



# Parental Involvement During Online Learning: A Study Among Low-Income Families in Indonesia

Risa Fitria<sup>1\*</sup>, Aulia Putri Pangesti<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1,2</sup> Primary School Teacher Education, Universitas Presiden, Cikarang, Indonesia

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## ABSTRAK

Sebagian besar orang tua menghadapi masalah selama pandemi, terutama orang tua berpenghasilan rendah menghadapi tantangan yang lebih berat dari yang lain. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana keterlibatan orang tua dengan status ekonomi rendah dalam pembelajaran anaknya di tengah pandemi dan bagaimana pandangan orang tua berpenghasilan rendah terhadap pembelajaran daring di tengah pandemi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian survei untuk memperoleh data dari salah satu sekolah negeri. Kuesioner yang terdiri dari data kuantitatif dan kualitatif digunakan dan disebarluaskan melalui Google Forms kepada semua orang tua di satu sekolah dasar negeri. Penelitian ini melibatkan 132 orang tua. Data kemudian dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis deskriptif. Hasilnya, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa orang tua yang sebagian besar berstatus ekonomi kurang mampu terlibat dalam pembelajaran anaknya dengan berbagai cara, seperti menjelaskan, melengkapi, dan memeriksa lembar kerja atau tugas anaknya. Temuan penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa orang tua berpenghasilan rendah menghadapi kesulitan dalam mendampingi anak mereka selama pembelajaran daring, membuat sebagian besar orang tua menolak pembelajaran daring. Akhirnya, penelitian ini menyarankan beberapa rekomendasi kepada pembuat kebijakan dan pendidik untuk dipertimbangkan di masa mendatang.

## ABSTRACT

Most parents face problems during the pandemic, especially low-income parents face tougher challenges than others. This study aims to analyze how parents with low economic status get involved in their children's learning amidst the pandemic and what the low-income parents' perspectives on online learning amidst the pandemic were. This research used a survey research method to obtain the data from one of the public schools. Questionnaire consisting of quantitative and qualitative data was used and disseminated via Google Forms to all the parents in one primary state school. This study is involving 132 parents. The data were then analyzed by using descriptive analysis. As a result, the study showed that the parents who were primarily categorized as economically disadvantaged status were involved in their children's learning in various ways, such as explaining, completing, and checking their child's worksheets or assignments. This study also found indication that low-income parents faced difficulties in assisting their children during online learning, making most parents resistant to online learning. Finally, this study suggested several recommendations to policymakers and educators for future consideration.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, the educational sector underwent a massive change that impacted teachers, students, and parents. Since most schools in Indonesia were closed and students were required to study from their homes, online learning became the solution to mitigate the learning losses (Pajariato et al., 2020; Patrikakou, 2016; Puspitasari, 2020). During this unprecedented time, teachers were challenged to ensure a smooth and effective process of e-learning that benefits the students. They had to change how they planned the lesson, executed the plan, and evaluated the learning process because all of the learning processes were conducted online (Phan & Dang, 2017; Ujianti et al., 2021). This quick shift has generated complex issues such as a lack of school and teacher readiness and inadequate

infrastructure (Anam & Hanik, 2002; Yulfiana et al., 2021). Besides, teachers could not be physically present to accompany their students in the classroom due to the mandate of studying from home. Parents became the closest support to their children, especially the younger ones. Therefore, their involvement in their child's learning during the online learning is very crucial.

Parental involvement can be interpreted as the role of parents to assist various types of children's learning activities at school and home (Delipiter Lase et al., 2021; Pajariantanto et al., 2020). The involvement of parents in a child's education at home is ultimately salient for the development of a child's learning since parents can provide emotional and cognitive support to their children at home. According to previous study parental involvement in a child's education can be specified in several different ways, such as cooperation between parents and children at home (for example, parents help with housework), activities related to school (parents attend school events), communicate with each other between parents and teachers (parents ask about homework) and monitor the development of children's behaviors outside of school hours (Rahman, 2014). In addition previous researcher state that parental involvement can also be viewed from parents visiting their children at school, meeting their teachers, participating in school activities, helping their children to take learning courses outside, monitoring their child's academic progress and can pay for children's education (Schunk, D., Meece, J., & Pintrich, 2008).

