# Teacher Intervention for Coping with Students' Learning Difficulties of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in the Covid-19 Social Restrictions

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## Abstract

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the government implemented a large-scale social restriction policy that impacted online learning. There are obstacles where not all students have supporting learning facilities and have learning difficulties requiring teacher intervention in the learning process. The study aimed to determine teacher intervention in the learning process for students with learning difficulties. The research method used descriptive qualitative at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Islamic Elementary School) Ats-Tsauroh Serang City, Banten Province. Data collection was limited to interviews with eight informants, including teachers, madrasa heads, and deputy madrasa heads, during the social restrictions period in February-April 2021. The results showed that teacher intervention in overcoming student learning difficulties was carried out directly, namely by understanding student conditions, understanding the typology of student learning difficulties, communicating with students' parents, observing students' family environmental conditions, conducting study visits to students' homes, and assessing student motivation. Teacher creativity is essential in making decisions for the benefit of student learning so that teachers provide the best service under challenging conditions. The implication of this research is that teacher intervention is effective in overcoming students' learning difficulties in the Covid-19 social restrictions.

Keywords: *teacher intervention, learning difficulty, home visits.*

## Abstrak

Akibat pandemi Covid-19, pemerintah menerapkan kebijakan pembatasan sosial berskala besar yang berdampak pada pembelajaran daring. Terdapat kendala di mana tidak semua siswa memiliki fasilitas belajar yang mendukung dan mengalami kesulitan belajar yang memerlukan campur tangan guru dalam proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui intervensi guru dalam proses pembelajaran bagi siswa yang mengalami kesulitan belajar. Metode penelitian yang

digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ats-Tsauroh Kota Serang, Provinsi Banten. Pengumpulan data terbatas pada wawancara dengan delapan informan, termasuk guru, kepala madrasah, dan wakil kepala madrasah selama masa pembatasan sosial pada Februari-April 2021. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa intervensi guru dalam mengatasi kesulitan belajar siswa dilakukan secara langsung, yakni dengan memahami kondisi siswa, memahami tipologi kesulitan belajar siswa, berkomunikasi dengan orang tua siswa, mengamati kondisi lingkungan keluarga siswa, melakukan kunjungan belajar ke rumah siswa, dan menilai motivasi siswa. Kreativitas guru sangat penting dalam mengambil keputusan untuk kepentingan belajar siswa sehingga guru memberikan pelayanan terbaik dalam kondisi yang penuh tantangan. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah intervensi yang dilakukan guru efektif dalam mengatasi kesulitan belajar siswa di masa pembatasan sosial Covid-19.

Kata kunci: *intervensi guru, kesulitan belajar, kunjungan rumah.*

## INTRODUCTION

Learning difficulties are a problem faced by all students, especially since they have many internal or external limitations. The role of parents, teachers, and schools is needed to create conditions suitable for learning. The Covid-19 pandemic is still spreading throughout the world, including in Indonesia, so the government makes a policy of restrictions. Large-scale social distancing (PSBB) to prevent the risk of broader transmission. For this reason, Tuti et al. (2022) revealed that social restrictions were marked by all activities being limited and following health protocols. For this reason, Okuda and Pinheiro (2015) explain that students' internal and external factors influence learning difficulties. The existence of social restrictions causes all parties to be able to carry out limited activities, including learning, but teachers have creativity while still paying attention to health protocols.

It has resulted in educational and learning activities in schools being affected, where the learning process is carried out online (Penrod et al., 2022). It requires many components that require adaptation, including the availability of infrastructure, student learning concentration, and learning atmosphere (Maggio et al., 2021). The role of parents is to raise challenges and opportunities for the transformation of conventional education into a digital form (Akkaya & Kapıdere, 2021). Thus, the gap between previously face-to-face conditions then adapts to online learning requires the necessary components, namely the role of teachers, learning systems, and learning media.

