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# Student Viewpoints Regarding Distance Learning

Ariesya Aprillia<sup>1</sup>, Rony Setiawan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Kristen Maranatha

Correspondence: Ariesya Aprillia. Email: april.lie@hotmail.com

## Abstract

This study aims to examine potential disparities in student perspectives towards distance learning precipitated by the significant shifts in educational dynamics. The sample comprises 709 students hailing from diverse universities in Bandung Indonesia, selected through snowball sampling. Prior to hypothesis testing, validity and reliability assessments are conducted. The distribution of student responses concerning distance learning is scrutinized utilizing the Anova test, investigating variances in perspectives based on academic batch and university type. The findings affirm discernible differences in students' perspectives on distance learning relative to their academic batch and university type.

**Keywords:** Distance Learning, Academic Batch, Type of University

## 1. Introduction

Previous studies have highlighted challenges such as disparities in educational quality, unequal access to technology among students for distance learning, and variations in students' technological preparedness (Syahrudin et al., 2021). Additionally, there is evidence suggesting that students who struggle academically in traditional face-to-face settings are more prone to lower academic performance in distance learning environments (Mohd Basar et al., 2021). The abrupt and unforeseen shifts in educational settings present an opportunity for academic institutions to innovate their teaching methods by harnessing current technology. Consequently, the transition from traditional in-person classes to distance learning poses both challenges and prospects that warrant deeper examination. This study aims to delve into the advantages and obstacles of remote learning from the perspective of students. Distance learning, as defined by Al-Mawee et al. (2021), involves utilizing technology for instruction, wherein students are physically distanced from face-to-face interactions and transition to online platforms. Such programs can either be entirely web-based or a blend of virtual and in-person sessions, known as hybrid learning. This approach not only enables educators to reach a broader audience but also offers students greater flexibility in their academic pursuits. While online education falls within the spectrum of distance learning, often referred to as e-learning, it represents just one facet of this multifaceted approach.

Furthermore, research indicates that students experience a heavier workload during distance learning compared to traditional face-to-face instruction. Numerous studies have explored students' perceptions of distance learning. Conversely, in addressing the inquiry into students' experiences during distance learning, researchers undertook a qualitative research synthesis to gather insights from ten articles, summarizing their content and distilling key findings (Blackmon & Major, 2012). These findings revealed that students often juggled domestic responsibilities alongside their studies and reported difficulty in grasping abstract learning materials. However, some students

demonstrated success in adapting to distance learning. Educators, therefore, hold a crucial role in fostering innovative online environments conducive to the acquisition and application of new cognitive skills. Satisfaction with various online asynchronous activities, including video recordings, exam information, interaction with teaching staff, and updates from social media platforms, significantly contributes to students' satisfaction with the university's response during the Covid-19 pandemic (Aristovnik et al., 2020).

Students cited numerous benefits of distance learning, including time savings, enhanced schedule flexibility, increased course load capacity, independent study opportunities, temporal and spatial flexibility, and often lower attendance costs (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). Conversely, drawbacks included technological and internet limitations, diminished face-to-face interaction (Das, 2023), feelings of isolation, attention challenges, and delayed feedback (De Paepe et al., 2017; Gillett-Swan, 2017; Barrot et al., 2021). Previous research offers several recommendations, including universities offering diverse learning modalities (face-to-face, online, hybrid) to cater to student preferences, continued professional development for faculty (Philipsen et al., 2019; El Islami et al., 2022), providing the distance learning process with adequate social support and motivation, instead of only providing synchronous or only asynchronous practice (Çankaya & Yünkül, 2017; Amiti, 2020; Zeng & Luo, 2023); considering students who have complex needs and special needs, trying to open communication channels between administrators, educators, and students, as well as improving mental health programs and providing proactive psychosocial assistance to students (Amiti, 2020; Zeng & Luo, 2023). Focusing on a specific academic term, researchers investigated graduate students' perceptions of distance learning through online survey analysis (Fedynich et al., 2015). Their findings underscored the significance of teacher engagement, student-teacher interaction, and feedback mechanisms in shaping learner satisfaction

In the study, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) posits that there is no variance in students' perceptions of distance learning questions based on batch and university type. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) suggests differences in students' perspectives based on batch and university type. The null hypothesis is rejected if the significance value is  $\leq 0.05$ .

## 2. Research Method

This study employs a descriptive comparative research methodology aimed at addressing current challenges. Descriptive research serves to uncover novel insights, elucidate existing conditions, ascertain the frequency of occurrences, and classify informational patterns. Its objective is to elucidate or outline research issues arising from the characteristics of individuals, locations, and time periods. Specifically, this research seeks to elicit responses from participants regarding their perspectives on distance learning.

