Optimization of Google Classroom in Blended Learning in Junior High School

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Optimization; Google Classroom; Blended Learning *Article history:* Received 2022-01-10 Revised 2022-02-22 Accepted 2022-04-27	This study aims to optimize the learning of Islamic Religious Education with Google Classroom. This type of research is quantitative. The population as well as the sample is 4 teachers. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire via Google Form. Assessment of the questionnaire using the Guttman scale. Next is the interpretation of the calculation results. This study shows that the teacher's perception, ease of access, and the benefits of Google Classroom are on average 4.15 or 83.18%, this indicates that it is very good. Thus, Google Classroom can optimize online learning in blended learning on Islamic Religious Education subjects. This study recommends teachers to use Google Classroom in online learning or distance learning as an alternative application.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia shows a decrease in the number of positive cases (Apriyono, 2022). In this case, the Government lowered the Community Activities Restrictions Enforcement or CARE (PPKM) level in various regions from level 2 to 4 (Dzulfaroh, 2022). The impact of the decrease in level, then the community is given leeway to do activities outside the home. Including the world of education, the Ministry of Education and Culture encourages schools to reopen (Tanjung, 2022). Face-to-face learning or limited PTM in some parts of Indonesia is again being pushed along with changes in the level of implementation of restrictions on community activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Napitupulu, Nababan, Adri, & Rukmorini, 2022). Some areas that apply face-to-face learning (PTM) are limited, including Manado (DetikManado, 2021), Mataram (NTB, 2021), Palembang (Hidayatun, 2022), and other big cities.

Along with the Government's policy regarding limited PTM, educational institutions carry out various innovations in learning both in class and online, one of which is applying learning with a blended learning model. The application of blended learning is a manifestation of the innovations of

the industrial revolution 4.0, namely the Internet of Things (Winata, 2020). In addition, this learning model is suitable for use during the Covid-19 pandemic which applies face-to-face learning directly in class and online (Budiyono, 2020).

Blended Learning is one solution in the learning process. This learning integrates the internet network and combines classical learning with online learning that utilizes information and communication technology (Ni'mah, Hasan, & Wiyono, 2021). For online learning, it is often known as e-learning. With e-learning, the learning process can interact directly in real-time, such as in video conferences, zoom, Google meet, real audio or real video, online meetings. And also in no real-time form, such as with Google classroom, E-learning, mailing lists, discussion groups, newsgroups and bulletin boards. Meanwhile, teaching materials, evaluations, quizzes and all activities in the learning process can also be implemented on the web (Purnama, 2020).

The presence of the blended learning model does not intend to replace direct face-to-face learning in the classroom, but this model only supports learning materials that have not been delivered during learning (Diana, Wirawati, & Rosalia, 2020). In addition, it is also to facilitate students learning from home by utilizing various applications.

Blended learning implemented by teachers has several advantages including helping students learn independently and obtain information without having to meet face-to-face with the teacher (Anggraini, Wonorahardjo, & Utomo, 2016), increasing students' curiosity about information, flexible learning, and reducing costs (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002), students can learn according to their own learning speed (Yapici & Akbayin, 2012). Furthermore, students can not only rely on the material provided by students in class, but can also search for material in various ways, including searching the library, asking classmates or friends online, opening websites, and searching for learning materials through search engines, Portal or blogs, or learning software and other learning tutorial media (Saifuddin, 2017). But on the other hand, according to Noer (2010) Blended learning also has shortcomings, including the lack of teacher competence in using technology, the need for adequate support for facilities and infrastructure in the field of technology, uneven facilities owned by students such as computers, internet, and smartphones (Utari, Hikmawati, & Gaffar, 2020).

The application of blended learning in Islamic Religious Education learning is based on the advantages of blended learning and following up on the implementation of limited face-to-face learning (PTM) by the Government as well as recommendations from the Ministry of Education and Culture to implement blended learning. Based on the data in the field, it was found that there were still many teachers using applications that were not suitable for learning that required planning, process, and evaluation in one system. For example, some teachers use WhatsApp and Telegram applications for online learning, these applications are used by teachers only for attendance and assignments, while for evaluation activities and others still use other media such as Google Forms. However, it was found that there were some teachers who used an application that accommodated the face-to-face learning system directly in the classroom such as attendance, assignment, evaluation, face-to-face, and others in one system. The application used by the teacher is Google Classroom.