Students with economic limitations have no android facilities and internet access. It is not conducive. They lack attention from parents or family because they work for a living (Collins et al., 2019; Al-Nasa'h et al., 2021). According to Li and Che (2022), all citizens continue to carry out the education and learning process with new adaptations. A joint role is needed in carrying it out. Although theoretically, teachers must deal with differences between

students as differences in individual nature, social, cultural, economic, and environmental backgrounds (Kong et al., 2021). Differences condition students in online and face-to-face learning. It is taken into consideration of effectiveness according to the abilities of each student.

In conventional learning activities, students and teachers are accustomed to offline learning models that rely on interaction, question and answer, direct responses, and school infrastructure support. Knowing ages 7-11 years are at the basic education level having a phase-activities by functioning their minds to think logically, rationally, and objectively, including the learning aspect (Suzuki et al., 2015). It provides direct assistance from teachers and the role of parents in online learning because they have learning barriers or difficulties, such as in elementary schools or madrasah (Hastasari et al., 2022). The learning program will be effective if it follows the characteristics of the students. However, otherwise, there will be problems with learning difficulties for students (Maggio et al., 2021). The effectiveness of learning this research, parental or family support must be important as supervision teacher at home.

Teachers have a responsibility to carry out the learning process and play a role in overcoming learning difficulties faced by their students as a symptom faced by teachers (Assen & Otting, 2022). Teachers must provide exceptional handling and more attention to students with learning difficulties (Ramli et al., 2013). For this reason, need intervention to help limit the conventional approach; this is a logical consequence. So that students continue to follow learning with their limitations, as revealed by Ertesvåg et al. (2022), by responding to intervention as a valid method to help students with learning difficulties. This research intervention is used face-to-face by a teacher and follows the instruction as usual learning.

The teacher's intervention approach to students is part of a learning system that develops students' creativity by considering their characteristics (Marcilla-Toribio et al., 2022). According to McAllister et al. (2022), the correct form of intervention is offered to formal schools in the second year after it is known that students have learning difficulties. The forms of teacher intervention are Smith and Minescu (2022), either directly or indirectly. Suppose the learning difficulties experienced by students are not immediately helped to resolve, according to Huijsmans et al., (2022), they will experience boredom and reduce their learning motivation. It will have implications for the learning outcomes obtained.

In conducting effective teacher intervention, it is necessary to examine several aspects, including the teacher's understanding of student learning difficulties, the teacher's communication skills with parents of students, the technique of teacher visits to students with

learning difficulties, and teacher assessment of students with learning difficulties. Teachers must be willing to learn and significantly impact student learning by using suitable models and approaches for student success (Ahmed & Sintayehu, 2022). For this reason, this research needs to be built on some previous research or theory bases.

The teachers must be understanding of the condition of students with learning difficulties. According to Tao and Gao (2022), understanding is an ability that emphasizes by the teaching and learning process. The teachers must understand what will be conveyed, to whom, when, where, where, and how to convey it by connecting with prepared learning materials. It was revealed by Thaiposri and Wannapiroon (2015), that teachers must try to create better students in learning, thinking, and acting and increase understanding and knowledge related to the educational process. The difference in this research, the teacher makes different student categories based on social economy and family conditions as decisions for better learning.

Building communication with student-parents is more important. Students can be comfortable learning and understand things conveyed by the teacher-parents participate in giving a positive response. The use of communication with a speech in the learning process, where teaching and learning interactions will make it easier for students to complete the tasks given by the teacher (Nemr et al., 2021). Because in terms of communication that occurs, avoiding the direction hinders the achievement of the learning objectives itself. For this reason, personal communication provides two-way access. According to Jin et al. (2022) is a process of sending and receiving messages between two people or small groups with feedback. Then Alharbi (2022) added that interpersonal communication could be done by meeting or through other media. The existence of communication between teachers and parents or families will increase student involvement in completing homework, study assignments, and study habits (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013). For strengthening teacher-parent communication, Chena and Chena (2015) said that solid communication is essential for this partnership and for building a sense of community between home and school. The teachers must continue developing and expanding their skills to maximize effective communication with parents.

