

## **Online Learning and Distortion of Character Education in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to describe the distortion of the implementation of student character education in online learning in the Covid-19 Pandemic era. The research was conducted in Majene Regency, West Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. Methodologically, this study is based on a mixed-methods approach, where data was collected through 4,380 respondents. Respondents were selected to represent Elementary Schools, Junior High Schools, Senior High Schools, and Vocational High Schools in Majene Regency. Apart from respondents, data was also collected through the interview process and documentation study. The results showed that as many as 292 schools spread across 8 districts with a total of 44,949 students actively implementing online learning. Applications that are commonly used during online learning are WhatsApp, Ruang Guru, Zoom Meeting, and Google Classroom. The implementation of online distance education has distorted character education in students, including distortions in religious, nationalist, independence, mutual-cooperation, and distortions in integrity characters. Therefore, to reduce the distortion of character education through online learning, blended learning should be carried out, namely combining online and offline learning processes while still paying attention to health protocols.

### **Keywords**

Character Education, Distortion, Information Technology, Online Learning.

## **Introduction**

Until now, the Covid-19 Pandemic is still a global problem. This virus was first identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) at the end of 2019. From various news in the media and research results, it is known that this virus emerged from the city of Wuhan, China and has plagued various countries (Liu, et al., 2020). Because of its rapid spread, WHO has officially designated the Covid-19 pandemic as an international public health emergency. This official WHO statement is a warning to all governments in all countries to increase vigilance in anticipating this pandemic because the transmission is very fast (Yin and Zeng, 2020). Based on epidemiological data, it is known that 66% of patients have a relationship with a seafood market or live market in Wuhan, China (Huang, et al., 2020).

Medically, the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) centered in Wuhan, China triggered an epidemic of acute respiratory syndrome in humans (Zhou, 2020). Within three months, the virus had spread to more than 118,000 cases and caused 4,291 deaths in 114 countries. To slow the spread of this virus, a global public health campaign is being carried out to increase awareness by washing hands, reducing facial touch, wearing masks in public places and maintaining physical distance (Bavel, et al., 2020). As an illustration, patients infected with Covid-19 generally have fever symptoms, however, some only feel chills and respiratory pain with a mild dry cough, fatigue, difficulty breathing, and diarrhea. Some of the mild symptoms include flu, phlegm, and gradual difficulty in breathing (Equatora et al., 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic is a serious concern because it is not just a health problem, but has had a wide impact in various aspects of life, including in the socio-economic aspects (Obi, et al., 2020), and even led to cybercrime (Kashif, et al., 2020). This concern causes public panic, especially when in a crowd (Clarke, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic caused a massive global crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic affects almost all aspects of life, including education. In a pandemic condition, the role and position of the educational aspect are very crucial.

In response to this, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China supports education and teaching based on information technology and increases the capacity of platform services to support online teaching. Online classrooms have become a necessary way to maintain normal teaching order (Chen, et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic forces schools and education to be involved in the transformation of the learning process (Livari, et al., 2020). Online learning has become a policy imposed by countries affected

by the coronavirus, including education in Indonesia. The implementation of distance education during the Covid-19 pandemic era caused various problems. Strengthening student character development is an important thing that is ignored in online implementation. In practice, online learning in Mamuju Regency has distorted character education.

The problems that have occurred lately are that character values have experienced a decadence (Abdi, 2018; Nurhisam, 2018) and the development of new behaviors that now tend to be widespread, namely: (1) intolerant behavior between religious adherents; (2) deteriorating use of language and words; (3) strong peer-group influence in acts of violence; (4) increased use of drugs and alcohol; (5) decreased integrity; (6) there is less respect for older people; (7) dishonesty has become more entrenched; and (8) Sowing hatred among others. This shows that the positive characters that students should have are increasingly difficult to find.

Therefore, the quality of character education must be improved. Education with dignified and good quality starts from the formation of the noble character of students. A student with character means a student with a personality, behavior, character, or character. Personality is a characteristic or characteristic or characteristic of a person that comes from the influence of the family or received from the social environment. However, strengthening the character education of students was neglected in online learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic (Bokayev, et al., 2021).

