

# How Indonesian Policymakers Turned to Madrasas for Inclusive Religious Education During the Outbreak

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## Abstract

During the Covid-19 epidemic, distance learning systems gained widespread acceptance as a viable alternative to traditional educational services. Over ten million madrasah-based students participated in the Learning From Home (BDR) program with the bare minimum requirements for the implementation of inclusive religious education through the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia's circular No. 4 of 2020 and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. This exhaustive literature analysis dives into the philosophical basis of distance education. It provides context and reason for a religious education based on madrasas. This study examines remote learning implementation at madrasah institutions from a policy and practical standpoint and makes recommendations for appropriate programs. The findings of this study contribute to the creation of an inclusive and responsive road map for religious education in Indonesia. The subsequent researcher may focus exclusively on program development.

**Keywords:** Distance Learning, Education Policymakers, Inclusive Religious Education, Madrasa.

## Introduction

Numerous elements of people's lives, including schooling, have significantly been harmed due to the Covid-19 pandemic that has been afflicting Indonesians since March 2020 (Pradana & Syarifuddin, 2021). When providing educational services during the Covid-19 epidemic, the central government can use remote learning methods, including both synchronous and asynchronous modalities. The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud), in Circular No. 4 of 2020, directs all educational institutions in Indonesia on the following essential issues; (1) Independent learning aims to provide students with a meaningful experience while absolving them of the pressure to complete the entire curriculum to advance in grade or meet graduation criteria.

Students must develop life skills in order to succeed in Covid-19; (2) When giving homework in various formats, the teacher considers the student's aptitude and the availability of learning facilities; and (3) Qualitative comments on student performance outcomes are required (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020; Keputusan Presiden RI, 2020). Following receipt of the circular, the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag), which oversees all Islamic educational institutions, issued an official circular ordering madrasa to modify their teaching and learning practices (Moh. Khoeron, 2022). In the coming weeks and months, other continuing circulars will release in response to the increasing spread of the Covid-19 virus, notably the Omicron variant. In his statement, the Director of Curriculum, Facilities, Institutions, and Students (KSKK) indicated that the circular educates all Regional Offices (Kanwil) policymakers at the provincial, district, city, or city madrasah levels on educational service guidelines for all regional offices (Kanwil).

In greater detail, the circular also empowers the madrasa head and the madrasa task force to guarantee that the health protocol in the region of the education unit under his supervision is up to date and complete. To put this in a practical context, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Religion has instructed more than ten million students fostered by madrasas under its institutional auspices to participate in the Learning From Home (BDR) program. It was initiated by the central government, in the most basic of circumstances. What is the point of being modest? In practice, the outcomes of periodic evaluations demonstrate that not all ideals in distance learning design can implement successfully, whether through online or blended learning methods (Putri et al., 2020). One example is the ongoing debate in the community on the effectiveness and disappointment of the community in the learning process, which is evidence of this (Zakso & Agung, 2021).

Earlier research identified various issues as posing challenges to remote learning, ranging from infrastructure readiness, technological competency, budgetary conditions, learning efficacy, and evaluation methodologies to topographical reality (Mallisa et al., 2009). Intending to alleviate these situations, the government provides substantial aid by distributing educational data packages, syllabi, emergency learning curricula, and regular educational broadcast programs on national television (Ismuniar & Ardiwinata, 2021). Despite this, there is still a possibility that a learning crisis (2021) will occur at any time in the future, raising concerns. Not to mention the reality of madrasa finance, in which 95 percent of the management population qualifies through private institutions (Pendis, 2021), which has the possibility of unstable financial oscillations, as previously mentioned. Developing a more flexible road map for madrasa digitalization is one of the preventive measures for dealing with these frightening education forecasts. Thus, madrasah educational institutions can prudently manage their administrative and operational characteristics to minimize budgetary disruptions produced by various circumstances. This study aimed to perform a literature review using publicly available government and individual report data to understand better the phenomena of distance learning practices during the Covid-19 outbreak. The study's findings will lead to the development of a taxonomy of problematic terms used in remote education, which will serve as the foundation for rationalizing the suggested contextual digitalization roadmap. The rationalization premise of the study aims to provide a point of convergence between the issues and solutions associated with distance learning in madrasah institutions.

