

# READINESS AND INVOLVEMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS IN EAST JAVA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THROUGH ONLINE LEARNING

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## READINESS AND INVOLVEMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS IN EAST JAVA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THROUGH ONLINE LEARNING

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### ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of 2020, the world has been shaken by an incident, namely the spread of the COVID-19. The COVID-19 is very widely spread throughout the world, so the World Health Organization (WHO) conveyed this as a threat to the world on January 31, 2020 which was later announced to be a pandemic for the international community, namely on March 11, 2020. The Indonesian government finally took part in handling the spread of the COVID-19, among others by recording the area of virus spread and mapping it into several zones (Kemenkes, 2020). Because some areas in East Java were mostly in the red and orange zones, the areas with a high and dangerous spread of the COVID-19, the researcher was interested to know the readiness and involvement of early childhood teachers in East Java during the COVID-19 pandemic in handling online learning. This research was a qualitative descriptive study that employed data collection techniques through literature review and surveys. The survey results showed that the learning activities which had been planned in the lesson plan could be carried out well. However, there were students' parents who often did not submit their children's assignments on time, resulting in teachers having difficulties in assessing each student. Early childhood teachers' good ICT mastery could facilitate the implementation of online learning activities and they also supported the implementation of online learning from home imposed by the Government to suppress the spread of the COVID-19.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood teachers, readiness and involvement, online learning

### INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of 2020, the world has been shaken by an incident, namely the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The spread of the Covid-19 virus is very widespread throughout the world, so the World Health Organization (WHO) conveyed this as a threat to the world on January 31, 2020 which was later announced to be a pandemic for the international community, namely on March 11, 2020 (Shan L. Pana et al, 2020). According to World o meter (worldometers.info) in real time, 226,673,731 people in 221 countries have been infected with the Covid-19 virus. The Covid-19 virus is very deadly with an incubation period of 12-14 days (Lai et al., 2020). It is generally pathogenic to mammals and birds and can cause upper respiratory tract infections that are generally mild in humans. The Covid-19 virus can infect the human respiratory tract, causing severe respiratory diseases such as those in Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). Therefore, WHO confirms to limiting transmission, providing early treatment, communicate key information and minimize social and economic impacts (WHO, 2020).

The Indonesian government finally took part in handling the spread of the Covid-19 virus, including by recording the area where the virus spread and mapping it into several zones (Kemenkes, 2020). There are at least four distribution zones for the spread of the Covid-19 virus, including red and orange zones for areas with high virus spread and which are dangerous areas, while the yellow and green zones are areas with lighter and less

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dangerous virus spread. The division of zones for the spread of the Covid-19 virus apparently also had an impact on learning carried out in areas within the zone. Areas in the red and orange zones are required to conduct online learning from Early Childhood Education to Senior High School levels in accordance with the Minister of Education and Culture Circular Letter No. 4 of 2020 (Ifitah & Anawaty, 2020). The implementation of this online learning is in order to make social distancing.

