

Psychological Students' Perceptions on Blended Learning

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Abstract. Blended learning is one of the learning methods implemented in universities after the Covid-19 outbreak. Blended learning is implemented by combining learning carried out face-to-face (offline) with learning carried out online (online). The aim of this research is to determine students' perceptions of blended learning that they have experienced previously. The method used in this research is a qualitative method using an open-ended questionnaire. The number of subjects involved in this research was 227 students. The data obtained in this research used thematic analysis techniques using N-Vivo software. The results of the research show that there are three themes that emerge regarding student perceptions regarding blended learning, namely learning experiences, social support (interaction), and learning flexibility. The findings of this research also show that students have a positive perception of blended learning, but students prefer learning in face-to-face (offline) sessions compared to learning conducted online. Face-to-face learning is considered more interactive compared to learning during online sessions. However, combining these two methods becomes a learning method that is considered effective and provides many benefits for students.

Keywords: blended learning; students' perceptions; face to face learning; online learning.

1 Introduction

The implementation of learning in higher education after the Covid-19 pandemic experienced several differences from before. During the pandemic, learning uses an online system to avoid the spread of the virus. However, after the pandemic ended, learning was carried out face-to-face again and several higher education institutions combined face-to-face and online learning, known as the blended learning method. Blended learning is implemented by integrating information technology into learning activities by strengthening an interactive and communicative learning environment [1]

The success of the blended learning method involves collaboration between students (students) and lecturers and requires certain abilities to support this success. Among them is the ability of

lecturers to present learning material, and students also need digital devices, support from facilitators and peers [2]. Apart from that, there are challenges faced in blended learning, such as lack of learning control, adequate digital technology capacity, motivation, and parental support [3].

In facing these challenges, a positive assessment of the methods applied is needed. Positive assessment provides a positive impact and increases the possibility of successful learning [4]. For students, this positive view takes the form of interest, motivation, and confidence in the success of learning [4]. On the other hand, assessments that tend to be negative will affect academic performance and learning satisfaction [5]. Positive assessments are also influenced by the perception of the facilitator (lecturer). Lecturers who have positive perceptions can provide maximum support, such as facilitating learning activities and providing effective control over students [6]. Thus, it can be said that the assessment or perception of students and lecturers is an important element in achieving success in blended learning.

Based on initial interviews interviews that researchers conducted (preliminary study) with lecturers and students, there is some data that shows inconsistencies and differences in perceptions related to the blended learning method. Students stated that online blended learning was considered ineffective and difficult to understand regarding the material being studied. Meanwhile, lecturers consider that blended learning is an alternative digital-based learning that needs to be implemented in the implementation of today's learning, and can support the ability to use digital technology for both lecturers and students.

Research so far tends to focus on student perceptions of blended learning methods [7] [8] [9] [10]. Meanwhile, there has not been much research that measures the perceptions of educators (lecturers) [11]. Therefore, this research aims to determine the perspectives of students and lecturers regarding the application of the blended learning method. It is hoped that the research results can become the basis for developing a blended learning system, so that it can improve the quality of learning, especially regarding the implementation of the use of information technology as a learning medium. It is important to carry out this research to find out the views or perceptions of both lecturers and students regarding the application of blended learning, so as to obtain comprehensive data that can be used to develop the application of this learning model and improve the quality of student learning.

2 Method

The method used in this research is a quantitative research method. The subjects in the research were 227 students from the Department of Psychology, Padang State University. The subject criteria are students who are currently taking semester 3 (class of 2022), semester 5 (class of 2021) and 7 (class of 2020). Meanwhile, students from the class of 2023 (semester 1) were not included as samples in this research, because new students have not yet had learning experience through blended learning. The sampling technique used is cluster sampling based on student cohorts, namely students from the 2022 class and 2021 class who study using the blended learning method. The research data collection instrument used an open ended questionnaire which explored student assessments related to the implementation of blended learning that had been completed. Before the questionnaire is distributed, the questionnaire is validated by

carrying out a professional judgment regarding the suitability of the research measuring instrument.