## Materials and Methods

A manual assessment of the literature findings conducts in combination with the reduction table. After doing content analysis, the test findings are evaluated and synthesized (Martin, 2002). The final stage of the research process is to provide a logical structure for the literature review results. Conducting a literature review entails identifying pertinent information, conducting a review, and drafting a review. As demonstrated in **Figure 1**(2022), the entire approach to this study is circular, with researchers discovering and reading new sources to incorporate them into the outcomes of the study synthesis.

Numerous concerns must be addressed for this research to be successful: (1) What is the rationale for adopting distance learning amid the Covid-19 pandemic? (2) What is the objective of distance education? What does integrating distant learning within madrasahs entail? Additionally, (3) what are the inquiry results into the difficulties associated with remote learning in madrasas? Following that, a narrative is developed to explain the rationale and urgency for implementing distance learning in madrasas during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the fundamental concepts and standardization of distance learning in madrasas based on Islamic Religious Education theories, as well as the interpretation of the implementation analysis's results and the composition of the proposed recommendations related to dispensing with dispensing.



**Figure 1. Literature review procedures.**

The following are the anticipated outcomes of the study; (1) it will serve as a resource for practitioners and academics studying distance learning, both online and in-person; and (2) the findings of the study of writing papers, in the form of a classification of distance learning problems, will provide a more accurate picture of madrasa education practices in the community, both in terms of policy and practice. Numerous previous studies laid the groundwork for the development of the studies in this study, including Khanan Auladi's research entitled Teacher Constraints in Distance Thematic Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic Period at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Ummah Kotagede Yogyakarta, which was published in the journal *Islamic Law and Education Studies* (2020). This study aims to examine the use of distance learning to deliver theme-based instructional materials at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Ummah (Minu). The field study discovered problematic usage of the 2013 Curriculum in distance learning practices and teachers' internal and external constraints, such as mental unpreparedness and network stability.

Khanan's (2000) conclusions were corroborated by thoroughly examining the study's historical setting. The second study is named Analysis of Online Learning During a Pandemic at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, conducted by Novi Rosita Rahmawati and colleagues (2020). In August 2020, a phenomenological study was undertaken at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Miftahul Huda Kediri to examine the online learning process after the Covid-19 outbreak. The research findings contain information about distance learning cycles and beneficial and detrimental factors associated with implementing distance learning using the Whatsapp and Google Suite platforms. The study's findings provided a theoretical framework for reflecting on the practice of distant learning adoption in madrasas during the Covid-19 pandemic. Third, a study named Learning Strategies and Academic Performance in Distance Education was conducted by Joyce Neroni (2019). The goal of this study is to determine the relationship between academic

accomplishment and learning styles during university distance learning. This study revealed that time and effort management and the use of sophisticated cognitive processes are all positive predictors of academic achievement, whereas contact with others is a poor predictor. The study's findings provide a theoretical for producing suggestions for research conclusions.

## **Results and Discussions**

### ***The Legal Justification of Madrasa Policy***

Madrasas organize learning under the Ministry of Religion's circular which was issued in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and contained general recommendations for implementing learning in madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic religious education institutions, among others. Others during the Covid-19 Restriction on Community Activity (PPKM), which stipulates the following policies and regulations; (1) Every madrasah education unit must adhere to the four ministerial Joint Decrees (SKB) released on December 21, 2021, to continue educating students during the Covid-19 pandemic. (2) Every madrasah education unit is obligated to pay strict attention to health and safety principles for all madrasah citizens participating in it, particularly in light of certain technological casuistics that happened during the pandemic and involved health procedures for the madrasa environment. (3) The madrasa head has the authority to determine the technological implementation of Learning From Home (BDR) or Distance Learning (PJJ) as a security method for enforcing madrasa health and safety norms (Kemenag, 2022b).

