



Evaluation of Distance Learning in Pre-schools During the New Pandemic Era

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ABSTRACT: Distance learning at the pre-school level requires evaluation action considering that this form of learning is a new process for most elements of education in early childhood education. The purpose of this study is to evaluate virtual learning, namely planning, implementation, and assessment, as well as revealing the obstacles that occur in online learning in Kendari City Kindergarten. This study uses descriptive quantitative research methods with data collection techniques through surveys. The results showed that planning for online learning had been carried out by coordinating between teachers and parents, as well as drafting a learning plan from home starting from standard learning operations, semester programs, weekly and daily lesson plans. The implementation of learning uses several facilities, including WhatsApp application (62.50%), Zoom meeting application (12.50%), learning videos (12.50%), Google Meet (6.25%), and YouTube (6.25%). Children's learning methods currently include giving assignments (32.26%), performance (25.81%), demonstrations (22.58%) and experiments (19.35%). While the media used are video, picture media and children's worksheets. The assessment used by the teacher is in the form of portfolio assessment (50%), performance (30%) and observation (20%). The obstacles faced by teachers during distance learning are the lack of cooperation from parents when accompanying children to study at home, parents who are often late in collecting their children's assignments (portfolios), and the lack of smart phone facilities owned by parents. In response to this, good communication and collaboration between teachers and parents are needed, and parents must be able to pay attention and motivate children during the distance learning process, especially in the new pandemic era.

Keywords: pre-school, distance learning, ECE evaluation

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1 INTRODUCTION

Some early childhood education facilities, considered cutting edge organizations, remain open during the COVID pandemic, while others are temporarily closed, and others are experimenting with other distance learning methodologies. The increasing use of the virtual approach at ECE raises concerns about teachers' experiences with them and the problems they have in ensuring continuity of education for the children they care for. In the early months of the pandemic, 1,434 ECE instructors from 46 states serving children ages 0 to 5 (including Kindergarten)—529 of whom reported teaching virtually—completed and survey about their teaching experience (Ford et al., 2021). Content analysis of the open responses revealed several problems, including low levels of participation of children and their families, limited social interaction and developmentally appropriate ways to engage children in online learning formats, lack of knowledge and skills for distance teaching, and limited technology support.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, most non-medical disciplines have focused on the psychological and behavioral reactions of the public (Prime et al., 2020), with only a few focusing on the emotions of parents and children (Brown et al., 2020; Spinelli et al., 2020). One study looked at Chinese's parents' attitudes and ideas about kindergarten students' distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that most parents had negative sentiments regarding online learning (Dong et al., 2020). However, parents' perspectives on the distance learning experience of kindergarten students, the challenges they face and the support they need, as well as their children's use of screen media at home, as well as the skills of teachers in implementing distance learning have not been widely investigated.

Distance learning refers to educational opportunities outside of the traditional brick and mortar classroom (such as, lessons sent to caregivers, virtual instruction). Despite the importance of distance learning in limiting COVID-19 spread, children, caregivers, and instructors have been adversely affected by the US school system's low capacity to provide high-quality online learning for long periods of time (Dorn et al. 2020). There is currently a dearth of study on how the COVID-19 epidemic has affected early childhood educators or how they have responded to provide remote instruction (Bassok et al., 2020; Safi et al., 2020). There is very little information on the accomplishments and challenges that early childhood educators face when delivering virtual learning. Understanding early childhood educators' achievements and difficulties in delivering distance learning during COVID-19 is critical because it can help shape future regulations and guidelines for providing high-quality, accessible remote teaching to young children.

In Indonesia, online learning in early childhood education has been carried out starting in 2020, when face-to-face learning is constrained by the pandemic. At the early childhood education level, institutions do the same thing by making various adjustments with institutions, teachers, and parents. The improvement of the online learning process that has been carried out requires reflection and evaluation of the process that has been running so far. This study aims to evaluate distance learning from the aspects of planning,

implementation, and assessment in Kindergarten during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research findings are expected to be a tool to determine the next policy for education providers, stakeholders, and every party that cares about the will of education, especially the early childhood education level in Kendari City.

