

Discrimination in Indonesian higher education's online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

This article aims to identify the forms of discrimination that occurred in Indonesian universities during the COVID-19 pandemic and analyze their causes. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to identify and analyze forms of discrimination in Indonesian universities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were gathered through interviews with students, lecturers, and students' parents, with special consideration given to their unique characteristics, situations, and culture. This study demonstrates how differences in student and parent groups and social classes shape their opportunities for online learning in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, social class differences impact discrimination in dealing with online learning. The existing structural differences play a significant role in understanding the discriminatory reality of online learning in Indonesian higher education.

Keywords: COVID-19; discrimination; higher education; online learning; pandemic

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1. Introduction

During The COVID-19 pandemic, online learning discriminated against students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Poor economic class is a term for lower-level people with relatively low living standards; it is known that some students in Indonesia have problems with technology ownership and networks due to financial constraints (Batubara, 2018); the survey found that people have experienced increased psychological pressure as a result of rising costs associated with online learning (Firman & Rahayu, 2020). COVID-19 has evolved into a multifaceted educational issue, one of which is mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptop computers (Azmi, 2017; Sahu, 2020; Juntunen et al., 2022).

The telecommunications infrastructure required for online learning is uneven. Research has highlighted the hard work of students seeking network access in remote villages (Karim, 2020) and the difficulty in accessing online learning services such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, Edmodo, and Schoology (Enriquez, 2014). Indonesia has imposed extensive social restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19. Still, the online learning system has proven insufficient due to geographical challenges that make it difficult for students to obtain a stable signal (Harsasi & Sutawijaya, 2018; Mustofa, 2021). Economic factors have also exacerbated the situation; the poverty rate has risen by 11%, and approximately 30 million Indonesians live in poverty (Gudi & Tiwari, 2020). Thus, to achieve equal educational distribution, online learning has been discriminated against by people of lower socioeconomic status.

To date, educational research during the COVID-19 pandemic has primarily focused on three areas. First, studies have been conducted to investigate the psychological impact of COVID-19 on students and educators as it relates to the online learning process (Shah et al., 2020; Sarçoban et al., 2019; Wang & Zhang 2021). Shah et al., (2020) contend that online learning has harmed educational skills and that the COVID-19 Outbreak has harmed students' mental health. Second, studies have examined barriers to effective online learning, such as household distractions, untrustworthy technology, and insufficient student-educator interactions (Herlina et al., 2021; Sahu, 2020; Setiawan, 2019). Third, studies have been conducted to compare the quality of study time before and after the implementation of social and physical distancing policies (Khairiah & Sirajuddin, 2019; Permana et al., 2020; Permatasari et al., 2020; Sahu, 2020; Setiawan, 2019). Permatasari et al., (2020), for example, identified differences in intimacy before and after the policies above were implemented; some of these cases resulted in discrimination against the quality of knowledge acquired by students with poverty, gender gaps, and geographical differences that made it difficult to obtain a stable signal in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cornell & Kessi, 2021). However, there have been no studies in Indonesian higher education that discuss, let alone offer a solution to, discrimination in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.1. Purpose of study

To fill this gap, this study investigates discrimination in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic by analyzing structural inequalities encountered by online learners. The researcher attempted to answer three research questions as a result of this. First, how adequate are technological tools for meeting the needs of online learning students in higher education? Second, how ready are human resources for online learning in higher education institutions, as evidenced (for example) by student and parent literacy levels? Third, how prepared are higher education institutions to support online learning? The discussion section goes into detail on these three questions.

This study departs from the argument that accepting new things requires specific prerequisites, such as adequate technology equipment, ready human resources, and ready educational institutions, both on and off campus. Online learning through WhatsApp, Telegram, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Edmodo, Schoology, Facebook, or Instagram can increase access to education by encouraging large-scale interactive participation and providing opportunities for those

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seeking education and professional development in underserved communities (Barger, 2020).

1.2. Literature review

1.2.1. COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is an infectious disease that has claimed many lives and harmed economic structures in various parts of the world (Airlangga & Akrim, 2020). COVID-19 was discovered in December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, and has since spread worldwide (Pearman et al., 2021; Soehardi & Untari, 2020). More than 8 million cases have been reported in around 100 countries worldwide by the end of 2020. (Wang et al., 2020). Indonesia is no exception. According to Caraka et al., (2020), COVID-19 spread rapidly in Indonesia after the first case was reported on March 3, 2020. The pandemic has been declared a national disaster and a public health emergency in all 34 provinces of Indonesia. COVID-19 has traumatized society due to inadequate preparedness, insufficient treatment systems, and poorly managed lockdown policies (Abdullah, 2020). Human life has changed dramatically in the social and educational sectors due to the constant threat of infection (Pradana et al., 2020; Lee & Rose, 2021; Quenzer-Alfred et al., 2021).