Character education is important to become a pillar of education in Indonesia both formally, non-formal and informal. Factors that influence children's character development include parenting styles and students' genetic personalities. Parents in the family are obliged to build the character of their children from childhood, even from the womb. Thus, the cooperation of teachers and parents is the key to the success of online learning. Without the cooperation between parents and teachers, the expected educational process will not go well. On this basis, this study aims to describe the distortion of the implementation of student character education in online education during the Covid-19 Pandemic era in Majene Regency, West Sulawesi Province.

## **Methods**

Methodologically, the approach used in research is the mixed methods approach (Cresswell, 2014). Through this approach, it provides a clearer and deeper description of the various meanings behind the facts, as well as an explanation in a macro context. Thus,

online learning and the distortion of student character values during the Covid-19 pandemic era in Majene Regency can be presented comprehensively. The data needed in this study are divided into two categories, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with informants. The questionnaire for respondents was divided into four targets, namely a questionnaire for parents or a representative for 2,865 elementary schools, 930 junior high schools, 330 high schools, and 255 vocational schools. So that the total number of respondents is 4,380. Informants are used to reinforcing the selected questionnaire results according to data needs. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from the Education Office, Village Offices, and District Offices. After all the data is collected, then the data classification is carried out, the data presentation is in the form of interview quotes and the presentation in the form of tables. The final step is to interpret and draw conclusions.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Implementation of Online Learning in Majene Regency**

The Large-Scale Social Restriction Policy in Majene Regency requires carrying out work and learning activities online using the internet. The learning process that is usually carried out in schools face-to-face with teachers and friends cannot be carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic. Students are required to study from home. Therefore, teachers are also required to prepare learning tools that allow students to learn from home. This condition makes the teacher have to change the strategy of the teaching and learning process (Al Lily, et al., 2020; Azhari & Fajri, 2021). The use of appropriate teaching methods, as well as teacher behavior and attitudes in managing the teaching and learning process, is very much needed in learning during the home learning program. All of this was done to provide access to learning that was not limited to space and time for students during the Covid-19 emergency period.

Distance learning as a model of distance education is not a new educational model. Initially starting with written courses, it later evolved into formal higher education in the form of an Open University (Marini & Milawati, 2020). Distance learning provides the interactivity of the learning process. This learning method is built using technology that allows student-teacher interactions, even though they occur in different physical environments and timelines (Gardanova, et al., 2020). Based on data from the Majene Regency Education Office, 292 schools held online learning ranging from Elementary School to Senior High School and Vocational High School. This data is spread across 8

districts (Table 1) with a total of 44,949 students (Table 2) who actively carry out distance learning (e-learning).

**Table 1 The Number of Schools that Provide E-Learning in Majene Regency in 2021**

No.	Subdistrict	Primary school	Junior high school	Senior High School	Vocational high School
1	Pamboang	30	11	2	1
2	Ulumanda	20	7	1	2
3	Tammerodo Sendana	15	5	1	1
4	Tubo Sendana	10	3	1	1
5	Banggae	35	6	2	2
6	Sendana	27	11	4	4
7	Malunda	22	7	2	3
8	Banggae Timur	32	12	9	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>191</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>

**Table 2 Number of Students Participating in E-learning in Majene Regency in 2021**

Level of Education	Total students
Primary School	22,889
Junior High School	11,299
Senior High School	5,397
Vocational High School	5,364
<b>Total</b>	<b>44,949</b>

The online learning process at the elementary school level requires assistance from parents. This is an effort so that the learning process can run by the learning objectives that have been previously set. The success of the learning process is also influenced by people who accompany students when learning takes place. Based on the results of the study, it is known that assistance in the distance learning process in Majene Regency has been carried out mostly by parents, then assistance is also carried out by relatives, other families, neighbors, and private teachers. Mentoring is generally carried out by parents, where the percentage of parental assistance at the Primary School level is (56.80%), Junior High School (42.90%), Senior High School (36.67%). Whereas at the Vocational High School, mentoring was mostly carried out by private teachers (35.69%). For more details, see table 3 below.

