

Perspectives of Parents in Jabodetabek on Indonesia's 2022 Limited Face-to-Face Learning Policy

Dhian Sintapertiwi

Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, Indonesia

Corresponding E-mail: dhian.pertiwi@uiii.ac.id

Abstract

The Indonesian government has announced that their latest policy on limited face-to-face learning will be implemented in January 2022. This policy will be applied equally to all educational levels – from early childhood to tertiary institutions. The latest policy will be unlike the previous ones and will require all students to attend face-to-face learning. The new changes triggered different opinions among parents who are considered to be one of the key stakeholders in the decision making process. During the Covid-19 pandemic, parents had the right to decide whether or not to send their children back to school. This qualitative study aims to explore parents' viewpoints on the limited face-to-face learning policy that will be implemented in 2022. The data was collected from 20 parents in Jabodetabek (Jakarta-Bogor-Depok-Tangerang-Bekasi) area electronically using Google Form. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with five parents. The data gathered from the questionnaire showed that most parents agreed to send their children back to school. Health protocols, learning loss, and mental health or well-being were the three themes that emerged as the reasons why parents supported the government's policy to reopen the schools next year.

Keywords: *COVID-19, parents' views, limited learning, face to face, policy*

Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic after the virus had spread to over 100 countries. Indonesia detected its first cases of COVID-19 in early March 2020. As we entered the second year of the pandemic, the COVID-19 cases continued to spread across the country (UNICEF, 2021). UNICEF's Executive Director (2021) has warned that "COVID-19 could cause the largest disruption to global progress for children in modern history – stating that the pandemic has set off a chain reaction of negative impacts." The education of millions of children and adolescents has been severely disrupted (UNICEF, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has caused the students an unprecedented interruption. In 2018, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that Indonesia had been facing significant learning challenges even before the pandemic. The report stated that 70% of fifteen-year-old students in Indonesia were unable to achieve the minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics. With the pandemic, a World Bank simulation model predicted that school closures in Indonesia could lead to a 21-point reduction in PISA reading scores (Yarrow et al., 2020).

For health and safety reasons, most governments around the world decided to close schools and shifted the learning process to electronic/virtual settings. In many countries, online instant communication apps such as WhatsApp and various technologies like radio, television, cell phones, computers, and satellite systems, are being used to facilitate communication between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves. These technologies also enabled services such as video conferencing and online distance learning (Bharmani et al., 2020). UNICEF (2021) reported that most distance learning in Indonesia took place via WhatsApp, with limited live interaction between teachers and students. World Bank (2020) also stated that there was a significant variation in the average time spent on distance learning per day – with students in Jakarta province spending an average of 3.5 hours per day and 2.2 hours those outside Java. Primary school students in rural areas and those in the lowest 40% percent income group, spent less time on average per day on distance learning (UNICEF, 2021). The usage of the term distance learning was quite diverse during the Covid-19 pandemic – some used online learning and some e-learning, or learning from home, etc. Fundamentally, emergency remote teaching-learning (ERT) is the most appropriate term to describe it. Based on the decision made during the Covid-19 pandemic, ERT is an unpremeditated educational path (Seabra et al., 2021). In contrast to ERT, online learning is essentially a planned learning system that is carried out virtually. However, the term online learning is more commonly used in daily practice.

As much as various initiatives have been implemented to address the needs of the time, it is an inevitable fact that online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges for teachers, students, and parents to overcome. Technology, interaction and control are the three essential components in executing online learning (Piccoli et al., 2001). Soesanto and Dirgantoro (2021) mentioned that the integration of these components can enhance learners' satisfaction. However, teachers, on the other hand, are still facing challenges in ensuring a successful remote learning. This failure occurred mainly due to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. ERT emerged as an impromptu response to the crisis, where educational activities and the planned curriculum shifted from face-to-face to remote learning – without careful planning, readiness of infrastructure or training for teachers (Seabra et al., 2021). In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic and quarantine created multiple stressors for families, particularly parents who had to juggle with various responsibilities at home and cope with the loss of emotional and physical support (Weaver and Swank, 2021). In U-Report (2020) polls, 38% of adolescents stated that one of the main challenges in distance learning was a lack of teacher guidance. A significant proportion of students, up to 31%, identified boredom as a primary challenge.