Data collection was carried out in two ways, namely (1) face-to-face and (2) online survey. Face-to-face data collection was carried out by meeting the subject directly in a particular classroom and then asking the subject to fill out a questionnaire which was presented online via the g-form link that had been prepared by the research team. Before the subject filled out the questionnaire, the research team first explained clearly to the subject the purpose of the research and techniques for filling out the questionnaire, then distributed the link for the subject to complete. During the process of filling out the questionnaire, the research team accompanies and is present with the research subjects, to coordinate filling out the questionnaire and help the subjects if they experience technical or non-technical problems. Meanwhile, online data collection was completely carried out based on the distribution of the g-form link via class and generation WhatsApp groups, without the research team meeting and accompanying the subjects in filling out the questionnaire. Subjects are also encouraged to share the research link via their respective social media, so that more subjects can fill in the research link.

Before filling out the questionnaire, the subject was given an informed consent form as a form of agreement to participate as a participant in this research, and informed that the participant's identity and all responses would be kept confidential, and all data would be used only for research purposes. The research team provided rewards as a form of gratitude to subjects who were willing to become participants in this research by giving e-vouchers to 100 selected subjects. Next, the data obtained in this research was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques via NVIVO Software.

Even though this research uses a lot of data regarding student experiences related to blended learning, it has not been able to obtain data that is representative of all students. The questionnaire used in this research may not necessarily be able to fully explore experiences, but by using open-ended questions, it is hoped that students will be able to maximize and detail their experiences related to the blended learning that they have gone through so far, so that researchers can also obtain useful data. richer and more detailed, and makes it possible to obtain unique data.

2 Result and Discussion

In table 1 below, there is demographic data on the distribution of research subjects based on generation, gender and age. There were 157 subjects from the class of 2021 who were students in the 5th semester and 82 students from the class of 2022 who were taking the 3rd semester. There were 36 male subjects and 236 female subjects. Then, there were 18 subjects who were 18 years old, 121 people aged 19 years, 86 people aged 20 years, 26 people aged 21 years, and 22 years old 20 people.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 227).

Subject	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Class (group)	Class of 2021	157	69%
	Class of 2022	83	31%
Gender	Male	36	15%
	Female	236	85%
Ages	18 years	18	5%
	19 years	121	49%
	20 years	86	31%
	21 years	26	9%
	22 years	20	6%

Based on the thematic analysis that has been carried out regarding student perceptions in participating in the blended learning activities that have been completed. In presenting the following research results, the researcher uses the code S (number) which means S is the subject and is followed by the subject number, for example S5 which means that the sentence or sentence fragment was uttered by the subject with serial number 5 and so on. Following are three themes related to the research questions, namely (1) learning experiences, (2) social support (interaction), and (3) learning flexibility.

3.1 Learning experiences

The subject said that the blended learning that had been completed provided certain experiences with the learning process. This diversity of experience makes the subject have a unique dynamic in participating in this learning and providing assessments (both positive and negative) related to the learning process using blended learning that has been passed. Such as the uncertainty of the schedule for when learning will be carried out face-to-face (offline) and when learning will be carried out virtually (online), students often experience network disruptions or problems, unavailability of data packages, and sometimes also problems with devices (laptops). Apart from that, the learning experience that has been experienced so far is considered by students to be a new and non-monotonous learning method (it feels unique and interesting), when compared to the conditions during Covid-19 where learning was completely carried out online.

Regarding students' experiences in this learning, students stated that the success of blended learning was influenced by internal and external factors. These internal factors are directly related to students themselves, especially how to manage time optimally and effectively when implementing learning, and being able to maintain learning motivation during online learning sessions. Then, regarding external factors, students' learning experiences stated that the lecturer's ability to deliver and present material in e-learning had an influence on learning carried out using blended learning. The more interesting the content presented by e-learning, the more

enthusiastic students will be in accessing and studying independently the material presented on the e-learning platform.

