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## Foreword

Welcome to edition 16.4.1 of the TESOL International Journal. The pandemic has, it seems, given global academics much valuable time to work from home and put their energies into research for we have seen a vast increase in the number of submissions. However, only a very small percent makes it through to publication as the competition to be published is indeed strong.

The first paper entitled ‘Academic Reading Preferences and Behaviors of Indonesian Undergraduate Students during Covid-19 Pandemic’ is from Firman Parlindungan, Refanja Rahmatillah and Lia Lisyati. Their study investigated the preferences and behaviors of Indonesian undergraduate students in reading their academic materials during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the current demands of digital reading, the results revealed that most of the students still favored print format for their academic materials. Nevertheless, various factors that contributed to the students’ preferences were mentioned, including types of courses, accessibility, and print reading habits, which resulted to the students’ lack of confidence upon electronic material.

The second paper, “Inquiry-based Instruction in Language Learning Classroom: Saudi EFL Learners’ Learning Orientation” is authored by Shadma Iffat Rahmatullah, Ratna Rintaningrum Nazik and A. Osman Medani. Their study examined the learning orientation of Saudi EFL learners toward inquiry-based instruction (IBI) as language pedagogy and to analyze whether the IBI can promote students’ capability to think critically and reflectively about the production of knowledge or not. The study also examined the students’ learning style that would influence their learning motivation and achievement. A factor common to global study notes the short duration of a four-month semester seems to be insufficient to implement the IBI method for vast syllabi.

The third paper in this volume “Reflective Roles and Resilience Building Opportunities of Parent-Teachers in Emergency Remote Teaching: Trajectories toward Inclusive Recovery,” is authored by Mas Ayu Mumin, Nena Padilla-Valdez, Lee Kok Yueh, Norihan binti Abu Hassan and Hj Shafiqah Hj Mat Salleh. This study aimed to explore the roles, dispositions and responses of Bruneian parent-teachers who were forefront Work From Home facilitators

of Emergency Remote Teaching for nearly three months and Home Based Learning for the last one month and how they coped, sustained, and persevered during the pandemic. The authors conclude that adaptability and resilience remain dominant attributes for teachers to cushion the impact of unpredictability and uncertainty of virtual-digital teaching, yet a strong and dynamic support system defines their speed of growth and survival in the profession.

Three authors from Indonesia, Nurlela, Ely Hayati Nasution and Fikry Prastya Syahputra co-authored the next paper, “University Students’ Language Errors in Writing Narrative Text: Carelessness or Incompetence?” This research aims at examining higher level students’ problems in writing narrative texts. The results showed that Mis formation (Dulay 1982) became the most frequent error found and included three main problems, namely the use of tenses, articles, and dangling structures. Contrary to other published research, the authors noted the use of Machine Translation, such as Google Translate also contributed to the students’ carelessness. This finding clearly required further study. The next paper is entitled ‘Clause Projection in News Item Text Written by Tertiary EFL Learners.’ The research questions formulated in their study were, ‘What type of projected clause is found in the source part of news item text and how are projected clauses constructed as the logico-semantic system realization in the source part of news item text?’ In analyzing the data, the researchers found that five texts were not suitable to be used as a data source thus giving follow up researchers areas for following or distinguishing new research.

The final paper is entitled Challenges in Online Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned from Universities in Indonesia by Authors Mursyidin, Firman Parlindungan and Refanja Rahmatillah. Their study examined how the Covid-19 phenomenon changed the learning experience of higher education in Indonesia and specifically focuses on (1) the conception of online learning and (2) the constraints faced in implementing online learning. It is clear that education Ministries worldwide face the same problem and if the pandemic continues to enforce study from home, far greater resources must be allocated by governments to the teaching profession.

We hope you find valuable research herein to assist you in your research.