Prior to implementing the policy within the madrasah, the madrasah head must consult with and debate the proposed policy with the provincial, district, or Regional Cities Offices of the Ministry of Religion. It is a legal requirement. To ensure that distance learning policies issued for the scope of madrasas are appropriate and contextual, provincial, district, and city MoRA Regional Offices, as well as madrasah management foundations and madrasah heads, are required to collaborate with the nearest regional government in responding to the development of the pandemic situation in their respective regions. The circular underwent significant adjustments in the subsequent stage due to the Covid-19 outbreak that had subsided across the country. After four years of deliberation, the Ministry of Religion issued a revised circular on August 30, 2021, containing limited Face-to-Face Learning (PTM) instructions while sticking to the previous four Ministerial Decrees' PPKM rules.

The circular was formally released by the Ministry of Religion's General Directorate of Islamic Education (Pendis). Additionally, the circular suggests that madrasahs complete a preparedness checklist for PTMs (2022a). The Ministry of Religion undertook an examination of preparedness data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs based on institutional characteristics and variables influencing stakeholders and parents' willingness to volunteer to involve their sons and daughters in offline or mixed learning activities. The data collecting results will also be used as monitoring material for the Ministry of Religion office director in the regency or city region, who will use them to formulate future technical policies during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### ***The Critical Role of Distance Education***

Distance learning via online or online models, as well as hybrid models, is a proactive effort by Muslim academics to combat an epidemic, as Islam states in the Qur'an and Al-Hadith. The madrasa method for administering the BDR program is a logical reflection of national Muslims' views regarding the requirement to learn

everywhere, anytime, and under any circumstances as follows from Ibn Adi and Baihaqi's narrations of the Prophet SAW's hadith (Alawi Abdualgader Alsaggaf, 2021). In reality, attempts to meet Muslims' educational commitments must not miss components of the greater community's benefit or virtue, such as knowledge conveyed in the revelation of Islam as a religion endowed with the value of *rahmatan lil'aalamiin* (grace for all nature). When confronted with novel issues for which sharia law had never been handled textually in prior fiqh books, Amir Syarifuddin (2014) claimed that the process of derivative contextualization of ushul fiqh norms to the demands of the entire community might be used instead of legal judgements. As a result, it can be found that the Covid-19 pandemic that has struck Indonesia is consistent with ushul fiqh's legal norms (Shodiq, 2020). As a result of these legal restrictions, Indonesia's Covid-19 pandemic, which can spread and creates a risk of transmission to the general public, must be proactively addressed by implementing a comprehensive BDR program to control the epidemic. Muslim students can continue their studies at home while adhering to health measures, immediately minimizing the risk of virus transmission. In practice, this rule makes Indonesia's madrasa policy, which acts as the country's official religious education institution, mandatory for all Muslims on a national level in enforcing Islamic law in the education sector.

### ***Distance Education in Madrasas: What Is It?***

The concept of remote learning is the first step in overcoming all of the technical obstacles in teaching and learning activities, particularly those related to location and time. This realization resulted in a shift in activity from face-to-face instruction in the classroom to a more open and flexible learning environment accessible from any location and at any time via a virtual space (Budi et al., 2020). Due to the physical separation of students and teachers, the name "Distance Learning System" was coined (PJJ) in Indonesia (Kemendikbud, 2020). Students benefit from distance education in two technological areas: time and place. At the subsequent level, this adaptability necessitates the use of technology in teaching and learning activities (Salsabila, 2021). According to the idea's definition, remote learning practices should not place a premium on learning activities in the presence of instructors and students in the same space and time (Salsabila, 2022).

It is anticipated that this type of adaptability will continue to be a driving force behind the development of technology practices in the Indonesian educational system, particularly in the context of madrasa institutions, even after the pandemic has passed. Haryono (2020) coined several expressions that are often used in conjunction with distance learning approaches, including the following of **Table 1**. The same concepts apply to different learning systems, and distance learning also requires a systematic and planned learning design.

The design is mostly project-based with asynchronous completion that uses the daily or weekly recording in e-learning and is geared at adaptability and contextualization of material knowledge according to student conditions. To ensure that the project is developed in a neutral environment, it is not fully dependent on internet access during its development period (Mubarok, 2021). Combining a teacher's delivery of instructions or teaching materials with teleconference communication technologies is a frequently used way of implementing remote learning in a range of scenarios (Auliya Vilda Ghasya, Salimi, & Pranata, 2021).

