

STUDENT'S CHALLENGES IN ENGLISH ONLINE CLASS

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Abstract: Online learning has become increasingly common because it provides flexibility, accessibility, and opportunities for independent learning in universities. However, students may encounter technological, academic, social, and motivational difficulties that reduce the effectiveness of online classes. This study aims to identify the challenges experienced by university students in online classes and understand how these challenges influence their learning experiences. A qualitative approach was employed through interviews with 10 university students at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. Interview responses were analyzed by identifying common patterns and grouping similar responses into major themes. The findings reveal four challenges: unstable internet connections, limited interaction between students and lecturers, reduced learning motivation, and difficulty understanding learning materials. Unstable connectivity disrupted students' participation and caused them to miss parts of lessons. Limited interaction reduced opportunities to ask questions and participate actively. Students reported lower motivation because of distractions at home, including social media, family activities, and other responsibilities. In addition, insufficient lecturer explanations and reliance on digital materials made learning difficult. The study concludes that online learning challenges are interconnected and require technological and pedagogical support. Reliable internet access, interactive teaching strategies, clear explanations, and supportive learning environments are needed to improve students' online learning experiences.

Keywords: Online Learning, Student Challenges, Online Classes, Student Motivation, Internet Connectivity.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed the educational landscape, particularly in the implementation of online learning. In recent years, online classes have become increasingly common at various educational levels, especially with the growing integration of technology in education. This shift has enabled students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere, making education more flexible and accessible. Online learning also supports independent learning and digital literacy development among students. However, despite these advantages, online learning also presents various challenges that may affect the effectiveness of the learning process. These challenges have been widely discussed in recent educational studies (Rahayu & Wirza, 2020); (Hodges et al., 2020); (Allen & Seaman, 2017).

Online classes require both students and teachers to adapt to new methods of teaching and learning. Unlike traditional classroom environments, online learning relies heavily on digital platforms and stable internet connectivity. Many students face difficulties such as poor internet access, limited technological devices, and lack of familiarity with digital tools (Rahayu & Wirza, 2020). These issues can hinder students' ability to participate actively in online classes and complete learning tasks effectively. As a result, students may experience learning difficulties and decreased academic performance. Such conditions highlight the importance of technological readiness in online education (Bao, 2020).

Another significant challenge in online learning is the decrease in student engagement and interaction. In face-to-face learning, students can interact directly with teachers and peers, which helps them better understand the material. However, online learning environments often limit real-time interaction, reducing opportunities for discussion and collaboration. This can lead to decreased motivation and participation among students. In

addition, students may feel isolated due to the lack of social interaction. These issues can negatively affect their learning experiences (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

Furthermore, teachers also encounter various challenges when conducting online classes. They must adapt their teaching strategies to suit digital platforms and virtual environments. This includes preparing online materials, managing virtual classrooms, and maintaining student engagement. However, not all teachers are well-prepared for this transition, especially those with limited technological skills. Without proper training and institutional support, teaching effectiveness may decline. These challenges highlight the need for professional development in online teaching (König et al., 2020); (Trust & Whalen, 2020).

In addition, students' self-discipline plays an important role in the success of online learning. Studying from home exposes students to various distractions such as social media, family activities, and other responsibilities. These distractions can reduce students' concentration and focus during learning activities. Moreover, the absence of direct supervision may lead to procrastination and decreased motivation. As a result, students may struggle to manage their time effectively. These factors significantly influence students' learning outcomes in online environments (Serhan, 2020); (Technol et al., 2021).

Considering these challenges, it is important to explore the difficulties experienced by students in online learning environments English Education Department Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng. Understanding these challenges can provide valuable insights for improving the quality of online education. It can also help educators develop more effective teaching strategies and support systems for students. Furthermore, identifying these issues can contribute to better learning experiences and outcomes.

