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STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN ACCOMPLISHING THE BLENDED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the students' motivations in higher education to accomplish blended learning. It applies qualitative research with an open interview research instrument. The researchers randomly selected the participants in 2021 from the 6th-semester students from a public university in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. The composition of the number of students who were interviewed was 20 students. It employed some procedures to obtain the data, such as: First, the researchers applied random sampling to define the participants. Second, the researchers made the interview questionnaires, and third, the researchers interviewed the interviewees. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the students have different motivations in accomplishing the blended learning during COVID-19 for each element which are: (1) Self-efficacy; (2) Active learning strategies; (3) Blended learning value; (4) Performance goal; (5) Achievement goal and 6) Learning environment stimulation. However, the findings show the beneficial things for students in higher education to have high motivations in accomplishing the blended learning during COVID-19 even though there must be difficulties faced.

Keywords: Blended learning; Covid-19; higher education; students' motivation

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1. Introduction

Education is an important sector of in-country development, and it is needed to enhance the quality of human resources. With the high quality of human resources, a country can increase its economic and social growth (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2019; Dođru et al., 2019; Heleta & Bagus, 2021). However, it has been two years since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. This has impacted all of us in many ways, including the educational sector. Teaching and learning from home have been a common yet challenging practice nowadays. Additionally, teaching and learning activities are done with face-to-face meetings yet have turned into online meetings. Learners from various levels of education are forced to study from home using any available technological devices (Hartati, 2021; Ramadhani et al., 2021).

Moreover, Simamora (2020) states that educational fields have been impacted by the COVID-19 in accomplishing the education process, specifically in higher education. Higher students have also faced many challenges in online learning, such as learning styles and culture, pedagogical e-learning, technology, technical training, and time management (Islam et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2022b). Thus, according to the Joint Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture, Minister of Religion, Minister of Health, and Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 03/KB/2021, Number 384 of 2021, Number HK.01.08/MENKES/4242/2021, and Number 440-717 of 2021 regarding the Guidelines for the Implementation of Learning in the Pandemic Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), it informs that learning in universities for the odd semester of the 2021/2022 academic year will be held with limited face-to-face learning while still implementing health protocols, and online learning (Herlina, 2021).

The government has changed the regulations from online learning to blended learning. Dangwal and Latta (2017) define blended learning as a cutting-edge idea that combines the benefits of both traditional classroom teaching with ICT-enabled learning, which includes both offline and online learning. Collaboration, constructive learning, and computer-assisted learning are possibilities (CAL). Additionally, Kim (2007) also states that blended learning can combine two or more of all possible learning types. At least one of the learning types must be a physical class-based type (whether there is a course schedule, formal, or face-to-face interaction outside the physical classroom), and at least one other learning type must be an e-learning type (Rahman & Ja'afar, 2018; Nengsih et al., 2022). Based on the definitions above, blended learning is a way of learning which combines two types of learning, namely offline and online learning.

Even though blended learning has been used in higher education, there are still specific challenges. However, blended learning challenges are also faced by students in higher education (Hartati et al., 2019). According to Ma'arop and Embi (2016), the challenges of blended learning are both physical and cognitive. That fact is also supported by the Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Garnham & Kaleta (2002), which show that mixed-course (Blended Learning) students face several challenges. The four main challenges identified are the

expectation that fewer classes mean less work, inadequate time management skills, the problem of taking responsibility for personal learning, and the difficulties of more advanced technology.

Blended learning is a complicated area with no silver bullet that ensures success, and the factors that contribute to success might be problematic (Mozelius & Hettiarachchi, 2017). According to a study conducted by Shahin et al. (2007), factors that affect the implementation of blended learning can be categorized into two categories. The first one is the technical category which includes: architecture, multimedia, educational technology, networks (internet, intranet, extranet), web-based technology, virtual resources, communication methods, and accessibility (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Arwin et al., 2022). The second one is a non-technical category which includes: approaches/models of pedagogy or teaching, styles of learning, course instructional goals, student characteristics, discipline, developmental level, political factors, economics and finance, administrative, social (online/offline activities, self-paced; live and collaborative learning, human interaction—with peers and instructors, delivery modes, skills (learners, instructors), and standards and quality.