### ***Distance Learning in Madrasas: Its Purposes***

According to the overview of the Ministry of Education and Culture's and Ministry of Religion's circular contents, the key objectives of implementing remote learning are twofold; (1) Ensure that efforts be made to ensure that students' rights to educational services are respected during the Covid-19 pandemic (Efendi, 2020); and (2) Ensure that efforts are made to ensure that students' rights to educational services are respected during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is critical to prevent the extensive spread and transmission of the Covid-19 virus.

### ***Distance Learning at Madrasas: Characteristics***

Distance learning practice, according to Nurul and Novi, is defined by the implementation of the following characteristics into their learning activities; (1) The interactive, comprehensive, and integrative components of the learning process are demonstrated through various activities that emphasize student engagement and efficiency. Among these components are scientific, contextual, and thematic components; (2) The learning process fosters positive interactions between teachers and students; (3) Students' curiosities are viewed as engaging and amusing during the learning process rather than as dull; and (4) The learning process facilitates learners' access to and absorption of charged educational resources.

***Table 1. Distance learning terminology.***

<b>Term</b>	<b>Signification</b>
Online learning	The most common term that refers to online activities when implementing distance learning using devices, such as tablets or mobile phones to access applications in learning cyberspace.
Website learning	Common term to refer to website-based technology (e-learning) whose management is done through formal educational institutions to massively become teaching media in the learning process at madrasas or other educational institutions. The website contains comprehensive learning materials and evaluations for certain subjects of education.
Virtual learning	System by utilises various kinds of online facilities or digital platforms and complex computer software to simulate the delivery of certain teaching material content, which in offline learning usually requires realia media and visual media. Virtual learning can also be in a virtual learning environment setting or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which is usually a combination of media in blended learning elements in developed countries.
Blended learning	Learning activity by combines offline and online. This system is included in the category of the highest level of distance learning concept because it can significantly improve students' learning experience. It has become a discourse for the Indonesian government to run permanently in the national education with a flexible portion of 75:25 according to the policies of madrasa.
Hybrid learning	Integrative approach in a distance learning system that divides a 50:50 balanced portion between online and offline face-to-face. Some experts say that this type is a derivative of a mixed learning.
Remote learning	Remote learning is a pure distance learning term, or, in other words, completely face-to-face online without being offline. As per the central government circular, this system had become common in the national

education system during the pandemic.
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The distant learning approach has both difficulties and advantages in its practical applicability in madrasas. The distant learning approach has both difficulties and advantages in its practical applicability in madrasas. According to Mubarok and Kharisma's (2021) list, the following are the disadvantages of distance learning; (1) Teachers' abilities or competencies as implementation facilitators are contingent upon their meticulous planning, time management, and readiness; (2) Teachers and students alike have the potential to lose concentration amid the learning process as a result of factors present in their respective learning or instruction environments; (3) Students frequently underestimate and disregard their educational duties and their awareness of the importance of managing their own time at home; (4) Relationships between students and teachers and their interactions with one another can influence the process of developing learning experiences and individual motivation during the learning process.

Tahar and Yuangga (2020) have compiled a list of benefits that education stakeholders can maximize by employing remote learning approaches, which are given below in descending order of relative strength; (1) Increased opportunities for egalitarian educational and information diffusion in Indonesia, notably in the madrasa context; (2) The remote moderating tool enables professors and students to communicate without regard for distance, location, or time constraints; (3) Additionally, due to limited accessibility, it is feasible to enable the design of student-centred learning activities, which contributes to the normalization of awareness, independence, and personal growth participation; (4) Reduced travel expenses linked with the educational process translate into increased financial efficiency.

### ***Distance Education in Madrasas: Implementation***

The findings are presented in the form of a classification of distant learning characteristics based on teacher and student activities that occur in the madrasa context; (1) The interactions between teachers and madrasa students in distance learning include two interactions categories; synchronous or asynchronous as **Figure 2**. Asynchronous engagement is frequently accomplished through online education, email, Google Classroom, and instant messaging applications like WhatsApp and Telegram. The Zoom Meeting Cloud is often used to facilitate simultaneous communication between madrasa professors. For instance, some asynchronous learning activities include assignment instructions requiring students to create films demonstrating how to pray and memorize brief surahs from the Qur'an within a certain time limit.