Several previous studies have examined the challenges faced by students in online learning environments. For instance, a study

conducted by (Barrot et al., 2021) found that students experienced various difficulties during online learning, particularly related to their learning environment, motivation, and access to resources. The study revealed that distractions at home and limited access to learning facilities significantly affected students' ability to focus and complete academic tasks. In addition, students also reported experiencing stress and reduced learning effectiveness due to these challenges. These findings indicate that online learning is influenced by multiple external and internal factors. Therefore, understanding students' learning conditions is important in improving online education systems (Dhawan, 2020). Similarly, research conducted by (Chiu & Kirsti, 2021) showed that students face challenges in adapting from traditional learning to online learning environments. The sudden transition to online learning requires both students and teachers to adjust their learning strategies and teaching methods. This adaptation process can be difficult, especially for those who are not familiar with digital learning systems. As a result, students may struggle to manage their learning effectively. This study suggests that proper preparation and support are essential for successful online learning. In addition, a study by (Farzana et al., 2023) emphasized that online learning challenges include technological issues, lack of engagement, and limited access to learning resources. The study also highlighted that many students experience difficulties in managing their learning independently. These challenges can affect students' academic performance and overall learning experience. Furthermore, (Yuzulia, 2021) found that students commonly face problems such as poor internet connection, low motivation, and distractions during online learning. The study also showed that students often feel stressed due to increased workload and lack of interaction with teachers. These challenges can reduce students' engagement and learning outcomes. These findings suggest that improving technological support and teaching strategies is necessary to enhance online learning effectiveness (Hassan, 2022).

Although many previous studies have explored the challenges of online learning, several gaps still exist in the current literature. Most studies tend to focus on general issues such as technological barriers, student motivation, and engagement in online learning environments. While these studies provide valuable insights, they often rely on large-scale surveys or quantitative data, which may not fully capture students' personal experiences and perspectives. In addition, previous research has frequently examined online learning challenges in a broad context without focusing on specific student experiences in particular learning environments. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by using a qualitative approach through interviews with university students. By focusing on students' direct experiences, this research provides a more detailed understanding of the challenges faced in online classes. In addition, this study highlights the most common issues experienced by students and how these challenges influence their learning process. It is expected that the findings of this study can contribute to improving the quality of online learning.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach to explore university students' experiences and challenges in online classes. The study focused on students' direct perspectives because these experiences can provide information about difficulties that may not be fully captured through quantitative measures. Data were collected through interviews with 10 participants. The participants were asked five interview questions addressing their experiences during online classes, including the challenges they encountered, the effects of internet connectivity, interaction with lecturers, factors influencing learning motivation, and difficulties in understanding learning materials. The interview responses constituted the primary data for the study.

The data were analyzed descriptively and thematically. First, the researchers reviewed the participants' responses to identify

recurring ideas and statements related to challenges in online learning. Second, responses with similar meanings were grouped together to determine the most common issues reported by the participants. Third, the grouped responses were interpreted to identify broader themes representing students' experiences. The analysis resulted in four major themes: unstable internet connection, limited interaction between students and lecturers, factors affecting learning motivation, and difficulty understanding learning materials. Selected participant statements were used to illustrate the themes and represent students' experiences directly.

The analysis also considered relationships among the identified challenges. For example, unstable internet connections could interrupt communication and access to explanations, while limited interaction could affect students' motivation and understanding. The findings were then interpreted in relation to the study's objective and discussed alongside relevant previous research on online learning challenges.

RESULTS

The results of this study are based on interviews conducted with 10 participants. The findings are presented based on the interview questions. The analysis focuses on the most common responses shared by the participants. These responses were grouped based on similarities in their answers. This approach helps in identifying the main challenges faced by students. The results provide a clear overview of students' experiences in online learning.

Challenges Faced During Online Classes

Most participants reported that the main challenges they face during online classes are unstable internet connections and difficulty in understanding the material. These issues were mentioned by almost all participants, indicating that they are common problems in online learning. Students often experience interruptions during online sessions due to poor connectivity, which affects their ability to follow the lesson. In addition, they

find it difficult to fully understand the material without direct explanation from lecturers. These combined challenges make the learning process less effective. As a result, students struggle to keep up with the course content.

For example, one participant (CP) stated, *"I usually face problems with internet connection and sometimes I cannot follow the class properly."* Similarly, another participant (MP) mentioned that understanding the material becomes more difficult in online settings. These responses show that students not only face technical problems but also academic difficulties at the same time. The combination of these challenges creates a more complex learning situation for students. Therefore, online learning requires better support to overcome these issues.

The findings demonstrate that students experience interconnected technical and academic challenges during online classes. Internet instability can disrupt access to learning, while limited direct interaction can make course materials more difficult to understand. Therefore, improving the effectiveness of online learning requires not only reliable internet access but also stronger instructional support and opportunities for direct lecturer–student interaction.

The Effect of Internet Connection on Learning

Internet connectivity plays a crucial role in students' online learning experiences. All participants acknowledged the importance of a stable internet connection for attending virtual classes, accessing learning materials, participating in discussions, and communicating with lecturers. However, the participants' responses indicate that unstable connectivity remains a significant barrier to effective online learning. Poor internet connections frequently cause interruptions that prevent students from participating continuously and following lessons as intended.