Considering the above challenges and drawbacks of distance learning, it is not surprising that many parents are worried about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their children's education. Seventy percent of parents have expressed their concern about the loss of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic (UNICEF et al., 2021). In addition, the World Bank (2020) reported that nearly half of all parents have expressed concern about limited access to the internet and electronic devices, as well as limited time and capacity to help teach their children at home. The main reason why parents are the key indicators on whether or not distance learning would be successful, is that the education process completely shifted to homes during the pandemic due to schools closure. As a result, practices of education suddenly became the responsibility of parents, majority of whom did not have prior experience with teaching. The Ministry of Education and Culture addressed parents' concerns by conducting an evaluation on the effectiveness of distance learning.

As the COVID-19 cases gradually decreased, government of Indonesia considered an option for educational institutions to conduct limited face-to-face learning under a strict health protocol (Soesanto and Dirgantoro, 2021). Implementing this policy was a significant challenge for the government as it required considerable efforts to ensure that the health and safety of all parties involved were in line with the vision, mission, and goals of education. In order to promote the reopening of schools, teachers followed by students were among the priority groups to be vaccinated (UNICEF, 2021).

The government's efforts to recover learning loss by reopening schools, was a positive decision that should be appreciated. However, the decision makers on whether or not children can return to school, were the parents. Many studies examining the educational challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic have predominantly focused on the perspectives of teachers and students, while the role of parents and their influential input in the education policy-making process has received comparatively less attention. Rasmitadila's (2020) qualitative research shows that primary school teachers' opinions in regard to online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic have been disregarded due to insufficient support, motivation, instructional strategies and the challenges faced by teachers. Similarly, Rahayu and Wirza's (2020) qualitative research also indicates that a majority of junior high school teachers perceive online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic as ineffective. From the students' point of view, Hasan's (2020) qualitative research paper and mixed-methods study by Mishra et. al (2020) showed that distance learning provides convenience in terms of flexibility. However, poor internet connection, lack of social interaction, and other academic disturbances have become a scourge in the education process during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The idea of resuming face-to-face learning has always been a dilemma for parents due to their concerns on their children's health and safety during the pandemic situation. The policy for the upcoming year, unlike in 2021, is mandatory and will require all parents to allow their children to return to school as the national vaccination program for students has been implemented. These are what underlined this study, seeking answers to the following questions: What are parents' perceptions on government's policy about the implementation of limited face-to-face learning in 2022? How do parents view the idea of schools reopening and allowing their children to return to school next year?

Literature Review

Online and Offline Learning Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought immense changes in the global educational system, resulting in the suspension of face-to-face activities and direct interactions between teachers and students for a considerable period of time (Soesanto and Dirgantoro, 2021). The government rolled out a package of online and offline distance learning programs due to school closures to support distance learning and enable students and teachers continue the teaching and learning process (UNICEF, 2021). However, distance learning still seems to be challenging for many families, as they struggle with the increasing cost of internet connection among other issues (UNICEF and Empatika, 2021).

As mentioned earlier, there are different terms used to refer to the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as distance learning, online learning, home-based learning, etc. What needs to be emphasized is that the basis for discussing online learning in this research is the emergency remote teaching (ERT). ERT refers to the implementation of temporary transition from face-to-face mode to full remote learning. The transition was caused by an emergency situation and delivered through an unplanned learning design (Zhang, 2021). In this scenario, this policy tends to refer to a limited face-to-face learning mode that necessitates several adjustments in the implementation of online, offline or hybrid learning. All will be explained in the following paragraphs, which will depend on the COVID-19 situation in Indonesia.

The Indonesian government has been implementing strict health protocols and a national vaccination program in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 cases down and prepare for the challenges caused by ineffective distance learning so schools can resume their operations. UNICEF (2020) mentioned that Indonesia was one of four countries in the East Asia region and the Pacific that has not implemented a full face-to-face learning program. The other 23 countries such as Vietnam, China, Cambodia, and Laos, have already implemented face-to-face learning. This means that other countries had reacted quickly and reviewed their learning policies to address the learning needs during the pandemic as the Covid-19 cases hit high according to UNICEF (2021). The Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia also has issued safe school reopening guidelines, and has urged the local governments to start with face-to-face learning, particularly in rural and remote districts where distance learning is not functionally active. We are just learning to comprehend the impacts of the pandemic, but there are many issues that cause dilemmas and require urgent attention. One of the issues that requires urgent attention is the need to do an assessment in order to find out the strengths and weaknesses of online learning, as well as to explore further possible options of returning to in-person schooling. Education is a multidimensional process at the center of which are teachers, students, and parents (Janmaat et al., 2016). Therefore, any educational policy regarding students during the pandemic will impact and influence parents due to their health and safety concerns for their children.

