



Covid-19 Is Not A Barrier To Learning: A Lesson Learned From Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

Mentoring and tutoring are fundamental needs for students, which should be able to run on an ongoing basis. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, mentoring and tutoring as a solution to strengthen understanding of school concepts and subjects for students in Islamic boarding schools. When students feel that there are difficulties in understanding school lessons due to the less than optimal online learning process and limited access to electronic media, mentoring, and tutoring are solutions that are able to bridge students in mastering school lessons, completing assignments, and question exercises. This service took place based on the results of observations and interviews related to the needs and anxieties of students regarding the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mentoring and tutoring are carried out using interactive discussion methods with students, as well as understanding the concept of subjects by completing non-religious subject matter exercises. Based on the results of the research obtained, mentoring and tutoring for students can help the students' learning process and their understanding of school lessons become better, as well as mentoring and study guidance being able to build motivation and enthusiasm for student learning to be better. Mentoring and tutoring are also able to formulate learning models to be more fun and happy because they can develop the concept of "learning and collaborating", by creating "learning communities and learning spaces", so that during the mentoring and guidance process, students become more enthusiastic in learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Since it was declared that the COVID-19 became a global epidemic throughout the world (Wargadinata & Maimunah, 2021; Syafrida, 2020), it had a very significant impact on all aspects of human life (Marpaung et al., 2020), both in the economic aspect (Nasution et al., 2020), socio-cultural (Agung, I., 2020), and education (Siahaan, 2020). The emergence of these impacts has forced a cultural shift (Habibi, 2020), adjusting and supporting government policies that lead to prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the implementation of new habits (new normal), social distancing (Kissler et al., 2020), and physical distancing (Islam et al., 2020), with the main aim of breaking the chain of the spread of the COVID-19 virus from life.

As an emergency measure in the education dimension, it is necessary to have policy regulations that decide attitudes and actions to prevent and control the COVID-19 outbreak. The education process, which previously could run without obstacles, but due to the COVID-19 outbreak, has drastically changed towards an educational process that is run remotely, and interactions are carried out at a distance (social and physical distancing). Thus, the demand for the implementation of distance learning and online is an option that is carried out during the pandemic.

In line with Wargadinata et al., (2020), online learning as an agreed effort is a solution in teaching and learning practices during a pandemic because online learning (on a network) can balance new normal rules and policies a pandemic. In addition, the continuity of the online learning process can be accessed by anyone without being hindered by space and time (Hikmat et al., 2020). Therefore, even during a pandemic, learning can run well, hopes and educational goals can be realized, health is still a priority (Wargadinata et al., 2020).

So far, the online teaching and learning process has not always been able to run effectively and optimally; online learning in some places is also still experiencing obstacles (Mustakim, 2020), which results in a lack of student understanding of the subject matter taught by teachers in schools (Widiyono, 2020). Especially for students (*santri*) who study in Islamic boarding schools, so far, the community understands that Islamic boarding schools prioritize religious education; teach the correct way of worship and religion, habituation of reading *dhikr*, *shalawat*, and *istighosah* (Wargadinata et al., 2020), then strengthening the primary content taught in Islamic boarding schools sometimes makes students less understanding of the general knowledge taught in schools. Meanwhile, in the global era, Islamic boarding schools have become an alternative education model, acting as institutions that can protect all students from understanding the integration of religious and general knowledge, paying attention to mental welfare, strengthening spiritual and academic aspects are also the main priorities that must be realized (Wargadinata et al., 2019). So giving more attention to students in Islamic boarding schools should be the calling of all parties. The act of balancing religious and non-religious scientific understanding (general material) to students is a necessity that must be pursued.

Seeing the importance of Islamic boarding schools in equipping students with a balance of mastery of religious and general material, mentoring and tutoring for students is a solution to realize education success in Islamic boarding schools. Considering the Islamic boarding school as a prototype of an ideal educational model in Indonesia, innovation and renewal of Islamic boarding schools have an essential meaning in facing modernization today (Hasan, 2016). Institutionally, Islamic boarding schools can also develop and streamline the learning process in all fields, with the condition of living in a dormitory and lasting all day (Tolib, 2015), the climate of this boarding school can provide convenience in raising the spirit of student learning and cultivating a collaborative-learning system in Indonesia. among them. The learning system will run well and effectively if it is supported by intensive mentoring and tutoring (Setianingsih, 2016). For this reason, mentoring and tutoring for students in Islamic boarding schools is a significant effort to be made to realize success in the learning process of students in Islamic boarding schools.

