



## **UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFICULTIES ON CONVEYING THE ARGUMENT IN ONLINE DISCUSSION DURING THE PANDEMIC COVID 19**

**Sulistya Ningsih Pratiwi<sup>1</sup> and Selamat Husni Hasibuan<sup>2</sup>**

*Sulistyp pratiwi3@gmail.com*

**Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara**

### **ABSTRACT**

During the 2019 corona pandemic, Indonesia itself decided to conduct online learning, both at schools and universities. Students are required to carry out the virtual learning process in their respective homes. One of the ways in which online classes take place is to conduct online discussions between students. Therefore in this study, the researchers conducted research with the aim of finding out what difficulties students faced in presenting their arguments in online discussions during this corona pandemic. Researchers used qualitative methods through online surveys by giving several questions to correspondents in the form of questionnaires using google form. There are 34 students who are willing to be correspondents in our research this time. The researchers produce so many surprising facts that have been experienced by students when online discussions take place. Some students did experience difficulties in delivering arguments in online discussion sessions ranging from not being confident and also lack of knowledge in building arguments. There is a lot that needs to be evaluated about the way lecturers make this online discussion in order that students are better prepared to convey their arguments in online discussion.

*Keywords : argument, difficulties, online discussion, students' perception*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to find out how the perceptions of students from all majors who have been running online lectures that also require them to have online discussions with their friends and lecturers about what difficulties they face when trying to build and then present their arguments. in the classroom. Online distance learning are used as it is the current trend to solve the difficulties faced by learners around the world that may not be encountered in institutions. This includes using technology and e-learning to provide students with online education that helps them improve their communication skills and enrich their learning experiences (Hazaymeh, 2021).

With the outbreak of COVID19, online learning has become the best option available under social distancing and quarantine guidelines and discussions about



the effectiveness of online learning and the potential for future activities continue. One of the weakness of online learning is that teachers cannot see students' body language. For example, the lack of nonverbal cues from students' confused facial expressions and distracting scribbles helps assess understanding (Rojabi, 2020).

In recently study, we found that a study examines student involvement and the factors and involvement of guides in online discussion forums for undergraduate programs where education is complemented by online learning. As such, this survey provides insight into student engagement in online discussion forums and the factors that contribute to reported grades. In addition, the survey findings enhance the strategies of university stakeholders such as faculty, research program designers, and university leaders to increase student engagement in online discussion forums. Therefore, this study argues that it adds to knowledge about the ever- changing issues of online education in the context of higher education. Student support is believed to reduce transaction delays throughout the course. Some students may find that the same level of support as others is imbalanced, and this inequality can help promote or undermine participation in learning. Awareness of student support can depend on many factors, including course format, structure, sense of communication, number of students, teacher teaching methods, and student learning style (Lee et al., 2011). Therefore, when preparing a course, educators and curriculum planners need to consider ways to support their students in different ways. Especially when taking online courses, it is important to build a learning environment that properly supports students' learning (Yanni et al., 2021).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Discussion is a routine activity that people use to support their conclusions. However, the rationale for such arguments can become invalid because people tend to argue repeatedly without supervision and cause confusion in communication. Analytical reasoning is needed to assess the validity of a concept. Therefore, encouraging students to use an open and fair spirit, specific metrics, and analytical discussions that promote accuracy and clarification are important elements in education (Amornchai et al., 2015) .

Since the emergence of the COVID19 virus, the general learning process in educational institutions around the world has changed. Therefore, when preparing a course, educators and curriculum planners need to consider ways to support their students in different ways. Especially when taking online courses, it is important to build a learning environment that properly supports students' learning. The results of the online discussion show that in order for online learning to be successful, it is necessary to consider integrated education that supports learning. In addition, the results show that communication between teachers and students remains an important success factor, regardless of the class category involved (Choi et al., 2021).

According to a previous study, the online question and answer discussion forum, recently online discussions have become a very important source of



information for students during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this research shows that online discussion forums have a positive impact on learning outcomes. However, it is still unclear how certain properties of this forum will contribute to this effect (Liu et al., 2013). Students' learning experiences and perceptions are greatly influenced by the use of digital technology during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the higher education sector adapts to uncertainty, it is more important than ever to examine students' perceptions of online learning with integrity (Peimani & Kamalipour, 2021).

