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Hybrid Learning In Higher Education Setting: Evaluation Of Its Effectiveness

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Abstract

Hybrid learning has gained more popularity in the era of post-Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, continuous evaluation is highly required to enhance the quality of hybrid learning in higher education setting. Drawing on this issue, the present study aims to evaluate the application of hybrid learning by scrutinizing perspectives of Islamic education department students at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta Indonesia. Employing sequential explanatory research, this study utilizes questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to elicit the required data. The results show that the students have positive perceptions toward the implementation of hybrid learning at the faculty. The findings of FGD further reveal that the students experience new and interesting learning environment during the hybrid activity. Despite of its challenge in terms of unstable internet connection, the hybrid learning could increase the students' motivation, engagement and self-regulated learning. This study contributes to providing fruitful insights for higher education stakeholders to enhance the quality of hybrid learning in university setting.

Keyword: Hybrid Learning; Higher Education; Blended Learning

Abstrak

Pembelajaran hybrid semakin populer di era pandemi pasca-Covid-19. Oleh karena itu, evaluasi berkelanjutan sangat diperlukan untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran hybrid di lingkungan pendidikan tinggi. Berangkat dari permasalahan tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi penerapan pembelajaran hybrid dengan mencermati perspektif mahasiswa jurusan pendidikan Islam di UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta Indonesia. Menggunakan sequential explanatory research, penelitian ini menggunakan kuesioner dan Focus Group Discussion (FGD) untuk mendapatkan data yang dibutuhkan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memiliki persepsi yang positif terhadap penerapan hybrid learning di fakultas. Temuan FGD selanjutnya mengungkapkan bahwa siswa mengalami lingkungan belajar yang baru dan menarik selama kegiatan

hybrid. Terlepas dari tantangannya dalam hal koneksi internet yang tidak stabil, pembelajaran hybrid dapat meningkatkan motivasi, keterlibatan, dan pembelajaran mandiri siswa. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi untuk memberikan wawasan bermanfaat bagi pemangku kepentingan pendidikan tinggi untuk meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran hybrid di lingkungan universitas.

Kata Kunci: *Pembelajaran Hybrid; Pendidikan yang lebih tinggi; Pembelajaran Campuran*

INTRODUCTION

Hybrid education, often known as blended learning, essentially entails an instructional method that merges digital instruction with in-person teaching (Hwang, 2018; Meydanlioglu & Arikan, 2014). Due to its amalgamated nature, the hybrid structure is also hailed as an ideal amalgamation, offering the advantages of both online and face-to-face settings (J. Singh et al., 2021). In this specific study, hybrid learning pertains to amalgamating online and face-to-face teaching while reducing physical class sessions. Within hybrid learning, interactive exercises could replace lectures, managed by teaching assistants under the instructor's guidance (Haningsih & Rohmi, 2022). Consequently, the instructor gains more time to engage with individual students, elevating course quality through continuous development and innovation (Megahed & Ghoneim, 2022).

When effectively executed, hybrid learning yields various benefits across student, faculty, and institutional domains. Scholars posit that blended learning courses are highly sought-after due to heightened convenience and flexibility, enhanced learning outcomes, and improved classroom efficiency (Carius, 2020). A recent comprehensive analysis of online education by the U.S. Department of Education also unveiled that students in online learning settings exhibited slightly better performance than those in face-to-face conditions, with hybrid learners outperforming both fully online and traditional setups (Means et al., 2009). Correspondingly, Bordoloi et al. (2021) found that blended learning courses yielded comparable or superior success rates when considering college and gender influences.

Previous research underscores that educators opt for blended or hybrid learning for three primary reasons: 1) enhanced pedagogy, 2) expanded access/flexibility, and 3) heightened cost efficiency. Hybrid approaches amplify opportunities for learner-centric teaching methods such as active learning techniques and collaborative tasks (Atwa et al., 2022; Saboowala & Manghirmalani Mishra, 2021). Additionally, learner adaptability and convenience gain prominence, especially as more nontraditional students, juggling job and familial responsibilities, seek further education (Singh, 2021). Furthermore, hybrid learning

holds the promise of elevating higher education quality by shifting faculty focus from dispensing information, easily automated, towards fostering critical thinking skills through student interactions (Cobo-Rendón et al., 2022; Saboowala & Manghirmalani Mishra, 2021).