Teacher home visits to students' homes are an alternative to achieving learning effectiveness, especially for students who do not have an online learning infrastructure. The students can take lessons both directly and indirectly. In contrast, Neuenschwander et al. (2021) classify interventions in the form of direct visits, namely individual guidance, group guidance, and teaching and learning activities nuanced guidance. Home visits are a cross-

cultural learning experience and an essential component of teachers' understanding of students and their families (Oinas et al., 2022). Then Martin et al. (2022) said that teachers and parents could address their concerns and share their experiences through home visits. Furthermore, Sizoo et al. (2020) identify home visits as a means for teachers to create an initial positive impression and gain support from parents. Understanding this research teacher home visits to learning makes it easy for a student who does not have online learning facilities.

One of the final parts of the learning process is the evaluation of learning outcomes obtained through the established assessment system. The teacher determines the assessment standards that are determined primarily in situations of social restrictions. The teacher gives the assessment becomes essential for students as part of the results obtained and the students' process. Student assessment includes formative assessment, used to tailor instruction and help students improve, and summative assessment, used to provide grades. The two assessment forms must be linked coherently through a good learning model (Shepard, 2019). This research used learning modification assessment, it has compromised with the head of the madrasah and the special condition.

The description above confirms that during the implementation of Covid-19 social restrictions, most students have the infrastructure to support online learning. However, it is the other way around for a few students, so they cannot carry out the learning process like other students. It means that some students have limited socioeconomic backgrounds. In this condition, students find it challenging to learn because there are no online learning facilities; it is necessary to intervene from the teacher in the learning process to the assessment. From differences from previous studies, this research focus on teacher rules to cooping or intervention for the student with learning difficulties caused they have no online learning facilities.

This study aims to analyze teacher intervention in overcoming students' learning difficulties at the elementary education level, especially Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Serang City, during social restrictions. The approach to answering the objectives uses the involvement of parents and the creativity of teacher-learners so that students receive learning that is considered effective at home.

**METHODS**

This research method uses a qualitative descriptive method to understand an approach by tracing through exploration of an individual or group's social problems through interviews with informants with broad questions (Creswell, 2014). This type of research uses a case study approach. Beech (2000) argues that exploring an integrated systems approach of a case of through a process of collecting data with the involvement of a wide variety of sources of information in a problem context. The bound system indicates the existence of programs, policies, events, and individual or group activities. The objective reasoning is based on social reality and through a phenomenological paradigm, to explore participants' subjective experiences or study what is seen. This research is also evaluative to obtain a relatively deep understanding and interpretation of the meaning of the phenomena that occur in the field.

This research was conducted in February-April 2021 during social restrictions (PSBB). This study uses purposive random sampling. Teachers have a bachelor's degree by involving eight teachers as informants, including six classroom teachers, one madrasa principal, and one deputy madrasah from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ats-Tsauroh of Serang City, located in the center of the capital of the province of Banten. Collecting data using interviews using notes and recordings that have been compiled themselves. According to Miles and Huberman (2005), data analysis means activities carried out interactively and continuously until they are completed so that the data is saturated. It means that if it is felt that there is no information obtained. Indicators of teacher understanding of student learning difficulties, teacher communication skills to parents of students, teacher study visits techniques to students' homes, and assessment of students with learning difficulties. At the same time, the validity uses data triangulation. Triangulation can be done in the following ways: a) Comparing the observed data with interview data. b) Comparing what people say in public with what is done in private. c) Compare what people say about the research situation with what is said over time. d) Comparing the situation and perspective of a person with various opinions. e) Comparing the interview results with the issue of a related document.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

During the Covid-19 social restriction, the learning process carried out at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ats-Tsauroh of Serang City followed the direction of government policy. They are carrying out the learning process at school, conducting online learning with communication facilities through the WhatsApp application owned by students, parents, or family. However, different conditions occur in some students who have no online learning support facilities.