Extensive research conducted before the pandemic has shown that parental involvement played an important role in children's academic achievement (Driessen et al., 2005; LaRocque et al., 2011). However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was little discussion how parents were involved in their children's education. Parental involvement became a critical issue during online learning because parents received new roles and responsibilities to assist their children in learning in a virtual environment. Since most governments in the world put efforts to mitigate the impact of Covid-19, not only learning from home (LFH) was mandated, but also working from home (WFH) (Alamiyah, S. et al., 2021; Delipiter Lase et al., 2021; Treviño et al., 2021). This means that all activities done by parents and children were carried out at home. Because of their presence at home during LFH, parents substitute teachers' roles with significant responsibilities. However, studies showed that almost all parents perceived negative feelings against their involvement in online learning. Various reasons were stated by parents, such as their limited pedagogical and technological abilities, inability to balance their work time with helping their children, and difficulties in managing children's characters (Dong et al., 2020a; Garbe et al., 2020). Consequently, lots of parents prefer the implementation of offline learning.

The use of technology in online learning was a necessity to support children's learning at home. Particularly with younger children, parents need to be by their side to operate the gadgets/devices to ensure a smooth learning process. To help their children, parents must have the good technological knowledge to benefit their children during the learning process (Alamiyah, S. et al., 2021; Atiqoh, 2020; Harahap et al., 2021). This technological knowledge will be supported if parents have the technology needed during learning. Besides, the capability of technology must be accompanied by the ownership of technology at home (Blackwell et al., 2016; Treviño et al., 2021). However, not all households have computers or cell phones to facilitate online learning. Some studies report that all children do not own the availability of cellphones at home. They even have to share the devices with their parents or siblings. The lack of technological devices, such as mobile phones, computers, and laptops, often occurs in low-income families (Aisyah & Muhammad Alif Kurniawan, 2021; Lubis & Lubis, 2020). As a consequence, teachers use WhatsApp since the application is used pervasively among parents due to its low cost of use and its ease of accessibility (Djamdjuri & Kamilah, 2020; Hasiru et al., 2021).

Another form of parental involvement in LFH is the role of parents in explaining learning materials. Parents need to provide additional assistance during online learning when children experience difficulties. Regarding providing materials, studies report parents help children provide additional explanations when children do not understand the learning materials (Sari & Maningtyas, 2020; Solekhah, 2020). The learning given by the teacher can be too fast for children to understand, so children do not readily comprehend the learning materials. In addition, parents report that they ensure their children focus in class and check the assignments given or help their children do homework in complex subjects such as English and mathematics (Baharun & Finori, 2019; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021). Even though their roles are critical, many parents complain about their new roles because they lack knowledge and teaching capacity.

In addition, online learning necessitates children to become independent learners. However, for younger children, parental assistance in online learning is a must (Marchlik et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2021). Younger children have a short period, so they will quickly get bored and withdraw from learning if the materials delivered by their teachers are not attractive. Therefore, the role of parents for younger children is to help them monitor their learning schedules, explain learning materials, and encourage them to study (Dong et al., 2020b; Lubis & Lubis, 2020). In addition, previous study state younger children tend

to lack self-regulation that requires parents' time commitment to get involved in online learning (D. Lase et al., 2022). In addition, children trust their teachers more than their parents which causes arguments between parents and children. As a result, parents believe offline learning is more effective.