Other higher education institutions have implemented online learning programs. Despite their practical benefits, virtual classes or online learning still require adequate technological tools for students and lecturers (Mulyani et al., 2021; Segbenya et al., 2022). As a result, Indonesians from lower socioeconomic classes have faced discrimination due to their inability to provide technological tools and cope with rising education costs (Wilder-Smith & Freedman, 2020). According to Chaudhary and Dhakal (2021), online education during the crisis depended on students' ability to access the internet optimally. If internet network access is lacking, students cannot achieve optimal online learning outcomes.

1.2.2. Discrimination in online learning

Learning is rapidly evolving, with classes ranging from face-to-face to more extensive and unrestricted online learning (Bensalem & Al-Zubaidi, 2018; Barger, 2020). Online learning makes use of electronic technology (LAN, WAN, or the Internet) to deliver learning content, interaction, or guidance through a variety of media (audio, video, and web pages) or platforms (video conferencing, Google Meet, Zoom, Cloud Meetings, Siakad, forums, and chat applications) (Huda et al., 2018; Karim, 2020; Sintema, 2020). Online learning has several advantages, including the reduction of various activities as well as the elimination of spatial and time constraints (Barger, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning is seen as a way to improve educational quality (Seaman et al., 2018). Researchers investigated the Critical Success Factors (CSF) that can facilitate the successful implementation of e-learning in higher education (Elkaseh et al., 2015) and found that online learning allows various parties to coordinate and communicate (Fallis, 2013). However, it is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in discrimination in online learning. The required technology and infrastructure are uneven, the literacy rate of students and parents is not uniform, and educational institutions are not fully prepared (Karim, 2020; Permatasari et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2012).

Online learning allows for the creation of a modern learning environment. Still, it also discriminates against poor economic class students with limited access who cannot meet tuition fee demands in the online learning process (Gikas & Grant, 2013; Korucu & Alkan, 2011; Sahu, 2020; Williams et al., 2012). Williams stated that online learning negatively correlates with students' final grades (Williams et al., 2012; Seaman et al., 2018). According to Ulum and Pamungkas (2020), online education is susceptible to bullying. In a pandemic situation, online learning is the only available approach, and it isn't easy to achieve quality education (Setiawan, 2019; Setiawan & Saputri, 2020) because the necessary media are not public, the curriculum must be redesigned, and objective measurements must be developed (Jamaluddin et al., 2020). Inequality in online learning has resulted in an imbalance in student competence and achievement. Online learning has the potential to reaffirm

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and legitimize existing structural inequalities, resulting in discrimination due to access difficulty, which eventually forms discrimination in competence and achievement (Ulum & Pamungkas, 2020; Ifenthaler et al., 2023). As a result, online learning discriminates against the poor and perpetuates poverty. Discrimination is the unfair and unequal treatment of a person or group based on socioeconomic status (Mubarrak & Kumala, 2020).

1.2.3. Education quality

Quality of education is defined as satisfaction with the learning outcomes obtained through the products or services provided. The higher the received quality, the higher the produced quality, and vice versa (Jannah Akmal, 2020). To achieve human improvement (Andreasen et al., 2019), provide the emotional, mental, and physical maturity required to face life's challenges (Sastrawan, 2019; Davis & Hadwin 2021), and compete in the global market, quality education is needed (Winarsih, 2019). The learning process and outcomes, including teaching (Anderson, 2019), learning services, feedback, daily services, class comfort, effectiveness, and efficiency, can be used to ensure educational quality (Alam, 2021).

To provide quality education effectively and efficiently during the COVID-19 pandemic, three additional elements are required: (1) technology to facilitate access to online learning (Fuja Siti Fujiawati, 2020); (2) human resources to ensure a timely and appropriate response (Rohmanu et al., 2020); and (3) institutions ready to provide the necessary infrastructure (Tsani et al., 2020). Discrimination has disrupted online learning in Indonesia due to insufficient technology and human resources, as well as educational institutions' lack of preparedness (Fujiawati & Raharja 2019; Rohmanu et al., 2020; Tsani et al., 2020). There is a significant gap between government requirements and stakeholder capacity, as many struggle and lack the necessary cost and quality education, as well as poor infrastructure and an uncertain regulatory and policy environment, preventing students from receiving good educational services (Yirdaw, 2016), which is detrimental to students' emotional intelligence (Fauziyah, 2020). Diverse stakeholders must work together to ensure students have the skills they need to compete globally (Lestari, 2018).