The effect of unstable connectivity is evident in the participants' descriptions of their learning experiences. One participant (APM) stated, *"I often get disconnected during the class,*

and it makes it hard to follow the lesson." This response illustrates that disconnection does not merely create a technical inconvenience but directly interferes with students' ability to follow instructional activities. When students are disconnected from an online class, they may miss explanations, discussions, instructions, or other important parts of the lesson.

Similarly, another participant (FD) stated, *"My internet connection sometimes interrupts the class, so I miss some parts."* This response further demonstrates the relationship between connectivity problems and incomplete access to instructional content. Missing parts of a lesson may subsequently affect students' understanding because they do not receive the complete information presented by the lecturer.

The findings suggest that unstable internet connectivity represents both a technical and pedagogical challenge. It interrupts students' participation and limits their access to learning content, potentially affecting their understanding and learning outcomes. Therefore, reliable internet access is an essential condition for supporting effective and continuous online learning.

Interaction between Students and Lecturers

The study found that interaction between students and lecturers is considerably more limited in online classes than in traditional face-to-face learning. Most participants reported that online learning reduces opportunities for direct communication, spontaneous discussion, and immediate clarification of questions. In face-to-face classrooms, students can communicate directly with lecturers, respond to explanations, and participate in discussions through verbal and non-verbal interaction. In contrast, online interaction is often influenced by technological limitations, time constraints, and the communication features available on the learning platform.

The participants' responses suggest that limited interaction

has consequences for their classroom participation. One participant (IRS) stated, *"The interaction is very limited, so I rarely ask questions."* This response indicates that reduced interaction may discourage students from actively seeking clarification when they encounter difficulties with the learning materials. The lack of opportunities for immediate communication can therefore create a distance between students and lecturers during the learning process.

Similarly, another participant (FD) stated, *"There is not much interaction, so I feel passive during the class."* This response highlights the relationship between limited lecturer–student interaction and students' level of engagement. When students have fewer opportunities to communicate, ask questions, or express their opinions, they may become less involved in classroom activities and increasingly assume a passive role.

The findings suggest that interaction is an important factor influencing students' engagement in online learning. Limited communication does not only affect students' willingness to participate but may also hinder their ability to clarify difficult concepts and construct understanding through discussion. Thus, online classes require more interactive strategies to facilitate meaningful lecturer–student communication and encourage active student participation.

Learning Motivation

Students' motivation during online learning is influenced considerably by the learning environment and the level of external control available to them. The majority of participants reported that studying from home creates conditions that can reduce their concentration and willingness to engage with learning activities. Unlike face-to-face classrooms, where students are physically situated in an academic environment and receive direct supervision from lecturers, online learning takes place in settings where students may encounter various competing activities and

distractions.

One participant (PMP) stated, *"I feel less motivated because I get distracted easily at home."* This response illustrates how the home environment can interfere with students' ability to maintain attention and engagement with online learning activities. Distractions may include social media, family activities, household responsibilities, or other activities that compete for students' attention. In addition, the reduced physical presence of lecturers may lessen students' sense of accountability and make it easier for them to disengage from learning tasks.

Similarly, participant (CP) mentioned that using a mobile phone during class often reduces her focus. This response further demonstrates how digital devices can function as both learning tools and sources of distraction. Although mobile phones and other devices are necessary for accessing online classes, they also provide immediate access to social media and other non-academic activities. The findings suggest that maintaining motivation in online learning is not determined solely by students' individual willingness to learn but is also shaped by their surrounding learning environment. A less structured environment may contribute to reduced concentration, engagement, and persistence. Therefore, effective online learning requires strategies that help students manage distractions, maintain attention, and remain actively engaged throughout the learning process.

Difficulty in Understanding Learning Material

The study found that understanding learning materials is a significant challenge experienced by most participants in online classes. Participants reported that difficulties in comprehension are largely associated with insufficient explanations from lecturers and limited opportunities for direct interaction. In some online classes, lecturers primarily provide slides or other learning materials without accompanying detailed explanations. Although

these materials may contain the essential content, students may have difficulty interpreting complex concepts without additional clarification and instructional guidance.

One participant (AN) stated, *"Sometimes the lecturer only gives slides without clear explanation."* This response suggests that simply providing instructional materials may not be sufficient to support students' understanding. Students may require explanations, examples, elaboration, and opportunities to discuss difficult concepts with lecturers. The absence of these forms of instructional support may require students to invest additional effort in interpreting the materials independently.