2 THEORITICAL STUDY

2.1 *Distance Learning in Pre-School*

Distance learning is defined as the delivery of course materials over the Internet (Lau & Lee, 2020). There are several platforms and technologies accessible to conduct the teaching-learning processes to distribute these course materials, and these have made DL more possible. The major components that facilitate DL are understood to include communication, collaboration, and information exchange. Online tools in the learning environment have risen significantly because to the flexible usage of mobile devices and the growth of telecommunication services like video conferencing, chats and forums, online assessments, remote laboratories, or web-based teamwork. Distance learning is typically characterized as training provided to people who are physically separated from one another. It might range from the delivery of learning materials through various postal services to the usage of online learning tools (Guilar & Loring, 2008). The necessity for social distance rather than geographical distance has required its use in the contemporary environment, as explained in greater detail below. On the other side, virtual learning refers to study that is mediated and accessed using Web-based technology tools (Nichols, 2003).

Since classroom learning has been moved to the home, the obligations of parents for the education of their children have become more important, and many may have to face many expectations. Stay-at-home parents must adjust to a new routine at home where they must manage the demands of distance learning while carrying out other household tasks. Parents who work outside the home should organize childcare and support their children's online education while also working from home or the office. Parents will surely face many challenges and problems if they are not trained and prepared (Lau & Lee, 2020).

Previous research has revealed that more parenting stress, which is often generated when parents feel unable to handle parenting tasks, can result in less successful parenting and may further limit parent-child bonding (Beckerman et al., 2017). According to a recent study, parents who reported having more difficulty supporting their children's learning than before the pandemics were shown to be more stressed (Spinelli et al., 2020). Parents' parenting stress decreases, and their level and quality of the parental participation rise when they believe that their children's learning is managed, and that they are content with the education provided by schools (Lau & Lee, 2020; Tao et al., 2019). A meta-finding analyses also revealed the significance of parental participation and the relationship between home and school in predicting young children's educational success (Ma et al., 2016).

As a novel method of instruction for young children, distance education is well recognized to be unfamiliar to the majority of ECEs (Campos & Vieira, 2021). The current study has shown that ECEs require efforts and practices that support their psychological well-being while assisting them in improving their technological competencies, increasing the number of interactive resources, establishing a user-friendly distance education platform, and serving families, as stated by Darling-Hammond et al., (2020). All these requirements must be met to deliver early childhood distance education of the highest caliber.

2.2 Evaluation of New Era Early Childhood Education

As expected, the pandemic has demonstrated the drawbacks of using technology tools in professional/teacher preparation. Many teachers stated that they needed training in distance teaching. Many platforms should be covered in the training, as well as how to interact with families online. Teachers are advised to train more on this subject because using technology to supplement live or online instruction is a great tool, if the teacher has the skills to use it effectively (Atiles et al., 2021). Teaching in distance learning, where children connect with the teacher by learning independently or participating, is understood in a way of organizing the teaching process, where children, in different places and using information communication tools and technologies, with the teacher to achieve the teaching goals. Group teaching, in which children enroll in a class or group and continuously study while being instructed by teachers in accordance with curriculum, is a form of teacher consultation that may take place in either a group or an individual setting (Bilbokaitė-Skiauterienė & Bilbokaitė, 2021).

The knowledge, abilities and dispositions required to successfully reconsider and engage in online teaching, and learning should be part of a teacher development program. Teacher training should be comprehensive and cover not only how to design activities that can be carried out remotely but also how to collaborate with caregivers who have different levels of expertise and education. The ability of families to provide educator feedback on assessments should be taken into account when conducting distance education. Several teachers stated that assessment was the main obstacle. The teacher also shows the value of training which includes setting assessments that are in accordance with educational goals by expressing his inability to be satisfied with evaluating products without seeing the process in action. Various Obstacles in distance learning in early childhood education include many things for learning to run successfully (Bigras et al., 2021). The objectives of teachers frequently include encouraging learning, prioritizing the security and success of all their pupils, establishing standards, and upholding a supportive and secure learning environment. The COVID-19 epidemic, which has profoundly changed how children, families, educators, and society into a whole their daily lives, presents a specific challenge to achieving these aims.

