

## Parents' Attitudes and Stress Levels Associated with Assisting Children's Distance Learning in Western Indonesia

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### Abstract

The Indonesian government implemented distance learning to reduce the viral spread during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. A preliminary study based on interviews with 10 parents found that some parents had problems accessing the internet during their children's online classes and that they used an excessive amount of data. Parents also had difficulty dividing their time between working and assisting their children with their online learning. This study aimed to determine parents' attitudes and stress levels associated with assisting their children's distance learning in western Indonesia. A descriptive research method was utilized, and the research population consisted of parents with school-age children undergoing distance learning in western Indonesia. The accidental sampling technique was used, and 384 respondents were involved. The research instrument was a questionnaire. Univariate analysis was used to analyze the data. The results showed that 1.6% of the respondents had a low stress level, 49.7% had a medium stress level, and 48.7% had a high stress level. The results also revealed that more than half of the respondents (51.3%; n=197) had a positive attitude toward assisting their school-age children during distance learning. Given that this study involved a substantial sample of parents, the findings have implications for academic institutions and community leaders in western Indonesia and similar region. The findings indicate that efforts could be made to educate parents about their stress and attitudes associated with distance learning and the effects these have on their children's learning.

**Keywords:** attitude, distance learning, parents, stress

### Abstrak

*Perilaku dan Stres Orang Tua dalam Mendampingi Anak yang Menjalani Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh. Pemerintah menetapkan pembelajaran jarak jauh untuk memutus mata rantai penyebaran COVID-19. Sebuah studi pendahuluan yang melibatkan sepuluh orang tua, ditemukan bahwa beberapa orang tua memiliki masalah dalam mengakses jaringan selama kelas online dengan penggunaan kuota yang berlebihan. Orang tua juga kesulitan membagi waktu untuk bekerja dan mendampingi anak dalam pembelajaran daring. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan sikap dan tingkat stres orang tua dalam mendampingi pembelajaran jarak jauh anak di Indonesia bagian barat. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif, dengan populasi penelitian orang tua dengan anak usia sekolah yang menjalani pembelajaran jarak jauh di Indonesia Barat. Teknik pengambilan sampel yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah accidental sampling sebanyak 384 responden. Instrumen penelitian menggunakan kuesioner. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam analisis univariat. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan tingkat stres rendah (1,6%), stres sedang (49,7%), dan stres tinggi (48,7%). Penelitian ini juga mengungkapkan bahwa lebih dari separuh responden memiliki sikap positif terhadap pendampingan anak usia sekolah selama pembelajaran jarak jauh, yaitu sebanyak 197 responden (51,3%). Penelitian ini melibatkan sampel orang tua yang cukup besar, sehingga temuan-temuan yang ada memiliki implikasi bagi institusi akademis dan tokoh masyarakat di Indonesia bagian barat dan wilayah serupa. Upaya-upaya dapat dilakukan untuk mengedukasi orang tua mengenai stres dan sikap mereka terkait pembelajaran jarak jauh dan dampaknya terhadap pembelajaran anak-anak mereka.*

**Kata Kunci:** orang tua, pembelajaran jarak jauh, perilaku, stres

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## Introduction

In response to the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, numerous countries implemented measures such as school closures and the adoption of learning-from-home (LFH) to mitigate the spread of the virus. In Indonesia, LFH was implemented countrywide in the first quarter of 2020 for K–12 education, with the ministerial order signed on March 24, 2020 (The Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). Distance learning was the fundamental aspect of the LFH policy, particularly online learning. However, in Indonesia, a considerable number of educational institutions, educators, pupils, and guardians were ill-equipped to expeditiously and substantially adapt to the pedagogical and instructional modifications necessitated by the LFH policy (Putri et al., 2020).

Distance learning typically relies on synchronous and asynchronous communication that is facilitated by the use of digital tools, such as email, instant messaging applications, online forums, video conference or teleconference programs, collaborative tools, and education administration systems. Ideally, it should involve regular online interactions between teachers and their students.

It has been shown that distance learning students may encounter various challenges; for example, they may struggle to adjust to the academic requirements set by instructors and have insufficient resources, such as mobile devices and computers (Chusna & Utami, 2020). Aji (2020) outlined that the implementation of distance learning may result in the loss of the student assessment process, and other significant consequences of closing schools include the postponement of exams, inadequate achievement of students' skill targets, and the inability to carry out assessments, all of which have implications for the learning outcomes in the subsequent academic year. Furthermore, Addimando et al. (2021) explained that implementing remote teaching necessitates both educators and students having access to essential technologi-

cal devices and being proficient in their operation.