The madrasah and teacher's intervention is needed to cope with students learning difficulties experience.

**Teacher's Understanding of Students' Learning Difficulties**

To understand learning difficulties, all teachers hold meetings to identify students who have no online learning support facilities and have learning difficulties. They understand students with their limitations to intervene in learning. The below data shows how teachers understand students' learning difficulties.

Table 1. Teachers' Understanding of Students' Learning Difficulties

| No. | Indicator | Indicator Correlations |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | The teacher understands the socioeconomic student's background. | • The teacher knows the condition of the students after visiting the house and communicating with students-parents. |
| 2. | The teacher understands the learning student facilities owned. | • Teachers understand the typology of students' learning difficulties with no facilities and no guidance at home students because their parents work or die. |
| 3. | Teachers understand the role of parents in learning | |
| 4. | The teacher understands student learning difficulty typology. | |

Online learning is a new experience for educators and students. It offers exciting variations of learning, but it is required to prepare facilities that support the effectiveness of learning with the use of information technology, which needs to be improved again in the future.

The table 1 above shows that all classroom teachers are from class one until six; students with learning difficulties have no online learning facilities. It is necessary to intervene in madrasa principals with a policy to identify difficulties based on the results of meetings with the teachers. There are two students in grades 1 and 5; in classes 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 4, and 6, there is one student, so ten students have learning difficulties.

From interviews, all teachers visited home students and communicated with their parents to understand their socio-economic background, their learning facilities, and the role of parents in learning. Eight teachers stated that it was difficult for students to learn because there were no online learning facilities. Hence, they relied on books or notes owned by students. In contrast, six students still had parents, two students without a father/mother, and two students without a father and mother. However, there are still closest relatives for students without a father, mother, or both. The condition of the presence or absence of parents needed by students is a companion who can guide them when studying at home. The teacher understands that the lack of parental attention to student learning at home reduces the

motivation to learn because parents are busy making a living. The teacher has visited students with learning difficulties because there are no supporting facilities. The teacher has visited students' homes and communicated with students' parents to know and understand their condition—the typology of learning difficulty experienced by all students in the absence of online learning support facilities.

As the spearhead of successful learning, this teacher condition is a leader for the students under his care, so it is essential to fight for his students to be proud and gain trust for their students. According to Okuda and Pinheiro (2015), learning difficulties categories are faced by students as a learning disorders. A person's learning process is disrupted because conflicting responses arise, and learning outcomes are lower than their potential.

Students' learning difficulties can be interpreted as a condition in the learning process marked by obstacles in achieving predetermined learning outcomes. That is teachers must be responsive to cope with student learning difficulties from the inner or outside of the student. To Fritz et al., (2019) opinion, the factors that affect student learning difficulties arise from internal and external. The factors of students' learning difficulties are students' internal factors, namely socio-economic conditions and the absence of supporting facilities, and external factors, namely parental attention and guidance.

**Teacher's Communication Ability to Parents of Students**

The role of communication between teachers and parents supports student learning success. A two-way form of caring makes communication skills effective to minimize student learning difficulties. The following data shows the teacher's communication skills with parents regarding student learning difficulties.

Table 2. Teacher's Communication Ability with Parents
of Students' Learning Difficulties

| No. | Indicator | Indicator Correlations |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Opening a conversation about student learning difficulties | • The communication between teacher-parent with coping with students' learning difficulties during the home visit is carried out by preparing a place, disciplined learning rules, and learning facilities as well as working together/communicating to convey the student's learning process |
| 2. | Knowing the condition of the family and home environment | |
| 3. | Knowing alternatives provides learning tools | |
| 4. | Submit learning reports from teachers and parents and vice versa | • The teacher observes the condition of the family and home environment to determine the correct time/hour to visit. |

The table 2 above explains that from the interviews, all teachers have communicated to ten parents regarding students learning difficulties experienced during the social restriction

period. They responded positively to the teacher's desire to visit the house and convey the rules. However, in the home environment, the teacher saw eight students in a residential area while two students were in a market or shopping environment. The teacher tells parents to work together to provide learning facilities at home and view learning reports. In contrast, home visits are delivered once per/week with a schedule adjusted by each teacher. The schedule for the first session is from 08.00 to 10.30 AM and the second session is from 10.30 to 12.00 AM. The obstacle home students near the market or shops area are reducing concentration due to active business activities, so the approach taken by the teacher is by discussing practice questions.