3 METHOD

This study uses a descriptive survey research design (Creswell, 2015). In keeping with COVID-19 social distancing measures, this design is acceptable for research as it allows researchers to collect both qualitative and quantitative data at once without engaging in close or drawn-out conversations with respondents. In addition, this approach is expected to enable researchers to obtain in-depth feedback from respondents regarding their experiences with online teaching during COVID-19 school closures.

The data in this study are in the form of numbers, which are then analyzed using descriptive statistics to obtain results in the form of a percentage on the evaluation of distance learning (DL) in Kendari City Kindergarten during pandemic. The research subjects were 10 kindergartens, which were representative of each sub-district in Kendari City who were carrying out online learning. Data collection techniques were carried by distributing questionnaires that had been prepared using google form. The questionnaire consisted of several questions related to the evaluation of DL in kindergarten, including, lessons plan, implementation, and assessment.

Data analysis in this study used the percentage technique with steps, such as preparation, at this stage the activities carried out were checking each answer collected from the respondents by checking the completeness of the respondent's identity, the completeness of each questionnaire sheet, and the completeness of the answers given by the respondent. Data tabulation, which is entering data from the results of data collection through filling out by respondents. Percentage of Data, which is looking at the size of the comparison between the frequency of answers in the questionnaire that has been calculated in each percentage amount.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 *Result*

4.1.1 *Distance Learning (DL) Lesson Plan*

Preparation for online learning must be adapted to the conditions and situations of the parents at home. Parents' knowledge is still very limited to the world of information and technology, making teachers must find the best solution. By using the WhatsApp application all parents can use it. Of the 10 kindergartens studied, all could follow and enter the WhatsApp Group. During learning from home, all children's activities changed completely, from those who used to go to school, to study at home. The teacher explains that this is a new experience that must be done, although it is quite difficult for the teacher, the teacher must be ready to accompany the child, and the cellphone is always online to take part in learning activities every day according to the schedule sent by the teacher in the WhatsApp Group.

In planning DL at Kendari City Kindergarten, it was found that all respondents (100%) knew about the guidelines for implementing DL during the pandemic issued by the

Ministry of Education and Culture for Kindergarten. In the second aspect, all respondents (100%) teachers continue to arrange semester programs for children during DL. All respondents (100%) teachers still prepare weekly lesson plans (WLP) and daily lesson plans (DLP). All respondents (100%) teachers prepare weekly lesson plan (WLP) implementation plans and learning implementation plans which are adjusted/changed according to circumstances during online learning. More details can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of DL Lesson Plans in Kindergarten

Aspects of Distance Learning Lesson Plan	n = 10 Percentage
Do you know about the guidelines for implementing distance learning during the pandemic issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture for Kindergarten?	100%
During distance learning, teachers continue to arrange semester programs for children	100%
During distance learning, teachers still prepare weekly lesson plan (WLP) and daily lesson plan (DLP)	100%
The WLP and DLP compiled are adjusted/changed according to the situation during distance learning	100%

4.1.2 Implementation of Distance Learning

The online learning process in Kendari City Kindergarten is carried out through direct interaction between children and learning resources designed in the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (DLP) with the aim of developing the knowledge and skills in Core Competencies No. 3, and Core Competencies No. 4 on indicators of aspects of the development of the Indonesian early childhood education curriculum accompanied by parents, whether it's done virtually and assignments at home. In the implementation of DL in Kendari City Kindergarten, it was found that WhatsApp groups were the most preferred choice in the use of learning facilities in kindergarten (62.50%), zoom meetings and videos were the second choice in distance learning suggestions (12.50%). Finally, Google meet and YouTube is the last choices in the use of learning facilities in kindergarten (6.25%). For more details related to the learning facilities used during online learning can be seen in figure 1.