Previous research studies found a relationship between parents' economic status and involvement in their children's online learning. Regardless of their background, previous studies reveal that most parents face problems during a pandemic regardless of their background, but those with lower income face more severe challenges than their affluent counterparts (Camacho-Thompson et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016). Low-income parents face challenges in the form of risks of losing their jobs, limited time, their incapability of subject materials, lack of facilities such as cellphones or laptops, and uncertainty about the future (Alonzo et al., 2022; Treviño et al., 2021). Therefore, children from low-income families tend to receive inadequate academic support from their parents, resulting in low academic achievement. Meanwhile, more fortunate parents tend to be more involved in their child's learning activities in various ways. They assist their children by doing homework and having more discussions related to school activities. Previous study state that if high-income child experiences academic difficulties, higher-income parents will be able to provide needed resources to help their children achieve academic success (Vellymalay, 2012).

The literature shows that parents' negative feelings towards online learning have been due to the challenges they faced in implementing online learning. However, although several studies found what challenges low-income parents dealt with in online learning, there has been little study about how Indonesian low-income parents were involved in their children's online learning and their perspectives of online learning were. Therefore, this study aims to analyses how parents with low economic status get involved in their children's learning amidst the pandemic and what the low-income parents' perspectives on online learning amidst the pandemic.

## 2. METHOD

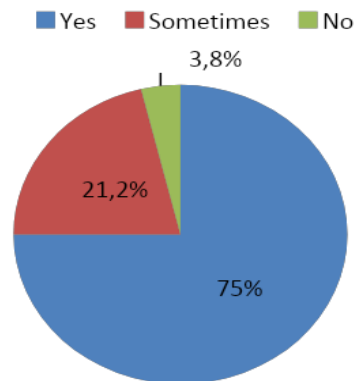
This study used a survey research methodology to gather information from the participants' responses regarding their involvement in their child's education. A mixed-method survey combining quantitative and qualitative strategies was applied (Braun et al., 2021; Glasow, 2005). The quantitative data were used to obtain information about the identity of the participants filling out the closed-ended questionnaire section provided with answer choices. The qualitative data were gathered from an open-ended questionnaire containing the perspectives of parents and the assistance needed from the school during the e-learning. The population of this study was all the parents who sent their children to a public primary school in an Industrial city of West Java Province, Indonesia. The homeroom teachers contacted the parents and requested to fill out this questionnaire. As a result, 132 parents out of 205 students filled out the online survey voluntarily. The parents whose children aged 10-12 contributed the most to this study.

The type of questionnaire used in this research is a mixed questionnaire, using an open and closed questionnaire. The items in the questionnaire were developed and modified based on the researchers' experience and a literature review collection (Garbe et al., 2020; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Sari & Maningtyas, 2020; Ticheloven et al., 2021). In this study, the research team modified the questions that eventually appeared in the questions section and in the open-ended questions. The questionnaire consists of three types: (1) participants' background information consisting of twelve questions, (2) participants' access to technology, information, and communication consisting of five questions. (3) the participants' involvement in their child's online learning which consists of eight questions, two questions of which are open-ended to gain parents' perspectives using their own words in order to improve online learning and about what things are needed from the school to help them during learning online. The questionnaire was distributed using a google form to parents from grade 1 to grade 6 via WhatsApp Group. In the beginning, the researcher contacted the teacher of each class which was then continued by being put into a class group. Then, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the parents in the group. The data analysis used in this research is descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is used to interpret the distribution of answers to the questionnaire by using diagrams and tables for easier understanding. This descriptive analysis method is used to obtain in-depth data, with data that contains meaning and can significantly affect the substance of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sugiyono, 2018). To answer the second research question, several procedures were carried out to find the themes that emerged from the data and eventually turned into patterns to interpret the themes' meaning.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