Educators advocate for widespread integration of hybrid learning to cater to the swiftly evolving demands of the 21st century. Research on the evaluation of hybrid learning application in university level show its effectiveness and practicality (Kurniawan et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022; Wut et al., 2022). In other words, conducting hybrid learning was appropriate to fulfil teachers' and students' demands of interactive learning environment in both virtual and face-to-face modes (Supriyadi et al., 2023). To successfully transform a conventional face-to-face course into a hybrid model, multiple facets require careful consideration. Therefore, to transition from a conventional face-to-face format to a hybrid one, an instructor must meticulously scrutinize learning objectives, devise fresh online and in-person activities, employ novel assessment methods (e.g., real-world projects, presentations), integrate digital and face-to-face learning exercises, and adopt innovative student interactions (Bizami et al., 2023). This progression demands a systematic and well-supported approach encompassing an instructional framework rooted in robust learning theories, top-notch faculty development, aid in course development, student support, and ongoing formative and summative assessment (Yang et al., 2023).

Hybrid learning is becoming an alternative learning approach in most universities in post-Covid-19 era, including in UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta Indonesia. The Covid-19 pandemic seems to be such 'a wake-up call' for educators and education stakeholders to begin acknowledging the potential of online learning, in addition to face-to-face learning. Thus, hybrid learning, which is the combination of the both modes, is considered as a promising learning approach that can enhance the efficacy of learning environment. Considering its potentials, universities have begun to implement hybrid learning in almost all fields and faculties. Therefore, examining whether the application of hybrid learning can enhance the learning efficacy is highly required and becomes a worthy inquiry.

Drawing on the issue, the present study aims to examine the effectiveness of hybrid learning as seen from the students' perspectives. This study employs survey research inviting students of Islamic education department at Faculty of Tarbiyah of UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The result of this study is expected to provide an alluded picture of how hybrid learning is conducted and to what extent it is effective to facilitate students' learning activity. Furthermore, this study offers valuable insights and policy recommendation for the

faculty members and related stakeholders to continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning in the university.

METHOD RESEARCH

Setting and design of the study

This study aims to reveal students' perceptions on the effectiveness of hybrid learning conducted in the department of Islamic education at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. To reach the objective, survey research was employed by involving 215 students (out of 250) enrolled in the academic year 2021/2022. Specifically, this study used sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2009), in which qualitative data can be collected to support the results of the quantitative data. In this study, FGD was administered to collect qualitative data in addition to the result of quantitative data gathered by the questionnaire. The participants were experiencing hybrid learning as the faculty issued the policy in responding to educational recovery after the pandemic of Covid-19. Teachers and students are encouraged to conduct both online and face-to-face learning activities during the semester. In the faculty, a Learning Management System (LMS), named Si-Kulon, was used to assist the hybrid learning process. In addition, teachers are also suggested to use other types of digital platforms (e.g., Zoom, Google Meeting, web-based applications, social media) to enhance the learning efficacy.

Instrumentation and data collection

This study utilized questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to gather the required data. First, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants in an online mode using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items developed by referring to previous studies (Almuraqab, 2020; Rahayu et al., 2017) scrutinizing the evaluation of hybrid learning application in the faculty. The questionnaire comprised three parts. The first part dealt with participants' demographic data such as gender, age, and phone number. The second part was the main element consisting of the statement items, which were measured using 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (see Table 1). In the third part, an open-ended question requiring the participants to choose the most preferred learning mode in post-Covid-19 era (online, face-to-face, or hybrid) along with their reasons. Second, an FGD was further administered to follow up the results of questionnaire. The FGD aimed at revealing students' opinions and views to elaborate the

quantitative data obtained from the survey. The participants of the FGD were 28, chosen by considering each class representatives. The FGD enabled the researcher to obtain rich and in-depth understanding of the issue being studied. During the FGD, the participants can freely interact with each other to discuss the result of the quantitative data and additional issue related to hybrid learning application in the faculty. The FGD was moderated by the researcher and attended by other faculty members and policymakers.