The Islamic boarding school that is the object of service and research is the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School As-Surur Ledokombo Jember. This Islamic boarding school was founded in 2003 by one of the charismatic Kyai in the village. Islamic boarding schools that prioritize the *tahfidz al-Qur'an* program, the activities of students every morning, afternoon, and evening are required to deposit memorization directly to the Kyai. In addition to the *tahfidz al-Qur'an* program, educational institutions (MI, MTS, and MA) under the auspices of the Islamic boarding school also run a formal education system by following government policies. Since the pandemic period, learning activities at MI, MTs, and MA have been running online. Moreover, students who live in Islamic boarding schools, such as students at the MTs and MA levels, need special assistance and tutoring. The time and learning opportunities they spend in Islamic boarding schools show the diversity of understanding of school subject matter.

Based on the results of observations and interviews with all caregivers and teaching staff at the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School As-Surur Ledokombo Jember, students' learning activities show a need for mentoring and tutoring; this is because, during the pandemic, the teaching and learning process is less effective and efficient as learning in regular days, due to restrictions on accessing electronic media. Students are more activated to participate in religious activities at the *pesantren*. So mastery of school materials, especially general material (English, Mathematics, Indonesian, and Science), is still needed. Understanding general material that has not been optimal causes a lack of motivation for students to learn and master general material and has implications for the emergence of obstacles and obstacles in implementing learning in schools.

As a solution to the phenomenon that occurs, mentoring and guidance for the learning process is a priority scale that must be carried out, especially for students in Islamic boarding schools.

Mentoring and tutoring for students help solve learning difficulties for students and foster enthusiasm and motivation in learning. Moreover, mentoring and guidance are carried out using creative, varied, and innovative methods. From these activities, students are not only helped in understanding school material but in the psychological aspect, they are also diverted from a boring, monotonous learning activity to a fun learning activity.

Based on existing studies, mentoring and tutoring for students can be carried out through community service programs. This community service is carried out as a solution to educational problems that are not running optimally. However, learning assistance runs to implement educational programs run during the COVID-19 pandemic (Darmayanti & Sueca, 2020). Because basically, education under any circumstances should not be ignored. Following the vision and mission of education in educating the nation and state is an absolute obligation that must be carried out (Permendikbud, 2013). Therefore, the community service that runs at the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School As-Surur Ledokombo Jember provides a very significant meaning. The students at the Islamic boarding school can master school material well, and the learning process that goes with the mentoring and tutoring program becomes more focused and fun.

METHOD

This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive method, aiming to get an actual and natural explanation regarding the process of mentoring and tutoring at the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School As-Surur Ledokombo Jember. This is in line with Bogdan and Taylor (Moleong, 2019). They propose a qualitative method as a procedure that produces descriptive data in written or spoken words from people and observable behavior or referred to as qualitative descriptive. The data used in this study were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation.

Observations were made on learning activities that were running during the Covid-19 period. Interviews were conducted with selected informants based on learning policymakers, institutional seniority, teachers, and students of Islamic Boarding Schools. Data collection in this study was carried out by the triangulation method in three ways, namely active participatory observation, structured interviews, and documentation.

The collected data was then analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques. The results of the study indicate that there are several obstacles in the implementation of online learning, including the limitations of teacher interaction in explaining the material so that many students do not understand, and limited access to electronic media for students because they live in Islamic boarding schools. Internet costs incurred during online learning are becoming more expensive. Many. To overcome these obstacles, mentoring and tutoring programs are provided for students affected by COVID-19. This program is considered to positively impact both students and Islamic boarding schools in overcoming their obstacles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This mentoring and tutoring activity is a service carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, located in one of the Islamic boarding schools located in Sumber Lesung, Ledokombo Jember. The tutoring assistance runs for ten meetings, given to the students of the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School As-Surur Ledokombo Jember. Mentoring and tutoring are devoted to non-religious subject matter or general material, such as Mathematics, Indonesian, Science, and English. Considering the students are students of Islamic boarding schools, they live in Islamic boarding schools and carry out teaching and learning activities in Islamic boarding schools. Their understanding of general subjects is not as deep as their understanding of religious material. The development of religious materials during the COVID-19 pandemic has been carried out continuously as long as they are in Islamic boarding schools because the crucial point of pesantren education is character education; actualization of Islamic values and national values; and the learning process carried out is not merely a transformation of knowledge (Fahham, 2020). Therefore, the presence of students in Islamic boarding schools is very much needed. Even though there is still a pandemic, religious material has received better guidance when compared to non-religious subjects.