S39: "I feel that the experience of learning using blended learning in previous semesters has made me assess this blended learning positively. Apart from that, the blended learning mechanism has had a positive influence on me to be able to get the most out of every learning session".

S73: "I feel that blended learning is fun, because with this method there are many conveniences that are obtained and it doesn't seem like learning is done forcedly."

S201: "In my opinion, my success in the blended learning method that has been used so far depends on myself, especially if the learning is done online. This makes me have to be able to manage my time well, especially in relation to assignments that have a deadline for completion. If I study offline, there are lecturers and classmates who remind me, but if I study online, I am the only one who plays a role in the success of my learning. So, I feel that my learning experience last semester made me much better prepared and have the best strategies to be effective in this blended learning."

3.2 Social support (interaction)

This second theme emerged from students' assessments that blended learning can run optimally and effectively, related to interaction and support from classmates, especially when learning is carried out face-to-face (offline). When learning is carried out online, students tend to feel that learning is carried out individually, and there is minimal interaction and communication with classmates, especially when there are assignments carried out in groups. Students are limited in communicating with classmates, and this barrier in communication makes students tend to ignore assignments during online learning sessions. This condition is different when offline learning sessions are held, where students feel happier with face-to-face learning. This is because when learning is carried out offline, students can maintain maximum communication and interaction with their classmates, so that the learning carried out in offline sessions is maximized. By joining classes with other friends, who can have direct interactions, students feel that they receive mutual support during offline learning sessions. Through face-to-face learning, students can maximize their learning.

The results of the research findings in this second theme are also related to the interactions that exist between fellow students in implementing learning in blended learning sessions, which can give rise to other positive things that support successful learning, such as learning motivation. Students tend to have more high motivation if learning is done face-to-face, and it also gives rise to other positive emotions. Apart from that, students feel happy and enthusiastic about going to campus because they are physically close to other classmates. This has an effect during the question and answer session in class, students feel they can compete more in answering the lecturer's questions and are actively involved in learning. This condition is different when learning is carried out online, students tend to be passive in learning, although when these two methods are combined learning can still be carried out optimally.

S68: "Learning using the blended learning method (50% online and 50% offline) is more fun than just one method alone. With blended learning, which includes offline learning, it makes me more comfortable, because it is not completely done online."

S159: "In my opinion, learning carried out using blended learning is an effective method. Because when I'm online, I'm hampered by asking questions and sometimes I feel lazy about studying, so I become more passive. However, with offline sessions, I feel that the learning material left behind online can be maximized when learning is done offline. "In offline sessions, I can also ask the lecturer directly about things that are difficult or that I cannot understand, even though the material has been passed in the previous meeting, and I can also ask my classmates about things that I don't understand"

S215: "I think that blended learning is the right method for now. This is supported by the convenience of technology (such as e-learning) which provides materials that can be accessed online at any time, and is not continuously done online. So that when offline, you can discuss with classmates and lecturers. This makes learning more fun and varied".

3.3 Learning Flexibility

Learning using the blended learning method is considered by students to be more effective learning, when compared to learning that is continuously carried out face-to-face. With mixed methods, students and lecturers can carry out learning that is appropriate to the situation and conditions they are experiencing. The online method can be used if face-to-face learning is not possible, such as the lecturer's schedule being hampered by other important activities or assignments, weather (rain), technical problems, and so on.

Then, regarding the access time for learning materials provided, students can also access materials that are not limited by learning hours. Students can access learning content anywhere and at any time, without any particular restrictions. These conditions have a positive impact on students in participating in learning.

Furthermore, students also encountered learning flexibility regarding the learning schedule at each meeting. Sometimes, there are conditions where students and lecturers agree to carry out lectures using certain methods that are both desired by lecturers and students, so that this condition makes students and lecturers feel comfortable with the flexibility obtained by using the blended learning method.