## Challenges in Online Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned from Universities in Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

Higher education faces alarming challenges due to the global Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic. Learning activities are transferred into online environment. Higher

education institutions must adapt from conventional face-to-face learning (direct learning) to fully digitalized learning. This study aims to examine how the Covid-19 phenomenon changes the learning experience of higher education in Indonesia. In particular, this study reveals the preferences of online learning platforms that are often used by lecturers in Indonesia, the conceptions of online teaching and learning, and the challenges faced during the teaching and learning process. This research involved 57 lecturers from various universities in Aceh, Indonesia. The data were analyzed using a qualitative approach. The results showed the preferences of using online learning platform that 77.2% of 57 participants often used WhatsApp Group, 56.1% used Zoom, and 29.8% used Google Classroom. The second finding is related to the conception of online teaching and learning during Covid-19. Broadly speaking, the participants had a teaching pattern of delivering material, asking questions, and having question-and-answer session or discussion. This pattern indicates that the concept of learning is more oriented towards teaching-focused than learning-focused. Finally, we found two categories of challenges faced by lecturers during the teaching and learning, which are related to: (1) facilities or infrastructure, and (2) human resources. This study indicates that online learning practices that are different from conventional learning require special skills and knowledge at the learning planning, implementation, and learning evaluation stages. Continuous development of lecturer professionalism needs serious attention.

**Keywords:** *Covid-19 pandemic, Higher education, Online learning*

## 1. Introduction

The educational landscape of higher education in Indonesia has experienced major shift in the last three decades. The shift is marked by changes in the composition of the student population in each decade. There are four generations currently living side by side; Baby boomers (who were born around 1946-1964), Generation X (who was born around 1965-1979), Millennials (who were born around 1980-1995), and Generation Z (who were born around 1996-2010) (Bump, 2014; Kate, 2016). The gap between these generations is very wide, starting from personal characteristics, demands of the workplace, to different learning styles (Karakas, Manisaligil, & Sarigollu, 2015). Universities in Indonesia needs to make some adjustments to the curriculum and educational practices, so that the outcomes remain relevant to the local and global development.

Today, the most striking change of the four generations above is in the use of technology and the internet between Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z. This change has shaped

the practices of teaching and learning in higher education where technology is used inseparable from the clear and measurable educational goals. Darmayanti, Setiani, and Oetojo (2007) state that implementing teaching and learning through the use of technology in Indonesian universities involves a very complex process. They contend that technological use in higher education can be successful if the institution has established these four dimensions: organization, infrastructure, financial support, and human resource. Similar statement mentioned by Kusmana (2014) and Astuti and Febrian (2019) that integrating technology into learning requires lecturers to plan appropriate learning activities and develop contents that are accessible for all learners.

Additionally, Muhammad (2016) who examines issues of learning in tertiary institutions reveals that universities must be able to become a learning organization. This means that universities are not only proactive in developing knowledge and changing the behavior of students based on the knowledge, but also must be able to build the capacity to adapt in a sustainable manner. This includes the ability to integrate technology into learning.

The global Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic has also shaped higher education practices. For example, the Indonesian government has restricted all public activities since March to prevent the spread of Covid-19, including closing school and college activities (Mona, 2020; Yunus & Rezki, 2020). All learning activities are transferred into online. Universities must ensure that online learning delivers equal quality as in conventional learning environment. Universities must also involve in the mitigation of the pandemic, so its service and productivity are not greatly affected.

Lecturers are one of the many entities faced challenges in the process of online teaching and learning during the pandemic. The study of Zaharah, Kirilova, and Windarti (2020) finds that teaching and learning process carried out at home and online cause various problems, such as lack of ability to use technology, limited internet facilities, and inadequate teaching competence. Moreover, Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) state that the success of online education is closely related to the commitment and competence of lecturers in developing online teaching. Despite those problems, the transfer of knowledge must continue. However, research on this issue is very limited. There are still abundant points of interests that have not been revealed, including the social impacts of Covid-19 in the world of higher education in Indonesia.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the educational landscape in Indonesian universities. Through a case study at tertiary institutions in Aceh, this research has a unique and interesting context to be analyzed. This research will



add the literature on online learning process in Indonesian universities during the Covid-19 period. Specifically, this research will answer overarching questions as follows:

1. How do lecturers formulate the concept of online teaching and learning during Covid-19?
2. What are the constraints faced by lecturers in conducting online learning during Covid-19?

To answer these questions, we will first review the literature, which is the basis for analysis and discussion. Then, we will explain the research methodology, in which the chain of reasoning from this research is clear, directed, and measurable. After that, we will present the results of the study which are linked to the literature review. Finally, we will conclude the results of the analysis and formulate recommendations for future stakeholders, lecturers, and researchers.