Google Classroom is an application that allows the creation of classrooms in cyberspace. In addition, Google Classroom can be a means of distributing assignments, submitting assignments and even assessing submitted assignments (Hammi, 2017; Ramadhani & Rahmawati, 2021). The features in the Google Classroom application such as post reuse, create questions, create assignments, create announcements can be used by students to re-upload several files, provide discussion space, make announcements, distribute assignments and learning materials, collect assignments until the teacher can see who is there. who have submitted assignments. In addition, files that can be uploaded are also not limited in format, all files can still be uploaded such as word, powerpoint, PDF, video, or in the form of a link can also be used (Salamah, 2020).

Kusumah's research (2021) found that Google Classroom (GCR) became an effective platform in optimizing online learning for Islamic Religious Education during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study reported aspects of GCR utilization such as access, usability, communication, instructional delivery,

overall student satisfaction, and their involvement in using GCR for student learning to run well. Furthermore, Mahpudin (2021) found that using google classroom media can optimize Islamic Religious Education learning. And also has an impact on the ease of transferring knowledge to students (Susanto & Rahmatullah, 2020). What distinguishes it from previous research is the application of blended learning using Google Classroom by Islamic Religious Education teachers.

2. METHODS

This research is a survey research. The population as well as the sample in this study were 4 teachers of Islamic Religious Education (P, H, Y, and SA) at SMP Negeri 3 Palembang, the consideration for choosing this sample was because these 4 teachers used Google Classroom in online learning. Data was collected by means of interviews and questionnaires. The research instrument used was a questionnaire using a Likert scale (1-5). A questionnaire containing 11 questions was used to collect data on perceptions, ease of access, and benefits of Google Classroom. The instrument in the form of a questionnaire that has been prepared is tested to determine the quality of the instrument. The results of the questionnaire trial were analyzed to determine the level of validity and reliability using Cronbach's Alpha.

Data were analyzed to determine the average score of each item. Then, to identify the verbal interpretation of the mean score range, the Bringula interval was used. The open questionnaire was analyzed using thematic analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive techniques to obtain accurate and accountable data by matching the data obtained through surveys and interviews (triangulation). Data in scores or numbers are identified using the Bringula interval with a 5-point scoring scale.

Table 1. Interpretation of scores

No.	Range of Values/Scores	%	Criteria
1	1,00 – 1,80	20% - 36%	Very low
2	1,81 – 2,60	37% - 52%	Low
3	2,61 – 3,40	53% - 68%	Enough
4	3,41 – 4,20	69% - 82%	Good
5	4,21 – 5,00	83% - 100%	Very good

In this study, data were obtained on perceptions, ease of access, and the benefits of Google Classroom for Islamic Religious Education learning. The data is interpreted and analyzed in order to obtain an overview of the optimization of Google Classroom in learning Islamic Religious Education in blended learning.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research data was collected using a Google Form-assisted questionnaire confirmed through interviews. The study results report the use of the Google Classroom application by teachers in learning Islamic Religious Education.

Table 2. Use of Google Classroom

No.	Aspect	Score	%	Interpretation
1	Love using the Google Classroom app to study	4,75	95	Very good
2	Using the Google Classroom app suits my learning style	3,5	70	Good
3	The Google Classroom application provides convenience in conducting attendance, assignments, materials, and discussions	4,5	90	Very good

4	The Google Classroom application allows me to study whenever and wherever I am	4,5	90	Very good
5	The Google Classroom application facilitates the learning needs that I need	4	80	Good
6	Using the Google Classroom application for some time to come	4,25	85	Very good
7	The Google Classroom app is easy to use	4,5	90	Very good
8	Using the Google Classroom app because it's fun	4,25	85	Very good
9	The use of the Google Classroom application will improve my learning process to be effective	3,5	70	Good
10	Open to using new technologies like the Google Classroom app	4,5	90	Very good
11	Complete assignments using the Google Classroom app	3,5	70	Good
	Average	4,15	83,18	

Table 1 shows that the use of Google Classroom by teachers is on average 4.15 or 83.18, which shows that it is very good. Of the eleven aspects measured, the highest score was on the teacher's preference for Google Classroom (4.75). This shows that this application is preferred because it helps learning activities during online learning with the various tools it has. Meanwhile, the lowest average is using the Google Classroom application according to the learning style (3.5), the use of the Google Classroom application will increase the learning process to be effective (3.5), and complete assignments using the Google Classroom application (3.5). This shows that the use of Google Classroom during the Covid-19 Pandemic is a good alternative media used in online learning.