In 2021, the government implemented a limited face-to-face learning program as an effort to restore "lost" competencies, occurred during the online learning period. For limited face-to-face learning to be carried out in schools, it is essential to fulfill several main requirements. These include, obtaining approval from the local government, providing facilities to implement health protocols, ensuring a maximum class capacity of 50%, and most importantly, acquiring the

approval of parents. The policy issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture stated that if parents do not allow their children to take part in limited face-to-face learning, schools should facilitate them with an online learning option. Based on the given description, parental consent is the crucial factor for the implementation of face-to-face learning programs in schools (Powa et al., 2021). In 2021, the government continued to make adjustments on limited face-to-face learning programs. Health protocols in schools were continuously monitored, and national data on COVID-19 cases was one of the references to determine whether to continue the program or not, particularly in light of the new variants. The government enforced strict warnings and imposed fines on any parties that jeopardized public health and safety.

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2021) informed that the implementation of a limited face-to-face learning program was in response to the expectations of communities (which includes students, teachers, parents, education experts, and social observers). In April 2021, the national government issued a Joint Decision Decree signed by four ministers (Education, Health, Religious Affairs, and Home Affairs), mandating all schools to resume face-to-face learning programs by July 2021 (UNICEF, 2021). As per the Joint Decree, schools are allowed to open using a combination of face-to-face and distance learning, but all teachers must be vaccinated before the reopening occurs. In 2021, numerous schools adopted a hybrid approach of limited face-to-face and distance learning to accommodate students whose parents did not approve their children returning to face-to-face learning. The Ministry of Education and Culture identified two schools as role models, who successfully implemented the hybrid learning in 2021: SD Negeri 03 Pontianak Selatan and SMA Negeri 9 Bengkulu Selatan (Jelita, 2021).

According to Kompas Media (2021), 56.1% of parents were hesitant and did not agree on the implementation of face-to-face learning program (PTM) or the reopening of schools/madrasahs in July 2021. In contrast, approximately 43.9% of parents supported the government's policy at that time for various reasons. The Education and Teacher Association (Perhimpunan Pendidikan dan Guru/P2G) collected and analyzed the data through a national survey on child vaccination and the 2021 PTM plan. It was discovered that parents had 5 reasons for not consenting their children returning to school:

Five reasons why parents did not agree with face-to-face learning in July 2021

No.	Parent's Statement
1	COVID-19 cases are increasing
2	Students are not vaccinated
3	Schools/madrasahs are in the red or orange zone
4	The school lack facilities to support the health protocol
5	Teachers are not fully vaccinated

*Source: Kompas Media, 2021.

Aside from parents who opposed the PTM, the data also revealed that parents who supported PTM cited reasons such as their children were getting bored at home, spent excessive time playing games, experienced difficulties accessing the internet, lacked the required expertise to teach at home, and other factors.

The Indonesian government has made adjustments to the limited face-to-face learning policy to minimize the prolonged negative social impact of online learning and to address parents' concerns regarding the latest policy. Kemendikbud (2020) discovered that students who were absent from face-to-face learning for a longer period of time, were impacted more adversely. Some of the impacts of distance learning are (a), The risk to drop out of school: some parents believe that schools have no role in online learning so they require their children to assist them with household work, (b) Barriers to growth and development: distance learning has created gaps in student's academic performance due to different qualities of distance learning and decreasing level of participation in Early Childhood education, and (c) Psychosocial pressure and domestic violence: online learning can causes stress in children, which will likely lead to domestic violence at home.

The inefficiency of online learning and the impacts of school closures are acknowledged by at least three world institutions who have close connections to the issues of pandemic and education. According to a report by the World Bank (2020), "The closure of schools worldwide might potentially lead to a loss of at least US\$ 10 trillion lifetime income for the current school-age generation." The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) also mentioned that "School closures have a clear negative impact on children's health, education, development, income, family and economy at large." UNICEF announced that "As the days go by, children who are unable to access schools, increasingly fall behind, and the marginalized children are affected the most. Our (UNICEF) message to world leaders is clear: We must utilize all our effort to maintain schools operation or prioritize their reopening (if schools are still closed)."