The implementation of online learning is something that must be adapted by teachers from Early Childhood Education to Senior High School levels. This is a significant contrast since the formal education in Indonesia in pre-pandemic time has been using in-person learning. Teacher were teaching at school at least five days in a week and almost never work from home (Yarrow at al., 2020). Pajarianto et al. (2020) suggested that the online learning activity requires teachers' and parents' support. The government, on the other side, needs to provide supporting facilities. Unfortunately, due to teachers' and parents' unpreparedness, students do not receive appropriate support from their teachers and parents. The implementation of online learning is certainly very different from the implementation of face-to-face learning, where teachers can meet directly with students while being able to deliver material and be able to assess and evaluate their progress. However, in the implementation of online learning, this is not the case, students will take part in learning from home via an internet network that is connected to a computer/mobile device while receiving assistance from parents, while the teacher will provide material as well as assess and evaluate their students online (Aisyah, 2021). This situation has impacted in disruption on access to quality education because learning from home requires new skill for student, parent and teachers (Yarrow at al., 2020). This is a new challenge for early childhood teachers, where teachers have to adapt to information and communication technology and have to find new ways to be able to convey material to early childhood that basically they can only think concretely. Teachers need to design learning models based on information and communication technology (ICT) while also teaching this to parents. In addition to teaching parents how to use information and communication technology, teachers also teach parents to teach their children as teachers teach in the classroom. This is because, not all parents understand how to teach children as well as teachers in schools. There are several forms of online learning that have been implemented by teachers for example home visit, self-study at home, etc., most likely to be a completely new experience for many teachers and students in Indonesia. The teacher will also design various materials that can be done by children at home, namely through various games using the equipment available at home but still being able to develop all aspects of child development. To overcome this online learning, there are many things that need to be changed, for example the implementation of learning which was originally face-to-face directly to online (done by staring at the device monitor screen). The next change that must be made by the teacher is to change the learning material, which initially the child can carry out all the material by socializing with friends, but in online learning the teacher must make material where the child can only carry out his duties with his family at home, thus the teacher must change several things in learning planning (RPPH) which is usually done. Although online learning has vast possibilities to improve students' development, it still cannot replace the direct instruction model (Munastiwi & Puryono, 2021).

Therefore, teachers need to prepare various things in conducting online learning activities from home, including preparing daily lesson plans (RPPH), carrying out task collection, assessment and mastery in the field of information and communication technology (ICT) which is very much needed in carrying out online learning.

Therefore, researchers want to know the readiness and involvement of early childhood teachers in East Java during the COVID-19 pandemic through online learning.

## METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study that used data collection techniques through survey. The survey was conducted from May 26 to June 21, 2020 and participated by 256 early childhood teachers in several areas in East Java as the respondents of this study. Those teachers were selected with consideration that they were experiencing changes in the teaching and learning activities in the classroom due to the impact of the spread of the COVID-19. The questionnaire of the survey containing several close-ended questions with three options (strongly agree, agree, and disagree) was filled out by choosing the best possible answers based on the respondents' opinions. It was distributed to the respondents in the form of a google form through social media, namely WhatsApp. The content of the questionnaire consisted of questions asking teachers of early childhood education in handling online learning for early childhood students, implementing lesson plans (RPPH), assessing students' assignments, mastering information and communication technology (ICT) and their readiness and involvement in early childhood online learning. The data from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics. Furthermore, all data collected from both the literature review and survey results were analyzed for description.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Since the beginning of 2020, the international world has been hit by the spread of a virus named Coronavirus disease 19 or better known as COVID-19. This virus is so called because it has a rim (outside) that is shaped like a crown (Burrell et al., 2017). Finally, the condition of the world that is being hit by the spread of this virus has prompted the world health agency (WHO) to declare it a pandemic for the international community (Xie et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 virus which has spreaded throughout the world and has become a pandemic in this world has caused changes in every aspect of life, including education (Unesco, 2020). During the pandemic, the education sector that initially carried out face-to-face learning activities became learning that had to be done online (CDC, 2020). Research on teachers related to the use of technology or online learning in early childhood classroom learning during the pandemic has been carried out including by Munastiwi and Puryono (2021) with the title "unprepared management decreases education performance in kindergartens during the COVID-19 pandemic," and Golberstein, Wen, and Miller (2020) with the title "coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and mental health for children and adolescents." From the two studies previously conducted, it shows the role of teachers in learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Efforts to prevent COVID-19 in Indonesia had been carried out through the establishment of four distribution zones, where the areas with red and orange distribution zones had to conduct online teaching and learning activities from their respective homes (Handarini, 2020). However, online learning still had to be able to develop children's skills (Lim, 2012), where children's skills and learning experiences could be useful for their lives later (Donoghue, 2017). Because most areas in East Java were in the red and orange zones, the researchers wanted to know the readiness and involvement of early childhood teachers in East Java during the COVID-19

pandemic in handling online home learning. The research was participated by as many as two hundred and fifty-six early childhood teachers spreaded across several areas in East Java as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents' Areas of Origin**

