, utilizing WhatsApp group by the early childhood parents during the Covid-19 Pandemic is categorized good. It refers to the average percentage of 78%. It means that the early childhood parents accept in utilizing WhatsApp group as an alternative media of learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The second is, the parents' obstacles in joining the online learning via WhatsApp group during the Covid-19 Pandemic covers 3 points. Those are: 8% of the parents have obstacle in the internet access, 7% of parents have obstacle in the internet data, and 7% of parents have obstacle in the cell phone facility.

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