Previous studies have shown that critical thinking requires reasoning, including discussion, that supports judgment, thoroughness, and an unbiased perspective. Therefore, the ability to build arguments and present them in front of the class when online discussions take place greatly affects the improvement of students' critical thinking skills. (Amornchai et al., 2015).

Schools and universities are closed indefinitely, and both educational institutions and students are experimenting with how to complete certain curricula within the time frame specified by the academic calendar. These steps, of course, cause inconvenience, but also create new examples of educational innovation through digital interventions. This is the silver lining that confronted the university-based approach to education thousands of years ago, entrenched institutional prejudices, and the slow pace of reform of academic institutions that continue to have outdated classrooms. But in a relatively short time, Covid 19 has inspired educational institutions around the world to take a creative approach. During this time, most universities switched to online mode using whiteboards, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or other online platforms (Muthuprasad et al., 2021).

According to the current research situation, students will attend online courses with weekly online discussions during the semester. This accounts for 30% of the final grades of the students in the course. In each part of the course, all students participate in discussion activities as a group. You will be asked to read textbooks, share information, resources and insights, and help build knowledge. Students are assigned to moderate online discussion sessions in the textbook chapter. Discussion **session** for each chapter of the textbook chapter. The discussion session for each chapter lasts for a week. The facilitator discusses topics and activities with the instructor one week before the moderate session. All online discussion activities in this course are carried out in a discussion system developed by the researcher which tracks student attendance data and which is not posted and records it in an online database (Xie et al., 2014).

Thus, in an online learning environment, the application of assessment tools that can be used to obtain information about the level of individual participation in an interaction-based discussion environment can be a characteristic of the composition of the teaching and learning process in an online learning environment. A variety of criteria have been found to be important in the literature and are used in assessing participant messages in online learning environments (Kurnaz et al., 2018).



## METHOD

The research method is applied an online survey. This method is a research data collection by giving several questions to correspondents in the form of a questionnaire using google form. The researchers wanted to investigate the University students' perceptions of the difficulties on conveying the arguments in online discussion. The researcher gave questionnaires to students in all majors at several universities on the island of Sumatra. The number of correspondents who participated in this study were 34 students from 10 different study programs. The following table shows the number of correspondent data in more detail in each department :

**Table 1.** Number of Respondents

<b>Study Programs</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Aquakultur	1
English Department	15
Farmation	2
Computer Science	1
Matemathics Department	1
Dentistry	1
Public Administration	1
Psychology	3
Sastra of Indonesia	1
Information system	3
Hotels Management	1
Physics	1
Chemical	1
Accountancy	1
Communications studies	1
<b>Amount</b>	<b>34</b>

In the online survey, researchers have prepared 11 questions consisting of 9 choice questions and 2 essays. The Questions are organized according to the phenomenon that appears in online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic. From these 11 questions, researchers have obtained various student perceptions of how they feel when conveying their arguments in online discussions with their friends and lecturers.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In the first question, the researchers asked questions about how they felt when constructing a good argument. Do they feel capable of doing this? And it turns out that the survey results show as much as 6.1% strongly agree, 30.4% neutral, 42.4% agree, and 18.2% strongly agree that they feel they are able to build arguments well from their respective points of view. Based on the survey results from the first question, it was found that quite a number of people admitted that



they were able to make arguments even in the corona pandemic conditions which required them to have online discussions. And of course not a few of them turned out to be uncomfortable when having online discussions which required them to make an argument about the topic being discussed.

In the second question, I always be active in online discussion. Data collected 6.1% disagree at all, 18.2% disagree, 36.4% neutral, 21.2% agree, 18.2% completely agree. Based on the results of this survey, it has been shown that not a few of them actually take online lectures actively in online discussions. When students who answered agree and strongly agree were combined, it became 39.4%. This shows that there is interest and enthusiasm for online discussions even though they are carried out virtually, they are still eager to learn and try to master the lecture material that has been given by the lecturer. Meanwhile, as many as 24.3% were not very active when the learning process took place, especially online discussions.

They tend to be passive because they feel uncomfortable with the online classes they are currently taking.