Furthermore, based on their previous research, Mozelius and Hettiarachchi (2017) investigate the critical factors related to planning and implementing blended learning in higher educational contexts. Technology, didactics, course outcomes, collaboration, social presence, course design, synchronization vs. synchronicity, the heritage from technology-enhanced distant courses, multimodal overloading, trends and hypes, and economy are ten critical factors. In concluding which factors affect blended learning in higher education, Shahin et al. (2007) listed many factors that should be considered if blended learning is implemented, such as:

- 1) Faculty perception,
- 2) Student's relation (motivation, etc.),
- 3) Lecturer and students' skills,
- 4) Personal characteristics both of lecturer and student,
- 5) Lecturer and students' teaching and learning styles,
- 6) The flexibility of time,
- 7) Communications/interactions methods/approaches,
- 8) Reasons to implement blended learning,
- 9) The utilization of multimedia and instructional media,
- 10) Costs,
- 11) Availability,
- 12) Strategic directions/objectives,
- 13) Administrative success,
- 14) Reach,
- 15) Contents and resources,
- 16) Pedagogy,
- 17) Delivery mode,

- 18) Instructional strategies,
- 19) Infrastructures (Technology, human resources, legal and constitutional),
- 20) Social,
- 21) Level of support,
- 22) Politics and power groups/centers, and
- 23) Security/confidentiality/privacy.

The list above demonstrates the effort required while implementing the blended learning program. These features, concerns, issues, precautions, and insights address the most, if not all, aspects, concerns, issues, precautions, and insights of blended learning contexts in higher education (Khairunnisa et al., 2022; Maulida et al., 2022). Thus, due to the challenges of blended learning that higher education students have faced, motivations are needed. According to Ondabu (2014), motivation can be defined as a psychological process that gives someone a purpose and direction to behavior; a tendency to behave in a certain way that aims to achieve specific unmet needs; internal drives to satisfy and unsatisfied needs and desire to achieve something, an action that influences someone to act according to directions with the purpose to achieve a specific desired result.

All of the above statements are supported by Ibrahim and Nat (2019) which found that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors substantially influence the instructor's motivation to use the Blended Learning technique. A previous study done by Law et al. (2019) shows that students' learning motivation plays a vital role in boosting their enrolment in blended learning contexts. This previous research, in particular, shows that instructors' and students' motivating factors have a substantial impact on their enrollment in blended learning contexts. However, the emphasis of this study was solely on students' higher education motivation throughout their enrollment in a blended learning program.

Along these lines, the researchers will investigate the students' motivation to accomplish the blended learning in higher education during the COVID-19 in the 6th semester of the English Education Department of Antasari State Islamic University Banjarmasin to reveal the students' motivations in accomplishing the blended learning in the COVID-19 (Rahman et al., 2022a). Against this theoretical background and context, there are the following questions regarded for this study: (1) What are the students' motivations in accomplishing the blended learning during the COVID-19? And (2) What are the elements of motivation in blended learning?

2. Method

This study used qualitative approach for data collection. Qualitative research with an open interview research instrument aims to reveal the students' motivation in higher education to accomplish the blended learning in the COVID-19 (Sarte et al., 2021; Sicam et al., 2021; Pernantah et al., 2022). First, the participants of this study were selected by using random sampling and asked for their permission to be interviewed. Then, the researchers asked some questions related to students' motivation in blended learning. The population in this study is the 6th-semester students of the English Education Department of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin from class A to class D, with a total of 190 students. The composition of the number of students who

will be interviewed in each class is about five students. So, there were 20 participants interviewed to collect the research data.