2. Materials and method

2.1. Design

This study was conducted between September and October 2020, when COVID-19 was widely distributed and online learning was recently implemented. It takes a qualitative approach to discrimination in online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the required data were gathered through online interviews, with the scope of the obstacles encountered by students during the online learning process being randomly sampled. Online learning begins by displaying the new experiences that students have had. Students who took part in this study were interviewed extensively. Questions were asked openly, one by one, both inside and outside the home. Most of the interviews were conducted over WhatsApp (WA). Throughout the online learning process, students are asked to share their experiences. Constraints include inadequate technological tools, a lack of human resources (including low literacy rates among students and parents), and institutional support. The selected data also consists of the experiences of lecturers, students, and parents. Learning discrimination involves personal, infrastructural, and structural challenges.

2.2. Participants

The data were collected from fifteen students, four lecturers, and three parents of students from three universities in Indonesia (Sumatra, Java, and West Nusa Tenggara), among others: (1) 5 participants from the Bengkulu State Islamic Institute (IAIN), which has now been transformed into Fatmawati Sukarno State Islamic University (UIN) Bengkulu, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University (UIN) Malang with 5 participants, and State Islamic University (UIN) Ma The selection of students considers the balance of variation. Students are chosen based on socioeconomic categories

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relevant to online learning. Students from four faculties attend, namely the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Tadris, the Faculty of Sharia, the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah, and the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business. Semester 4 (four) students who are in the process of online learning, and Semester 6 (six) students in the process of studying together, in the process of participating in the implementation of the Community Service Program (KKN), that is, experience unfair treatment. According to Mubarrak & Kumala (2020), discrimination is defined as unfair and unequal treatment of a person or group based on something such as socioeconomic class (Mubarrak & Kumala, 2020) who are unable to meet the demands of education costs in online learning process (Gikas & Grant, 2013; Korucu & Alkan, 2011; Sahu, 2020; Williams et al., 2012; Carlson & Bell 2021). As a result of access issues, inequality develops, eventually leading to discrimination in competence and achievement (Ulum and Pamungkas 2020).

2.3. Data collection instrument

Data were gathered through direct and online interviews with students. Participants in this study were students who were relatively unfamiliar with online learning but were required to participate in it; in other words, they are interested in online learning but lack technological literacy and digitization. Fifteen students from three higher education institutions were chosen for in-depth interviews based on their socioeconomic status. The interview guide served as the foundation for developing open-ended questions on five topics: (1) technological equipment ownership; (2) Internet access; (3) parental support in learning; (4) lecturer involvement, and (5) educational system and support institutions. These are necessary to realize online learning and solve these issues.

For supporting data in the online learning process, interview data were thematically classified to emphasize the difficulties encountered by students, parents, and lecturers. The data is classified based on the student's social and institutional status, allowing the researchers to assess the significance of various experiential contexts.

2.4. Data analysis

The data were analyzed in three stages, following Huberman's theory: data presentation, description, and interpretation. First, the data was presented using excerpts from interviews with students, lecturers, and student's parents. Second, a data description is performed to show the patterns, trends, or types of difficulties students encounter during online learning. Third, interpretation is carried out by considering the individual, social, and institutional contexts that underpin student difficulties. The data is then concluded based on the analysis results (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

2.5. Ethical consideration

The research followed the appropriate ethical guidelines necessary for conducting research with human participants. Student participation in these interviews was voluntary, both online and in person.

3. Results

3.1. Readiness of technology devices and networks in online learning

Not all students can have technological devices for online learning. The inability of these technological devices has resulted in discrimination against students in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the lecturer of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Tadris explained "Students with poor socioeconomic class have difficulty in ownership of technological devices." The lecturer of the Sharia faculty stated that "students of the poor economic class are unable to have adequate technology such as smartphones/android cellphones with online learning standards, tablets, laptops, and network services." A lecturer at the Islamic Economics and Business Faculty stated, "Students who live in rural areas far from the reach of the internet network cannot participate in the online learning

process." According to a lecturer at the Faculty of Ushuluddin Adab and Da'wah, "Students who live in remote villages have difficulty accessing electricity and intermittent internet networks, so they cannot participate in the online learning process." The student's parents also stated that "they cannot prepare technology devices for their children, such as one cellphone per child, because they do not have enough money to buy cellphones." As a result, low socioeconomic status affects the level of ownership of technological devices and networks, resulting in an inability to participate in online learning and discrimination in obtaining educational learning services. Table 1 shows data on student experiences during the online learning process.