**Table 3 Student Companions during the Implementation of E-Learning in Majene Regency**

Level of Education	The E-Learning Companion (%)			
	Parents	Siblings	Other Families	Private Teacher
Primary School	56.79	14.90	11.34	16.96
Junior High School	42.90	11.08	17.10	28.92
Senior High School	36.67	8.18	20.91	34.24
Vocational High School	33.73	6.67	23.92	35.69

There are many ways to carry out distance learning, and one of the ways online learning is carried out in Majene Regency is through Video Streaming communication. The learning process takes place virtually through internet technology facilities using video teleconference applications or platforms, including; Google Meet, Microsoft Team, Cisco Webex, Skype, and Zoom. Various uses of this technology are very much needed and become a vital platform in the online learning process, not only during the Covid-19 Pandemic but also needed in the future to establish wider communication without borders. Apart from these applications, some teachers also use supporting applications in the learning process, for example, WhatsApp, Google Forms, Google Classroom, Google Drive, Youtube, WhatsApp Groups, Tuweb, Web Blogs, Edmodo, and others.

Using these various instruments takes teacher creativity in making online learning innovations. As an effort to implement distance learning, the government has also taken a role in providing online learning tools during the Covid-19 pandemic, namely by providing 12 applications that can be accessed by students, namely (1) *Rumah Belajar*; (2) *Meja Kita*; (3) *Icando*; (4) *IndonesiAx*; (5) *Google for Education*; (6) *Kelas Pintar*; (7) *Microsoft Office 365*; (8) *Quipper School*; (9) *Ruang Guru*; (10) *Sekolahmu*; (11) *Zenius*; and (12) *Cisco Webex* (Handarini & Wulandari, 2020).

The challenge of the online learning process is the need for the expertise of teachers and students in the use of existing information technology. Based on the research results, it is known that various online media are the most popular in use. Distance learning applications that are generally used by teachers and students in Majene Regency are very diverse, according to the agreement between parents, students, teachers, and local governments. From the respondents' statements, it appears that the applications that are often used are WhatsApp, *Ruang Guru*, Zoom Meeting, and Google Classroom, and other applications. For more details, see Table 4 below.

**Table 4 Usage of E-Learning Applications Per Week of Elementary School Students**

<b>E-Learning Application</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
WhatsApps	64.77
Official Application	20.07
Zoom	10.11
Other Applications	5.05

Based on the table above, it shows that the most widely used application in the distance learning process is WhatsApp (64.77%), then applications from the government (20.07%), Zoom Meeting (10.11%), and the rest are other applications. such as web blogs and others (5.05%). This quantitative data is also strengthened by qualitative data obtained through

interviews with several informants. Among them were the parents of students in Banggae District “our children who are in grade 5 of Elementary School, use WhatsApp Groups to get learning materials, and sometimes use Zoom Meetings when there is something their teacher wants to explain”. The same thing was said by parents of students in Pamboang District who said that “Almost every day, they receive material from teachers through WhatsApp Group, it is in the form of explanation videos, there are modules, there are power points and information related to learning materials”. The use of WhatsApp as an online learning medium is based on the consideration that the media is more practical, making it easy for children and parents to use.

### **Distortion of Character Education in Online Learning**

Character education is education related to the intrinsic quality of the whole individual, both personality, character, temperament, talent, human interaction with God, human interaction with others, and human interaction with the surrounding environment (Peterson, 2020; Metcalfe & Moulin-Stožek, 2020). Character is shaped and conditioned by teachers at school or by parents at home and in the community. Teachers and parents must provide or condition a good place to build character values that characterize and have good moral behavior. Because of the importance of character education, the government issued Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning the strengthening of Character Education. The purpose of this Presidential Regulation is to form a cultured national personality by strengthening the character values extracted from the nation’s own culture.

