Parental Engagement in Children's Online Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic

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Received: Juni 19th, 2020 Revised: July 23th, 2020 Accepted: July 28th, 2020

Abstract

The world is shaken as the Covid-19 pandemic. All aspects of human life feel the consequences, including the education. School activity is replaced by online learning at home and teachers is now sharing the burden of teaching with parents. Facing this situation, parents should be able to play a role as children's learning companions at home. In fact, not all parents are ready for this new task. This research aims to find out more about the parental engagement in children's online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Research conducted in Riau province with 148 samples of parents from the first and second grade of elementary school students, who filled the online questionnaire. The design used in this study is a converging design, simultaneously collecting quantitative and qualitative data, combining the data, comparing the results, and explaining all descriptions in the results. The result shows that parental engagement in supervising the children study time is 81.7%, parent role in accompanying children in learning is 80.4%, supervising children study time is 71.8%, recognizing children learning difficulties 69% and providing learning facilities 64.8%. It can be concluded that most of the parents are engaged in children online learning activities, although there are still those who have obstacles and difficulties in dividing time, attention and explaining the lesson to childrens.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; online learning; parental engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION
At the end of December 2019, an epidemic of mysterious pneumonia manifests some signs such as fever, dry cough, and exhaustion, and early gastrointestinal symptoms the began in Wuhan’s seafood market, Hubei, China. As of February 2020, a total of 28,276 cases have been confirmed with 565 deaths worldwide by the WHO, involving 25 countries including China, India, Filipina, Italia, UEA, Malaysia, Jepang, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Australia, Singapura, Amerika Serikat, Nepal, Kamboja, Kanada, Perancis, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Jerman, Finlandia, Rusia, Inggris, Spanyol and Swedia. The outbreak is known as Coronavirus (N-Cov 2019) or the severe Acute Respiratory syndrome (SARS-2003, caused by another beta-coronavirus) that
occurred 17 years ago (Huang et al., 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to global panic and concern. While providing challenges to the distribution and the ranks of ministries, medical personnel, researchers, and the community informs the correct response in the face of this pandemic spread.

As soon as Covid-19 has been exposed in the care facility, it has the potential to propagate speedily and extensively. In order to prevent the spread of Covid-19, everybody should make a serious attempt to keep a physical distance among one another. Social distancing is strongly recommended as one of the most effective approaches to decrease the spread of this disease through an outbreak (McMichael et al., 2020). It means to minimize close contact with others, and in education facilities, it means stopping children go to school and start to study online from home.

Home learning which is performed suddenly because of the Covid-19 pandemic, raises various reactions from parents. Although some of them take these additional responsibilities gladly and understand the importance of their role in helping children learn at home, there are also parents who have difficulty accompanying children to learn by reason of the absence of online devices or difficulties in controlling the child's behavior in learning. Some parents do not understand how to explain the material to make the children understand. Therefore, through this research, there will be a description of the children's learning assistance conducted by parents. And expectedly can provide input in the online learning system that is implemented by the school and give information for parents about what is expected of their role in assisting children learning online at home.

However, research about parental engagement in children’s learning is mostly done in Western context so there a lack of information about parental engagement in Indonesia. To fill this gap, based on Desforges & Abouchaar (2003), this study tries to explore parental engagement in the form of ‘home good parenting’ which has a significant positive effect on children achievement and adjustment.

In fact, the change of learning activities from classroom to home bring new challenge. The readiness of teacher, students and parents in this home learning varies, some are ready, forced to be ready, and completely unprepared. Without any preparation, the teaching-learning system changes from face-to-face to online by utilizing technology. As stated by Harrison et al., (2005) the accessibility and usage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) create new challenges. For school, there are demands in the way of meeting the cost and providing sufficient infrastructure. For teacher, parents and children, there are new skill to be learned and inserted in teaching and learning.

Some schools that are accustomed to using technological devices in the teaching and learning process certainly do not encounter any problems.
However, the opposite applies to schools, teachers, and students who were the first to run it. Moreover, if the area had minimal facilities, both devices and networks will be difficult to access and order information related to children's academic activities.