When distance learning was implemented, it was common for parents and children to share electronic devices due to their simultaneous engagement in remote activities, including work and study. This had a notable impact on classroom instruction, particularly regarding scheduling and the manner in which said resources were employed.

In addition, to mitigate potential hazards associated with prolonged usage, it is imperative to limit the amount of screen time allotted to children, particularly when utilizing devices such as smartphones. It is also worth mentioning that parental involvement is frequently required for primary school children when accessing electronic devices, as they may require assistance navigating and utilizing technology securely and appropriately.

According to a recent study conducted in China, which involved 3,275 respondents, parents hold negative beliefs regarding the worth and advantages of online learning (Dong et al., 2020). Most individuals decline to engage in online learning due to unforeseen modifications in the educational framework, inadequate self-management skills among students, and insufficient time and expertise to facilitate online learning (Dong et al., 2020). In addition, Garbe et al. (2020) applied a descriptive research approach to investigate the experiences of parents and children in distance learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic. They collected data via an online survey administered to parents or guardians, and their findings revealed that there was a consensus among the parents regarding school closure policies. However, the challenge of reconciling multiple responsibilities also serves as a driving force for children to pursue academic excellence.

An initial study conducted with ten parents of school-age children in Surakarta recorded parental grievances about the challenges they fa-

ced in accessing the internet during periods of remote learning and the issue of excessive data use. In that study, the parents reported that they were confused about how to allocate their time between meeting their professional obligations and supporting their children in the context of remote education. Six of the parents stated that they became stressed due to their children experiencing learning difficulties and preferring play over academic pursuits. The same six parents contended that parental stress could lead to anger toward their children. Five parents reported an inability to provide their children with learning equipment, expressed indifference toward their children's academic achievements, and neglected their children's learning due to the challenges of balancing their parental responsibilities and work obligations. As a result of this phenomenon, our team was motivated to examine the attitudes and stress levels of parents who assist their children with distance learning in western Indonesia.

## **Methods**

For this study, a quantitative descriptive inquiry was conducted from February to March 2022. The accidental sampling technique was used to recruit the participants. The study participants were individuals residing in the western region of Indonesia who had school-age children who were engaged in distance learning due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The study population was accessible and amenable to research.

The data were obtained through a questionnaire comprising three distinct sections. The items in Part A were used to assess the parents' demographic information, with a focus on their place of residence. The items in Part B were used to assess attitudes among parents in western Indonesia toward supporting their children's distance learning. The researcher developed this part of the questionnaire on parental attitudes, and it has been subjected to validity and reliability testing using 30 respondents who were different from the study's respondents. A total of 27 questions were deemed valid and subse-

quently utilized in Part 2, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.908. The items in Part 3 were used to assess the stress experienced by individuals who assist children during distance learning. The perceived stress scale, initially proposed by Cohen in 1983, was utilized in this investigation. Susilowati and Azzasyofia (2020) translated and developed the scale into 14 questions and administered it to 236 participants. The instrument consisting of 14 valid questions was found to be reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.731.

The data collection was performed during the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, the survey was made available through digital platforms, such as social media and WhatsApp. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive analysis techniques. This study is part of Project No. 117/RCTC-EC/R/I/2021, which has been reviewed and approved by the ethical board of the Faculty of Nursing at Universitas Pelita Harapan to safeguard the rights of the respondents.

## **Results**

The data presented in Table 1 show that most (26.6%,  $n = 102$ ) of the respondents were from Central Java. The majority of the respondents were female (66.9%,  $n = 257$ ), and almost half of the respondents had a senior high school education (44.3%,  $n = 170$ ).

As shown in Table 2, 51.3% ( $n = 197$ ) of the respondents had a positive attitude toward assisting their school-age children with their distance learning. The data presented in Table 3 show that almost half of the respondents (49.7%,  $n = 191$ ) had a moderate level of stress.

## **Discussion**

The majority of this study's respondents were from Central Java ( $n = 102$ , 26.6%). This result aligns with the work of Simanjuntak and Kismartini (2020), who reported that 99.4% of the schools in Central Java implemented distance learning and that all parents (100%) agreed to

implement distance learning and were actively involved in assisting their children's learning.