Strengthening Character Education is an effort by the government under the education unit to strengthen the character of students through the harmonization of heart, mind, and sports, involving three educational units, namely schools, families, and communities. Then followed up with Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 20 of 2018 concerning Strengthening Character Education. Strengthening character education, namely implementing character education based on the principles of Pancasila (Benawa, et al., 2019) by instilling a religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hard-working, creative, independent, democratic attitude, curiosity, national spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, communicative, peace-loving, likes to read, cares about the environment, cares socially, and is responsible. All of these attitudes are the elaboration of 5 core values, namely religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual- cooperation, and integrity.

Before the Covid-19 Pandemic, strengthening character education in schools had been carried out well, namely by internalizing character values in every learning activity.



However, in the current Covid-19 Pandemic era, character education is experiencing a distortion. Why not, character education which should be internalized through the direct learning process in schools, families, and communities, must be limited and diverted through online delivery. Internalization of values and norms in character education through online learning shows a problem. This is due to many factors, including limited internet network access, limited creativity of teachers and students in assessing values and norms through an online system. In addition, because of the leap in the learning tradition that takes place very quickly, from learning patterns in class to virtual learning patterns. Based on the results of the research conducted, it was found 5 distortions of character education in online learning in Majene Regency, Indonesia.

### **1. Distortion of Religious Value**

The value of religious character has three main indicators, namely the individual's relationship with God, the individual with others, and the individual with the universe. In building religious character or inculcating religious values in students during online learning the most worrying thing is the distortion in relationships with others (Eko & Putranto, 2019). This value is hardly a concern in the teaching and learning process while using the e-learning application.

Based on the results of the study, it was found that the aspect of mutual care experienced the most distortion, namely below 15% for all levels of education. The threat of distortion of mutual care is getting more serious at the primary school level, which only reaches 7.99%. This can lead to intolerance, individualism, and a lack of respect for others. Then the character for the value of concern for the environment also includes worrying which is under 25% on average. This can lead to ignorance of environmental sustainability and the emergence of destructive actions for the surrounding environment. For more details, see table 5 below.

**Table 5 Assessment of Character Education from Religious Aspects**

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Elements of Religious Character (%)</b>		
	<b>Worship</b>	<b>Care for others</b>	<b>Environmental Care</b>
Primary school	71.59	7.99	20.42
Junior high school	64.19	13.01	22.80
Senior High School	67.27	8.79	23.94
Vocational high School	68.63	14.51	16.86



## **2. Distortion of Nationalist Value**

The character of nationalism basically must be embedded in the minds of students, because these students will become leaders of the nation in the future. Nationalist character values are a way of thinking, behaving, and acting that shows loyalty, concern, and high respect for language, the physical, social, cultural, economic, and political environment. The actualization of nationalist values is to place the interests of the nation and the state above the interests of themselves and their groups.

Based on the results of research using 5 components in building the character of nationalism. First, the love of the country, which includes being willing to sacrifice, protecting the environment, obeying the law, and discipline. Second, respect for cultural diversity, including excellence and respect for cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. Third, the appreciation of the nation's culture, including the appreciation of the nation's culture and maintaining the nation's cultural wealth. Fourth, obeying the law, including being willing to sacrifice, and discipline. Fifth, superiority and achievement, including maintaining the nation's cultural wealth and excellence and achievement.

The threat of distorting the value of nationalism in students during online learning in the Covid-19 pandemic era can be measured through reduced nationalist behavior. In the love of the homeland component, it appears that students seldom regularly attend the flag ceremony, be it the commemoration of Heroes' Day, the proclamation of independence, or other national celebrations. The percentage of its activity doesn't even reach 15%. This is a threat to the lowering of the national character in students. Celebrating national holidays aims to commemorate and honor what happened on big days. This celebration is a means of planting the values of nationalism that love the country. For more details regarding the description of activeness in the celebration of national ceremonies at each level of education, see table 6 below.