## **2. Literature Review**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the changes in the educational practices of tertiary institutions in Aceh during the Covid-19 pandemic. The government has limited activities of community through social isolation to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus (Mona, 2020). The limitation includes the practices of higher education in which the entire university learning system has been transferred online through various platforms. The readiness of each university and the instructors become pivotal. To support the topic of the research, we reviewed previous research related to the concept of teaching and learning in tertiary institutions, the use of technology, information and communication (ICT) in higher education learning.

Higher education institutions have been trying to integrate ICT into learning for a long time. This is due to changes in the current demands, starting from (1) student needs, (2) learning methods, (3) and access to education (Lai, 2011). With the existence of digital technology and the internet, the use of ICT in learning has been increasingly becoming a necessity, especially in the application of online learning. Mouloudi (2011) mentions that online learning has some advantages because students might have the opportunities to deliver opinions without afraid of being judged. Nevertheless, the quality of online learning by using ICT will greatly depend on the learning design prepared by a teacher. Not all online learning designs lead to active or student-centered participation (Wright, 2011). Teachers often focus more on lecturing or teacher-centered learning because they do not have adequate knowledge and skills on how to

conduct active learning for students online. Alhuwaydi (2021) also points out that the biggest factor for weak online learning implementation is due to the lack of training of teachers.

In relation to this problem, Lofstrom and Nevgi (2007) conducted a study on the use of ICT at universities in Helsinki, Finland. They argue that even though the universities have integrated ICT in learning, quality assurance of the learning is rarely carried out. The online learning is often only in the form of one-way assignments from lecturers to students. The use of ICT is more to fulfill the demands of lecturers in teaching, while the lecturers' time and commitment are neglected. Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) and Kim and Bonk (2006) who conducted a similar study in the United States added that the development, implementation and maintenance of online classes are not easy, especially from the side of the lecturer. The lecturers spent an average of 10 hours on an online class that lasts one hour. The same point is stated by Wang and Ip (2010) that the lack of preparation and consideration for online classes may result in students over workload. Online classes are certainly time-and energy-consuming for both lecturers and students. Then, what about online learning in Indonesia?

According to some scholars, online learning in Indonesia has not fully implemented the ideal principles of online learning (Sari, Antoni, & Rizal, 2016; Surjono, Muhtadi, & Wahyuningsih, 2017; Majid & Fuada, 2020). In a study on the effectiveness of developing online learning content in Indonesian universities, Astuti and Febrian (2019) state that in general, universities in Indonesia apply a blended learning system. This system is a combination of face-to-face (conventional learning) with online learning. Online learning is only additional or supplemental. In this context, lecturers' task in preparing face-to-face learning is greater than in online learning. Lecturers only prepare additional material as enrichment in online learning, such as videos, assignments, or reading materials.

In addition, the success of online learning is largely determined by some factors of the students. You (2016) examine predictors of success in online learning involving 530 students in Korea. His findings indicate that students' regular learning patterns, delays in submitting assignments, number of sessions (frequency of online class attendance), and evidence of reading the course information packets are significantly associated with their success in the course. A similar opinion is expressed by Muzid and Munir (2005) who conducted their research in Indonesia. Then, Guspatni (2018) also conducted a study involving 52 students in Padang, Indonesia. These studies reveal that most students think that online learning is very difficult and not suitable to be applied for them. The students' involvement in the online learning process is very low.

However, a slightly different finding showed that when compared to other countries, such as Myanmar, online learning at universities in Indonesia is much more promising in terms of facilities, readiness of lecturers' human resources, and readiness of students (The & Usagawa, 2018). Several challenges in the application of online learning in Indonesian universities are still found, including: (1) lack of teaching competence in using ICT and lack of institutional support for this, (2) lack of internet access, and (3) lack of time management in implementing online learning (Rahayu, 2019).