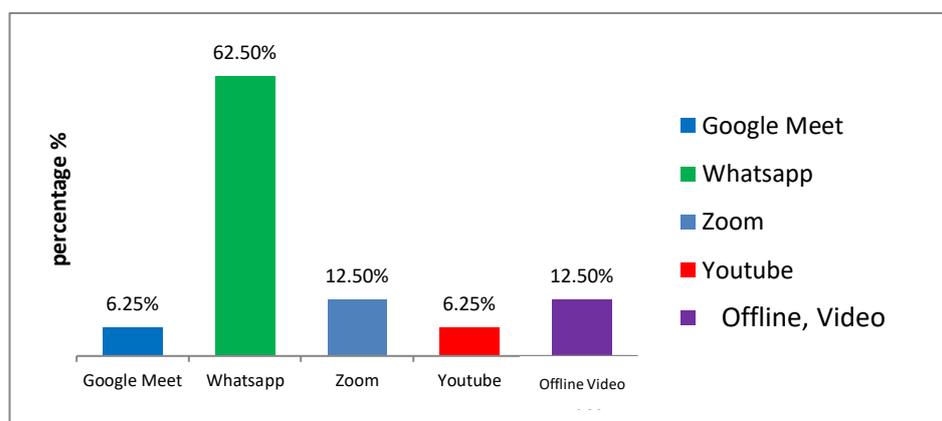


Figure 1. Distance Learning Tools

Learning activities carried out by teachers during distance learning in Kendari City found that assignment assignments were the most preferred choice by kindergarten teachers during distance learning (32.26%), performance activities became the second choice for kindergarten teachers during distance learning activities. (25.81%). Furthermore, demonstration activities became the third choice for teachers during online learning (22.58%) and experimental activities became the last choice for kindergarten teachers in distance learning activities (19.35%). For more details related to DL activities carried out by kindergarten teachers during the pandemic, see figure 2.

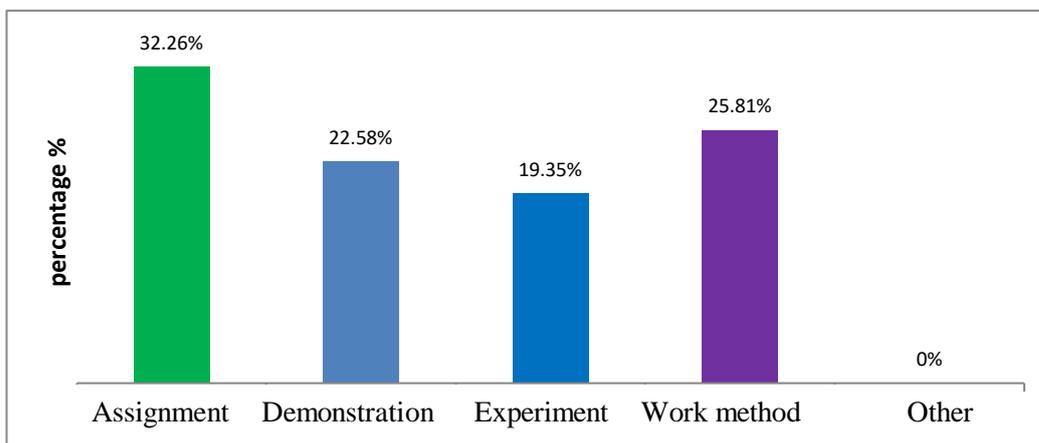


Figure 3. Distance Learning Activities

The learning media used by kindergarten teachers during distance learning was found that video was the media that was often used and considered effective by teachers for DL in kindergarten (52.94%), picture media became the second choice for kindergarten teachers (25.81%). Furthermore, children's worksheets became the third choice that was used during distance learning (11.76%) and power points were not used at all by teachers during DL (0%). For more details related to the learning media used by kindergarten teachers during DL, it can be seen in figure 4.