Table 1. Questionnaire Items

Items	Statement
Item 1	The hybrid learning is effective to support my study
Item 2	The hybrid learning improves my motivation to study.
Item 3	The hybrid learning encourages me to actively engage in the learning environment
Item 4	The hybrid learning provides me opportunities to enhance my learning productivity
Item 5	The hybrid learning makes me more convenient to follow lesson study
Item 6	The hybrid learning enables me to build better communication and interactions with teachers and classmates.
Item 7	The hybrid learning gives me new and interesting learning experiences.
Item 8	The hybrid learning offers ample opportunities to foster my self-regulated learning.
Item 9	The implementation of hybrid learning does not reduce the quality of lesson study.
Item 10	Overall, the hybrid learning in the faculty is interesting and smoothly conducted.
Open-ended question	Which of the following learning modes do you prefer? Provide your reason. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Face-to-face learning 2. Online learning 3. Hybrid learning

Data analysis

The information garnered from the online survey and FGD underwent analysis through specific procedures. Initially, the outcomes of the survey were computed as percentages, employing the Excel software. These percentages served to indicate the participants' perceptions on hybrid learning implementation in the faculty. The Likert scale was determined by calculating the cumulative score per item using the formula $T \times P_n$, where T represents the total responses and P_n signifies the Likert score. The highest achievable score was 1.075, derived from the maximum Likert score (5) multiplied by the number of participants (215). Additionally, the authors established the index (expressed as a percentage) by dividing the total score by the maximum score, subsequently multiplying the result by 100. Lastly, this index was employed as a criterion for classification, leading to conclusions summarized as follows: 0-20% denoting strong disagreement, 21-40% indicating disagreement, 41-60% representing neutrality, 61-80% signifying agreement, and 81-100% corresponding to strong agreement (see Table 2)

Table 2. Scoring criteria

Percentage	Criteria
0% – 20%	Strongly disagree
21% – 40%	Disagree
41% - 60%	Neutral
61% - 80%	Agree
81% - 100%	Strongly agree

Subsequently, in accordance with Creswell's (2009) sequential explanatory approach, the FGD data were utilized to enhance the insights derived from the survey data. The data from the FGD were primarily organized and categorized based on responses to the questions. The author thoroughly reviewed the transcriptions multiple times to identify initial points related to digital technology-driven learning activities during the global pandemic. The data were systematically coded to reveal patterns and emerging trends. Throughout this process, redundant and irrelevant information was eliminated by the author. Ultimately, pertinent excerpts related to participants' opinions on the hybrid learning implementation in the faculty were presented in the results section.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

Quantitative data – students’ perceptions on the hybrid learning implementation

Table 3 presents the results of data analysis in terms of the students’ perceptions on the implementation of the hybrid learning in the department of Islamic education UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. Overall, the students expressed strong agreement that the hybrid learning in the faculty does not reduce the quality of learning activity. The item 9 was the only one statement in the questionnaire that obtained the highest score in the questionnaire (85.39% - strongly agree). In terms of the effectiveness of the hybrid learning to support the students’ study (item 1), the students expressed agreement (63.81%). The result further showed that the hybrid learning could encourage students to actively engage in the learning environment (71.81%). Moreover, the students expressed neutral preferences that the hybrid learning provided them with opportunities to enhance learning productivity.