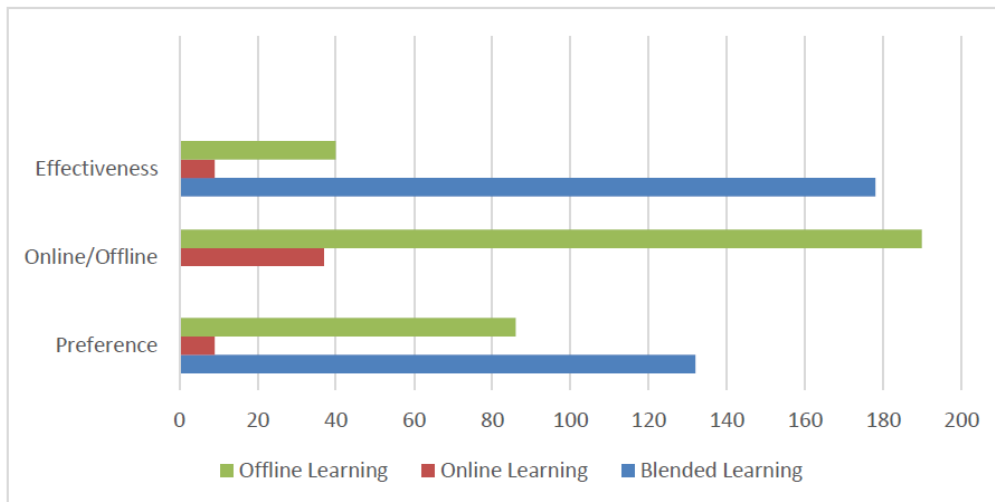
S9: "I think blended learning is effective, because it is more flexible, especially in online sessions, and makes it easier for students to learn."

S38: "In my opinion, blended learning is an interesting and non-monotonous learning method. If you go offline continuously it makes me feel bored, but alternating it (taking turns) makes lectures more enjoyable, and also sometimes students and lecturers can agree on a time or schedule. certain conditions and circumstances, such as when it rains for example."

S121: "I am happy with learning using the blended learning method, because if the lecturer has problems doing offline learning, he can switch to learning online, without having to bother looking for a replacement lecture schedule."

Additional Result

In addition, students still favor offline learning over online learning, even in blended learning environments. A description of preferences, online and offline learning, and student perceptions of learning effectiveness are shown in graph 1.



Graphic.1. Students' Preference, online/offline, and effectiveness

According to graph 1 above, students believe that blended learning is more effective than either face-to-face (offline) learning or learning that is done entirely online. These findings are consistent with previous research on the subject. It can be concluded, then, that learning through the blended learning approach—which combines in-person and virtual learning—is thought to be more successful than learning through any one of the methods alone.

Then, the results of the research above are also in line with the tendency of students to choose blended learning as a learning method, compared to just one learning method, either offline or completely online learning. This shows that learning using a combination method is preferred by students as a learning method.

The graph above also shows interesting research findings, that even though learning is carried out using blended learning, students prefer learning in face-to-face (offline) sessions compared to learning in online sessions. However, students still think that it is important to combine the two. This is caused by boredom that arises in students, if learning is continuously carried out using only one method for a full semester, so by combining both methods (online and offline) it makes learning more enjoyable, even though both methods are offline learning is considered more fun.

S112: "blended learning is fun, from online and offline sessions, I prefer learning face to face, because I can interact more directly with lecturers and classmates optimally without experiencing obstacles or signal problems."

S157: "I like studying using the blended learning method, compared to full offline or online. If it is continuously done offline, boredom will also arise, whereas online is the same, learning becomes less fun because it is only online continuously."

S56: "If you go offline completely, it doesn't feel fun either, it's the same as online if you constantly feel like there's no challenge, and if the learning is mixed like this, it can also save costs (transportation costs) for going to campus."