The interesting thing from table 1 is the teacher's good to very good response to the use of Google Classroom. Even though this application still feels foreign to previous teachers, teachers are more familiar with online learning with short message applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Furthermore, to support learning success, teachers innovate by utilizing information and communication technology that has been developed. This is part of the teacher's responsibility to carry out his duties as a teacher despite the limitation of the distance between the teacher and students. This attitude is part of an openness to using new technologies such as the Google Classroom app (4.5).

The use of Google Classroom in learning provides convenience in carrying out teacher duties such as attendance, giving assignments, providing material, and discussing (4,5). This application provides different and even better tools than other applications in supporting learning needs. Teachers can make student attendance, make video calls (conferences) in large numbers, give assignments, create quizzes, distribute materials, and conduct assessments. The use of these tools is very easy for teachers to use, this is in accordance with the finding that the Google Classroom application is easy to use (4,5).

Utilizing Google Classroom requires an internet connection, smartphone, and or computer. Internet and Smartphones have become part of teachers' daily lives so that every teacher has them and has even become a necessity. Not only that, almost all teachers have laptops/computers. Google has provided application and website versions of Google Classroom, the application version can be accessed on the Playstore or Appstore while the website version can be accessed via Google Chrome, Mozilla, Microsoft Edge, and others. This ease of access allows teachers to use Google Classroom anytime and anywhere (4,5).

In addition to collecting teacher responses to Google Classroom through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were also conducted by asking about their experiences for several months using

Classroom. Some of the main findings in the interviews conducted that strengthen the questionnaire results, namely, first, Google Classroom is easy to use. Second, can carry out learning activities such as face-to-face learning directly in class. and Third, can be accessed anytime and anywhere.

First, Google Classroom is easy to use. Teachers previously learned using Google Classroom in learning through training and self-study through YouTube tutorials. So it doesn't take long, teachers start using Google Classroom, which previously used a short message application. As stated by Mrs. YI below:

> "I have long heard of Google Classroom from other teacher friends, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, more and more teachers are using it, I met one teacher who uses Google Classroom to see and learn how to apply it in learning. For almost 2 weeks, I was intensely communicating with the teacher. Finally I used Google Classroom in religious learning, which previously I used WhatsApp for online learning. Until now, I think Google Classroom is easy to use in learning. I can use it on my smartphone and laptop. What I do include making student attendance, giving assignments, and conducting assessments. In addition, it is very helpful to provide an easy-to-understand Indonesian version."

Second, can carry out learning activities such as face-to-face learning directly in class. Google Classroom's advantage with other applications is that the tools provided allow teachers to carry out learning as in face-to-face learning in class. With these tools, conventional classes switch to online/online classes. As stated by Mr. P below:

> "My choice to use Google Classroom because it is superior and suitable for learning than other applications. Implementing 2 days of face-to-face learning at school and 3 days of online learning due to Covid-19, Google Classroom is my choice. The eight classes that I teach all use Google Classroom by learning from studi.id. Before studying, I first uploaded the material (pdf/video) in the material menu, made attendance, made a quiz for the pretest, made a video call to explain the material through Google Meet, made assignments, and other activities."

Third, it can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Google Classroom is available in application and website versions that can be accessed via smartphones and laptops/computers. To operate it requires an internet network. With it, teachers can access and manage learning anytime and anywhere. As stated by Mrs. AS below:

> "I use Google Classroom using the app and website versions, but what I use more often is the app version which is accessed via a smartphone. Because almost all the time, Smartphone is always around me so I can easily access Classroom anytime and anywhere. With Google Classroom, I can give assignments, discuss, give materials, video calls, and do assessments."

Online learning is currently increasingly popular for use by teachers, especially when the world is facing a wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Utilizing online learning with various platforms to support learning, each teacher uses a different platform with consideration of various factors. Several studies reported including Google Classroom ((Aditia, 2020; Susanto & Rahmatullah, 2020), Zoom Meeting (Novita, Kejora, & Akil, 2021; Ramdani, Arifin, & Fathurrohman, 2021; Sholihah, 2021), Edmodo (Ansori, 2020; Asmuki & Aziz, 2021), WhatsApp (Atqia & Latif, 2021; Masitah, 2021), Youtube (Permatasari, Amirudin, & Sittika, 2021), and other platforms. The use of this platform is part of an effort to keep the learning process going as usual even in a pandemic atmosphere. How many teachers use a single platform or a combination according to the teacher's needs. One of the factors that influence this utilization include having competence, being easy to use, and providing tools for learning activities.