Table 3. Students’ perceptions

Items	N	Responses Score					Total Score	Index (%)	Criteria
		SD	D	N	A	SA			
1	215	31	76	135	244	200	686	63.81	Agree
2	215	28	70	240	188	125	651	60.55	Agree
3	215	12	30	90	600	40	772	71.81	Agree
4	215	46	102	150	200	90	588	54.69	Neutral
5	215	14	50	120	192	440	816	75.90	Agree
6	215	51	80	162	124	195	612	56.93	Neutral
7	215	4	20	75	580	155	834	77.58	Agree
8	215	11	40	138	280	340	809	75.25	Agree
9	215	10	28	45	180	655	918	85.39	Strongly agree
10	215	16	32	120	380	240	788	73.30	Agree
11	215	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face (32%) - Online (28%) - Hybrid (40%) 							

Notes: N (Number of students); SD (Strongly disagree); D (Disagree); N (Neutral); A (Agree); SA (Strongly agree)

In addition, the results of quantitative data through questionnaire revealed that the hybrid learning made students convenient to follow the lesson study (item 5). However, the hybrid learning was not sufficient to enable students to build communication and

interactions during the learning activities. It was expressed by neutral opinion from the students in item 6. Notwithstanding the fact, the hybrid learning was successful to give students new and interesting learning experiences. It might be due to the combination of online and face-to-face learning modes which did not make the students feel boring. Overall, the results of the questionnaire showed that the students of the Islamic education department at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta perceived positively the application of hybrid learning conducted by the faculty in the post-Covid-19 era. Last but not least, the results also depict that the majority of the students preferred hybrid learning (40%) to face-to-face (32%) and online (28%). It indicates that the students agreed to the policy of hybrid learning in the faculty.

Qualitative data – the results of Focus Group Discussion

The data obtained from the questionnaire were further supported by the administration of Focus Group Discussion (FGD). In the FGD, the students were directed to discuss three primary themes (1) experiences of hybrid learning activity, (2) benefits of the hybrid learning, and (3) challenges encountered during the implementation of hybrid learning. In this section, several responses of the students are quoted to support the delineation of the findings. The FGD was joined by 28 students as participants (coded as P1-P28).

First, the FGD revealed several interesting experiences by the students during the hybrid learning. A participant (P11) mentioned that the implementation of hybrid learning offered new insights and experiences for his learning. The majority of the participants agreed to the statement of P11. It indicated that learning in the combination of online and face-to-face interactions was something new for the students; hence, it provided them with ample opportunities to experience an interesting learning approach. As P11 said:

This is my first-time experiencing hybrid learning like this. In my opinion, hybrid learning is very interesting since it combines online and offline learning. It enables me to have an opportunity to improve my learning experience, motivation, and engagement in the learning activities. I am more motivated. (FGD/P11/C-105)

Moreover, most of the students experienced interactive learning activity. In addition to the face-to-face activity in the classroom, the students experienced online learning using not only the LMS provided by the university but also social media (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook) and other platforms (e.g., Youtube, email, Edmodo) to facilitate the lesson study. As P18 said:

We are not only using Si-Kulon [LMS provided by the university] to assist with online learning activity, but also using social media to facilitate the learning, such as Instagram and Facebook. My teacher often gives us tasks and assignments through social media. It makes the learning activity more interactive and interesting. (FGD/P18/C-281)

Second, the FGD revealed several benefits of hybrid learning as experienced by the students. The majority of the students conveyed that the hybrid learning could enhance students' motivation, engagement, and self-regulated learning. P15 said that the hybrid learning was able to enhance motivation, engagement, and autonomous learning. It was because the hybrid learning facilitated interactive activity in both face-to-face and virtual modes. Students could elaborate their independent learning at home when they have face-to-face interaction with teachers and classmates. She stated:

This learning approach [hybrid learning] can improve my motivation and engagement in the learning activity. Also, it makes me more motivated to improve my autonomous learning at home. When I have difficulty, then I can ask my teacher or discuss with my classmates when we meet in the classroom. This combination makes me easy to understand learning materials. (FGD/P15/C-146)

Third, the FGD also depicted challenges of the hybrid learning. Most of the students stated that limited technological tools and unstable internet connection still became challenges for the students when having online learning, especially those who lived in disadvantaged area. However, they also said that this challenge could be solved by maximizing public space facilities such as village office, coffee shop, and education institutions. For example, P2 stated that the most challenging issue of hybrid learning was related to internet connection, especially when having video conference such as Zoom meeting and Google Meeting videos. She said:

I think the challenge of the hybrid learning is unstable internet connection, especially for students who live in disadvantaged area like me. But I often go to public spaces which have free internet connection (Wi-Fi) such as village office and coffee shop. (FGD/P2/C-172)

DISCUSSION

In the early months of 2022, several nations have effectively managed to slow down the transmission of COVID-19, leading to the prohibition of gatherings and the temporary closure of universities. The necessity of university closures has been substantiated as an

efficient strategy for reducing virus infection rates, particularly among students and educators who constitute a significant demographic in many countries. Conversely, the closure of educational institutions, particularly in developing nations like Indonesia, has presented its own set of challenges. In collaboration with universities, the government in Indonesia has established guidelines for hybrid learning implementation as the Covid-19 pandemic nears its end. In this era of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) advancements, remote learning has become relatively manageable (Gjelaj et al., 2020; Makki & Bali, 2021). Students are already well-acquainted with technological tools and digital platforms for educational purposes, especially at the university level (Rabah, 2015). Consequently, implementing hybrid learning, which combines both online and face-to-face interactions, poses minimal difficulty in this context.

The outcomes of this investigation reveal a favorable outlook among students within the Islamic education department at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta regarding the hybrid learning approach. This discovery should serve as a call to action for education stakeholders and governmental bodies, particularly in developing nations. This signifies a shift towards recognizing not only the potential but also the practicality of digitalized online learning methods in conjunction with traditional classroom learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened awareness about the pivotal role of technology in education (Hashemi & Kew, 2020). Thus, this study's findings offer valuable insights for education stakeholders to reshape teaching and learning strategies in schools and universities, taking into account students' perspectives who seek a blended learning model during the post-pandemic recovery phase.

Arguably, the most significant finding from this study pertains to students' preference for the hybrid learning model over purely face-to-face or online modes. Although briefly mentioned earlier, delving into this preference is crucial, especially in understanding the underlying reasons. This detailed discussion can provide valuable insights for educational stakeholders and government bodies aiming to ensure the efficacy of future education systems. This includes curriculum design, infrastructure development, teaching methodologies, and the preparation of both digital and human resources. Undoubtedly, many students opt for blended learning due to the limitations of online learning. On one hand, they are intrigued by the notion of adopting a contemporary learning style through digitalization and online platforms. On the other hand, they have faced numerous issues and challenges during its implementation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is unsurprising, given that the abrupt shift from in-person classroom interactions to digital

interfaces was not meticulously planned, but rather an improvised response to the pandemic. Consequently, the implications drawn from this study provide valuable insights for policy-making, contributing to the broader discourse on future teaching models in educational institutions.

This study has several implications for teaching and learning process in university levels. Theoretically, the findings of this study enrich the literature about the evaluation of hybrid learning implementation in higher education setting. Not only does it, but this study also provide valuable insights for teachers and policymakers to redesign the teaching and learning approach which is appropriate with the students' interests. Moreover, the findings of this study might become guideline and reference to design future education system, especially in Indonesia. In the era of technological advancement, education stakeholders must deal with ICT development and integrate them in the process of teaching and learning.

CONCLUSION

This study is initiated to evaluate the application of hybrid learning in the department of Islamic education at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. This study uses sequential explanatory research design, in which quantitative data are supported by the qualitative data. A questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion are employed to collect the data from the students. The findings depict that the students are at positive perception towards the implementation of hybrid learning in the faculty. It is successful to provide them ample opportunities to enhance motivation, engagement, and productivity. The findings of FGD further reveal that students experience new and interactive learning activity through hybrid learning. It can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and self-regulated learning. In addition, the most challenging difficulty is related to the unstable internet especially for students who live in disadvantaged area. The findings of this study provide fruitful insights for education stakeholders to enhance the quality of hybrid learning in higher education context.

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