**Table 6 Student Activities Following National Celebrations**

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Activeness in National Celebrations (%)</b>	
	<b>Not Active</b>	<b>Active</b>
Primary School	96.96	3.04
Junior High School	90.86	9.14
Senior High School	88.18	11.82
Vocational High School	85.88	14.12

Apart from that, the character of nationalism also occurs in the form of "enforcing" students' abilities from an economic aspect. Online learning forces students to own

smartphones or laptops whose prices are not yet affordable for their families' abilities. In addition, the use of quotas and internet networks is not evenly distributed, which some students have to search for areas far from their homes to allow the online learning process. This distortion of the character of nationalism is a serious threat to multicultural character education which emphasizes the process of cultivating a way of life that is mutually respectful, sincere, and tolerant of the diversity of living cultures in the midst of a society with a high level of plurality.

Multicultural education is a discourse that crosses borders because it is related to issues of social justice, democracy, and human rights. Multicultural education is education that takes seriously the background of the aspects of ethnic, ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural diversity. Therefore, the development of the character of multicultural values is education regarding cultural diversity which aims to instill a tolerant attitude towards existing differences. Multicultural character education is to instill the values of pluralism, humanism, and democracy directly by the community from an early age in schools which aims to invite students to accept the differences that exist as a natural process.

### **3. Distortion of Independence Character**

Independence has characteristics, namely: (1) self-confidence, (2) able to work alone, (3) mastering skills and skills that are appropriate to their work, (4) respecting time, and (5) being responsible. The value of the character of independence must be developed by the school to form an independent young generation. Independent students are expected to be able to (1) be more confident in acting, (2) consider opinions and advice from others, (3) can make decisions, and (4) not easily influenced by others.

The distortion of the character of the value of student independence during online learning is the development of attitudes and behavior of students who pocket themselves on their parents or companions during online learning. This is triggered in the activities of the online learning process, where the teacher always gives a lot of assignments, not even one teacher, but all subject teachers. This condition causes the task to accumulate within a day and the child eventually becomes exhausted and eventually bored. This causes students not to want to do assignments and the work done by their parents, older siblings, or other people, of course, it will have an impact, namely, students who experience dependence on other people's help, are less independent in completing assignments, and tend to be children who lack confidence. For more details regarding the distortion of student independence, it can be seen in Table 7 below.

**Table 7 Homework Assistance for Students during Online Learning**

Level of Education	Student Homework (%)	
	Done students without help	with the help of others
Primary School	54.03	45.97
Junior High School	62.90	37.10
Senior High School	71.21	28.79
Vocational High School	69.41	30.59

The distortion of the character of student independence will get worse when online learning puts heavy pressure on it and has the potential to become stronger when there is no guidance or supervision when studying at their respective homes. They lose their “confidant partner” between peers. Moreover, the home learning mechanism has also changed the schedule of activities of parents who have to participate in supervising their children in participating in the learning program at home. It is not enough only to prepare children to wake up early and prepare for school lessons, but also to participate in the guiding process in following online learning procedures in guiding children to follow their lessons. Independent character values are attitudes and behaviors that do not depend on others and use all your energy, thoughts, and time to realize hopes, dreams, and ideals. The elements of independence value, among others, are work ethic or hard work, tough and resilient, fighting power, professionalism, creativity, courage, and being a lifelong learner.

#### **4. Distortion of the Characters of Mutual Cooperation**

The character of mutual cooperation reflects an act of respect, a spirit of cooperation, and helps each other in solving common problems, establishing communication and friendship, and giving help to people in need. As for the value indicators of mutual cooperation, among others, respect, cooperation, inclusion, commitment to joint decisions, deliberation and consensus, help, solidarity, empathy, anti-discrimination, anti-violence, and voluntary attitudes. Ideally, learning activities are a process of interaction in the classroom between students and between students and teachers to build mutual understanding. This learning process takes place face-to-face as an arena for internalizing the values of togetherness. However, in online learning, there is a lack of physical interaction between students without realizing it, so that it raises the individualistic attitude of the students.