Table 1

Student experience level of technology and network device ownership

Participant	Student Experience	Code
P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P13,	Lack of internet service, especially in rural areas, even having to climb up to find a signal, blackouts, and cloudy weather deter online learning. Learning is not very practical for us in the upper semester because we require a lot of direct guidance.	network constraints,
P4, P9, P10, P12, P15	Do not have a standard cellphone, many applications must be downloaded, RAM is limited, the learning process is intermittent and not smooth, the online learning schedule is not always specific, and learning is not enjoyable. As a result, we are unable to attend online classes.	Do not have a standard cellphone, small RAM
P11, P8, P14	Online learning is more complex than face-to-face learning because students must wait for a response from the lecturer, which can take a long time, and it is difficult to respond to signals and lecturers.	Difficult to respond

Using technology, online learning has changed the way people learn. Learning traditions have shifted from face-to-face to online due to technological advances. This tradition has also used information technology and telecommunications equipment in the learning process, so changes in practice have required adjustments from various parties, including students. Students struggle to adapt to online learning. Students work to understand learning material due to issues with insufficient cellphones, small RAM, not connected, disrupted internet network, difficulty to reach, frequently hampered and very troublesome, cannot attend lectures, learning is ineffective, and students lose the opportunity to receive good teaching and education for the future, as well as the implementation of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the readiness of technological devices, students face difficulties with internet network access. Online learning shifts the learning tradition from classical to online learning, causing students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to face challenges due to a lack of technological devices and internet access. Lecturers use various learning methods but are not matched by poor socioeconomic class students who only have old-school cellphones and no data packages. For example, consider using Zoom, Google Classroom, GC, WA group, and Google Meet. Signal, the internet network is sometimes not friendly, which reduces students' enthusiasm, learning is not focused, and it isn't easy when it rains and is cloudy. The electricity goes out, causing them to miss lectures, assignments, and learning materials. The opportunity for students to receive appropriate learning is lost, as is the implementation of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning has been limited to the transfer of cognitive knowledge via technological tools and has ignored poor socioeconomic class students who are unable

to access learning materials via Zoom, Google Meet, and Google Classroom because they lack standard technology tools, do not have a data package, have no signal, the internet network is terrible and not smooth, and sometimes the electricity goes out. This condition causes poor socioeconomic class students to fall behind in the learning process, and some cannot participate as fully as they should. In other words, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who are not prepared to own technology and network devices fall behind and cannot develop their competencies and achievements.

3.2. Readiness of human resources (HR)

Readiness of human resources (HR), such as the literacy level of students in the online learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tarbiyah and Tadris Faculty Lecturers explained that "unprepared human resources (HR) such as insufficient understanding and knowledge, then experience difficulties in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic." The Sharia faculty lecturer stated that "students who cannot use technology will not be able to participate in the learning process." A lecturer at the Faculty of Economics and Islamic Business said, "Students who do not understand technology are not able to follow the online learning process to the fullest." A lecturer at the Faculty of Ushuluddin Adab and Da'wah stated that "due to the weak literacy and reference levels of students, online learning is often left behind, and there are even students who cannot participate in the online learning process, so online learning becomes ineffective." The parents also stated that "we have difficulty understanding and assisting children in downloading their learning materials, so that children have difficulty accessing reading sources, are less responsive to advances in science and technology because we do not understand using this latest technological device." As a result, the level of readiness of students and parents in online-based literacy and references makes obtaining learning very difficult for students, resulting in discrimination in obtaining online learning services. See Table 2 for more information on the experience of student readiness in online learning.

Table 2

Literacy and reference level student experience

Participant	Student Experience	Code
P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P11, P14, P15.	There are numerous tasks to complete. Even if you only have one week, each course has an assignment. COVID-19 prevents borrowing from the library if adequate references are not provided. Because I cannot download digital library applications, I am constantly falling behind and losing the motivation to learn.	Reference Constraints
P5, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, 13, P14.	Many students do not understand the lesson, have a low tolerance for assignments, are unable to use qualified technology, HP is frequently damaged, lecture materials are challenging to understand and capture knowledge, lecturers only provide the primary material, and many learning materials and information are not conveyed.	Literacy Constraints

Online learning using technology during the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for students with low socioeconomic status. They are forcing students to download learning materials, requiring assignment completion with the most recent references from at least the last ten years, regardless of students' literacy levels in using technology devices, and requiring student ownership of the technology. Another issue is that students have difficulty downloading learning materials and accessing references (reading materials), making it challenging to complete the final project due to not understanding how to download learning materials and not knowing how to access the most

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recent references, as required by the criteria for scientific writing, namely a minimum of ten years of contact. As a result of the low literacy rate and weak student references, students face various discrimination during the online learning process.