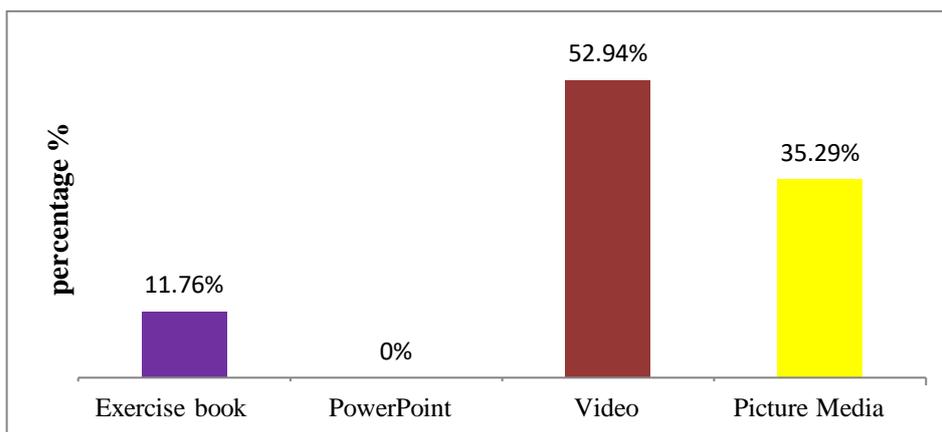


Figure 4. Distance Learning Media

Ultimately, that becomes an important highlight in the implementation of DL in Kindergarten is the aspect of child development. During distance learning, can kindergarten teachers stimulate all aspects of child development optimally or are there some aspects that cannot or are difficult to develop. Based on the results of the

questionnaire, it was found almost all respondents answered the social-emotional aspect was an aspect of child development was difficult to develop during online learning (69.23%). Then the cognitive aspect, religious moral aspect, motor aspect and language aspect got the same percentage (7.96%), and the art development aspect got 0%. More details related to aspects of child development that are thoroughly stimulated or not during the implementation of online learning can be seen in figure 5.

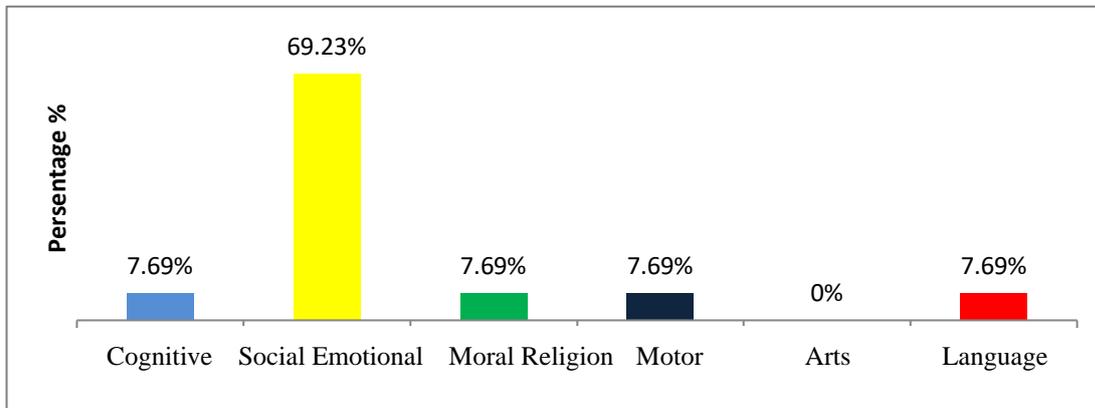


Figure 5. Aspects of Child Development

There are aspects of child development that are difficult or lack of stimulation, so the teacher feels the need to do a home visit. The home visit program is carried out by teachers visiting children's homes. Before conducting a home visit, the teacher will contact the child's parents the day before to ensure that the child and parents have time and are willing to accompany the child. The implementation of home visits during this pandemic is carried out while still complying with the health protocols that have been set by the government in anticipation of preventing the transmission of the Covid-19 virus.