No	Respondents' City of Origin	Quantity	Percentage (%)
1	Surabaya	114	45 %
2	Sidoarjo	31	12 %
3	Gresik	38	15 %
4	Probolinggo	11	4 %
5	Nganjuk	1	0 %
6	Kediri	4	2 %
7	Batu	3	1 %
8	Tuban	21	8 %
9	Malang	1	0 %
10	Bangkalan	2	1 %
11	Sampang	2	1 %
12	Rembang	2	1 %
13	Pasuruan	9	4 %
14	Lamongan	1	0 %
15	Jombang	7	3 %
16	Tulungagung	3	1 %
17	Sumenep	1	0 %
18	Situbondo	2	1 %
19	Mojokerto	3	1 %
Total of Respondents		256	100 %

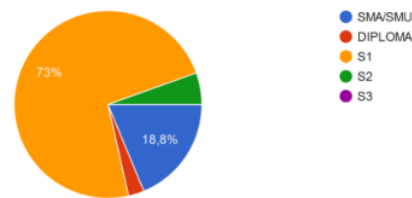
The respondents in this study also have had sufficient years of teaching. Seventy four percent of them have taught more than 5 (five) years as shown in Table 2. By having a long teaching experience, these teachers are expected to have sufficient skills in teaching early childhood.

**Table 2. Respondent's Teaching Experience**

No	Teaching Experience (year)	Quantity	Percentage (%)
1	1-5	68	27 %
2	6-10	69	27 %
3	11-15	72	28 %
4	16-20	26	10 %
5	21-25	11	4 %
6	26-30	2	1 %
7	31-35	4	2 %
8	36-40	4	2 %
Total of Respondents		256	100 %

In addition, Figure 1 shows that most of the respondents have a bachelor's degree (73%), senior high school certificates (18.8%) and the rest have a Diploma and Master's degree. The fact that most teachers have an undergraduate educational background met the expectation of the government as stated in the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014 where an early childhood educator must have a bachelor's degree.

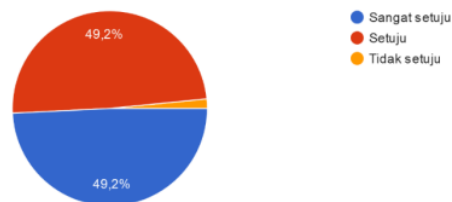
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**Figure 1. Educational Level of Respondents**

Thus the above data can be used as a reference to support the readiness of teachers in East Java in facing the changes of learning activities carried out during the pandemic. In carrying out online learning during the pandemic, there were several things that must be prepared by early childhood teachers, including the existence of a means of communication with parents/guardians of students as well as a forum for providing learning materials. In this study, 49.2% of early childhood teachers, as shown in Figure 2, stated that they strongly agreed to have used social media including using the WhatsApp application as a means of communication with parents/guardians of students as well as a forum for delivering learning materials; 49, 2% of them agreed, while the rest said they did not agree.

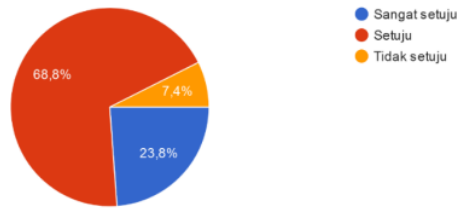
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**Figure 2. The Use of Social Media as a Means of Communication as well as a Place for Delivery of Learning Materials**

In addition to communication facilities, another thing that needs to be prepared during online learning by early childhood teachers is the daily lesson plan (RPPH). The making of this lesson plan is an obligation that must be prepared by a teacher before carrying out teaching and learning activities in class. Figure 3 shows that 23.8% of early childhood teachers stated that they strongly agreed and 68.8% agreed to continue to make lesson plans and all learning activities listed in the lesson plans could be carried out well; while only a small percent (7.4%) of them chose to disagree.