The Infographic issued by Kemendikbud (2021) clearly illustrates how carefully the 2022 limited face-to-face learning policy is planned. The public, especially parents, should be able to distinguish the six considerations that differentiate the 2021 and the 2022 policies. These six considerations that were evaluated and readjusted by the government include:

1. Limited face-to-face learning arrangements. These considerations were adjusted in more detail through different criteria, regional conditions, and vaccination data. In addition, the frequency, PTM capacity, and duration of lesson hours have also been determined.
2. The temporary termination of PTM is limited and adjusted to anticipate the occurrence of the COVID-19 transmission cluster within an education unit.
3. Monitoring and evaluation of limited PTM have become more detailed and effective with the help of technology, such as PeduliLindungi (an application recommended by the government).
4. The vaccination policy for educators and education personnel has become stricter, including the imposition of sanctions on those who refuse to be vaccinated.
5. Education unit readiness checklist.
6. The reopening of canteens, shops, sports activities, and extracurricular activities in the school environment.

The six considerations mentioned above demonstrate the proactive role of the Indonesian government in addressing the learning setbacks encountered by students during the Covid-19 pandemic, and reassessing parents' doubts regarding limited face-to-face learning policy 2021.

The Importance of Parental Involvement in Children's Education

The Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact on education, especially on children's development. The development of children, whether it be academic or non-academic related, is influenced by numerous factors that range from the innermost to the outermost layer. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, for instance, can be applied to emphasize on the close relationship between the development of children dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic situations and their environment. Parents, as one of the stakeholders in education, play an important role in shaping the development process.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) in *The Ecology of Human Development* urges that the development of children is not only influenced by their own characteristics, but also by their families and their broader surrounding contexts. Social, political, biological, and economic circumstances also impact the children (Bronfenbrenner,

1986). The five environmental structures that influence children's development are: the *microsystem*, *mesosystem*, *exosystem*, *macrosystem*, and *chronosystem*. Briefly, the *microsystem* comprises of family, school, teachers, peers, and the neighborhood. For example, parents may influence the beliefs and behavior of their children and vice versa (Tekin, 2011). Therefore, the *microsystem* in this case is the most powerful influence among other systems (Paquette & Ryan, 2011).

Paquette & Ryan (2011) described that the *mesosystem* connects the *microsystem* structure in the process of a child's development. If the relationship between teachers and parents is active and positive, the children's development will also strengthen and improve. As for the *exosystem*, this layer may contribute a positive or negative impact on children's development through a wider social system such as parents' work schedules, which may affect the way parents pay attention to their children.

The fourth system is the *macrosystem* which includes attitudes and ideologies of the cultures such as laws, morals, values, customs, and worldviews (Tekin, 2011). For example, the function of parents is strongly influenced by the culture of the country in which they live, and as well as the type of family environment in which they grow up. Consequently, the roles and responsibilities of parents provide different dynamics like how one country views a breadwinner figure in the family is very much different from others due to circumstances. As for the *chronosystem*, this structure is based on changes and time. In this case, Covid-19 is an obvious example because the pandemic contributes to both positive and negative values that leave a long-term impact on the development and well-being of every individual, especially children (Ioana, 2021). Child labour, early marriage, and unequal access to education are the main factors affecting the vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups during the pandemic. Therefore, the discovery of these matters triggers a deeper attention and requires a serious action for the improvement of the 2022 policy.

From the above theoretical explanations, it is understandable that parents play an active role in either approving or disapproving the Indonesian government's policy to reopen schools in 2022. The Covid-19 pandemic had a tremendous impact on all parties involved in the education process. In essence, Bronfenbrenner's theory argues that children's education does not only depend on the existing interactions between children and teachers at school. However, the journey of children's education also involves a wider scope of systems such as the role of parents, communities, and even policymakers like the government (Tekin, 2011).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF (2020) has identified three main potential secondary impacts on youngsters and their caregivers in regards to child protection. These include, lack of sufficient parental care, psychological state and

psychosocial distress, and hyperbolic exposure to violence – together with sexual violence, physical and emotional abuse. Similar findings were also discovered and published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture in 2020.

Methodology

Participants

Twenty parents participated in this study, had children between the ages of 5 and 20 years old. There were eight fathers and twelve mothers aged 34 to 55. Nine participants lived in Tangerang, five in Jakarta, four in Bogor, two in Depok, and none from Bekasi district. The participants' occupation were civil servants, teachers who worked both in public and private schools, office workers, housewives, and entrepreneurs. Throughout 2021, some of the participants' children attended school virtually while others experienced limited face-to-face learning. All depended on their parents' (participants) decision. Although the number of participants was limited, efforts were made to ensure that the participants' children came from a range of educational levels, which included (from early childhood to higher education levels) in order to obtain a comprehensive response to the policies, announced by the Indonesian government. Any names used in this study are pseudonyms.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through colleagues' acquaintances who showed willingness to fill in the Google Forms distributed via WhatsApp. There were three closed-ended and one open-ended questions in this form. All focused on participants' knowledge about the revisions of government policies regarding the limited face-to-face learning policy. The form also focused on seeking participants' views in general about the latest policies that will be implemented in January 2022. Prior to the distribution of the Google Form to the participants, a trial run was conducted with three colleagues to identify any potential confusion or areas where revisions were needed. The comments gathered were to make the questions simpler for the convenience of the participants.