The most used apps are WhatsApp group facilities in smartphone. Teachers give assignments to students through the WhatsApp group of teachers and their parents or class groups separately. Besides WhatsApp, Google Classroom and other applications that can conduct remote conferences by combining video conferencing also becomes the option in online learning.

Assignments are given daily according to the course schedule of the day and the teachers pre-determined hours. Students learn the material given independently and then work on tasks that are then reported on the same day. The next day the material and task will change again. Other apps that can be used virtually such as Google Classroom or Zoom.

As previous research has explained that this e-learning application can facilitate training and learning activities and the process of teaching formally and informally by using the Internet, intranet, CD-ROM, Video, DVD, television, HP, PDA, etc. (Darmawan, 2012).

Engaging families in the education of their children at home and at school is progressively seen as an important way to sustain better learning outcomes for children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Without parent support, it’s hard for children to had achievement in learning. Taylor et al. (2004) suggest that more appreciation of the trust that inspires parents’ decision about becoming engaged in their childrens’ education is necessary. In addition, Barton et al., (2004) suggest that parental involvement can’t be examined separately from what the supposed to engage in (teacher-parent meeting, helping children study at home) or how parent manage to accept opportunities for the involvement (Barton et al., 2004).

There has been no study about parental engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in Indonesia. Stevens & Borup (2015) found that the role of parents’ engagement will increase when their children are engaged in online learning, as the children tend to face problems with self-management, motivation, and understanding the learning material without the help of the teacher.

Therefore, researchers want to contribute by studying more about parental engagement in children’s online learning during Covid-19 stay at home.

2. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT IN CHILDREN’S ONLINE LEARNING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Coronavirus is an enveloped, positive single-strand RNA virus. Genus betacoronavirus can be divided into some subgroups. nCoV-2019, SARS-CoV, and bat SARS-CoV Sarbecovirus, while the MERS-CoV to Merbeticovirus (Zhu et al., 2020).
According to Li et al., (2020) Covid-19 has an average incubation period of 5.2 days. Symptoms usually begin with the nonspecific syndromes such as fever, dry cough, and fatigue, breathing (cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, hemoptysis, and chest pains). Gastrointestinal (diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting), musculoskeletal (pain muscle), and neurological (headache or confusion). Other general signs and symptoms are fever (83%-98%), cough (76%-82%), and shortness of breath (31%-55%). There are about 15% with fever, cough, and shortness of breath (Huang et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2020).

Clinically Covid-19 is similar to seasonal influenza (has a death case rate of about 0.1%) or influenza pandemic (same as in the years 1957 and 1968) and not a disease similar to SARS or MERS, which has the rate of death cases from 9 to 10% and 36% (De Wit et al., 2016).

Parental engagement in this research means parental involvement in the learning process and experience about children (Jeynes, 2005). Children whose parents are concerned of their school activities are more expected to accomplish well than children whose parents do not participate (Spera, 2005).

Bradley & Corwyn (2002) stated that children’s involvement in academic activities, the quality of parent-child relations, and the accessibility of learning resources are three key elements of the home learning atmosphere that help to boost children’s educational development. Parent role to support children’s learning is crucial. Specially children at early ages. Based on Piaget theory of cognitive development, Simatwa (2010) stated that the children in the first and second grade of elementary school are at the stage of concrete operations. The child of this age is only able to think based on the facts that he saw and still had difficulties when faced with things that are abstract and probabilistic nature of human knowledge.

Children’s first and the second years of primary school age still need brief explanation about a subject and in-home learning, parent must give them assistance. Children at this age still developing their independence and need to be directed to do home learning. According to Sooter (2013) children age turns out to be one of the factors of children’s independence. As they grow older, children’s thoughts and actions will become more mature so that he will be more independent in doing activities, both in home and in school.

3. METHODS

This study was conducted in March 2020 until April 2020 in Pekanbaru, Riau Province. The purpose of this study was to find out the parental engagement in children’s online learning. The sample in this study are totaling 148 Parents of children in the first and second grade of the elementary school in Pekanbaru.