4.1.3 Distance Learning Assessment

In the assessment of distance learning in Kendari City Kindergarten, it was found that portfolio assessment was the most preferred choice used by teachers during DL in kindergarten (50%), children's performance got a percentage of 30% as the assessment used by teachers during DL. Observations get a percentage of 20% and the other 0%. For more details related to the assessment used during distance learning, see figure 6.

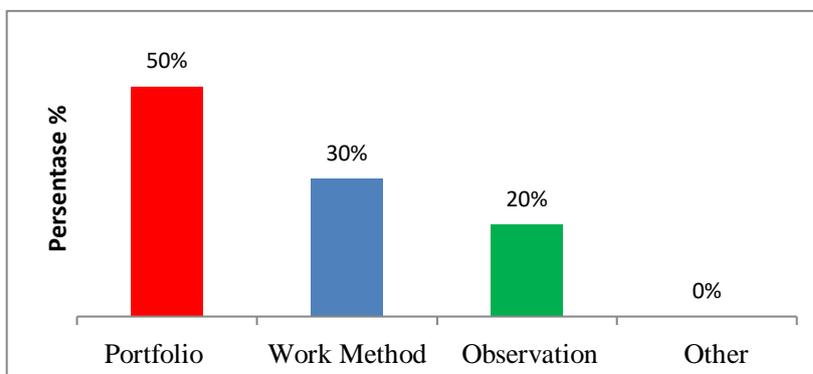


Figure 6. Assessment in Online Learning

During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers still must assess all aspects of child development. This is important because it will be a report to parents on the child's development, whether all aspects of child development have developed as expected or have not developed. However, because the Covid 19 changed face-to-face learning to distance learning, the assessments carried out also changed. Based on the results of the questionnaire it was found that almost all respondents (nine kindergartens) answered that there was a difference in assessment during online learning and face-to-face learning with a percentage of 90% while only one kindergarten answered there was no difference in assessment during distance learning and face-to-face learning with a percentage 10%. As for the differences felt by kindergarten teachers in Kendari City in the assessment of distance learning, nine respondents (90%) answered that teachers could not see or directly assess the real development of children. Kindergarten teachers can only see or assess children's development based on video documentation sent by parents on WhatsApp groups, portfolios, and the work the children have done. While 1 respondent (10%) answered that there was no difference in assessment between online and offline learning.

4.1.4 Distance Learning Obstacles

There are several obstacles to be online learning in Kendari City Kindergarten. Among others, the teacher provides information that some parents do not have a smart phone as teacher-parent communication medium (two respondents), parents do not have the time and opportunity to accompany their children to study (five respondents) , and the delay of parents in collecting their children's assignments in the form of a portfolio (three respondents) see figure 7.