The sex distribution of the respondents indicates that a significant proportion of the sam-

ple (66.9%) identified as female. This finding is consistent with Rakhmah (2020) which reported that mothers provided 66.7% of the support for children's distance learning. This is because mothers tend to spend more time with their

Table 1. The Respondents' Characteristics

Characteristic	n	%
<b>Province</b>		
Aceh	5	1.3
North Sumatera	27	7.0
West Sumatera	14	3.9
Riau	5	1.3
Riau Island	4	1.0
Bangka Belitung	7	1.8
Lampung	64	16.7
Jambi	8	2.1
Bengkulu	15	3.9
South Sumatera	9	2.3
East Java	20	5.2
Banten	10	2.6
Yogyakarta	26	6.8
Jakarta	36	8.3
West Java	15	3.9
Central Java	102	26.6
West Kalimantan	7	1.8
Central Kalimantan	13	3.4
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	257	66.9
Male	127	33.1
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
<20	12	3.1
21–30	96	25.0
31–40	122	31.8
41–50	127	33.1
>50	27	7.0
<b>Educational Background</b>		
Primary school	19	5.0
Junior high school	13	3.4
Senior high school	170	44.3
Diploma	58	15.1
Bachelor's degree	110	28.6
Higher degree	14	3.6
<b>Working Status</b>		
Employed	352	91.67
Not employed	32	8.3

Table 2. Parents' Attitudes Toward Assisting Their Children's Distance Learning in Western Indonesia

Parents' Attitude	n	%
Negative	187	48.7
Positive	197	51.3
Total	384	100

Table 3. Parents' Stress Levels Associated with Assisting Their Children's Distance Learning in Western Indonesia

Parents' Stress Level	n	%
Low	6	1.6
Moderate	191	49.7
High	187	48.7
Total	384	100

children than fathers, who are often absent from home due to work commitments (Rakhmah, 2020).

In terms of age, most of the respondents (33.1%) were 41–50 years old. In general, individuals aged between 41 and 50 years possess a level of emotional maturity and stability that allows them to regulate their emotions effectively and adjust to challenges. In contrast, the majority of respondents in Palupi's (2021) study was aged 20–39 years (70.78%, n = 63). During the transition period from adolescence to young adulthood, individuals may experience increased susceptibility to stress.

According to the data shown in Table 2, most of the participants (51.3%) had positive attitudes toward supporting their school-age children in their distance learning. A recent study that investigated the extent of parental involvement in the implementation of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that 32.38% of the participants reported consistent involvement, 34.4% reported frequent involvement, 29.32% reported rare participation, and 3.81% reported no involvement (Bastian et al., 2020). In addition, Putro et al. (2020) noted the significant of parents' positive attitudes had on how they facilitated their children's distance learning, as evidenced by the presence of constructive interaction patterns between parents and their children. The parents provided consistent motivation and support to their children to prevent disinterest and foster engagement in distance learning, promoting sustained focus during the learning process.

In contrast, Lase et al. (2020) discovered that

most of the parents in their study—58.7%—exhibited negative attitudes toward managing their time between accompanying their children in primary tasks and fulfilling their daily work responsibilities. A separate study from Utami (2020) demonstrated that parents who could not provide complete support to their children during their distance learning had adverse dispositions. Parents are often occupied with other responsibilities, which may limit their ability to provide comprehensive instruction to their children. Additionally, parents may face challenges in fully comprehending the educational material teachers present, hindering their ability to effectively convey the information to their children (Utami, 2020). Moreover, Abuhammad (2020) found that parents face personal obstacles in remote learning, including inadequate training in distance learning techniques and materials, lack of trained personnel, and difficulties managing technological demands. Parents with lower educational attainment perceive themselves as inadequate in providing academic support, particularly in subject-specific learning and technological proficiency. These factors impact the quality and excellence of their children's remote learning experiences.

Parents' positive attitudes toward facilitating their children's distance learning can be demonstrated by the provision of time, space, and resources that bolster their children's learning and motivation. Furthermore, the level of success children achieve in their learning endeavours can be influenced by the nature of their interactions with their parents. According to Putro et al. (2020), it is imperative for parents to monitor their children's study habits at home to prevent them from becoming lethargic and hindering

their academic progress. Furthermore, parents have the opportunity to provide support by accompanying their children during the learning process, assuming the role of an educator in instances where the child may struggle to comprehend the material, fostering a sense of motivation to prevent disinterest during the learning experience, and ensuring that the child's learning is authentic (Dina, 2020). According to Pratama and Firmansyah (2021), possessing a personal computer at home was a significant indicator of parental support for LFH, even after accounting for demographic variables.