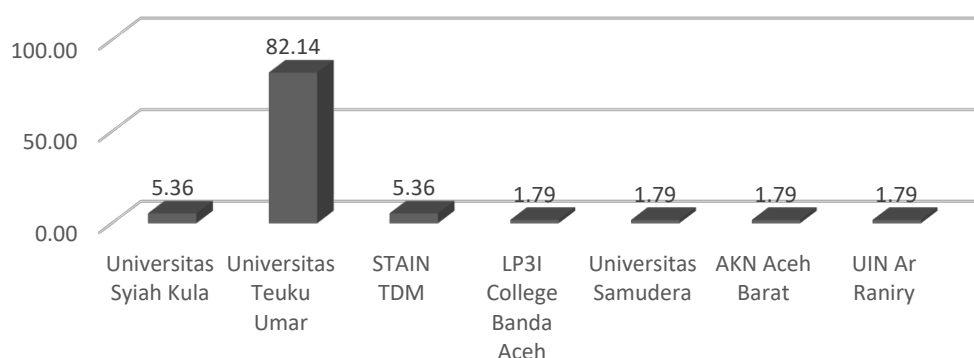
Based on the explanation above, it seems that the implementation of online learning in universities in Indonesia due to the Covid-19 pandemic is worth studying. Other problems might be found caused by the rapid changes and the unpreparedness of universities in managing online learning. Yet, lack of research looking into this topic leaves many questions unanswered. Therefore, this study tries to provide alternative answers that can complement the literature on the polemic of higher education in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, especially through a case study in Aceh.

### **3. Methods**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study research design. According to Barone (2011), case studies are descriptive-holistic analytical tools to help reveal the complexity of situations, programs, events, phenomena, or people that cannot be made explicit in other research designs.

#### **3.1. Participants**

This study involved 57 lecturers from various universities in Aceh. The recruitment process was carried out voluntarily. This means that anyone who was willing to become the participant could be involved in this study. However, there were two main requirements to become the participant in this study, which were: (1) the person was an active lecturer at a tertiary institution in Aceh, and (2) the person conducted online lectures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Figure 1 shows the number of participants based on campus affiliation.



*Figure 1. Participants' affiliation (in %)*

### 3.2. Data Collection

The data in this study were collected using an online questionnaire with the help of Google Form. The distribution of the questionnaires was carried out through our fellow lecturers in Aceh. Participants who meet the two criteria filled out the questionnaire voluntarily. To provide wider opportunities for lecturers at tertiary institutions in Aceh to be involved in this research, the access to the questionnaire was open for two weeks.

The research questionnaire consisted of 12 questions focusing on the selection of online platform, lesson plan, learning implementation, learning evaluation, and constraints faced in implementing the online lecture. The questions of the questionnaire were open-ended questions, so that participants could explain in detail their answers to each of the questions.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out by using a qualitative approach. This approach involves the process of analyzing data through coding the data into specific categories. Categories contain labels that resemble conceptualizations of key findings from the data and represent the cases being studied. Analysis stops when a core category emerges where we can integrate the analysis and develop a 'story' to summarize the main research themes (Dei, 2004; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The data coding process consists of three stages, namely (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding. Open coding is the initial stage of data analysis where the researcher classifies data that shows the same results from each respondent's answer. Then axial coding is the stage where the researcher combines or reduces certain data or categories that are considered the same or not. Finally,

selective coding is the process of determining key categories where no other new data is found in the analysis.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This study aims to analyze changes in learning patterns of universities in Aceh during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this section, the research findings are described in three themes according to the results of the analysis, namely: (1) use of online learning platforms, (2) conceptions of teaching and learning, and (3) constraints in the online learning process. Each of these themes will be discussed sequentially as follows.

##### 4.1. Use of Online Learning Platforms

Data in Figure 2 shows the level of the use of online learning platforms by lecturers at universities in Aceh during Covid-19. From the 12 platforms mentioned by 57 participants, WhatsApp Group, Zoom Meeting, and Google Class platforms ranked in the top three, respectively. 77.2% of 57 participants often used WhatsApp Group, 56.1% used Zoom Meeting, and 29.8% used Google Class as a medium for online learning during the Covid-19 period.

Figure 2 shows the use of online learning platforms by 57 lecturers in Aceh during the Covid-19 pandemic. Broadly conceived that WhatsApp Group was used most often. This is probably due to the easy access to WhatsApp Group in two-way virtual communication. Most of the participants stated that the reason for choosing WhatsApp was because this mobile application made it easier for students to access material anywhere and anytime. The internet bandwidth data package required to access WhatsApp tends to be lower than other platforms.