Preparation of Mentoring and Tutoring Programs

As with the learning process, they are mentoring, and tutoring programs must be well structured. Mentoring and tutoring are a solution to the difficulties experienced by students in general understanding subjects, so the mentoring and tutoring program is structured in detail so that the program can be planned and run well.

Based on the service program that has been running, in the beginning, the purpose of mentoring and tutoring is socialized as well as identifying the subject matter that will be delivered during mentoring and tutoring. Given that this mentoring and tutoring is private, the material presented adjusts to the difficulties and lack of understanding experienced by the students.

The next step is the formulation of subject matter that students consider difficult and determining problem-solving techniques so that the subject matter presented can be understood and the mentoring objectives can be adequately achieved. This problem-solving technique is done by determining the learning method used in mentoring and tutoring.

The mentoring and tutoring method emphasizes the interactive discussion method. The interactive discussion method is an alternative method used in tutoring assistance because this method emphasizes the activeness of students in understanding the subject matter. The interactive discussion learning process is also a student-centered method (Winterbottom et al., 2020).

During the mentoring and tutoring process, the students can easily open themselves up to convey the difficulties of the subject matter that is not well understood, and this interactive discussion method can also provide opportunities for other students to be able to share and solve problems regarding the subject matter that has not been studied. Understood. In other words, all elements involved in functional learning assistance can play a good role, as teachers can deliver material, provide reviews, and students can be actively involved during the learning process.

The mentoring and tutoring programs are arranged in the following table:

Table 1. Mentoring and Tutoring Program

No.	Mentoring and Tutoring Program	Actions
1.	Identify the subjects to be taught in the mentoring and tutoring program.	Explanation of the subjects taught is English, Mathematics, Science, Indonesian Language
2.	Delivery of English material on "Part of Speech."	Explanation of material, deepening and coaching, assignment of related material
3.	Delivery of Mathematics material on "Equations and Functions of Squares, Powers." (Persamaan dan Fungsi Kuadrat, Perpangkatan).	Explanation of mathematical material and enrichment of the material that has been explained so that students understand better.
4.	Delivery of science material, namely "Style, GLB, GLBB." (Gaya, GLB, GLBB).	Explanation of science material and enrichment of related material so that students understand better.
5.	Delivery of Indonesian material on "Majas".	Explanation of Indonesian material on a topic so that students understand better.
6.	Delivery of Mathematics material on "Integers, Fractions, Scales and Comparison, Numbers with Powers and Root Forms." (Bilangan Bulat, Bilangan Pecahan, Skala dan Perbandingan, Bilangan Berpangkat dan Bentuk Akar).	Explanation of Mathematics material and enrichment of related material so that students understand better.
7.	Delivery of English material on "Present Tense, Past Tense, Future Present Tense".	Explanation of English material and language practice so that students understand better.
8.	Delivery of Mathematics material on "Patterns, Sequences and Series of Numbers, Social Arithmetic, and Algebraic Forms." (Pola, Barisan dan Deret Bilangan, Aritmetika Sosial, dan Bentuk Aljabar).	Explanation of Mathematics material and giving practice questions to enrichment the material being taught. Giving the quizzes from the material of all subjects that have been given, and we give rewards for those who can answer the quiz correctly.

9.	Enrichment of English and Mathematics materials on the topics that have been taught.	It is giving quizzes on the topic of English and Mathematics subjects.
10.	Enrichment of Indonesian language and science materials on the topics that have been taught.	It is giving quizzes on Indonesian and science subjects, followed by giving rewards for students who completed the quiz with the best score.