The materials used in this study are six elements of motivations. The interview's questions are about six questions and categorized into six elements of motivations which have different purposes; (1) Self-efficacy; (2) Active learning strategy; (3) Blended learning value; (4) Performance goal; (5) Achievement goal; and (6) Learning environment stimulation. The six elements are developed by following questionnaire Tuan et al. (2005) and then, the researchers adjusted relevant questions related to the study. Also, the researchers define each element into questions for the interview as follows:

Table 1. The Interview Questions for Data Collection

No.	Element	Questions
1.	Self-Efficacy	What do you think about the blended learning program? Is it difficult or easy? Why?
2.	Active Learning Strategies	What kind of efforts do you usually make when you find it challenging to learn by blended learning? Moreover, why do you apply the efforts?
3.	Blended Learning Value	Do you think blended learning is essential in this case of universities class learning regulations in the era of COVID-19? Why?
4.	Performance Goal	What will you do to get good grades in learning by using blended learning? Why?
5.	Achievement Goal	What makes you the most fulfilled or satisfied with your achievement? Is it a good score when you can solve a complex problem or when the lecturer approves your ideas? Why?
6.	Learning Environment Stimulation	What reasons make you willing to participate in this blended learning program? Why?

2.1. Data Collection

The data obtained from many comprehensive insights were then transcribed from verbal data into written data to provide descriptive information for the findings. At first, the researchers applied random sampling to define and select the participants from 190 or more participants into 20 participants. At the beginning of the study, the researchers adapted and developed an interviews questionnaire related to students' motivation in blended learning, with six elements with one question for each element. Next, all the researchers asked the interviewees to answer each element's questions based on their experiences and thoughts. Then, the researchers collected the answers and accumulated them into one depending on each element and then

analyzed the data. After analyzing the data, initially, the data were separate and different, until finally, we put them together to produce one conclusion.

2.2. Data Analysis

The validity of empirical research depends on a thorough understanding of the data collection and analysis methodologies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaa, 2014). The iterative processes and underlying assumptions associated with the translation of qualitative data occur both during and after the phase of data acquisition. In order to establish the rationale behind the analysis, it is the researcher's obligation to disseminate the procedures used for the identification of patterns, construction of descriptions, and formulation of interpretations. Thematic data analysis is a common qualitative method, but its literature frequently lacks explicit and precise guidance. This article describes a meticulous six-step procedure for accumulating and systematically analyzing data, which has been informed by the works of four eminent authors who have made substantial contributions to the relevant methodological literature. Duran et al. (2006) describe thematic analysis as an adaptable and valuable research method capable of providing a comprehensive and intricate depiction of data. The six-stage approach is a perspective that emphasizes the researcher's active involvement in the interpretation of qualitative data. It provides a framework characterized by adaptability, complexity, and structure, which enables comprehensive and systematic data analysis. The analysis process begins with data collection, familiarization, and management. To facilitate the classification of relationships, common threads, and contradictions, tables and data maps are utilized. The process of categorizing codes is conducted in a systematic manner, and a theoretical framework is used to expand upon the results. The analyzed data is presented as cohesive snapshots that provide exhaustive visual representations of the data. The study's inquiries are approached through interpretations, which are represented as intertwined patterns identified within the data. The use of a thematic approach validates the qualitative researcher's proactive participation in recognizing patterns throughout the dataset. This strategy requires cautious consideration, reflection, and thoroughness.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Self-Efficacy

Based on the interviews that the researcher has carried out, the researcher found that in self-efficacy, some of them assume that a blended learning program is challenging or complex, and the rest of them said that blended learning is straightforward. However, few of them said that it depends on several factors, such as the teacher who teach the course and the certainty of the schedule that has been set (Handrianto et al., 2022; Ramadhani et al., 2022). After that, the researcher found that several factors made the respondents think blended learning is complex, for instance; the respondents complained that it is difficult because of the uncertainty and irregularity of the schedule, adaptation to new platforms of media, equipment limitations such

as (laptop, phone, data storage and so on), time management, teaching strategy used by the teacher, and flexibility.