The first five participants who submitted their Google Forms were then asked if they were interested to do a semi-structured interview – an effort to create a desirable and safe environment for the participants so they would share their experiences without any hesitation. All participants announced their willingness to do a semi-structured interview. The participants of this research were two males and three females. The interviews were conducted individually via face-to-face,

video calls, and audio recording. Each session lasts 15-30 minutes per subject. All questions related to the research topic were pre-planned. The questions in Google Forms were also prepared in Bahasa Indonesia, since all participants did not speak English.

Data Collection

There were four questions in the Google Form. Three of these questions were closed-ended and were designed to determine whether or not the participants were aware of the adjusted updates made to the 2021-2022's policies regarding the limited face-to-face learning. One open-ended question aimed to determine participants' perspective on the idea of sending their children back to school.

Further semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain more opinions from the participants. One of the example questions was, "Why do you agree/disagree with the mandatory policy of limited face-to-face learning that will be implemented in 2022?"

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed manually and used a thematic analysis approach. The audio files of the interviews were transcribed and observed thoroughly. The transcriptions were analyzed by coding to identify significant patterns, which were later labeled into different categories and grouped as themes. Consensus on the themes was obtained after the evaluation and revision. The narratives were then written based on the emergent themes and supported with quotes from the participants. Participants received the summary to review for accuracy (member checking) to increase trustworthiness after the narratives were reviewed and edited. None of the participants identified discrepancies nor wished to add to their interview.

Findings

Based on the Google Form questionnaires, a total of 20 participants were surveyed, and 17 people (85%) agreed with the idea of implementing limited face-to-face learning from January 2022 onwards. For more details about the description of the results of the Google Form questionnaires, please refer to Table 1:

Table 1. Parents' Responses to Question: "Do you agree or disagree with the Indonesian Government's latest policy that obliges students to return to school for limited face-to-face learning starting in January 2022?"

NO.	Names (Pseudonyms)	Children's Education Levels	Responses
1	Ibu Ani	Junior High - 9th Grade	AGREE
2	Bpk. Hasan	Senior High - 11th Grade	AGREE
3	Ibu Sukma	University - 6th Semester	AGREE
4	Ibu Nisa	Elementary - 2nd Grade	AGREE
5	Bpk. Angga	Kindergarten Level B	AGREE
6	Bpk. Budi	Senior High - 11th Grade	DISAGREE
7	Ibu Tari	Kindergarten Level B	AGREE
8	Ibu Santi	University - 2nd Semester	DISAGREE
9	Bpk. Haryanto	Junior High - 8th Grade	AGREE
10	Bpk. Sanusi	Elementary - 6th Grade	AGREE
11	Bpk. Tono	Senior High - 10th Grade	DISAGREE
12	Ibu Laila	Junior High - 7th Grade	AGREE
13	Ibu Yati	Elementary - 4th Grade	AGREE
14	Ibu Zaenab	Junior High - 7th Grade	AGREE
15	Ibu Yana	Kindergarten Level A	AGREE
16	Ibu Risma	Junior High - 8th Grade	AGREE
17	Bpk. Suryo	Elementary - 4th Grade	AGREE
18	Bpk. Warno	University - 2nd Semester	AGREE
19	Ibu Nur	Elementary - 5th Grade	AGREE
20	Ibu Nasywa	Elementary - 3rd Grade	AGREE

*Bpk.: Mr., Ibu: Mrs.

The distribution of Google Forms to 20 parents is the initial step to find out what parents would think about government policies related to the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, which often changes. There were three closed-ended and one open-ended questions in the Google Form: (1) Do you know about the Government's policy on Limited Face-to-face Learning which will be carried out in January 2022 – based on four Ministerial Decree that was signed on 21 December 2021? (2) Do you agree with the latest policy? (3) Do you allow your son/daughter to return to school, starting in January 2022? (4) Why do you agree/disagree with this policy? From the table above, three parents did not agree with the policy that requires their children to return to school as of January 2022 because they were concerned about the COVID-19. Another 17 parents agreed with

the policy to send their children back to school because the two-year learning process at home was considered very ineffective.