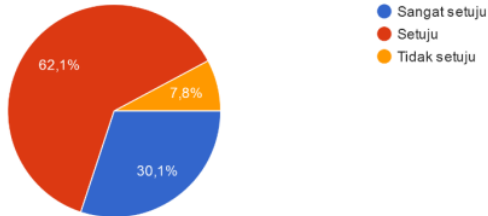
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**Figure 3. Making Lesson Plans and the Level of Achievement of Activities**

During online learning, early childhood teachers found themselves increasingly challenged to develop learning through a variety of different activities every day, so that all aspects of child development could develop optimally in an integrative holistic manner.

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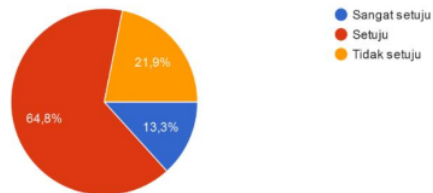


**Figure 4. Learning Development Innovation**

Figure 4 shows that 30.1% of the teachers strongly agreed that they were increasingly challenged to develop learning through a variety of different activities every day and 62.1% agreed; while 7.8% disagreed.

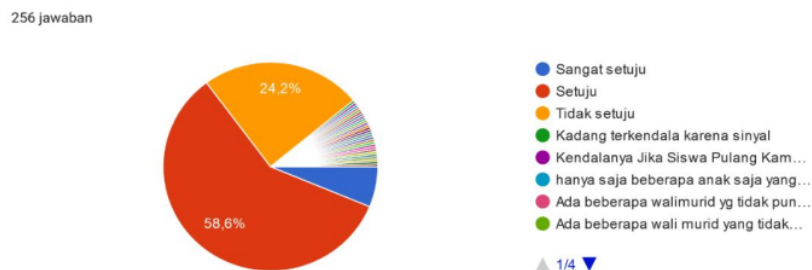
In learning online conducted from home, there were several obstacles that were faced by early childhood teachers, including the collection of tasks carried out by parents/guardians of students. Among the teachers, 13.3% stated strongly agreed that parents/guardians submitted their children's assignments on time and 64.8% agreed, while 21.9% disagreed that parents/guardians submitted their students' assignments on time as shown by Figure 5.

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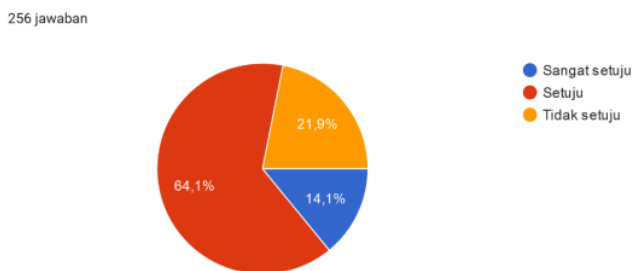
**Figure 5. Punctuality of the Submission of Students' Assignments**

When asked whether the unpunctuality in submitting assignments by parents/guardians could be an obstacle for the teachers in doing assessments for each student, 58.6% of them agreed, while 24.2% did not agree (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. Constraints in the Assessment of Students**

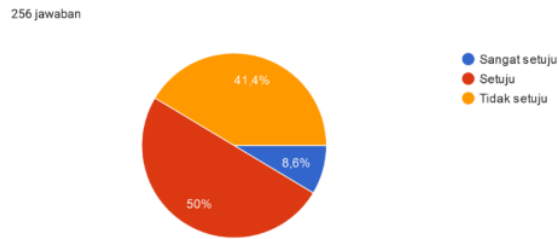
In dealing with changes in implementing learning activities during the pandemic, early childhood teachers should be ready and have a good skill in information and communication technology (ICT) to support online learning. When asked whether they were ready and had a good skill in ICT prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 64.1% of them chose “agree”, 14.1% “strongly agree”, while 21.9% chose “do not agree”.