Along with the findings, it can be discussed that some students have low motivation and high self-efficacy motivations in accomplishing the blended learning during COVID-19. Some students may have faced difficulties in accomplishing it, and some may not have faced any difficulties (Handrianto et al., 2021). Furthermore, Margolis & McCabe (2006) argue that if students have low self-efficacy, it is possible to make them have motivational problems, which they will be quickly left off and escape from any problems they face. It also means that if students have high motivation to accomplish the blend during the COVID-19, it will not get easier to give up and avoid the problems faced quickly. Additionally, they will try to figure out how to solve the problems instead of giving up easily and quickly.

3.2. *Active Learning Strategies*

Moreover, the researchers found in active learning strategies that there are several attempts or strategies made by the respondents to deal with the blended learning, including; good time management, adapting to the latest technology and comprehending concepts (Tiara et al., 2021). They also use technology to understand the newest one (using YouTube to get information about what to learn), take a note about important material (online learning) and record the material and play it back to relearn the material (online learning), ensure whether the tools are ready or not to use, do autonomous learning by reading the material given or search the material on websites to understand the material whenever the network connection is not good (Herlina et al. 2021; Herwanis et al., 2021).

Apart from that, the students in higher education have high motivation for active learning strategies. It can be seen from the finding that they have their strategies to deal with blended learning. Besides, they make reasonable efforts to accomplish it. It is also supported by Ramler (2002) that active learning strategies are helpful and beneficial to comprehending important points, becoming more awake, figuring out the best learning strategies, and overcoming problems.

3.3. *Blended Learning Value*

On the other side, in terms of blended learning value, it could be defined that respondents agreed that the blended learning program is essential to be implemented, especially in the era of the pandemic such as Covid-19. Moreover, the respondents agreed with this learning model because it is still safe to be implemented as long as it follows the existing protocol, where the classroom participants are only a few percent of all students and the students who attend the class are all vaccinated.

According to current research, implementing blended learning in the era of COVID-19 is critical for preventing the spread of COVID-19 while adhering to established health guidelines. It is safer than entirely offline learning, but it is also more effective in this epidemic than fully online learning. This conclusion is consistent with what Suhartono (2017) and Khoiroh (2017) discovered in their research, which revealed that blended learning would be essential to adopt since it will assist students in mastering the content delivered in online sessions. The aspects of blended learning that are used are also crucial to examine. In this setting, students follow health regulations, practice personal and environmental cleanliness, and maintain a safe distance from

one another. As is customary, the implementation time is restricted. Despite its limitations, blended learning can help students deepen their comprehension and enthusiasm and boost their feeling of responsibility, learning outcomes, and drive to learn during pandemics.

3.4. *Performance Goal*

Additionally, based on the interviews the researchers have done, which students do to get satisfactory grades in class with blended learning (performance goals), there are various things they do, some do self-study because they do not understand when in class, some take notes and record lessons when the class is online so that it can be re-studied, some choose to pay more attention during class, and always do the assignments well and as much as possible to satisfy them personally.

According to a recent study, even if blended learning is being adopted, students are still worried about how to acquire decent grades. They make several efforts to do so, including self-study when they do not understand in class, taking notes and recording lectures when the class is online so that they may be re-studied, and always doing the assignments well and as much as possible to please them personally. Prior research has found the same results as the present study. Students tend to prepare for the course in the classroom (Yapici & Akbayin, 2012). It can be more efficient since students can discuss things they could not accomplish with their professors and friends during classroom interaction blended learning. Furthermore, according to a study conducted by Utami (2018), the professor submitted materials via online learning in order for face-to-face learning to function successfully and efficiently. Learning may be done at any time and in any location. It also lessens students' workloads, giving them more time to work on other assignments and study independently.