The design used in this study is a converging design, simultaneously collecting quantitative and qualitative data, combining the data, comparing the results, and explaining all descriptions in
the results. Qualitative data were collected by researchers through closed interviews. The purpose of this design is to explain the quantitative outcome with the qualitative data of a study to see if they are converging and provide similar results. Quantitative and qualitative data are collected at the same time and analyzed to complement each other.

The sampling technique used was simple random sampling, namely the selection or sampling/respondent of population members is done randomly without looking at the strata in the population (Sugiyono, 2017). Quantitative data collection and processing using google form. The data source of this research is the subject of research, namely parents. The statement in this questionnaire was developed using a Likert Scale with four alternative answer choices namely answers that were never given a score of 1, sometimes given a score of 2, often given a score of 3 and always given a score of 4.

Furthermore, the grid of engagement parental instruments was developed by Goodall. According to Goodall there are several aspects that parents can do to help children learn among others: (1) Provide learning facilities, (2) supervise children's learning activities at home, (3) supervise the use of children's learning time at home, (4) Recognize children learning difficulties, (5) accompany and accompany children to learn (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

Assessment with a range of 0 -100 % for each indicator used the following formula:

\[
\text{Percentage} \ (%) = \frac{\sum \text{score result}}{\sum \text{maximum score}} \times 100\%
\]

The categories of parental assistance used are presented in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0% - 25%</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25% - 43,58%</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>43,59% - 62,33%</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>62,34 - 81.08%</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>81,09% - 100%</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. RESULTS

The result of data processing from a parental engagement questionnaire is presented in table 2. Among all parental engagement indicators in children’s online learning, the indicator of supervising the children study time score is 81.7% which is in very good category. Learning at home is different from studying in a school that has a fixed schedule. Supported by the results of the closed interview explained generally children think that home is a place to rest and play, not a place to study. There are some parents who state that their children play more than study at home. It makes parents quite difficult to organize children's learning activities and in order to overcome this problem, some parents direct the children to create daily scheduled activities, including a study schedule, break time and play time.
Besides that, parents also provide a reward to keep children motivated.

The score of indicator accompany children to study is 80.4% which is in very good category. Parents try to manage their activities to make sure their work, daily activities and children’s learning can run well. Most parents stated that they prioritize children learning activity at home to make sure children understand the subject, focus and feel comfortable in studying.

### Table 2. Parental engagement in children’s online learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Actual score</th>
<th>Ideal Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing learning facilities</td>
<td>383.5</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising children’s learning activities at home</td>
<td>425.5</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising the children study time</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing children learning difficulties</td>
<td>408.5</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompany children to learn</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supervising children's learning activities at the home score is 71.8% which is in a very good category. Most of the children's learning activities at home are learning new materials, doing tasks based on subject and life skill task.

Parent ability to recognize children learning difficulties score is 69% which is in very good category. Based on the results of the data analysis, learning online at home without teacher help can cause difficulties for children in understanding materials and do assignments. If parents accompany children to learn, then the difficulties of the child will be immediately known and parents can find a solution for the child by planning the subject matter in a way that is more understandable to the child or to find a various learning resource related to the material.

The indicator of providing learning facilities score is 64.8% which is in a very good category. It includes not only online learning devices, but also other learning facilities such as books, videos, and other media that support learning activities. Surely not all parents are able to provide online learning facilities that are specially used by children. In general, the device that the child uses is a device that can be shared with other family members. 60% of children use a mobile device, 20% using a laptop and 20% using a tablet/iPad.

Based on the results of the interview, moslem children still recite Quran and do Murojaah by recording the voice or video
sent to the teacher every day. Then the teacher will comment and correct the child’s reading. The parent felt very grateful because the child can still have guidance from the teacher despite being at home. According to Hafzalla & Mahdi, (2017) technology makes it possible to acquire knowledge without leaving home or bedroom, also in reciting Quran.