Once the results from the Google Form were collected, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the first five participants who submitted their questionnaires and were willing to be interviewed. The interviewed participants were Ani, Hasan, Sukma, Nisa, and Angga. Interviews were conducted at different times, places, and methods which include (face-to-face and also via WhatsApp video calls). The interviews were completed in December 2021, before the Christmas and New Year holidays. Three themes were identified: (a) Health protocols, (b) Learning loss, and (c) Mental health/Well-being. All of the participants who fully supported the government's plan for 2022, mainly based their reasons on these three significant statements or emergent themes.

Health Protocols

This finding indicated parents' optimism regarding the 2022 limited face-to-face learning policy. These people believed that all parties involved in education would sincerely take health protocols seriously. Angga and Sukma's statements were chosen as the primary findings due to a significant level of educational gap between their children, which presented compelling understandings between a father of a kindergartener (a toddler), and a mother of a university student, (an adult). Angga, a father of a kindergartener, stated:

“All parents can imagine how difficult it is to convince their young children about the risk of Covid-19 – let alone tell them to follow the health protocols. However, kids are great! With the right approach, they may listen to their parents' requests to always wash their hands, keep their distance (avoid the crowd). At first, they were reluctant to wear masks because it was a hassle for them. However, with funny pictures on their masks, now they are willing, and got used to it. Likewise in the school environment, my children's teachers always remind their students about healthcare protocols. Everything will be fine if parents and schools can trust each other and work together.”

Sukma, a mother of a student in a public university, explained:

“At first, the Covid-19 pandemic scared my daughter. She was afraid to leave the house and go back to college because she had a friend who had tested positive for Covid-19, and the situation was quite alarming. However, the implementation of stricter health protocols, the equitable distribution of vaccinations, and the use of the PeduliLindungi application have enabled

both my children and me to better adapt to this situation. There is no need to be afraid as long as we apply the healthcare protocols and always take care of each other. Life must go on, even with the pandemic.”

The initial finding emphasized how parents viewed the health protocols as the fundamental measurement to prevent the COVID-19 infection. These parents closely monitored their children, despite their age differences and educational levels – and displayed their full awareness on the importance of healthcare protocols (even without the for reminders). Parents frequently reminded their children to apply the healthcare protocols such as to wear face masks, wash their hands regularly, and avoid crowds. Some of the parents also included vaccinations and PeduliLindungi as part of the healthcare protocol.”

Learning Loss

Learning loss emerged as the second theme from the data analysis, which was a major concern for the Ministry of Education and Culture. The researcher chose Ani and Hasan’s views in this context due to the urgency in regard to their children’s academic development. Ani, a mother of a 9th grade student in a private school, stated:

“My son is in his final year of middle school. Next year, he will enter senior high school. If schools are only wait for Covid-19 pandemic to end, what will happen to my child? I know the fact that schools will be active again next year in (2022). It's not that I take Corona (the Covid-19) lightly, I want my child to be always healthy, and as well as be able to study optimally at school. Studying at home doesn't seem to work. My son tends to be lazy when he studies alone – without his teachers and friends. He always complains that he can't fully comprehend what the teachers teach virtually. He is never absent but still feels like he misses a lot of his lessons during the school closure.”

Hasan, a father of an 11th grade student, explained:

“While studying at home, the school expects parents to help and guide their children. For me, the materials for senior high school are very difficult. I do not understand. My daughter often says that if she studies alone like this, she doesn't not comprehend any of the lessons. Even though the teachers always explain with patience via Zoom and answer their questions on

WhatsApp. She still finds it difficult to understand anything out of it. When will this end? I'm afraid that my daughter will turn out to be a useless person without education!"

Although 'learning loss' was not the exact term that parents used, the researcher concluded that this is an appropriate term that emerged in this study. Parents during the member-checking process agreed and confirmed that 'learning loss' was aligned with their views during the interview. Parents explicitly expressed their difficulty in understanding the materials, feeling confused – didn't know what to write or how to answer the questions during the interviews. This second finding impacted all parties involved in the education settings, including the government (Kemendikbud), educators, parents, and most importantly students. In this case, an urgent and holistic policy is needed to bridge the gap between ensuring the safety of students from Covid-19, and preventing the academic setbacks.