Most madrasa teachers who teach at the lower grade levels, namely 1, 2, and 3, favour WhatsApp as a daily communication medium in distant education. For high school grades 4, 5, and 6, most teachers hold a bachelor's degree in Islamic education and give courses using increasingly complex platforms, such as Zoom and video calls; (2) A diverse selection of teaching media. Certain madrasa teachers seek to provide instructional materials via video and audio teaching tools distributed via instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp and similar platforms. Teachers communicate material content to certain pupils via PowerPoint presentations. When it comes to evaluation, most teachers send out questions using Google Forms, which students can complete at their leisure.

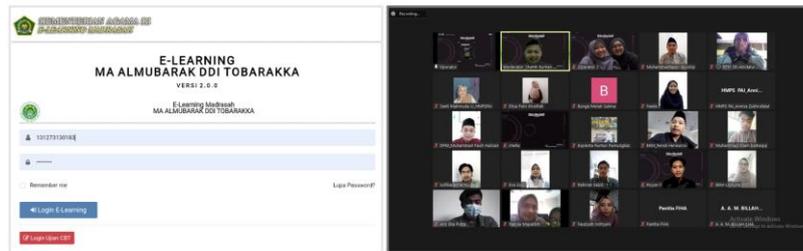


Figure 2. Asynchronous and Synchronous interactions in madrasas.

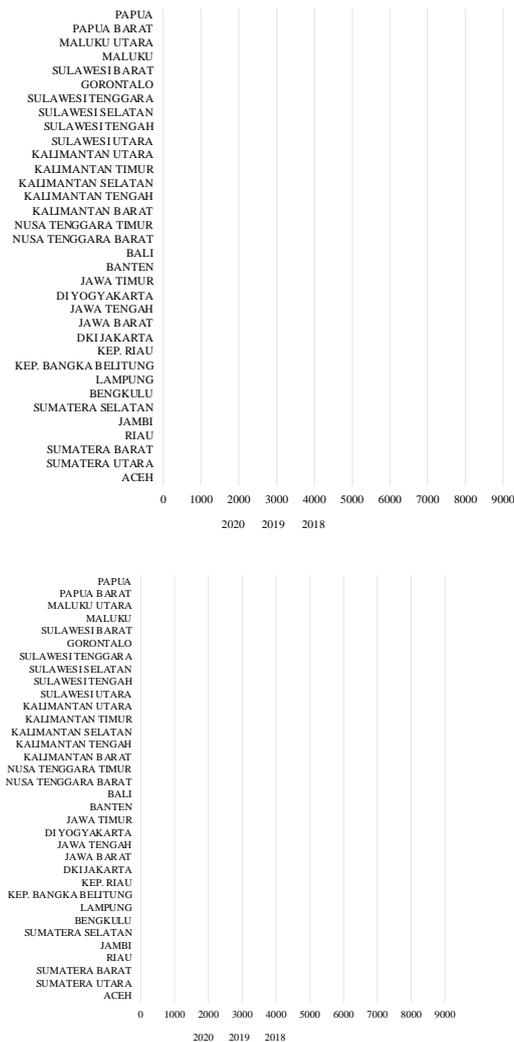
### ***Distance Education in Madrasas: Issues and Concerns Affordability and viability of regional infrastructure***

Educational practitioners involved in madrasas as educational stakeholders try to increase the use of technology, particularly the internet, smartphones, and laptops, to facilitate remote study. The record increase of 16 per cent in broadband shreds evidence this condition flows during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is predicted to be caused by the increase in distance learning platforms, is evidenced by the record increase of 16 per cent broadband shreds of evidence this condition flows during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, various organizations have raised worry over converting the traditional madrasa system from an offline to an online model, stating that it will be detrimental to students from low-income families and rural locations.

Only the government can provide internet and public cellular telephony, and only the government can do it. **Figure 3** presents an infographic study of national internet distribution, demonstrating that national internet procurement is subject to unequal conditions. According to the analysis, 3G and 4G networks, which are required for internet and cellular telephony services, are only available in small areas on the Indonesian islands of Java and Bali (2021). When marketing considerations are taken into account, metropolitan areas with a larger population will likely be preferred over rural areas to increase market demand. The investigation of this perplexing phenomenon reveals that internal factors, such as poor households' financial ability, substantially impact each family's access to the internet and cellular telephony.