From figure 1, we can see that majority mother is the one who accompany children learning activity at home (87.84%). It doesn’t mean that mother can handle the activity smoothly without encounter any problems. In fact, there are mothers who reported that they have difficulties in assisting children online learning. Some mothers had shared their struggle in assisting children learning at home.

In harmony with the following publications revealed that parent readiness to assist children’s online learning is differed. From teacher’s perspective, there are three parental knowledge of the child, 1) parental knowledge is inadequate; parents are potential teachers, but they’re not involved in children’s learning activity, 2) Parental knowledge is supplementary; parents are collaborator. Parent knowledge about their children supposedly complement teachers’ but only supplements it, 3) Parental knowledge is unimportant; parents are absent. They are not involved in children’s activity (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008).

These differences indicate that maternal and paternal involvement behaviors are expressed in different ways.

Figure 2 shows parental engagement in public and private elementary school in Pekanbaru. As we can see, there are no
significant differences between two categories of an elementary school in five indicators of parental engagement. Means, the type of school does not give a difference in parents parental engagement towards children's online learning activities at home. Although there are research results stating that the parent socioeconomic status related to parental engagement, just like Desimone (1999) that suggest there is a significant correlation between family economic level and parental involvement.

But other findings showed that the most correlated aspect proven to be related to parental engagement is parents expectations towards children.

![Percentage Chart of Public and Private Elementary School](image)

**Figure 2.** Parental engagement in public and private elementary school in Pekanbaru

### 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the data calculation results above, it can be suggested that parents are instrumental in each phase of the children's life. Without caregiving and good mentoring from parents, the child will struggle to face various challenges and changes that occur in his life. Also, the changes that occur with the way of learning in schools which had replaced with online learning conducted during the stay at home process to break the link of Covid-19 transmission.

The term parental engagement, also described to as parental involvement, involves actions that directly or indirectly support children’s school activities at home and school (Pomerantz et al., 2007). This sudden and almost without preparation online learning, requires parental engagement so that the school's learning process can be implemented at home. In order to do it well, parents should also understand the use of online media. Just as stated by Hoover-Dempsey et al., (2005) parents should be made more aware of the importance of home access to ICT.

Home Learning Environment (HLE) for early age children development is crucial.
and also act as a foundation that encourages upcoming educational success. With these vital consequences in mind, it is essential to develop ways to: (a) help parents in improving their children’s learning, (b) afford suitable training and support for educational professionals in order to support parents to improve their children’s learning at different ages before school start and at later stages of education, and (c) look for effective ways to do this both in settings and/or at home (Lehrl et al., 2020).

Parents also reported that children’s work is collected at the specified time. They therefore need to record the times and types of assignments teachers have given and supervise children while learning so they work at the tasks in order to be completed on time. Some parents also state that they really want the children to be able to study well even online at home, so they supervise the children more tightly.

Children in the first and second grade of elementary school, still need parent supervision in learning because they have not been able to study independently. According to Dewanggi et al., (2012) independence build from a mix of developments in children’s life, intending to form a better person, because independence can promote children to become innovator, creator and proactive person in the future. It is a long term process and needs to develop from an early age. Seginer (2006) argued that effective supervision from parents in home environment can support children’s learning activities and keep them motivated.

Together, parent and children build closer and warmer relationship while parent accompany children’s learning activity. Other advantages, according to (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015) parents and children can be actively participating with an app once they use it as a platform to find out new information concerning a subject area.

But there are still parents who reported that as long as children have no complaints in learning, he or she can do other activities freely. The parent also stated that tasks are given by the teacher quite a lot, according to school daily schedule. Because parent had to work from early in the morning until the afternoon, parent only able to accompany children to study in the evening. Since the child still needs guidance to do the task, parent had to accompany the child until all tasks are complete and as a result, parent physical condition is drop. The impact for her child, every time parent showed a message from the teacher, he responded negatively, so parent need to support the child until he felt motivated and ready to do his task. The child also stressed every time his task hasn’t finished yet and it had been quite late at night. (Novianti, 2019) stated that one of the parent’s tasks is to motivate children in order to do various activities well. Parental support and compassion will give children the ability to develop themselves, learn and make the achievement.
According to Kwatubana & Thabo (2015) the involvement of parents in children education is a great thing because it enhances educational performance. Children turn out to be more concentrated in their school work. Rosenzweig (2001) stated that parental assistance in children's learning activities is related to foster pattern. Parents with authoritative foster patterns show warm support and emotion. These qualities contribute in child learning achievements. Sylva et al., (2004) stated that a rich home learning environment which consists of plenty learning resources and constructive support by parent is essential to academic and social development in children of all ages. Davis-Kean (2005) it was found that parents’ expectations toward their children’s educational success was the stronger predictor of their accomplishment at school.