Source: Research in 2020

Mentoring and tutoring for students at this Islamic Boarding School is essentially a complementary action that can replace the spirit of learning as a whole (Aditia et al., 2020). That is, if classroom learning has been running, then this mentoring and tutoring unites the needs of students in a compatible manner on the material that must be studied and understood. Through learning assistance, students can think critically because the ongoing learning process is accompanied by solving the problems they face without delaying and waiting for other opportunities.

The key in this mentoring and tutoring program is to turn on the learning community to become more motivated for autonomous learning (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2012), learn more, and continue what has been discussed in class. The existence of a learning community for students also has a very significant meaning for developing interpersonal abilities and skills (Wargadinata et al., 2020). Moreover, this is a need that must continually be developed. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the quantity and quality of face-to-face meetings and conversations between teachers and students are greatly reduced because it is related to preventing and breaking the COVID-19 chain, which requires all humans to carry out social and physical distancing.

Implementation of the Mentoring and Tutoring Program

In the process of mentoring and tutoring, students participated with great enthusiasm. For students in Islamic boarding schools learning with very intensive assistance is a dream that is always expected. So far, they only study non-religious subject matter while in the learning process in class and with *ustadz-ustadzah*. Outside the classroom, there are very few opportunities to study non-religious material. They spend most of their time on *pesantren* activities and reading *turats* books for deepening religious material.

This mentoring and tutoring runs intensively by specializing in meetings outside of school hours and after *pesantren* activities. Students study subjects during the mentoring and tutoring process and ask questions that have not been understood with great enthusiasm. This program is in line with the primary objectives of the mentoring and tutoring program as a response to students' learning difficulties and problems.

The interactive discussion method used during the mentoring and tutoring process opened a deadlock for the students. Suppose the learning process has been running entirely by using a teacher-centered approach, which is more often the lecture method. In that case, it is not impossible that there is an atmosphere that runs in a monotonous and boring manner in the learning process.

After the tutoring assistance went well, the service program at this Islamic boarding school had a very significant impact. Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic requires innovation in the learning process, this tutoring assistance is significant; apart from being a transfer of knowledge, this tutoring assistance is also able to build motivation for students about the importance of profound learning, mastery of subject concepts can be materialized, the completion of practice questions in this tutoring mentoring process can work well.

The success of tutoring assistance can also develop students' self in terms of completing school subject matter. Compared to before mentoring, students are reluctant to learn non-religious material due to a lack of understanding of subject concepts and completing assignments and practice questions. Thus, tutoring assistance for students can change the habits and traditions of being reluctant to learn into a spirit of learning, accompanied by full awareness and confidence that they can understand the concepts of the subject and complete the practice questions given by the teacher.



Figure 1. Process of Mentoring and Tutoring

Based on the mentoring and tutoring results at this Islamic Boarding School, it can be understood that mentoring and tutoring during this pandemic is essential to do. Running programs can be a bridge to build the principle of "learning and collaborating," considering that students gather in the same community, collaborative learning becomes an initiative that strengthens students' understanding of the material and lessons, students' learning activities also become more meaningful (Hendarwati et al., 2019). Most importantly, students in Islamic boarding schools can realize creating a "learning community and study space." At least this effort can help students to be more motivated in learning. This is in line with activities that prioritize the learning process of peer tutors (Kusumah, 2018). Many studies have proven the effectiveness of learning activities with this strategy and improved students' collaborative and communicative abilities (Nurlizawati, 2019).

Mentoring and tutoring that goes with peer tutoring strategies can also foster motivation for participants students (Ridhani & Abidarda, 2019). In line with teaching and learning needs, learning success will be achieved if all teaching and learning processes have high motivation (Andriani & Rasto, 2019). Good motivation can activate communication and interaction between teachers and learning participants and form a positive attitude, be confident, and respect each other.

CONCLUSION

Mentoring and tutoring for students is an irreplaceable need, especially in the online learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to students in Islamic boarding schools that are difficult and limited in accessing electronic media, tutoring assistance is able to assist students in understanding the concepts of school subjects. In addition, the process of completing the practice questions should also be carried out on an ongoing basis. They were considering that in addition to deepening and mastering the concepts of subjects, mentoring and tutoring can solve students' difficulties in learning and build motivation, enthusiasm for learning, positive attitudes, self-confidence, and mutual respect. Thus, these efforts can support the self-development of students towards a better generation.

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