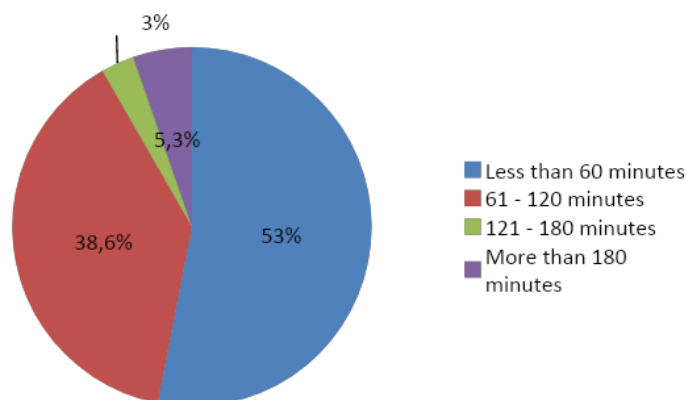
#### Result

This section explored how parents were involved in their child's learning during online learning. For example, parents were asked whether they accompanied their children, the frequency of their company, and what types of activities they carried out to implement online learning. The result is show in percentage as show in Figure 1.



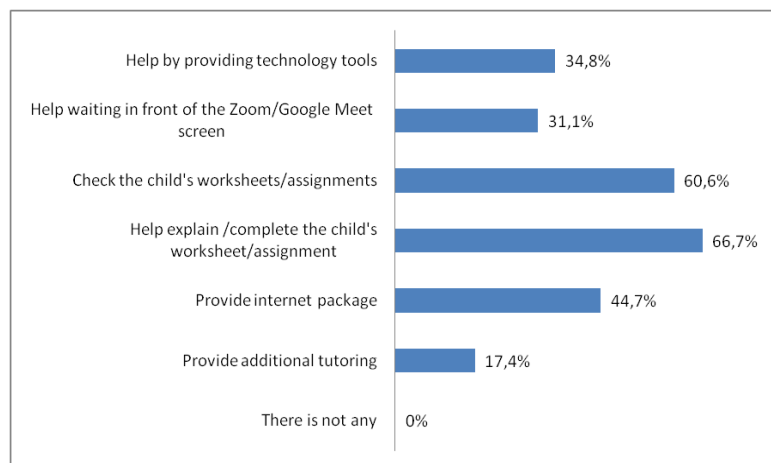
**Figure 1.** Parents Accompany Their Children During Learning

Base on **Figure 1** show three-quarters of the participants reported accompanying their children while studying online. Meanwhile, around 20% of the parents mentioned that they occasionally kept their children company during online learning and around 3% said they never did that. This study also inquired the parents how long they spent their time involved in their children's learning during the e-learning. The result is show in percentage as show in Figure 2.



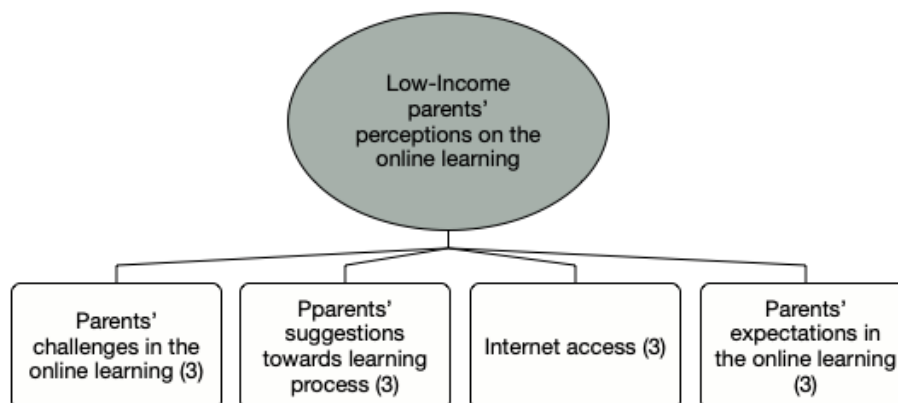
**Figure 2.** The Time Parents Spent Accompanying Their Children To Study Every Day

Figure 2 shows that just over half of the parents accompanied their children to study for less than 60 minutes and just under two-fifths (38.6%) of the parents accompanied their children for 61-120 minutes. There were only a small number (5.3%) of the parents who reported that they watched their children study for more than 180 minutes and 3% of the parents for 121-180 minutes. Then Figure 3 illustrates what types of activities parents were involved during online learning.