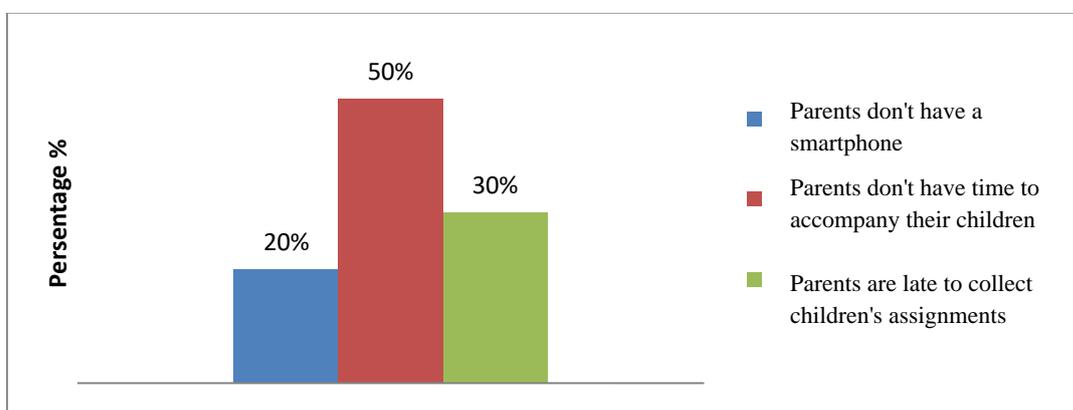


Figure 8. Parental Obstacles in Distance Learning

If children study at home, the role of parents in guiding children is quite a lot, the informants answered more about how they made their children not neglect their duties. Do every task the teacher gives him and makes their study schedule? The purpose of making the schedule is to train them to remain disciplined even though they are studying from home. When children start to get bored with studying at home, parents must be able to create conditions that are as comfortable as possible so that they remain enthusiastic about learning. Parents should also always be able to accompany their children, even if

it's just asking what lessons have been learned or will be studied. Make them an interesting and unique study schedule so that they are interested in learning.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 *The Implementation of Lesson Plan during Distance Learning*

Online learning at the Kendari City Kindergarten in the planning of the school principal coordinates with the teacher to prepare children's learning at home with parental assistance using the WhatsApp group media. The plans prepared by the teacher are in the form of weekly plans (WLP). The teacher makes two types of WLP. The first contains six aspects of development, including moral religious values, physical motoric, cognitive, language, social emotional, art used by teachers in carrying out home visit learning. The second only contains 1-2 development aspects such as moral and cognitive religious values given to parents for guidance in carrying out learning at home.

The results of the evaluation of online learning planning in Kendari City Kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic show that in online learning planning in Kendari City Kindergarten, all respondents have met four indicators. Teachers know the guidelines for implementing online learning from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The teacher arranges the Semester Program for learning. Teachers prepare WLP and DLP, and teachers adapt WLP and DLP tailored to online learning. The results found are in accordance with the three types of learning plans that must be prepared and prepared by teachers to the level of early childhood education. As for what must be prepared before carrying out learning: 1) One-Semester Program, 2) Weekly Learning Implementation Plan (WLP), and 3) Daily Learning Implementation Plan (DLP).

In the implementation of online learning in Kendari City Kindergarten, kindergarten teachers revealed that the most frequently used means of distance learning is WhatsApp groups. Learning activities carried out by teachers are giving assignments, demonstrations, experiments, and performance. The duration of time used in distance learning varies between 0-30 minutes, 30-60 minutes, and 60 minutes and above. The learning media used and judged effective by the teacher are video, picture media, children's worksheets, and power points. The aspect of child development that cannot be stimulated during distance learning is the social-emotional aspect.

Therefore, it is very important for teachers to provide understanding to parents regarding the learning materials, so that parents as teachers at home can motivate children and encourage the formation of new skills. The implementation of learning carried out by parents at home is guided by a simple WLP which consists of one to two aspects of development, which is given by the teacher once a week. Then every day the teacher will remind parents through the WhatsApp group of the material in the WLP. Parents teach children according to the WLP guidelines provided by the teacher.

4.2.2 *The Importance of Hybrid Learning through Home Visit Program*

Home visit learning activities are carried out by the teacher once a week, in one class the students will be divided into three small groups and the implementation of home visit learning is carried out at the students' homes in turns. The teacher provides material based on WLP, which includes six aspects of development. Teachers put more emphasis on development areas that have not been conveyed by parents to children during the implementation of distance learning, so that the home visit learning carried out will be optimal. McKenna's et al., (2021) research shows the majority of early childhood educators state that different caregivers participate differently in online learning. Therefore, home visits are a necessary program to overcome all the obstacles that arise in distance learning. Even while early childhood educators point out that many families check in several times each week, other families still need continued outreach using a variety of methods (such as, phone calls, texting). Previous studies assessing parental financial and emotional stress during COVID-19 support this conclusion (Russell et al., 2020). It is conceivable that parents' ability to communicate with early childhood educators has been impaired because of their adaptation to working remotely while caring for their children.