Discrimination occurs in the online learning process because students lack understanding and knowledge about the use of technological devices in downloading learning materials and accessing reading materials, resulting in students having difficulty understanding learning materials, a lack of knowledge, a lack of references, frequent lags, a lot of late information, even not delivered, frequently failing to join the class, and also difficulties in the process of completing the final project. This condition eliminates opportunities for students to receive education, teaching, knowledge, and training, such as no discussion room, consultation room, mentoring room, or competition room. As a result, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a decrease in motivation and enthusiasm for learning, as well as various discriminations against students in achieving competence and achievement.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students in Indonesia were forced to participate in online learning following the implementation of the online distance learning system through social and physical distancing policies and the prohibition of face-to-face learning. Thus, the learning materials and tasks assigned by lecturers are perceived as brutal for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds because full courses can be completed in one week. Each class includes an assignment to write papers in different styles and models of the lecturers. Then, within a specific time limit, these tasks must be completed, and the document must be presented and discussed with friends without the support of sufficient references, both from journal articles and web link articles. Online learning is extremely difficult for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Discrimination in online education occurs when completing tasks assigned by lecturers that are not balanced with complete understanding. As a result, information and knowledge do not reach. They cannot be digested by students, rendering presentations, discussions, and online learning ineffective for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

3.3. The readiness of the institution to support the online learning process

Because institutions' readiness to support online learning is still limited, it becomes a burden for students from low-income families. According to the Tarbiyah and Tadris Faculty Lecturers, "the campus has provided subsidies to students in the form of 2GB data packages, but students are still experiencing difficulties because they live in rural areas." According to the Sharia faculty lecturer, "higher education institutions subsidized students in the form of 2GB data packages, but it was ineffective because it did not match the cards used by students and the internet network was uneven." The lecturer at the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business stated that "the institution has facilitated students with 2GB, but students cannot use it because the package provided by the institution does not match the conditions in their place of residence, and they must replace the card first." The lecturer of the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah stated that "students cannot use the 2GB subsidy provided by the campus because students have never been to campus and live in hamlets far from campus. Students, so that assistance in the form of COVID-19 subsidies becomes ineffective." The parent statement explains that "the campus has provided subsidies to students in the form of a 2GB data package. Still, it cannot be used because we cannot provide technology devices and internet networks such as standard Android mobile phones for the online learning process, so our children cannot follow the online learning process organized by the campus." Thus, educational institutions' lack of preparedness in providing technological devices and internet networks increases the cost burden for students whose parents are low-income in participating in the online learning process. Table 3 below contains more information on student experiences.

Table 3

Readiness of institutions in supporting the learning process

Participant	Student Experience	Code
P1, P2, P3, P4, P8, P10,	The campus has facilitated internet quota assistance but it has not been effective; the network is often disrupted and challenging to use because we have to change cards. Then, in my opinion, because in the village, Ma'am, there are problems with the signal. So, the learning process is disrupted when connecting to Zoom in online lectures, Ma'am	Data package assistance is not yet effective
P5, P6, P7, P9, P15	Learning is ineffective because most students do not have the technological equipment. Communication tools to do online learning, such as laptops or Android mobile phones, do not have packages far from signal coverage, sometimes borrow friends' cell phones, and cannot learn optimally.	Do not have a laptop or Android phone
P11, P12, P13, P14	Online learning has not been effective; SIAKAD can only do attendance; while e-learning is not yet effective, we still use Zoom, and we from the regions cannot follow it due to network constraints and quota packages.	SIAKAD is not yet effective