**Figure 3.** The Types of Activity of Parent Involvement During The E-Learning

The first activity that the parents mostly did was helping explain and complete their children's worksheets and/or assignments, with 66,7% of the parents reporting this. In line with the first activity, the second most activity that parents reported was checking their children's worksheets/assignments. In terms of technological support, the following were activities that the parents did during the online learning such as providing internet packages (44,7%), providing technology tools (34,8%), and waiting in front of the Zoom/Google Meet screen (31,1%) to ensure the smooth learning process. The most minor activity parents (17,4%) were involved in was providing additional learning support to their children, such as hiring tutors. The second question that this study attempts to explore is the low-income parents' perceptions of online learning amidst the pandemic. Based on the parents' statements in the open-ended questions, there were four major themes emerged from 12 coded responses. The four themes were parents' challenges in online learning, parents' suggestions towards the learning process, limited internet access, and parents' expectations in online learning. Figure 4 illustrates the details of the thematic analysis.



**Figure 4.** Themes Emerged from The Analysis of Parents' Perceptions in The Online Learning

The first emerging theme identified from the parent's responses to the open-ended question was the challenges faced by the parents the online learning. One parent mentioned her struggles to manage her responsibilities in caring for her children at home. Another challenge is the conflict schedule between the implementation of online classes during office hours, so the parent requested the school to adjust the schedule with the parent's schedule. The last challenge was the parents' limited competence in explaining the materials to their children, so that face-to-face learning was considered to be more effective than online learning. One learning parent state it would be better if offline classes are conducted so that children can understand the materials faster than being taught with their parents. Furthermore, the internet connection quality was the next emerging theme from the open-ended question. Since most parents were categorized as low-income families, they were limited to internet access since they could not afford it. Yet, they realized that Internet access was crucial to ensure a smooth learning process. However, one parent said that it became more difficult during the pandemic to make ends meet, so they hoped the government would not stop the internet subsidy, mainly when the learning was conducted online.



The parents mentioned three items, including the school-parent partnership, training for parents, and teachers' home visit program. During online learning, students learn from home without their teachers' supervision. In line with the previous parents' concerns and parents' limited knowledge, teachers had to build cooperation and communication with the parents regarding the student's learning hurdles or progress at home. In addition, some parents expected the school and the government to provide them with training to help parents teach and deal with their children. One of them mentioned that she was impatient when elaborating on materials to her child, so trainings for parents about online learning were very necessary. Finally, a number of parents suggested that the teachers ought to do home-visit to understand their children's situations during the study from home, particularly for students who did not have Internet access. The last one identified theme was parents' suggestions regarding the teaching delivery, learning methods, and the assignment given. In terms of teaching delivery, parents suggested that teachers use more interesting methods and easy-to-understand learning concepts to avoid students' boredom during the lesson. Moreover, parents also viewed that teachers were supposed to create their teaching videos instead of merely using YouTube videos in their lessons. One parent stated even though online learning, teachers should not rely on YouTube for the tutorials. Instead, teachers should be the one who creates it through WhatsApp video. In addition, several parents thought that giving large assignments at once put pressure on the students and their parents owing to their limited knowledge of the materials. Therefore, most parents agreed that implementing offline learning was better conducted.