Some parents suggest that their children online learning makes them more familiar with children's learning and had a better understanding of the child. Parents also feel confident that they can help children in learning because they focus on accompanying children. Sapungan & Sapungan (2014) stated that children whose parents are engaged, enthusiastic and ready to learn, they learn to be prompt from an early age, to be determined as the parents would observed the learning progress and knowing that they will try best not to let them down. Children will learn to be responsible and organized so they are able to do the task according to the timetable.

Muller (1995) argued that the most important involvement measure is parental supervision of homework. Emerson et al., (2012) stated that parental supervision of children's learning activities depends on the parenting role construction that not only relates to parents decision to assist the child in learning, but also related to the academic achievement. Parent aspirations and expectations for child education relate to academic outcomes. Some parents who do not accompany the child fully in learning, usually because of work that cannot be abandoned, because they still had babies or because they also had other school-age children who demand the same attention to study online at home. For children to develop well both emotions and academic skills, parents need to have strategies in order to be able to accompany children learning activity.

Novianti (2018) stated that parents need to keep striving to spend time with their children, listening to their stories and ideas. It is important to help the child feel appreciated, understand their emotions and also help the child to be able to solve the problems they are facing.

Hoover-Dempsey et al., (1992) stated that parent had self-efficacy called parental self-efficacy which refer to parent’s belief and confidence that they are capable to assist their children, in this case is to assist children in academic activity. They also consider that their
thought and action will give impact their children’s development. But some parents said that they do not understand how to explain the material to make the children understand. In addition, there is a parent who stated that he was quite busy with various jobs, so if the child has difficulty, he will ask the child to do the task by himself. According to Hoover-Dempsey et al., (1992) parents who feel competent regarding educational matters tend to be more involved in their children’s learning, indicating the significance of specific efficacy.

Most problems are about children discipline and children spoil behavior. Bowlby (1956) stated that extraordinary relationship relating child to mother, make children always act in a more childish way with their mother than with other people. We heard many times that people mention that some child behaves nicely with them but show childish behaviour with his mother, and it happen because mother spoils the child. One thing for sure, that it is always easier to take care other people’s children, and quite contrary when parenting one’s own children.

However, the role of fathers in children's learning activities is certainly desirable. The percentage of fathers involved in children online learning activity which is only 9.46% can be caused of father still had to come to the office and the common perception that mother is the person who is in charge to meet children needs and accompany their activity. Hirao, 2011; Yamamoto et al. (2016) argued that several parents trust that assisting children education, besides physical care and social knowledge, is the mother's responsibility.

Rogers et al. (2009) based on his research stated that parents, both father and mother are engaged in their children’s school-associated activities. Both parents show the involvement of their children’s learning environment that is positively related to educational competency. Both parents take part in their children’s homework, though the basis for this relationship with achievement is uncertain. The difference among parents is that mothers show more encouraging involvement, which is associated to higher academic competence, while fathers show more academic pressure, which is related with lower academic competence.

Based on the result and discussion, most of the parents are engaged in children online learning activities, although there are still those who have obstacles and difficulties in dividing time, attention and explaining the learning material to children. Mother is the most instrumental person in the children's learning activities and there is no significant difference between parental engagement parents in public and private elementary schools in Pekanbaru.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
The author would like to thank parents of children in the first and second grade of an elementary school in Pekanbaru, Indonesia for participating in this research.
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