Distortion in the character of mutual cooperation is triggered by the lack of student interaction in online learning, and the use of e-learning application media that is incompatible with student character development. This triggers the birth of individualistic

values in students. The lack of interaction between students results in a lack of mutual understanding and ultimately no mutual respect, reduced cooperation between students, students become very closed with peers, no commitment and joint decisions are built, and the character of deliberation and consensus is not built. Individualism that appears in students results in a lack of help between students, reduced solidarity, diminished empathy for others which results in low voluntary attitudes.

### **5. Distortion of Character Integrity**

The value of integrity character is the value that becomes the basis for the actions or behavior of a person who can always be trusted in his words, actions and work. In addition, integrity can also be in the form of commitment and loyalty to human and moral values. The existence of the character of integrity can be seen in the form of attitudes and responsibilities as citizens in their social life, including consistency between words and behavior. Indicators of integrity values include: love of truth, loyalty, moral commitment, honesty, responsibility, exemplary, and respect for individual dignity.

Distortion of the character of the integrity of students in online learning, namely the increasing tendency of students to be dishonest when taking exams such as; daily tests, mid-semester exams, end-of-semester exams, and so on. The form of student cheating is by using a search engine (for example; Google Search) to find answers and using chat on social media between friends. Cheating behavior is one of the problems that is still experienced by the world of education and will continue to be a concern of educational institutions in the future. Cheating is an act of dishonesty, cheating and is carried out illegally to falsify learning results or to get answers during exams or tests. The tendency of students to cheat because they want to avoid dishonestly falling academic grades.

In the world of education, several actions that fall into the category of cheating include imitating a friend's work, asking a friend directly while doing an exam test, carrying notes on paper, on limbs, or on clothes to enter the exam room, accepting answers from outside parties, looking leaked questions, exchanging doing assignments with friends, ordering or asking for help from others in completing exams in class or assignments. Several reasons encourage students to cheat, include: (1) Solidarity between friends; (2) Almost all friends cheat; (3) Not ready to take the exam (unable to answer); (4) Not confident in own answers; (5) Shame if the score is low. 6. There is an opportunity to cheat. In general, cheating or cooperating in taking tests is a form of solidarity between friends, and almost all friends in the class do it. The source of the cheat sheet comes from students who are considered smart or capable academically. Based on the reasons put forward by students,

it shows that cheating has become a habit that has lasted for a long time. Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic through an online system provides a huge space for students to cheat due to the difficulty of teachers in control.

## **Conclusions**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the learning process in Majene Regency was carried out online. This learning model was followed by 292 schools, ranging from elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, and vocational high schools. In general, applications that are often used during online learning are WhatsApp, *Ruang Guru*, Zoom Meeting, and Google Classroom, and other applications from government websites and teacher blogs. From a process aspect, online-based learning during the Covid-19 pandemic can be said to have been successful. However, from the aspect of results, especially in character education, online learning has experienced failure or distortion.

In this research, 5 distortions of character education were found in online learning. First, the distortion of religious character occurs in the aspect of caring for others which can lead to intolerance, individualism, and a lack of respect for others. In addition, distortion also occurs in environmental concerns that can cause destructive actions to the surrounding environment. Second, the distortion in the character of nationalism arises because during online learning students seldom attend state activities anymore. Third, the distortion of the character of student independence is marked by the development of an attitude that relies on their parents or their companions during online learning. Fourth, distortion in the character of mutual cooperation is triggered by a lack of interaction between students which results in a lack of mutual understanding, disrespect for each other, and students become very closed with peers. Individualism that appears in students results in a lack of help between students, a lack of solidarity, a low sense of empathy which results in a low voluntary attitude. Fifth, the distortion of the character of students' integrity is the tendency of students to be dishonest when taking tests or exams. The form of student cheating is by using a search application engine to find answers and using chat on social media between friends.

Therefore, to reduce distortion of character education through online learning, an integrated learning process (blended learning) is needed, which is to integrate online and offline learning processes while still paying attention to health protocols. Blended learning is not just a combination of online and offline learning, but needs to be seen as an opportunity to integrate advances in technological innovation that can be provided face-to-face online. Through the blended learning approach, the learning process will be more

responsive and can increase the flexibility and effectiveness of character education development for students.

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