### ***Inequality in government funding and program socialization***

Through its policy, the central government provides flexibility to schools in selecting an online learning platform that matches their needs. To facilitate information exchange, the Ministry of Education and Culture also offers a free online learning platform called Learning House and a platform for instructors to collaborate called the Sharing Teacher Program.



**Figure 4. Weak signals in 2018-2019**

Through the Rumah Belajar page, users can access teaching materials and communication features, whereas the old Guru Sharing Program has Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) documents from teachers around Indonesia. For areas with limited internet access, the government is collaborating with TVRI, which serves as a national television station, to deliver teaching materials from the syllabus package and the Learning From Home curriculum for the duration of learning activities, which in some cases may last several months (Azzahra, 2020).

They were made possible by reallocating funds from the national budget for distance learning needs, which were distributed through licensing the use of School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds for madrasas operations related to learning activities and health protocols, including the provision of internet access for students and teachers, as well as the purchase of learning devices. In this context, the issue is the lack of socialization of infrastructure utilization from the central government to education practitioners in certain places.

It is partly due to a lack of signals, as seen in **Figure 4**, and burdensome bureaucratic procedures for the release and distribution of operational funds for madrasa-based distant learning. As indicated in **Figure 5** (2021), Indonesia's massive number of the madrasa and an uneven distribution of zoning results in an imbalance in the distribution

of knowledge concerning education stakeholders' rights during the implementation of remote learning during the Covid-19 epidemic.

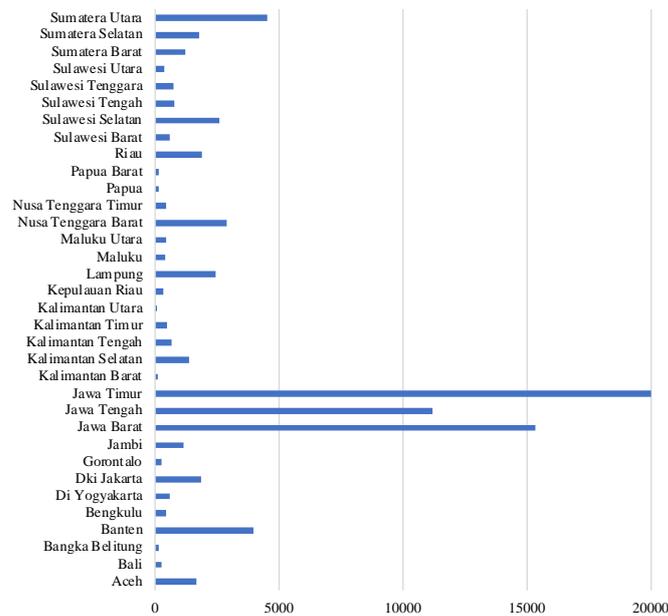


Figure 5. Madrasah Zoning in Indonesia in 2020

#### Kuantitas Interaksi Guru Madrasah Selama Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh

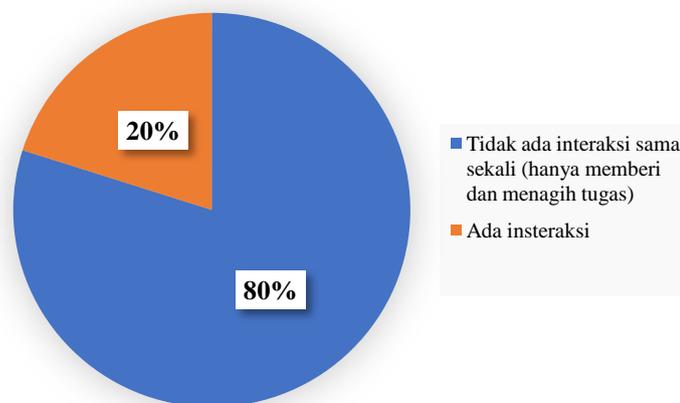


Figure 6. Madrasah Teacher Interaction Quantity Survey

#### *A lack of professional and numerous Madrasah teachers*

The teacher's imagination must create a map of the students' current state of health to ensure the success of all distance learning activities. As the critical facilitator of learning, the instructor must package the concept of distance learning so that it is universally accessible to all students. However, reality indicates that many teachers are unfamiliar with technology (Nugroho & Nasionalita, 2020), including laptop computers and the adaptability of internet-based training. As a result, teachers only assign students to read books and assign tasks alone (KPAI, 2017). As a result of a lack of adequate learning experiences for their age level, learners become disengaged.