## Discussion

The first objective of this study is to explore how parents with low incomes are involved in their children's learning amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Low-income parents are involved in various strategies to help their children during online learning, mainly in providing pedagogical knowledge and assisting their children to complete the assignments. Even though the parents can accompany their children in less than one hour, they take part in helping their children during online learning. The activity that parents usually do is to explain the tasks given to their children and check these assignments. These findings seem to corroborate with previous studies demonstrating that parents, regardless their economic status, are involved in their children's online education ([Dong et al., 2020a](#); [Garbe et al., 2020](#); [Lubis & Lubis, 2020](#)). Parents in this study mainly help their children with assignments because of the abundant assignments given by the teachers to keep the children learning at home. The fact that children are assigned excessive homework makes it difficult for parent to balance their roles and responsibilities. During online learning, parents have to ensure that their children should obtain an education regardless of the situation. However, parents strive to teach or explain the materials effectively to their children. Most of the parents in this study are high-school graduates that explain their struggle with teaching materials that they do not have the capability of ([Cheung et al., 2020](#); [Yulianti et al., 2018](#)). They have inadequate knowledge capacity to elaborate the lesson materials to their children, making them impatient. Thus, they expect the teachers to be more active in giving detailed explanations and creating videos instead of taking videos from YouTube. However, this seems to be more difficult in disadvantaged families since online meetings cannot occur due to the limited availability of technological devices and internet resources. The lack of our data is that we need input from teachers who teach at this school to understand teachers' teaching practices during the pandemic.

Another finding from the study that should be highlighted is the challenges that the parents have dealt with during online learning. Previous studies report that parents' economic backgrounds correlate with parents' engagement in their children's learning ([D. Lase et al., 2022](#); [Wardani & Ayriza, 2020](#)). In this study, the parents' economically disadvantaged status makes them have less flexible time in accompanying their children. Previous study report that the pandemic has significantly affected most parents, particularly those who earn less ([Anam & Hanik, 2002](#)). They have to find jobs outside to make ends meet. The parents who stay at home, primarily mothers, must be able to share multiple responsibilities such as accompanying the children, taking care of younger children, and doing house chores. This makes them unable to accompany their children during online learning. However, the case would be different with the parents having better educational attainment and high earnings. Parents with higher educational levels and better income would be highly likely to give their children additional support and encouragement for their children's success, such as hiring tutors ([Sadaf & Johnson, 2017](#); [Zedan, 2011](#)).

The second objective of this study is to explore the perspective of low-income parents when learning online in the Covid-19 pandemic situation. In general, parents perceive that the enactment of online learning is ineffective due to several challenges they deal with. Similar to previous studies, most parents believe that teachers must improve the delivery of the learning materials and build

communication between parents and teachers (Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Regarding learning materials in online learning, the parents viewed providing students with exciting learning materials and teaching methods as very important. To prevent the children from boredom, the parents believe that the teachers should create their own engaging and explicit instruction as well as videos so that students will feel that they are still connected with their teachers (Arianti., 2019; Jama'ah, 2021). In addition, teachers should minimize sending materials and assignments or YouTube videos because this method is considered impractical for parents and children. The parents feel that with their limited background in delivering learning materials their children learn ineffectively at home. Therefore, to improve the quality of online learning during the pandemic, the provision of learning materials should be adjusted to the students' needs and the teaching methods should be more varied (Sari & Maningtyas, 2020; Sutarto et al., 2020).

The implication of this study is to provide a better understanding of the involvement of parents with low economic status and their perspective on this online learning. The results of this study might add knowledge to parental involvement in their child's education. This study suggests that policymakers must consider emergency learning that can occur at any time. In this case, it can be seen that children from lower middle-class families are more vulnerable during disasters or other unfortunate events that their future must be considered. Schools and policymakers must be able to establish a plan and provide recommendations when a similar natural disaster happens in the future. The state must be able to provide various ways to ensure that children receive education regardless of their economic status. In this study, for example, if students lack educational facilities at home, home visits or teachers visiting students' homes can be used as an alternative during the pandemic to optimize the teaching and learning process and cater to students' needs.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In general, parents perceive online learning as ineffective and, therefore, prefer offline learning to be implemented. However, the current research highlights the need for further research to examine more deeply economically disadvantaged parents' perspectives using interview research methods to gain more in-depth answers. In addition, interviews with teachers and children need to be conducted to obtain more perspectives about online learning. Moreover, there needs to be a serious consideration, and careful preparation must be taken into account for future learning, particularly for economically disadvantaged children, if a similar occurrence, such as a pandemic, happens again. Policymakers should identify and think about how equitable learning will be in the future for children regardless of their economic and social backgrounds.

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