Mental Health / Well-Being

As important as the academic development of children, mental health was also a major concern for parents during this pandemic. The parents' concerns for their children's mental health made the majority of parents in this study fully support the government's limited face-to-face learning policy which will be implemented at the start of January 2022. Angga's view was re-elected in this context and Nisa was included as another parent of young children who expressed their concerns about their children's mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic. Angga expressed his thought on his daughter's well-being:

"It has been a very difficult time for my daughter, and for all of us as a family. As a parent, I obeyed the government's recommendation to 'stay at home' for the sake of everyone's safety. The children's world is naturally about playing and staying at home is not something ideal. No matter how creative and supportive the parents are at home, the children will eventually feel bored. I have noticed that she is not happy. She has lost her school routine and doesn't have enough space and time to play. At least, schools must be reopened because parents were still not able to take their children on an excursion (as a solution to boredom). At school, children can be happy again meeting their friends and teachers."

Nisa, a mother of an elementary student in a public school, stated:

"When schools are closed, children tend to feel bored and become easily irritated at home. They spend their whole time playing games on their hand

phones. Parents, including myself, have tried to provide enjoyable activities such as playing with water or doing craft works, but my son still shows no interest. I am sure that my son misses his friends, but the current situation is not in his favor. I am saddened to witness him in such a condition as I know my son is sociable and an easy-going person. Now, the pandemic requires him to stay at home without being able to play with his friends (he's an only child), it becomes even more challenging. Although he can play outside, our family is not close to our neighbors in the resident area, where we live. It looks like every parent forbids their children to go out due to Covid-19 pandemic. I'm willing to let my son go back to school next year. I wish to see him being happy and laughing again with his school friends. No more sad/ugly faces, he laughed!"

Similar to the previous context, the parents did not use the exact term 'mental health/well-being' in their statements, but the researcher inferred that it was a concern based on their responses and obtained consent from the parents to draw that conclusion. In this context, expressions like unhappiness, grumpiness, and boredom at home were the indications of poor mental health among children during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the situation got deteriorated by disclosure of schools. As a note, the pandemic was more under control, and 'stay at home' was no longer as strict as it was at the beginning of the pandemic when this study was conducted. However, the researcher discovered the fact that the areas where these participants lived were densely populated with neighbors or individuals who had been previously affected by the Covid-19. This situation affected these parents' perception of their children's social interactions outside the home, which created a dilemma as their children appeared unhappy. Parents trusted that their children would be safe going to school because of a more structured environment with healthcare protocols and strict supervision by teachers.

Discussion

According to Çayak and Karsantik (2020), parents are one of the stakeholders who can influence the quality and implementation of educational activities. The perspectives shared by parents in this qualitative study can serve as valuable inputs for the government in their decision-making process regarding face-to-face learning policy that will take place in January 2022. In respect to the role of parents, as one of the key stakeholders in education, Indonesia has a well-defined law regarding the national education system, stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003. This law generally regulates the rights and obligations of citizens, parents,

society, and the government in the education sector. In this study, the right of parents to take part in the government's plan to implement PTM in 2022, is specifically reflected in Article 7, Paragraph 1, and Article 8.

Article 7, Paragraph 1 confirms that "Parents have the right to participate in the educational process and obtain information concerning the progress of their children's education," while Article 8 states that "The community has the right to participate in the planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of educational programs" (Topan, 2019). According to these two Articles, it is evident that parents have the right to express their opinions and concerns in determining whether or not policies made by the Indonesian government should be implemented. In the context of this study, parents in Jabodetabek agree with the government's policy – both as students' parents in a small scope and as well as the active community members in a wider scope. They agreed that their children should return to school to resume their normal educational routine – while taking all possible preventive measures to suppress the spread of Covid-19.

The inclusion of Bronfenbrenner's theory in this study reinforces the argument that education cannot be viewed as a one-dimensional entity. There are multiple entities that influence the process of education. It goes beyond the interactions between teachers and students in the classroom. The government's plan to reopen schools in 2022 is supported by Bronfenbrenner's *Ecological Systems Theory*, which emphasizes the crucial role of the *microsystem* (parents) in shaping their children's development during the Covid-19 pandemic. This underscores the multi-layered nature of education, which is influenced not only by teachers and students in the classroom, but also by the wider *mesosystem*, *exosystem*, *macrosystem*, and *chronosystem*.