#### *Parental Perceptions and Guardian Engagement*

Parents play various roles in accompanying children as they transition to distance learning, including instructors, mentors, motivators, supervisors, friends, and

facilitators, all while continuing to fulfill their fundamental duty as suppliers of a child's inner birth in education (Rivadah, Salsabila, Rosyid, Fajrul, & Fikri, 2020). This situation is challenging and complex, especially when parents lack educational backgrounds or jobs relevant to the subject of education in general. Not to mention that many parents believe that teachers are solely responsible for completing learning activities in schools.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The authors make the following conclusions based on their research findings: (1) Distance learning in a madrasa environment is an endeavor for all practitioners and stakeholders in Islamic educational institutions to preserve the benefit's value within relevant sharia law. The terms and conditions for implementing distance learning have been detailed in circulars issued by the central government in collaboration with line ministries, most notably in circulars issued by the Ministry of Religion, the country's highest government institution responsible for overseeing the management of madrasah institutions on a national level. (2) Distance learning is a way of imparting knowledge that disregards the accessibility of teachers, locations, and times between instructors and pupils. It is critical to conduct research with specific aims and qualities in mind. Among the objectives are the evaluation of distance learning implementation standards and an analysis of potential weaknesses and strengths from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education.

Three implementation realities regarding distance learning practices in madrasas were identified from the implementation analysis: interactions between educators and students, media selection, and critical problems encountered by many madrasah teachers when implementing distance learning practices. Additionally, the author presents the following suggestions concerning the findings that could serve as a springboard for additional discussion in the subsequent study: (1) It is necessary to improve madrasa instructors' skills in using learning-related apps at all levels of education. Madrasa instructors must possess a minimum level of expertise in information and communication technology (ICT), which entails the ability to obtain learning apps from the central government on their initiative, design teaching materials, and create learning flows for remote education (Mugobi & Mlozi, 2021). Teachers with Level 4 qualifications, the highest available, have been able to train other teachers; (2) the practice of integrating online and offline learning models, even if they serve only as a supplement to learning so that teachers and students in madrasas become accustomed to interacting in any situation and using any media. (3) To reduce the divide between urban and rural areas, information technology solutions must be established for areas that are currently underperforming in terms of digital infrastructure. Access to a diverse variety of bandwidth capacities and the cost of access must be included in the government's list of public policy priorities.

To supplement TVRI's programs in areas with limited internet access, delivery of material via radio media, as Argentina and Fiji have done, provides radio content for seven hours moderated by experienced teachers via the government radio network. (4) Establishing regional working groups to provide guidance and socialization of government programs for madrasas on a national scale, as Argentina and Fiji have done (Levier, 2020). (5) Establish an oversight framework and strategy for using distance learning operational funds. Effective oversight management ensures that funds are used according to the ministry's original intent, identifies areas in need of assistance, and considers whether the funding expansion will be temporary or permanent (Satariyah, 2020). (6) The maintenance of public-private partnerships in

education, in which stakeholders and educational institutions form a consortium that can provide free learning resources as a form of service promotion. The Ministry of Religious Education has requested a feasibility study on public-private partnerships with technology service providers to buy infrastructure to support online or remote learning. When it comes to the challenges faced by madrasa technical leaders, such as school principals, in implementing distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, specific studies demonstrate that having broad autonomous authority is critical for responding to the unexpected situations that arose during the pandemic. The quality of policy implementation is hierarchically defined by the decision-making associated with operations. Additionally, the researcher proposes conducting additional research on the public's attitude to government-issued measures, notably those issued by the Ministry of Religion, during the Covid-19 outbreak, particularly in remote learning.

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