The study population comprises all actively enrolled students at various universities in Bandung. Given the limited availability of secondary statistical data up to the commencement of the research, the researchers presumed the research population to be infinite. Utilizing a 5% tolerable error rate, the Herry King Nomogram table was consulted, indicating a minimum sample size of 349 individuals. The research adopts a snowball sampling approach, whereby respondents are identified through networking with individuals having direct or indirect associations.

The questionnaire comprised demographic inquiries, Likert scale assessments, and open-ended prompts. Participants provided responses to four demographic queries concerning gender, age, academic batch, and university type. Additionally, they rated items on a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Moreover, respondents were tasked with addressing open-ended inquiries. Measurement of distance learning encompassed variables such as flexibility (five questions), expansion (four questions), student interaction (two questions), and technology utilization (two questions). Evaluation of instructional methods included inquiries regarding instructor involvement (four questions), distance learning tools (two questions), and preferences for distance learning methods (four questions).

The researchers conducted a comprehensive data collection process utilizing literature reviews and surveys. They initiated a contextual review, a method wherein the researcher situates a specific study within broader scholarly

discourse by examining analogous or related prior studies, thus forming a research framework (Snyder, 2019; Zekaj, 2023). In this study, the researchers systematically searched, read, and analyzed scholarly articles available in university-facilitated journals and conducted searches through search engines like Google. This approach aimed to identify, comprehend, and integrate conceptual and empirical insights relevant to the research topics and variables. These findings served as a foundation for structuring theoretical frameworks and guiding the preparation, design, and execution of the research in a coherent and comprehensive manner.

The researchers administered surveys through the compilation and distribution of written questionnaires, aiming to gather information on respondents' backgrounds, beliefs, and behaviors. In this study, the researchers assembled and disseminated a questionnaire in the form of a Google Forms, distributing it to relevant parties capable of reaching the target respondents. This approach considered the ongoing implementation of online or distance learning in the academic setting and aimed for a broad research sample coverage, specifically targeting the Bandung area, the capital of West Java. By disseminating questionnaires virtually via a link, the researchers sought to enhance the efficiency and precision of data collection in alignment with current circumstances. To ensure effective questionnaire completion, the researchers collaborated closely with intermediary parties, providing explanations directly to respondents when necessary through virtual platforms such as social media.

Validity testing in this study involved scrutinizing the correlation between item scores and the overall score. Reliability assessment was conducted using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, which gauges inter-item consistency and measures respondents' consistency across all questionnaire items. Reliability interpretation suggests that a Cronbach alpha value exceeding 0.8 indicates excellent reliability, while a value between 0.6 and 0.8 denotes acceptable or good reliability. A Cronbach alpha value below 0.6 indicates poor reliability. The distribution of students' responses to distance learning was analyzed using ANOVA (analysis of variance), a statistical method that examines the relationship between a metric-dependent variable and one or more non-metric or categorical independent variables.

### 3. Results and Discussion

This section delineates the attributes of participants along with the outcomes of validity, reliability, and ANOVA assessments. Table 1 illustrates the demographic profile of respondents, totaling 709 individuals.

Table 1: Recapitulation of Research Respondent Characteristics

Profile	Absolute Number (People)	Relative Amount (%)
Gender		
Male	286	40,4
Female	423	59,6
Age (years old)		
16-17	22	3,1
18-19	343	48,3
≥ 20	344	48,6
Domicile		
Bandung	431	60,7
Out of Bandung	278	39,3
Batch		
< 2018	36	5,1
2018	25	3,5
2019	116	16,4
2020	125	17,6
2021	227	32,0
2022	180	25,4
University		
Private	562	79,2
Public	147	20,8

Source: Processed research data (2022)

The r (correlation) value  $\geq 0.300$ , which ranges from 0.469-0.742 with a significance value of  $0.000 \leq 0.05$  and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient value is 0.918. Referring to this value, the questionnaire designed by the researchers is valid and reliable.

Table 2: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances  
(Batch and Type of University)

Dependent Variable: Distance Learning				
	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Batch	1.209	5	703	.303
Type of University	.200	1	707	.655

Before employing the ANOVA test, it is imperative to ensure that the assumption of homogeneity of variance, assessed through the Levene test, is satisfied. The F-test value for batch (refer to Table 2) is 1.209, with a significance value of 0.303, which is greater than 0.05. Similarly, the F-test value for the type of university (refer to Table 2) is 0.200, with a significance value of 0.655, also exceeding 0.05. These results indicate that the assumption of ANOVA, namely uniform variance, is upheld.