Interestingly, Balenzano et al. (2020) recently demonstrated that there were numerous positive effects associated with spending an extended period of time at home, commonly called "suspended" time, during the lockdowns that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than two-thirds of the sample reported that social isolation positively impacted their parenting practices. Specifically, they noted improved listening skills, relational abilities, and educational strategies. Additionally, the quality of their family dialogue and the time spent with their children was enhanced, as evidenced by increased monitoring of schoolwork and entertainment activities. These effects were observed to be moderately significant.

In our study, almost half of the respondents (49.7%) reported having a moderate level of stress. This finding aligns with that of a previous study that examined parents' stress levels when they accompanied their children in their distance learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia and found that 75.34% of the respondents had moderate stress levels (Susilowati & Azzasyofia, 2020). Another study found that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as many as 308 parents of healthy children in the United States had an average score of 16.41 or were classified as moderately stressed on the Perceived Stress Scale. The COVID-19 epidemic has brought about unparalleled levels of stress for parents. Anticipated long-term repercussions on mental well-being

necessitate proactive measures to address the rising need for mental health services (van Tilburg et al., 2020). The results of that study indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between increased levels of parental stress ( $\beta = .095$ ,  $p = .018$ ) and the amount of time children spend using screens. Seguin et al. (2021) reported that the duration of screen time exhibited an upward trend among children whose guardians reported elevated stress levels. Parents accompanying their children during their distance learning activities tend to encounter stress due to various factors.

A recent study revealed that among a group of mothers who assisted their elementary school-age children during home learning, 51.69% ( $n = 46$ ) exhibited low stress levels, 30.34% ( $n = 27$ ) displayed moderate stress levels, and 39.33% ( $n = 35$ ) reported high stress levels (Palupi, 2021). Lee et al. (2021) found that 40% of parents matched the Personal Health Questionnaire (PHQ)-8 criteria for major or severe depression and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)-7 criteria for moderate or severe anxiety (39.9%). Parents with moderate or severe anxiety reported higher child anxiety scores than those with minimum or mild anxiety ( $\beta = 0.17$ ; 95% CI = 0.06, 0.28;  $p = .005$ ). Parental stress also increased child anxiety ( $\beta = 0.40$ ; 95% CI = 0.32, 0.48;  $p = .001$ ). Based on the findings of content analyses conducted on open-ended questions, it was determined that the most disruptive factor was the closure of schools, followed by insufficient physical activity and social isolation. The study's findings indicate that parental mental health may significantly correlate with home-schooling and children's well-being amid pandemics (Lee et al., 2021).

Pablo & Dy (2018) found that 62% of their study's participants exhibited low stress levels for different reasons. They examined the correlation between parental stress levels and the cognitive functioning of second-grade students in the Philippines. Rubilar et al. (2022) mentioned that parenting dimensions, as perceived

by individuals, influenced children's behavior. Mothers who exhibited higher levels of positive parenting tended to report more significant changes in their children's behavior. Furthermore, mothers who experienced higher stress levels exhibited increased perception of issues in nearly all assessed behaviors than mothers with lower stress levels. Mothers who reported providing more significant school support to their children perceived that their children could better adapt to online classes. Cusinato et al. (2020) found that mothers, who constituted the majority of their study's respondents, exhibited reduced levels of well-being and perceived self-control and elevated anxiety levels compared to the general population. Notably, the well-being of children serves as an additional adverse predictor of stress experienced by parents.

Consequently, the well-being of children could safeguard against parental distress, whereby parents of offspring exhibiting superior psychological adaptation encounter fewer challenges in fulfilling their parental responsibilities. From this perspective, the adjustment of each family member is mutually influenced by others within the family unit. Consequently, promoting positive adaptation during challenging periods can facilitate the development of novel resources.

The fact that the data used in this study was collected via an online survey constitutes a limitation of the study. Hence, parents who do not have access to a reliable internet connection or a certain level of digital literacy were unable to participate in the study. Second, although all 18 western Indonesian provinces were included in this study, the number of respondents from each province differed. The conclusions of this research will be strengthened when a statistically significant volume of data from each province has been obtained and analyzed.

## Conclusion

In this study, more than half of the respondents exhibited a positive attitude toward assisting

their children with their distance learning, and nearly half of the respondents exhibited moderate stress in terms of supporting their children with their distance learning in western Indonesia. Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions impart knowledge about parental support for school-age children during distance learning. Educators could teach students about the signs, impact, and management of parental stress and attitudes. Students could use this information to educate their parents about stress management techniques. In turn, parents and guardians should work to develop positive attitudes toward supporting their children's distance learning. We plan to conduct further research in this area to ascertain the variables associated with parents' attitudes and stress levels as they aid their children with their distance learning activities.

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