Similarly, participant (FD) stated, *"I cannot directly ask the lecturer when I don't understand."* This response highlights the connection between limited interaction and difficulties in understanding learning materials. When students encounter unfamiliar or difficult concepts, the inability to immediately ask questions may prevent them from resolving their confusion. Consequently, students may have to rely heavily on self-study, which can be particularly challenging when the learning materials are complex or insufficiently explained.

The findings demonstrate that students' difficulties in understanding online learning materials are not solely related to the content itself but also to the way instructional support is provided. Limited explanations and restricted lecturer-student interaction may contribute to confusion and frustration. Therefore, online teaching should incorporate clearer explanations, opportunities for questions and discussion, and more interactive instructional strategies to facilitate students' comprehension.

DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, the findings indicate that students experience various difficulties, including technical issues, lack of interaction, low motivation, and problems in understanding

learning materials. These results show that online learning is a complex process that involves multiple dimensions, not only technology but also psychological and environmental factors. One of the main challenges identified in this study is unstable internet connection. Students reported that poor connectivity often interrupts their participation during online classes. This condition prevents them from accessing learning materials effectively and following explanations from lecturers. Similar findings have been reported in previous research, which emphasizes that internet accessibility is a key factor in determining the success of online learning (Onyema, 2020); (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020); (Hassan, 2022).

In addition, internet connection significantly affects students' participation and engagement. When students experience network disruptions, they tend to miss important information, which affects their overall understanding. This situation reduces the effectiveness of the learning process and creates learning gaps among students. Previous studies also indicate that digital inequality plays a major role in students' learning experiences during online education (Wijayanti et al., 2022); (Rapanta et al., 2020).

Another important finding of this study is the limited interaction between students and lecturers. Online learning environments often reduce opportunities for real-time communication, making students less active in discussions. As a result, students feel less connected to the learning process. This finding is supported by previous research, which shows that interaction is essential for improving student engagement and satisfaction in online learning (Bernard et al., 2009); (Graham, 2019).

Furthermore, students' motivation is influenced by the learning environment. Many participants reported that studying from home exposes them to distractions, such as social media and family activities. These distractions reduce their focus and interest in learning. Previous studies also confirm that learning

environments play a crucial role in shaping students' motivation and engagement in online settings (Baber, 2020); (Rapanta et al., 2020); (Serhan, 2020).

Another challenge identified in this study is students' difficulty in understanding learning materials. This problem occurs because lecturers often provide limited explanations and rely heavily on digital materials. As a result, students need to learn independently, which is not always effective. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies, which indicate that online learning may reduce students' comprehension if not supported by effective instructional design (Mulenga & Marbán, 2020); (Wijayanti et al., 2022).

Moreover, the findings show that these challenges are interconnected. For example, poor internet connection can limit interaction, which in turn reduces motivation and affects understanding. This interconnected relationship suggests that online learning problems should be addressed holistically. Previous studies also highlight the importance of integrating technological, pedagogical, and social aspects in online education (Kebritchi & Lipschuetz, 2017); (Sun & Chen, 2016). The study confirms that online learning presents significant challenges for students. Therefore, it is important for educators to improve teaching strategies by making learning more interactive and engaging. Institutions should also provide adequate technological support. Previous research also emphasizes that improving online learning requires collaboration between educators, students, and institutions (Singh & Thurman, 2019); (Martin et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study has identified several major challenges faced by students in online classes. The findings show that unstable internet connection, limited interaction, low motivation, and difficulty in understanding learning materials are the most common issues experienced by students. These challenges

significantly affect students' participation and overall learning experience in online environments. The results also indicate that online learning effectiveness depends on both technological and instructional factors. Without stable internet access, students cannot fully engage in learning activities. In addition, the lack of interaction and clear explanation from lecturers makes it difficult for students to understand the material. These findings highlight the need for improvement in both infrastructure and teaching strategies. Therefore, educators need to develop more interactive and student-centered learning approaches. Using engaging learning media, encouraging active participation, and providing clear explanations can help improve students' learning experiences. Institutions should also provide better support systems, including access to technology and internet facilities.

Future research is recommended to explore more innovative methods in online learning, such as blended learning and interactive platforms. Further studies can also involve more participants to provide a broader understanding of students' experiences. By addressing these challenges, online learning can become more effective and beneficial for students.

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