The critical role of teachers and parents in dealing with students learning difficulties as stated by Shah (2019) whereas a companion at home for parents and at school for teachers, is very influential in the learning process both at home and at school. Then supported by the opinion of Schnekloth (2021) that the role of parents, schools, and teachers is significant in overcoming students' learning difficulties where teachers motivate and parenting guide. It requires two-way communication to foster mutual trust between teachers and parents in guiding students both at home and at school to achieve learning success.

However, this study shows that the communication that occurs is in the same direction where the teacher submits reports to parents. However, the feedback response from parents to teachers is slow, as revealed by McCabe et al. (2022) where an essential thing is in the form of home visits. However, the parents' communication and monitoring of each other and assessing students learning that participate caused the response or feedback from parents to the teachers often be late. Those, Tuti et al. (2022) during the Covid-19 social restriction period, required good communication alignment in decisions at madrasah so that strategies were created according to expectations.

**Teacher Techniques for Students' Home Visits**

Study home visits of students with learning difficulties due to the teacher's limited online learning support aim to help students be motivated to learn, compete, and collect study assignments. The following data shows the technique of visits by teachers to students' homes in overcoming learning difficulties.

Table 3. Teacher Techniques for Students' Home Visits

| No. | Indicator | Indicator Correlations |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Visiting teachers by student-parent responses | • The students-parents happiness with the teacher's visit home according to the schedule set once per/week by health protocols. |
| 2. | The teacher applied to learn | |
| 3. | Knowing students' study habits | • Teachers bring supporting learning facilities |

| | |
|---|---|
| 4. The learning environment and student concentration | (props/books) and provide visiting cards to monitor their effectiveness and convey to parents-students how to adjust good learning habitually and learning conducive atmosphere. |

The table 3 above shows that eight teachers felt that students and parents responded positively to home visits as per a predetermined time or schedule once a week. The teacher brought learning facilities that supported the learning process at home. The teacher provided a visiting card that students' parents and teachers later identified as directing good study habits at home according to their respective conditions. However, unfortunately, the teacher's home visit of seven parents of students could not accompany learning at home. In comparison, three parents were willing to assist even once a week. It helps the teacher to motivate and complete the task well.

A home visit is a visit to a student's home which is carried out to coping a students learning difficulties. It is done to find out in-depth information about students (Sizoo et al., 2020). Teacher visits to students' homes have a positive effect on helping teachers improve student learning outcomes and attitudes (Ilhan et al., 2019). The home visits study is supported by Wahjusaputri et al. (2021) who suggest offline learning during social restrictions. With books or face meetings by collecting assignments, homework, or other exam assignments. For this reason, Wright et al. (2018) asserted that by visiting students' homes, teachers could develop a more vital understanding of the factors that contribute to student behavior and school performance.

That is a direct intervention by providing individual guidance to students at home (Collins et al., 2019). Then Cornett et al. (2020) that teachers learn by visiting students' homes to support individual learning. However, because of the social implementation period, teachers visit students' homes to conduct face-to-face teaching and learning activities. However, they pay attention to health protocols (Oinas et al., 2022). The results of this study are supported by Mali and Lim (2021), the Covid-19 social restriction period was enforced. It identified visits to students' homes for the learning process where home visits and face-to-face shows effectively influence students' learning difficulties (Ardvin et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, unfortunately, some students in the learning process at home do not get the attention of their parents or family. The attention of parents or family involvement in teacher visits to homes, according to Ovez (2012), positively impacts learning outcomes to overcome learning difficulties. Weak socio-economic conditions and parental attention, as Ramli et al. (2013) argue that teachers visit homes with 73.5% of families of low-income students. Evaluation.