With the consent of the majority of parents to reopen schools following the necessary measurement to prevent the spread of Covid, does not merely make things easier. In this study, parents' consent to reopen schools was mutually balanced with the expectations that their children would remain safe and achieve more in their studies, and avoid stress caused as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic pressure. These expectations are achievable through the establishment of an effective teamwork among the government, schools, and parents.

The initial theme that emerged from the data analysis was related the healthcare protocols. These regulations were enforced in all countries, including Indonesia to reduce the spread of Covid after it was declared as a global pandemic. The findings in this study indicate that parents were optimistic that schools will be opened with strict healthcare protocols in place. Parents did not only expect schools to implement preventive measurements, but also expected their children to comply with healthcare protocols like wearing masks, washing their hands

regularly, avoiding crowds, and following the physical distancing policy. This finding demonstrates that with consistent and straightforward healthcare protocols, pandemic can be effectively managed by students of all ages. According to a study by Knibbs and Mason (2021), a significant proportion of primary and secondary students' parents were not concerned about their children's transition from home learning to face-to-face learning mode because the majority of them confirmed that their children found it easy to adjust to the new COVID-19 measures in school. It is reported that 64% of primary students' parents and 55% of secondary students' parents confirmed that their children had no trouble adapting to these measures at school if the healthcare protocols are followed accordingly, such as handwashing, social distancing, smaller class sizes, and changes in the timetables.

As for learning loss, this study shows that parents and the Indonesian government (Kemendikbud) had similar opinions and concerns regarding the learning loss. To prevent the spread of the Covid-19 in the number of cases, online learning was considered a practical solution during the pandemic. Children were indeed safer with their families at home but their academic performance rapidly declined. Both parents and children expressed their dissatisfaction with the prolonged online learning, as it was found to have a significant impact on children's cognitive development. Majority of parents expected to facilitate home-based learning for their children, but they faced several unexpected challenges in carrying out the teaching and learning process effectively due to factors such as (parents were busy with other work) and also suffered from insufficient knowledge about their children's learning materials. The second finding in this study aligns with the Covid-19 UK Research Report. The report indicated that (29%) of primary students' parents could not effectively support their children's learning due to insufficient time, and 30% of secondary students' parents due to subject knowledge. According to Knibbs and Mason's (2021) research, 41% of primary student's parents, and 33% of secondary students' parents felt that their children's schools or settings were not providing adequate support during online learning. Although these figures may represent a significant minority, they still demonstrate the limitations of virtual learning settings in ensuring effective education.

The last finding was related to children's mental health. In this study, parents shared their concerns about the impact of the stay-at-home recommendation and the transition to full online school routines on their children's well-being. The parents also faced restrictions on taking their children out due to government-imposed area limitations policy. Based on parents' responses, home confinement policy had a detrimental influence on their children's attitude and behavior, resulting in decreased cheerfulness, increased grumpiness, and boredom. Parents also stated that their children suffered from severe anxiety since

schools had not yet returned to a normal routine. They were concerned about whether or not to send their children back to school amid the current pandemic. Knibbs & Mason (2021) reported that (37%) of primary students' parents requested for more information on managing their children's emotions and behavior and (29%) of the secondary students' parents were more likely to request information on how to support their children in maintaining their friendships while complying to social distancing guidelines.

Limitations

Regarding the limitations, in this study a larger and more diverse number of participants needed to be included. The study's sample size was relatively small compared to the data collected by Kompas Media (2021), and it did not adequately represent the parents' perspectives on the 2022 limited face-to-face learning policy. Future studies may focus on a larger geographical area, with a larger number of parents from multiple schools with similar levels of education, such as parents of kindergarten or primary school students. This study also needed to use software for thematic analysis to be more objective in gaining significant statements or emergent themes from the transcriptions. Above all, this study has the potential to be updated and be more relevant, particularly after the emergence of the Omicron variant in Indonesia in January 2022, which could affect parents' perceptions on the government's policy in implementing the limited face-to-face learning this year.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic is not yet over. The findings in this study present crucial insights for authorities in different fields and levels to adjust and come up with more holistic approaches in achieving sustainability in all sectors – at both national and international levels. The education sector has been facing an ongoing dilemma – unsure to whether continue with online or return to face-to-face learning mode. As a result, the decision-making process took a longer time, leading all parties involved to a significant level of uncertainty. Amid the unprecedented events of the pandemic, there is a crucial need for strong collaboration among educational sectors and other stakeholders such as the government, schools, and parents to propose more effective strategies for children's learning process. This study's findings concluded that a majority of parents in Jabodetabek were supporting the government's decision to apply the limited face-to-face learning policy in 2022.

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