The first Google Classroom was released to the public on August 12, 2014 by Google Apps for Education (GAFE) (Alim, Linda, Gunawan, & Saad, 2019). Google Classroom is an Internet-based service provided by Google as an e-learning system. This service is designed to help teachers create and

distribute assignments to students paperless. Users of this service must have an account with Google. In addition, Google Classroom can only be used by schools that have Google Apps for Education (Hakim, 2016). Google Classroom aims to organize assignments, improve collaboration, and encourage communication. Classroom is available on the web or mobile app. Classroom is supported by various tools that have been used, such as Gmail, Google Docs, and Google Calendar (Padjrin, 2021).

Teachers' use of Google Classroom in learning is because it is easy to use, both access and operates. Janzem said one of the advantages of Google Classroom is that it is easy to use. Google Classroom's design purposefully simplifies the instructional interface and options used for delivering and tracking assignments; communication with the entire course or individuals is also simplified through announcements, email, and push notifications (Iftakhar, 2016). This finding reinforces previous research, including El Fuaziah (2019)that teachers can more easily manage the class. Furthermore, after the training, all teachers were able to understand and operate Google Classroom and even 52.7% of the participants were very capable of operating Google Classroom (Yanto, Setiawan, & Husni, 2020).

Media selection is a determining factor for the media's accuracy, which can affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process. In determining the accuracy of the media, the thing that is taken into consideration for using is the ability of the media such as its advantages that can relate to various components of learning (Abidin, 2017). The use of Google Classroom in learning considers the advantages of the application, including facilitating online learning (Salamah, 2020). In addition, this application is very easy to use by teachers. The fact is that only taking a few days of training can be applied in learning, there are even teachers who study independently through YouTube.

The choice of media must be balanced to use the media. There are many purposes for using media, including learning, which is the main task of educational technology (Anderson, 1994). But the teacher must be able to implement it. If it is used for learning, it is necessary to see whether its role is as a tool, companion, media, or a combination (Abidin, 2017). Some teachers use Google Classroom as the main medium in online learning because of the many support features.

The use of Google Classroom does not require a complicated installation process. After an administrator has setup a Google account, teachers and students can use Google Classroom with their respective Google email accounts. Virtual classes can be created with Google Classroom (Nurfalah, 2019). Some of the features found in Google Classroom include forums, class assignments, members, Google Calendar, Google Drive Folders, assignments, quiz assignments, questions, teaching materials, (Nurfalah, 2019), and Meet (Padjrin, 2021).

The features and activities above are advantages over Google Classroom with other applications. With Google Classroom, teachers can carry out learning as usual even though learning is online. The activities carried out are almost the same as face-to-face learning in class. Teachers can deliver material by video calling, giving assignments, making quizzes, making attendance, assessing, asking questions, discussing, making announcements, and many others. This is the main consideration in the use of Google Classroom by teachers. This finding strengthens previous research, that the optimization of Google Classroom features has an important impact on learning in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, including online learning by utilizing technology (Nurfalah, 2019).

Google Classroom can be easily accessed anytime and anywhere by only requiring internet access and a smartphone/computer. Google Classroom provides application and web versions (Padjrin, 2021), making it easier for teachers to use it, almost all teachers have smartphones and are familiar with internet networks. The virtual system on Google Classroom makes it easier for teachers and students to carry out the learning process, especially distance learning (PJJ), because this application can be accessed anywhere and anytime using internet access (Putri & Dewi, 2019). This learning system is quite easy to access through smartphones, computers, or laptops. Anyone who has Google Apps For Education, gmail, documents and drives can use Google Classroom (Ashoumi & Shobirin, 2019).

The results of this study strengthen previous research that Google Classroom (GCR) is an effective platform in optimizing PAI online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic (Kusumah et al., 2021),

Making google classroom can be done easily by educators to make learning effective and efficient (Nurfalah, 2019).

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teacher perceptions, ease of access, and the benefits of Google Classroom are on average 4.15 or 83.18%, this indicates that it is very good. Thus, Google Classroom can optimize online learning in blended learning on Islamic Religious Education subjects. This study recommends teachers to use Google Classroom in online learning or distance learning as an alternative application. This study suggests to further researchers to develop a Google Classroom-based module in blended learning.

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