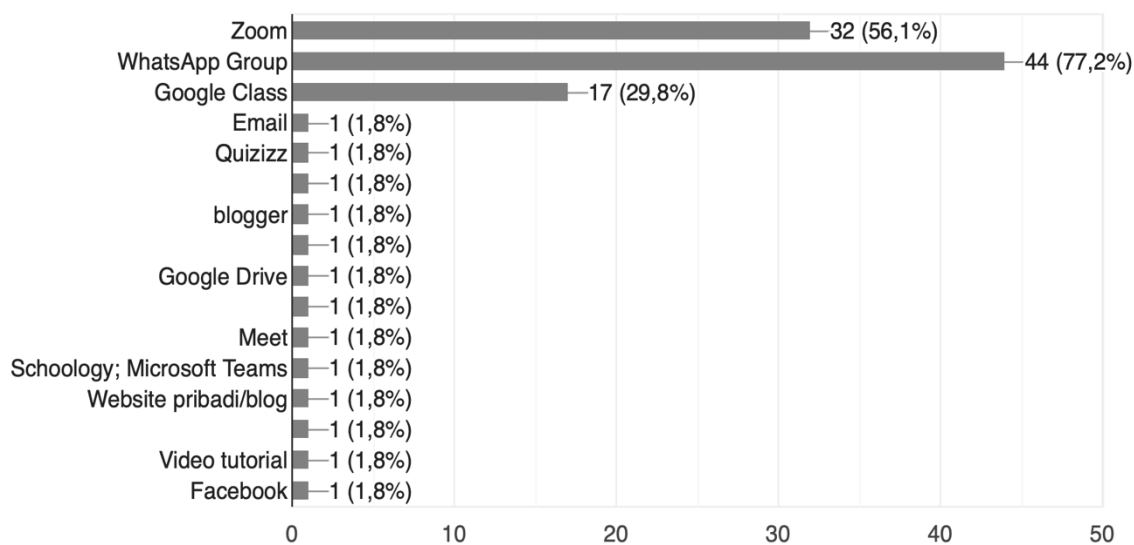


Figure 2. Use of online learning platforms

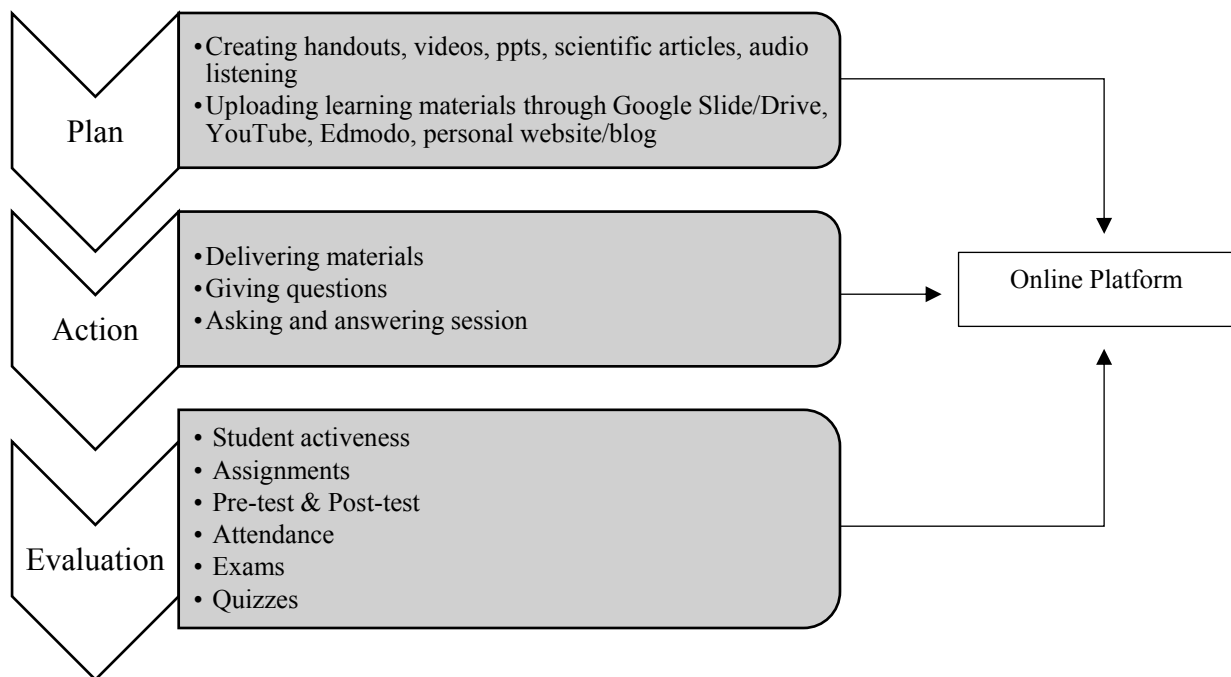
The statement above is in line with research conducted by So (2016) on an experimental study of the effectiveness of using WhatsApp in online lectures involving 61 students in Hong Kong. The mean margin on the post-test scores indicates that the study sample in the experimental group performed better than the sample in the control group. These findings suggest that the WhatsApp intervention can improve student achievement. In addition, the research sample also shows positive perceptions of the use of WhatsApp for online teaching and learning.