In the third question, I don't understand the material. So, I can't make my argument. Data collected 18.2% disagree at all, 36.4% disagree, 36.4% neutral, 9.1% agree, 0% disagree completely. If the data of students who answered strongly disagree and disagree were combined, a very surprising number was obtained, namely more than half of the students or as many as 54.6% who disagreed that they did not understand the material so they could not make arguments in online discussions. Based on the data above, it can be concluded that the average student actually follows the learning process from beginning to end. So that they understand the material being taught by the lecturer. In fact, none of the students answered strongly agree and very few percentages were obtained from the data of students who answered agree. this clearly shows that there are only a few students who really do not understand the material they are learning so that not a few of them cannot build arguments when online discussions take place. Perhaps this is due to a loss of focus and feeling uncomfortable during the learning and teaching process.

In the fourth question, I'm too shy to speak about my own perspective during online discussion. The data obtained were 9.1%, 27.3% disagree, 33.3% neutral, 30.3% agree and no students answered strongly agree. Based on the survey results that have been obtained, we can see that there are still many students who are not confident in themselves in conveying their views and ideas. And some of them also did not agree. This means they have high confidence in expressing their opinions in front of their classmates and also their lecturers. The remaining 33% prefer to be neutral because of the possibility they could be in both positions. However, despite all that, it is very unfortunate that there are still many students who do not dare to express their opinions directly. Even though classes are conducted online so that it can benefit students to be able to better manage their nervousness rather than having to stand in front of the class looking at all their classmates.



In the fifth question, difficulty finding what argument should I make during online discussion. Data obtained 18.2% strongly disagree, 36.4% disagree, 15.4% neutral, 21.2% agree, and 9.1% strongly agree. the same as the previous question, half of the students who filled out the online survey answered disagreed with the questions asked by the researchers. This means that half of them do not have any difficulty in finding sources and also strong evidence in order to build good arguments so that they can win online discussion forums. And not a few of them turned out to have difficulty in finding the arguments they had to convey during online discussions. The reason can be found in the last survey question later.

In the sixth question, difficulty doing assignment related to argumentation during online class. Data obtained 12.1% of students answered strongly disagree, 27.3% of students answered disagree, 36.4% of students answered neutral, 18.2% of students answered agree and 6.1% of students answered strongly disagree. Based on the online survey results obtained, it can be concluded that there are more students who disagree if they have difficulty completing assignments related to argumentation. This shows the willingness of students to learn about the lecture material so that they can master the material well and complete the tasks given by the lecturer as a learning evaluation. Meanwhile, if the data is combined there are as many as 24.3% of students who have difficulty in working on assignments. This figure is certainly less than the percentage of students who answered disagree to the questions the researcher asked. And the remaining 36.4% of students prefer neutral rather than answering agree or disagree in the sixth question survey session this time.

In the seventh question, difficulty communicating and sharing about my own perspective with lecturer during online discussion. Data obtained 18.2% strongly disagree, 27.3% disagree, 21.3% neutral, 30.3% agree and only 3% of students agree. Based on the data above, it shows that almost half of the students answered disagree if they had difficulty in communicating and sharing their views with the lecturers. This means that they still have the will and feel to try to communicate with the lecturers in presenting their own views without fear of being wrong. Meanwhile, as many as 30.6% of students answered that they agreed that they had difficulties when discussing their arguments with the lecturer. And the remaining 21.3% of students answered neutral.

In the eighth question, I don't have any idea when discussing the topic during online discussion. Data obtained 18.2% of students answered strongly disagree, 63.6% of students answered disagree, 9.1% of students answered neutral, 6.1% of students answered agree and the remaining 3% of students answered strongly agree. Based on the data above, if it is combined between students who answered strongly disagree with the percentage of students who disagree, a fairly large percentage figure is obtained, namely 81.8% of students who feel they have ideas in every online discussion that takes place. This condition shows that there are many students who really follow the course of the lecture well so that they are able to convey bright ideas when discussing with other students. This should be appreciated by all of us because it turns out that



there are still many students who do have the intention and also the enthusiasm to gain knowledge in lectures, even during the corona pandemic like this. Meanwhile, on the other hand, when combined like the previous data, as many as 6.4% of students who answered agreed because they did not feel they had any ideas to present to the group during online discussions. And the remaining 9.1% of students prefer neutral.