Assessment on distance learning uses a portfolio model. However, in practice the teacher feels the difference in distance learning outcomes from before because the teacher can only see the child's development through photos and videos sent by parents. Therefore, teachers feel the need to carry out direct assessments to see children's development through home visit learning activities. The teacher matches the documentation from parents and the results of the child's development that the teacher sees when carrying out the home visit. The Parental assessment framework is quite helpful for teachers in assessing children's development. Various evaluation data provided by parents also determine the results of distance learning assessments from all aspects of child development. Recent study show, many early childhood educators stated that to provide face-to-face instruction during the pandemic, they will need to learn new processes and that they will require administrative support. They stated that they will use student assessments to guide their instruction and modify their sessions to increase student participation (McKenna et al., 2021).

4.2.3 *The Obstacles of Distance Learning*

Based on the results of the study, there are three obstacles faced by parents when online learning is done at home, including. First, the problem of ownership of gadgets that support distance learning and complaints related to costs for internet quotas that are not small. Some Teachers said that the obstacle faced when learning online was that parents did not have smartphones. In distance learning, smartphones/gadgets are needed to support online learning activities. According to recent research, 464 of early childhood instructors experienced difficulties with distant learning. The major obstacles for early childhood educators include the lack of administrator training and policies, the limited access to technology for both, themselves and careers, and the difficulty in planning

classes owing to caregiver time restraints. According to an ECE, several students miss Zoom meetings because of their poor Internet. Another person said, Families and their schedules altered dramatically over night due to lack of technology abilities (McKenna et al., 2021).

According to Ariswari and Tirtayani (2021), there are general obstacles faced by parents in mentoring, including the ability to understand learning material by parents, busy work, lack of patients of parents, and less proficient operation of gadgets. Lack of Internet coverage, parents are not able to motivate children to learn from home, and parents do not know about the applications that will be used for online learning. Such as WhatsApp gathering, Google meet and zoom which can help the education and learning process take place. Parents Furthermore, tend to find it difficult to provide time and opportunities to accompany their children to study. This is because parents are busy, besides that parents do not have the ability to help children study at home. Early childhood educators' interactions with children and families, their emotional and financial well-being, and what it takes to provide young children with basic early childhood education services have all been the subject of research to date (Szente, 2020).

The delay of parents in collecting their children's assignments (portfolio) is quite a complicated obstacle in assessing children's learning outcomes. According to three teachers, parents are often late in submitting their children's assignments, because parents are busy at work and do not have time to help their children's complete assignments. The lack of variety in children's activities in changing learning while at school will make children not bored when at home is another obstacle. In addition, the children's learning process using online, using the WhatsApp, zoom, Google meet and YouTube applications greatly limit the children's space when playing and learning.

The implementation of online learning evaluation at Kindergarten in Kendari City shows that all kindergartens have been learning activities both in planning, implementation, and assessment indicators. The factor of cooperation between teachers and parents as well as difficulties related to supporting technology are the main obstacles during distance learning in all Kindergartens. Administrators in education programs are advised to: address the obstacles that kids who are vulnerable to educational disparities may encounter; provide early childhood educators and caregivers with instructional guides tailored to the difficulties and limitations of remote learning; and maintain communication between school administrators, caregivers, and early childhood educators to address this risk of long-term academic difficulty resulting from the pandemic (Reich et al., 2020).

5 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that most kindergartens have performed distance learning well, which is indicated in the aspects of planning, implementation, and assessment of distance learning for kindergartens. There are several obstacles in the implementation of distance learning, namely the lack of cooperation from parents in

accompanying children to study, parents who are often late in collecting children's assignments (portfolios), and the lack of smartphone facilities owned by parents. In response to this, it is necessary to coordinate and cooperate between the school and parents, to be more active in assisting children in learning and collecting children's assignments. In addition, teachers need to receive training on the use of IT which aims to facilitate and provide a fun and meaningful learning experience for children in kindergarten. The provision of teachers in designing learning, implementation, and assessment requires the latest standards so that the integration of various learning models during or post-pandemic is mastered by teachers and does not cause lost learning in ECE.

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