Meanwhile, the use of Zoom Meeting was in the second rank probably because this platform made it easier for lecturers and students to have face to face interaction and it is complemented with a screen sharing application feature that makes the teaching and learning process more effective and efficient. Sayem, Taylor, McClanachan, and Mumtahina (2017) conducted a study involving Australian students using Zoom Meeting application. They found that using Zoom Meeting in online learning resulted in higher student satisfaction and a 25% reduction in lecturer workload. On the other hand, Google Classroom was in the third rank of use possibly because the available features are not as comprehensive and as easy as Zoom Meeting, yet Google classroom is still the best option for implementing online learning (Iftakhar, 2016).

However, even with different choice of online platforms, the biggest challenge in implementing effective online learning is social factor or the ability of students to project their personal characteristics onto the learning space. This is coupled with the potential negative effects on student engagement, persistence, and academic achievement (Gleason & Greenhow, 2017). In choosing what platform or application to use, these factors must be considered.

#### 4.2. Conception of Online Teaching and Learning during Covid-19

One of the specific objectives in this study is to find out how lecturers formulated online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. We asked 57 research participants about their steps of learning: (1) lesson planning, (2) learning implementation, and (3) learning evaluation. These three steps are in accordance with the didactic steps of learning that are generally known (Kirkpatrick, 1998; Sudjana, 2002). Figure 3 shows the concepts of learning and teaching carried out by the participants.



*Figure 3.* Flowchart of learning and teaching conception

Figure 3 shows how the participants generally formulated the concept of learning and teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. It can be seen that at the planning stage, the participants created handouts, videos, ppts, scientific articles or audio lessons that were uploaded to online sites such as YouTube, Google Drive, Edmodo, or personal websites / blogs to be shared with students. As for the implementation stage that took place online, in general, the participants had a teaching pattern of delivering material, giving questions, and discussion session. Then, at the evaluation stage, the 57 participants generally focused on aspects of student activeness, assignments, pre and posttest, exams and quizzes.

Looking at the Figure 3 above, it seems that the concept of learning carried out by the participants was more teaching- rather than learning-oriented. When using the concept of teaching-oriented, the assumption is that teaching is the transfer of information, skills and attitudes to students. Meanwhile, the assumption of the concept of learning-oriented is more to promote the development of the conceptual understanding of students independently (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). The choice of this conception has a significant and interrelated impact on how lecturers use technology and learning methods. The choice also reflects attitudes about which factor is more important; teachers or technology that are considered significant (Kirkwood & Price, 2012).

Due to the limited scope of the research, unfortunately this study cannot reveal more deeply about the quality of the materials developed by the participants, how the discussion process was carried out, what steps or strategies were used in facilitating online discussions, and how the didactic language used by the lecturers and students in the discussion. This study also cannot measure the level of student learning success in the online learning process. The limitation of this study, however, can become a topic for other researchers in conducting future research.