Based on the presentation of the findings in this research, three themes emerged, namely learning experiences, social support (interaction), and learning flexibility. Learning experience is related to the experiences students have had in participating in blended learning activities. This shows the various kinds of experiences that students have experienced, both positive and negative. However, in general, students perceive that they have had a positive experience in participating in blended learning activities. The findings of this research are supported by the results of Khalaf, Abubakr, and Ziada (2023) research that students appreciate the educational experience gained through blended learning. The results of this research illustrate that students have diverse experiences in learning using blended learning techniques [12]. The findings of this research are also in line with research conducted by Kuong (2015) that the role of online content quality and interaction between students is an important factor in forming a satisfying learning experience [13]. Additionally, findings suggest that students' experiences during blended learning may influence their level of engagement. Students who feel actively involved in blended learning tend to have better academic results [14]. This underscores the importance of exploring ways to increase student engagement in these learning environments.

Social support shows the importance of support from classmates in participating in blended learning activities. Most respondents stated that interaction with lecturers and classmates (especially during online sessions) provided important support for understanding the material and maintaining optimal learning motivation. However, several students emphasized the importance of the teacher's active role in creating and facilitating classes so that the delivery of ideas and student collaboration during learning can be more optimal. Previous research conducted by Sun et al. (2022) showed that the success of blended learning also depends on the interaction design between teachers and students [15].

Furthermore, research findings relate to learning flexibility, which means that students can access material anytime and anywhere. This flexibility gives students the freedom to manage their time optimally, so that blended learning gets maximum results. Research conducted by (Kostolanyova et al. 2015) shows that designing effective blended learning requires special attention to the balance between flexibility and learning guidance provided by the facilitator. Analysis of the results shows that factors such as the quality of face-to-face interactions, online course design, and time flexibility have a significant impact on students' perceptions of blended learning [16] [17]. A deep understanding of these variables can help develop blended learning models that are more effective and can be adapted to student needs.

Apart from that, research findings also show that students tend to prefer face-to-face learning compared to online learning. The results of this research were also found by several other studies that students tend to have a positive assessment of face-to-face learning compared to online learning. This is because face-to-face learning allows students to interact with facilitators and peers in developing personal learning networks.

3 Conclusion

Based on the results of this research, there are three themes that emerge from students' opinions regarding the blended learning they have experienced, namely learning experiences, social support (interaction), and learning flexibility. Learning experiences, related to the learning experiences that students have gone through in the previous semester (both experiences involving positive and negative emotions); social support (interaction), related to the existence of sessions in blended learning which are carried out face-to-face (offline), so that students feel that there is direct interaction that occurs during the learning process and this allows students to maximize their learning. If in the online session students feel less than optimal and have minimal interaction, then in the face-to-face session they can maximize it by communicating directly with both the lecturer and their classmates. Next is learning flexibility, related to the high level of flexibility in the implementation of blended learning, especially if there are obstacles or other obstacles when learning is carried out face-to-face (offline) where students and lecturers have to be on campus, it can be transferred to use the learning system online, without the need to look for a replacement class schedule. Apart from that, additional results in the findings of this research show that students tend to prefer learning to be carried out using blended learning, compared to using only one method, such as online or offline. However, in blended learning, there is an interesting finding that even though learning is carried out in a blended manner, students tend to prefer learning sessions conducted face-to-face (offline) compared to learning sessions conducted online.

The implications of this research include the need to develop blended learning designs that are more responsive to students' needs in participating in learning in order to obtain optimal results. Apart from that, it is also related to strengthening interaction and support from friends and facilitators in digital-based learning environments. The results of this research can also provide insight into the factors that influence student acceptance of online learning. Thus, higher education institutions can focus on improving the quality of online platforms, overcoming technical obstacles, and increasing online interactions to improve the quality of distance learning to make it more effective and optimal. This research can also provide a basis for developing more inclusive education policies, ensuring that the implementation of blended learning takes into account the diversity of needs and preferences of students from various backgrounds.

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