3.5. *Achievement Goal*

For achievement goals, most of the interviewees are satisfied when they can solve the problems they face in lectures or class, and they are also satisfied when they get excellent and satisfactory grades. Because when they get these two things, it means they can understand the material that has been taught. However, apart from these two things, some of the students also stated that they were happy when their ideas were recognized and appreciated by the lecturers.

Achievement goal has been a significant research subject in studying student motivation in the academic context for the past 30 years (Nicholls, 1984; Pintrich, 2000). According to Maehr & Zusho (2009), an achievement goal specifies the type of goal that promotes achievement-related behaviors. Therefore, achievement goals examine the criteria students use to assess their beliefs about achievement outcomes, as Dweck and Leggett (1988) stated. It can be seen from the findings of researchers; that many students feel satisfied or fulfilled when they achieve their goals in learning, for instance; when they are asked about what makes them feel satisfied, most of their answers were when they succeeded in solving a problem or difficulty, when the teacher accepts their idea, and when they get a good grade. It shows that students have achievement

goals that tend to be the same as others, such as solving a problem or facing difficulties, accepting ideas from the teacher (appreciation), and good grades.

3.6 Learning Environment Simulation

For the learning environment stimulation, they want to do this blended learning because it is an obligation; that is what most interviewees stated when asked about this. Apart from the reasons above, some put forward different reasons: they miss interacting directly with friends in class; even though there are only a few offline courses, it is pretty fun. Some state that blended learning is a solution in this pandemic era, where most things have to be done online. At least we can do face-to-face learning on a limited basis. Then, some say that blended learning is very effective because they feel it is more effective to learn face-to-face rather than online.

Based on the findings of previous interviews, it is possible to conclude that most interviewees lack the motivation to participate in this blended learning. They indicated that they only participated in this program since it was mandatory by the university. In some ways, if they had the option of staying online, they would. According to Shand & Farrelly (2018), a crucial benefit of the blended experience was the opportunity to meet face-to-face. Furthermore, many said that the advantage of a blended course's online component was the continuity of the teaching and learning process and ease of communication because it is not only limited to offline or only limited online.

4. Conclusions

This study investigated the students' motivations in higher education to accomplish blended learning during COVID-19. It employs qualitative research with an open interview research instrument. The findings conclude that the students in higher education have high and low motivations depending on the six elements of the questions given. In self-efficacy, some students feel that they have difficulties, and some students do not have any difficulties. Moreover, in active learning strategies, they have reasonable efforts in overcoming the problems faced in the blended learning during the COVID-19, which means that they have high motivations. Meanwhile, in terms of blended learning value, all the students in higher education agree that accomplishing the blended learning in the COVID-19 is essential. Furthermore, in terms of performance goals, the students tend to want to get good grades by self-studying, taking important notes, recording the lesson when the class is online, paying more attention during class, and always doing the assignments given. While, in achievement goal, the students feel more satisfied by having good grades, solving the complex problems faced, and being appreciated by the lecturers. Also, in learning environment stimulation, the students have the same thoughts that the only reason they are willing to accomplish the blended learning is due to it is an obligation. Apart from the reason above, they also want to meet their friends and meet offline classes. This study was restricted by its limited scope, however, it provides researchers with the opportunity to conduct comprehensive investigations into intricate issues across various fields. Thematic analysis is a viable method for addressing research inquiries that require a thoughtful, introspective, and comprehensive approach within unique settings. It is imperative for researchers to explicate their research inquiries, constraints, and scope of inquiry while making methodological and theoretical decisions. In order to guarantee ethical practise and

ethical conduct, it is imperative that the selected research approach aligns with philosophical assumptions. This methodology exhibits adaptability and inclusivity, rendering it amenable for employment by researchers across diverse settings. It may be imperative to conduct future research utilising a quantitative or mixed-method approach in order to further investigate the subject matter addressed in this study.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declared no conflicting of interest regarding to writing, submitting and publishing this article.

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