They are using technology for online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the online learning process, technology has been considered as a solution. This is because Higher Education (PT) in Indonesia (Bengkulu, Malang, and Mataram) has made the SIAKAD (Academic Information System) application available to students and has subsidized 2GB data packages. However, it has turned out that it has made it difficult for poor socioeconomic class students by requiring them to use SIAKAD for the online learning process, regardless of the level of difficulty of educational institutions' readiness to provide technological devices, Wi-Fi, and internet networks in the Higher Education environment. Another issue is that even though poor socioeconomic class students have been given a 2GB data package, they cannot use it. Students have difficulty using the quota package because there is a requirement that they change their card. Meanwhile, the campus-prepared card cannot be used because it is incompatible with the internet network where students live, which is in rural areas and hamlets far from internet coverage. As a result of higher education's limited readiness to provide technological tools, students from poor socioeconomic classes face discrimination when participating in online learning.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, discrimination in the online learning process occurred because higher education did not have the readiness of technological devices, signals, and internet networks, causing the SIAKAD application, the 2GB data package, to not function properly. This condition causes students to be unable to participate in online learning, the learning process to be frequently disrupted, not follow the learning code of ethics, inability to access learning materials, inability to do and send assignments, inability to know information and orders from lecturers, obstacles in practical courses, and failure to interact with lecturers and friends. As a result of the unpreparedness of technological devices, Wi-Fi, and internet networks prepared by PT during the COVID-19 pandemic, this condition results in discrimination by removing the opportunity for students to obtain teaching rights.

The unpreparedness of university technological devices, Wi-Fi, and internet networks has hampered online learning. This is consistent with implementing social and physical distancing policies forbidding face-to-face learning. As a result of Wi-Fi, internet networks that are not smooth and

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uneven, and result in an inefficient learning process, students are unable to use e-learning at SIAKAD, are unable to access learning materials, are unable to participate in the learning process, are unable to communicate with lecturers and friends, are unable to attend virtual lectures, are unable to do assignments, and are unable to send tasks ordered by lecturers. Thus, online learning discrimination occurs due to technological devices, Wi-Fi, and internet networks in the Higher Education environment that are not smooth and uneven.

4. Discussion

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this study discovered three types of discrimination in online learning. The first is due to a lack of appropriate technology, specifically mobile devices, smartphones, tablets, laptops, and Internet networks. As a result, students find it challenging to engage in online learning. The second stems from a lack of human resources (i.e., the literacy level of parents and students). Parents cannot effectively support their children's online learning without adequate knowledge. Due to their limited technological literacy, students also have difficulty downloading, accessing, and understanding learning materials, limiting their participation. The third is due to the institution's lack of readiness to support the online learning process. Although students are provided with a 2GB data plan to subsidize their online learning, many students cannot take advantage of the program because they cannot pick up the package or do not have the necessary card. As a result, the online learning process is complex and time-consuming for students and their parents.

Such challenges in online learning in universities during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate that Indonesia's education system is unprepared for emergencies. Educational institutions cannot meet the demands of online learning and lack the flexibility to adapt to new learning systems. Adopting online understanding does not result in a shift in academic orientation (Das, 2021). Thus, the emergency conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in discrimination against students from low-income families because higher education institutions were not prepared with technological devices and internet network distribution and did not understand technology ideology.

COVID-19 establishes a precedent for legalizing technology and shifting educational paradigms (Chaudhary & Dhakal, 2021). As a result, to overcome the challenges of online learning, a series of action plans should leverage this momentum to effect fundamental change in educational traditions. To improve online learning, at least three approaches can be taken. First, various stakeholders must assess the implementation of online learning, including the curriculum and motivation (Fitriyani & Andriyanti 2020). Second, arrangements must be made to consider the unique circumstances of students and lecturers, resulting in the adaptability required for proper online learning (Jamaluddin et al., 2020). Third, various institutions and public powerhouses must actively participate in online learning. The failure of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is a common issue that requires everyone's attention (Gunawan et al., 2020).

5. Conclusion

This study discovered discrimination in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, with social class and student and parent characteristics shaping their opportunities to participate in online learning. Socioeconomic class differences become determinants of access to online education. Three major causes of this discrimination have been identified: limited availability of mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, signals, data packages, and internet network services; a lack of technological literacy among students and parents, which limits their ability to participate; and institutions' lack of readiness for online learning.

The scope of this study was limited to three Islamic higher education institutions in and outside of Java (State Islamic University Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, and State Islamic University Mataram). As a result, this study cannot be used to explain discrimination in online learning on a larger scale. Similarly, the informants'

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perspectives, all students, lecturers, and parents of students at the Islamic University institutions mentioned above, cannot provide a comprehensive picture of discrimination in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these constraints, it is necessary to conduct additional research by comparing various aspects of education, both general and Islamic, and collecting data from multiple sources. Only then can more appropriate policies for online learning in times of crisis be developed.

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