#### 4.3. Constraints in the Online Learning Process

After knowing various platforms used by the 57 lecturers in Aceh and the conceptions of learning that they carried out, this study also reveals the constraints faced by the lecturers during the implementation of online learning. The results of the analysis showed that the constraints faced by lecturers in Aceh can be divided into two categories, which are those related to: (1) facilities or infrastructure, and (2) human resources. Table 1 is the results of the coding analysis.

As noted in Table 1 that the main constraints faced by the participants in online teaching and learning are divided into two categories, namely facilities and human resources. Facility constraints include limited internet data packages, disruption of telecommunication networks in the village where students or lecturers reside, limited access to online applications or platforms, an environment that is not conducive for online learning, such as noise on the road or children, frequent electrical blackouts, and no opportunities to do laboratory works courses that require practicum.

Table 1. *Data coding of online learning constraints*

Constraints related to facilities	Constraints related to human resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited internet data packages</li> <li>• Telecommunication network disruption</li> <li>• Limited access to application/ platform</li> <li>• Not conducive environment</li> <li>• Unstable electricity</li> <li>• Cannot perform practicum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low student motivation</li> <li>• Difficult to control student activeness</li> <li>• Low competence of lecturers in processing content and learning strategies</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Student discipline</li> </ul>



Additionally, the constraints related to human resources include low motivation of students to participate in online learning, difficulties in making students active, low ability of lecturers to develop learning, poor time management, and students' lack of discipline in online lectures. These two categories of constraints are some factors that determine the success or failure of online learning. However, further research related these findings needs to be done, for example through a factor analysis research design, equation modeling, ethnography, and others. The goal is that a comprehensive picture of the barriers to online learning can be seen in more detail.

The findings in this study are in line with the results of a similar study conducted by Lofstrom and Nevgi (2007) in Finland where the commitment of both lecturers and students is the key to the smooth process of online learning. Similar results are also shown in research conducted in the United States by Bolliger and Wasilik (2009) and Kim and Bonk (2006) which emphasize the large role of lecturers in the success of online learning. Then this study also strengthens the research findings of You (2016) in Korea about predictors related to the success of online learning in higher education.

The constraints to online learning at universities in Aceh during the Covid-19 pandemic in this study were not much different from the results of Muzid and Munir's study (2005) and Guspatni (2018) which reveal the obstacles to online learning in Indonesian universities. It seems that lecturers and students in Indonesia are not yet comfortable to interact online for learning. If this problem is not resolved, it is feared that it will disrupt the knowledge transfer process, particularly in the time of the pandemic.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study aims to determine practices of learning in higher education during the Covid-19 pandemic. By raising a case study in higher education in Aceh, this research specifically focuses on: (1) the conception of online learning and (2) the constraints faced in implementing online learning. The results of the data analysis show that the learning in general follows three didactic steps, namely planning, implementing, and evaluating learning. Furthermore, the focus of the learning is more on teaching-focused, which is only the fulfillment of lecturers' academic responsibilities for teaching.

Second, the constraints faced by the lecturers in online learning during the Covid-19 period are generally the same as those of online learning before Covid-19, which relate to online system facilities or infrastructure (such as the internet, networks, etc.) and relate to human resources (such as competence of lecturers, student motivation, commitment, etc.).

Therefore, it is expected that stakeholders, especially the government, can pay attention to and provide adequate online learning infrastructure throughout Indonesia, especially Aceh. If the Covid-19 outbreak lasts for a long time, which make online learning lasts longer, then access to online learning needs to be a concern. Hence, none of students will become victims because they cannot participate in learning due to unavailability of stable network or electricity.

It is also expected that universities can improve the competence of lecturers in implementing online learning. Online learning practices that are different from conventional learning require special skills and knowledge at the learning planning, implementation, and learning evaluation stages. Continuous development of lecturer professionalism competence needs to be done.

In closing, the scope of this research is very limited. Future research can raise the same topic by conducting research using a different design and focus. For example, further research needs to be carried out to see the quality of online learning material content, the quality of the discussion from a discourse analysis point of view, or the inhibiting factors and predictors of online learning success using the factorial analysis approach, equation modeling, and ethnography.

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