Table 3: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Batch and Type of University)

Dependent Variable: Distance Learning		
Source	F	Sig.
Intercept	12358.577	.000
Batch	4.018	.001
Intercept	14298.170	.000
Type of University	15.076	.000

The computed F-value derived from the analysis of between-subject effects concerning the group (refer to Table 3) is 12358.577 for the intercept, with a significance value of 0.000, indicating  $\leq 0.05$  significance. Similarly, the calculated F-value for the variable "force" is 4.018, with a significance value of 0.001, also indicating  $\leq 0.05$  significance. This suggests that the academic batch significantly influences respondents' perceptions of distance learning, indicating variations in their responses across different batches. These findings align with previous research results (Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Buttler et al., 2021; Kirsch et al., 2021; Al-Mawee et al., 2021).

Likewise, the computed F-value from the analysis of between-subject effects based on the type of university (refer to Table 3) is 14298.170 for the intercept, with a significance value of 0.000, indicating  $\leq 0.05$  significance. Additionally, the calculated F-value for the type of university variable is 15.076, with a significance value of 0.000, also indicating  $\leq 0.05$  significance. This implies that the type of university significantly influences respondents' perceptions of distance learning, indicating variations in their responses based on university types. These findings are consistent with previous research outcomes (Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Buttler et al., 2021; Kirsch et al., 2021; Al-Mawee et al., 2021).

The research outcomes concerning the impact of academic batches reveal that a significant portion of incoming students perceive a diminished level of interaction between peers and instructors following the transition to distance learning, whereas students from other batches perceive adequate interaction. Regarding academic advancement and achievement, a majority of incoming students express more negative sentiments compared to their counterparts from other batches. Specifically, incoming students indicate a perception of inadequate learning outcomes in distance learning settings, highlighting a disparity in academic performance compared to face-to-face instruction. This discrepancy may stem from higher education institutions' unpreparedness to address the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, exacerbated by the lack of comprehensive information on best practices and effective assessment methods that are still in developmental stages.

Conversely, students across all academic batches expressed favorable views regarding the flexibility afforded by distance learning concerning class attendance and assignment completion. Notably, senior students exhibit a greater appreciation for the flexibility of distance learning compared to their newer counterparts. The advantages of distance learning, particularly in terms of flexibility regarding location and timing, encompass reduced commuting time, cost savings on transportation, enhanced time management, and increased opportunities for family engagement. Moreover, heightened flexibility has been observed to foster independent learning among students. Regarding access to reliable distance learning resources, the majority of students reported possessing internet connectivity and access to a computer or device dedicated to distance learning, with only a minority lacking personal computing devices. Equitable access to the internet and essential tools is crucial for students engaged in distance learning. Furthermore, findings indicate that senior students hold more positive perceptions than new students regarding the utilization and proficiency in platforms such as Zoom and Teams, serving as Learning Management Systems (LMS). Enhancing the perception and adoption of distance learning technologies can be facilitated through comprehensive training programs for both faculty and students, recognizing the increasingly integral role of digital technology in higher education institutions.

The results obtained from students' viewpoints regarding the available distance learning modalities indicate that a significant portion of students, particularly those who are new to the system, express highly positive inclinations towards opting for face-to-face or hybrid classes as opposed to strictly online ones. The preference for hybrid classes has been shown to enhance comprehension of the learning process, primarily due to heightened social interaction among peers and instructors. Conversely, a majority of students, especially those in their senior years, exhibit favorable inclinations towards online classes. New students, however, express negative sentiments towards asynchronous learning methods. There is a pressing need for ongoing assessment of students' preparedness for various online learning formats, considering factors such as aptitude, technological proficiency, self-directed learning capabilities, motivation, and perceived utility.

Regarding the impact of university type, the findings highlight that interactions with classmates are perceived unfavorably across all types of institutions, albeit private universities report less favorable perspectives compared to public ones. On the flexibility scale of distance learning, students from private universities display a positive rating for the statement suggesting that distance learning allows for more efficient time management. The disparities observed in distance learning evaluations across different types of universities underscore a primary challenge faced by distance learning, namely, the creation of comprehensive and inclusive learning experiences tailored to meet the diverse needs of students. These needs tend to vary based on institutional type or subject matter.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study sought to elicit insights from university students in Bandung Indonesia regarding their experiences with distance learning. These findings carry significant implications for educators and university leadership, aiding in the evaluation of distance learning initiatives and informing future decisions aimed at addressing its shortcomings. Educators are urged to tailor their approaches based on factors such as academic batch and institutional type to better cater to students' needs, encompassing improved instructional methods, appropriate assessment strategies, opportunities for interpersonal interactions, small-group discussions, collaborative projects, and group presentations. By adopting such strategies, educators can enhance student outcomes and mitigate challenges associated with distance learning. On the student front, factors such as adaptability to campus life, personal accountability, peer relationships, and time management skills emerge as pivotal influencers of the student experience. This research was conducted following two years of distance learning implementation in Bandung universities. Moving forward, further investigation could explore potential shifts in student perceptions over subsequent academic years.

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