**Figure 7. Readiness of ICT Mastery by Early Childhood Teachers**

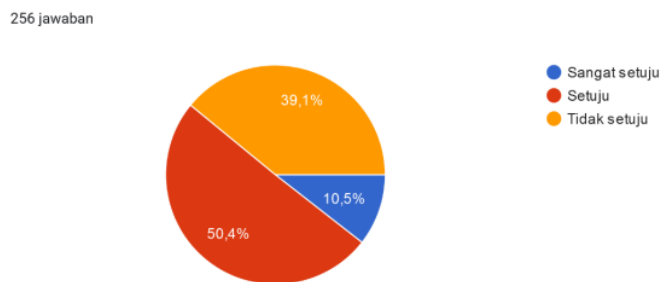
The COVID-19 pandemic has lasted for almost 2 years, where early childhood teachers have been able to feel and compare between the implementation of face-to-face learning and online learning from home. Based on the data taken, it shows that 50% of the teachers agreed that online learning could facilitate the delivery of learning activities to students with the support of good ICT mastery; 8.6% strongly agreed, while 41.4% disagreed because they did not have a good mastery of ICT so that they thought that online learning could not facilitate the delivery of learning activities to students. This is shown in Figure 8.





**Figure 8. Teachers' Perceptions on the Ability of Online Learning in Facilitating the Delivery of Learning Activities to Students**

In this study, early childhood teachers also expressed their willingness to support the Government's efforts in implementing online learning from home for early childhood; 10.5% of the respondents chose "strongly agree", 50.4% "agree", while 39.1% stated that they disagreed/not willing to support the implementation of online learning from home. This is shown in Figure 9.



**Figure 9. Willingness of Early Childhood Teachers to Support the Government's Efforts to Implement Online Learning**

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on all aspects of life, including education. In Indonesia, the learning system that was all before the pandemic was done face-to-face but during the pandemic it was done online. This is done in order to establish social distancing. Because the education system is carried out online from home, collaboration between teachers, students and parents is needed. This collaboration is needed because early childhood education really affects the future of children, therefore proper planning is needed in the implementation of the online learning system.

In order to support the online learning system carried out from their respective homes, various computer devices are needed. Therefore, teachers, students and parents need to have skills in operating these various devices. However, there are still many parents who have not mastered the skills to operate various computer devices to support online learning. In addition to teaching parents how to use information and communication technology, teachers also teach parents to teach their children as teachers teach in the classroom. This is because, not all parents understand how to teach children as well as teachers in schools. There are several forms of online learning that

have been implemented by teachers for example home visit, self-study at home, etc., most likely to be a completely new experience for many teachers and students in Indonesia.

Based on the data that has been taken, it shows that early childhood teachers have used social media in this case the WhatsApp application as a means of communication with parents/guardians of students as well as a forum for delivering material to students. In addition, in online learning from home, the teachers also continue to plan activities for students in a lesson plan where the survey results state that the activities planned in the learning plan can be carried out properly. In addition, online learning from home can inspire teachers to develop learning for the better. The teachers in general aspire the needs for advance digital skills such as making videos to help with online learning and on how to use virtual classroom. This is an indication of teachers have high interest to expand their teaching model, learning new methods, and increasing the effectiveness in doing online learning. The various preparations that have been made by early childhood teachers turned out to be experiencing obstacles, because parents/guardians of students often did not collect student assignments on time. This results in the teacher having difficulty in assessing each of the existing students. On the other hand, the teachers recognized that there are technological challenges example poor internet coverage and electricity, expensive communication costs, and low IT literacy level. Therefore, the use of offline methods was more preferred, for example developing worksheets for the students, giving assignments, and requesting parents to come to meet with the teacher once a week. However, this becomes a burden to the teachers as the cost of transportation is expensive.

4 In this study, the respondents were a group of early childhood teachers who were of productive age and were able to adapt to the development of information and communication technology (ICT). This of course greatly affects the readiness of teachers to support the implementation of online learning from home so that it has a positive impact in an effort to inhibit the rate of transmission of the Covid-19 virus, especially for early childhood. From the data that has been collected, teachers already have readiness in mastering ICT before the pandemic. Good ICT mastery can facilitate the implementation of online learning activities and early childhood teachers also support the implementation of online learning from home imposed by the Government to suppress the spread of the Covid-19.

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