**Teachers' Assessment of Students with Learning Difficulties**

In the learning process, assessment becomes one of the indicators of learning success, including the learning process by visiting students' homes. The following data shows how the teacher assesses students with learning difficulties.

Table 4. Teachers' Assessment of Students with Learning Difficulties

| No. | Indicator | Indicator Correlations |
|-----|-----------|------------------------|
| 1. | The teacher understands the socioeconomic background of the students | • The teacher knows the condition of the students after visiting the house and communicating with students-parents. |
| 2. | The teacher understands the learning facilities owned by the students | • Teachers understand the typology of students' learning difficulties with no facilities and no guidance at home because their parents work or die. |
| 3. | Teachers understand the role of parents in learning | |
| 4. | The teacher understands the typology of student learning difficulties | |

The table 4 above shows that the teacher's assessment of students learning difficulties is accompanied by good motivation, which is indicated by regular weekly attendance. The tasks given by the teacher are carried out and completed on time. However, February-April was the peak of the first wave of Covid-19 in Indonesia, including Serang City. Two students were with suspected Covid-12 families, so they were self-isolated and did not make home visits for 14 days.

The assessment aspects applied by the teacher are daily grades, discipline, attendance, weekly grades, mid-semester assessments, end-of-semester assessments, cognitive, and affective aspects. Unfortunately, this student assessment was not accompanied by parents' attention during the home visit for learning. It is known that student learning assessments will be included in the semester learning report. It is essential to do that the accumulated assessment consists of components that have been determined, especially for students with learning difficulties. The house minimizes the low value. Under these conditions, Wei et al. (2021) require assessment procedures and tools to be provided to identify students with difficulty and monitor their progress. Because the assessment components carried out by the teacher face-to-face are limited in time, they use conventional assessment. Yilmaz (2011) said that offline learning strategies with assessments are based on students' daily assignments, and assessments are based on students' experiences in the teaching and learning process. Although home visits and offline learning are limited, five teachers carry out remedial tests or assignments for six students to understand their solutions for better grades.

On the other hand, in the assessment stage, the teacher applies practical assessments, daily tests, mid-semester assessments, and end-of-semester assessments for cognitive aspects

(Estrada-Orozco et al., 2018). However, in social restrictions, efforts to overcome student learning difficulties with home visits are more effective because there are still obstacles. If one from their family is infected with Covid-19, they must follow the protocol by self-isolation or in a hospital.

In contrast to online learning, Lefa (2014) argues that students will feel confused when they have to visualize their knowledge, which will impact the results of the assessment later so that it becomes a different obstacle in the assessment. The same thing is said by Graus et al., (2022) that in online learning, the teacher is not maximal in providing learning material so the expected learning process is not achieved. In the end, the assessment of students is hampered by using aspects of cognitive assessment.

## CONCLUSION

The principle of the Covid-19 social restriction period is health protocol. The learning process was disrupted, one of which was learning difficulties, especially for students with no online learning support facilities like android-based handphones, netbooks or laptops, and internet networks. For this reason, it was necessary to intervene in coping with students' learning difficulties. The importance of teacher intervention in overcoming student learning difficulties without supporting online learning facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic is a big responsibility. The influencing factors are knowing the condition of students, understanding the typology of learning difficulties, communicating with students' parents, observing the family environment's condition, feeling happy for parents and students, bringing learning tools, and assessing student motivation. Teacher creativity is essential in making decisions for the benefit of student learning so that teachers provide the best service under challenging conditions. The implication of this research is that teacher intervention is effective in overcoming students' learning difficulties accompanied by parental involvement. The contribution of this research to anticipated learning in emergency conditions with unpredictable public health makes restrictions on student learning.

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