**Table 2.** Questionnaire results

Questions	Answer Frequency					
	SD	DA	N	A	SA	Number of response
I felt I could build my argument regarding the course material properly	6,7 %	2,4 %	30,3 %	42,4%	18,2 %	34
I always be active in online discussion	6,1 %	18,2 %	36,4%	21,2%	18,2 %	34
I don't understand the material. So, I can't make my argument	18,2 %	36,4 %	36,4%	9,1%	0%	34
I'm too shy to speak about my own perspective during online discussion	9,1%	27,3 %	33,3%	30,3 %	0%	34
Difficulty finding what argument should I make during online discussion	18,2 %	36,4 %	15,4%	21,2 %	9,1 %	34
difficulty doing assignment related to argumentation during online class.	12,1 %	27,3 %	36,4%	18,2 %	6,1 %	34
difficulty communicating and sharing about my own persperctive with lecturer during online discussion	18,2 %	27,3 %	21,2%	30,3 %	3%	34
I don't have any idea when discussing about the topic during online discussion	18,2 %	63,6 %	9,1%	6,1%	3%	34

Information:

SD : Strongly Disagree DA : Do not Agree

SA : Strongly Agree

N : Neutral

A : Agreed



The tenth question, the researchers made essay questions that had to be answered with the opinion of each correspondent. Do you think that build argument can improve your critical thinking skills? Please give the reason why?. In percentage terms, the data shows that all correspondents answered yes, that argumentation can indeed help students improve their thinking ability. So many reasons given by these students. and the average reasoning shows that in building an argument, our brain will work as much as possible to find what statements are suitable to be conveyed and of course how we assemble words into a sentence that is in order to form a strong and good argument. Not only that, building arguments when discussions are believed to be able to review the subject matter that we have studied previously and of course students must look for reliable sources based on existing facts in order to strengthen their arguments so that they cannot be refuted by their interlocutors when delivering their arguments in online discussions. And not only that, the students also reasoned that when we present arguments in front of our classmates, it will make us hone our speaking skills and train us to be confident in expressing opinions.

One of the other reasons given by correspondents in answering online surveys is by arguing that students can hone the knowledge they get because they can search for and also store new knowledge from the opponent's argument. This is because, when online discussions take place, there is one topic that is discussed and has a root problem that must be resolved. So, from these online discussions, there were many differences of opinion that they conveyed so that discussion members could exchange ideas and gain new insights that would enrich their knowledge. The eleventh question, the second question for the essay, is also the last question in the online survey for this research. What your biggest fear when conveying your ideas or arguments in front of your classmates and lectures. Unlike the previous question. The percentage of answers in the data results of this eleventh question has a surprising percentage. As many as 70% answered if they did have problems in presenting arguments when online discussions took place. The reason for this is due to the limited resources that are read and lack of confidence when expressing their opinions when online discussions take place. They think that speaking in front of classmates and lecturers is a very frightening specter because they are afraid to speak the wrong way, do not have the courage, lack of knowledge in building strong arguments, feel insecure when the arguments made are not as strong as they think. While the remaining 30% of students answered that they did not have the slightest difficulty and fear in building arguments and also presenting them in online classes. They think that building an argument is like playing with words in a sentence. So that it is very fun and can increase their critical power when online discussions take place. The confidence possessed by these students is indeed quite high because they can fight fear and anxiety so that they can build strong arguments and are not ashamed if they have to convey it in front of their classmates and lecturers though.





## CONCLUSION

Online discussions are a way for teachers to carry out the teaching and learning process through online student interviews. It turns out that online discussions are not as bad as imagined. Many students still have high enthusiasm in conducting discussions even online. In fact, more than half of the students feel comfortable in participating in online discussion sessions and even dare to build strong arguments. They are also able to convey their arguments in front of all students on virtual class. However, not a few of them still have difficulties and also afraid to express their opinions in online discussion forums. There are so many reasons and factors experienced by students starting from the lack of confidence they have in delivering arguments, being afraid to speak the wrong way, not having the courage, lack of knowledge in building strong arguments, feeling insecure when the arguments made are not as strong as they think. Apart from all that, online discussion is indeed the only way that lecturers do to make alternatives in the learning process so that they continue to hone students' abilities in building arguments and also be more daring to express their arguments

## SUGGESTION

Based on the results of research in journal articles regarding "University students' perceptions of difficulties on conveying the argument in online discussion during the COVID- 19 pandemic," the researchers provide advice to parties who want to conduct research related to the problems that occur, including :

To find out how successful the implementation is, it is very necessary to research the student implementation when building a discussion to enhance the student's critical thinking in online discussions. Implementing the management of online discussions for students who still have difficulty in delivering arguments to see the real impact.

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