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The role of Indonesian students as agents of community change in learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic has made big changes to the human life sector. In order to break the chain of this virus, the government has issued a policy to maintain social distance and all activities must be carried out at home.

Aims/Objectives: The purpose of this research is to find out what roles students can play in society as agents of change during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the issues raised in this research are; what is the role of students as agents of change in supporting learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods: This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to describe or analyze a research result but is not used to make broader conclusions. In the condition of natural objects, and the researcher is the key instrument, data grouping techniques are carried out by triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive, and the results of qualitative research emphasize real reality rather than reasoning.

Result: This research resulted in a conclusion that the role of Indonesian students as Agents of Change in the field of education during the COVID-19 pandemic includes; become a facilitator in learning activities, create fun learning, provide education about healthy lifestyles, and impart skills to children.

Keywords: Student Role, Agent of Change, Learning Activities, COVID-19 Pandemic

Introduction

The world is currently being shocked by the emergence of a virus that was first discovered at the end of December 2019, in Wuhan China which was later replaced with the COVID-19 virus. COVID-19 is a virus that infects the human respiratory system. Then the virus spread to various countries in the world, one of which is Indonesia (Nababan *et al*., 2022) [30]. The COVID-19 pandemic has made big changes to the human life sector, the pandemic requires each individual to keep their distance, and only do activities at home including teaching and learning activities (Hasudungan *et al*., 2022) [17, 18, 30]. Understand various learning activities that are increasingly complex in their implementation. There needs to be understanding and understanding from various parties who have a relationship with education. The world of education, which is currently experiencing various adjustments to conditions during this pandemic (Efriana, 2021) [13], has forced education stakeholders, both from education units to policy makers, in this case the government, to think hard about realizing a learning process that can adapt according to existing conditions.

Conditioning that occurs certainly requires many parties involved. The policy of implementing online education is carried out in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which has hit almost the entire world (Sparrow *et al*., 2020) [33]. Information technology is a solution for implementing online learning, many information media are used by teachers to carry out online learning (Kumalawati *et al*., 2021) [24]. Among the impacts that have been quite felt by the sons and daughters of the nation due to the COVID-19 pandemic is in the field of Education. Learning is diverted to study at home each with an online or online system. Since it was stated that the corona virus had begun to spread in Indonesia and infected several of its citizens, the government through Nadiem Anwar Makarim, Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Mendikbudristek) decided that learning activities would not be carried out face-to-face, but online at their respective homes

(Malyana, 2020) [28]. this situation causes a lot of anxiety, both by educators, parents and students/students (Aristovnik *et al*., 2020) [4]. Educators are not ready because in their minds they do not plan for online and distance learning. Parents feel overwhelmed because the position of educators in schools has shifted to parents. Parents switch professions as teachers suddenly so they have to direct, guide and even help solve problems faced by children during the learning process (El Nokali *et al*., 2010) [14]. Of course, many parents are very unprepared for the activities they are engaged in. The impact felt by students is from various angles, both misunderstanding because they are guided in learning not by the real teacher (Lodge *et al*., 2018) [26], boredom because of the monotonous atmosphere, and feeling lazy because they are more interested in playing and other activities.

In the midst of the unrest and problems experienced by various parties, many important roles were played by various elements, one of which was the role of students. In the academic field, students show the highest role that regulates the pattern of human integrity from the adolescent stage to the actual role as an adult. In other words, students are a process where the mindset leads to greater responsibility in social life. Departing from this, this writing aims to find out what roles students can play as agents of change during the COVID-19 pandemic (Coles *et al*., 2022) [8]. Therefore, their role as students is urgently needed in order to maintain the continuity of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, whose impact has shocked the world of education. With their role, it is hoped that they will maintain the stability of learning and maintain its quality. This is the important point of this research. The contribution that can be made in this research is that it can be used as a reference for academics in general that they as students have a role as agents of change in every situation to create better conditions, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Review
Education during the COVID-19 pandemic
The world of education has been greatly affected during this pandemic, face-to-face schools have not been allowed, because we must also break the chain of the COVID-19 virus outbreak, so that it does not affect the next generation of the nation. There are many challenges that must be faced in education during this pandemic, including: 1) The role of the teacher, teachers are required to think creatively and innovatively in providing online learning, so that children are not bored in receiving this learning, what is the level of children's understanding of the material which has been given online, through interactive dialogue between the teacher and the child, raises the child's understanding of good material; 2) The Role of Children, children are required to always follow online and complete the tasks given in the learning completely. Children must learn virtually, where interactive dialogue between teacher and child is not as easy as face-to-face (Hasudungan, 2022) [17, 18, 30]. The level of children's understanding of the material provided is of course different, many have a low level of understanding, because they are not serious in the learning process. Whether or not there are other parents who provide assistance. In addition, children's facilities vary, such as the type of cellphone, type of laptop, provider used and the amount of quota they have; 3) The Role of Parents, parents when online learning is very much needed by children, especially for children at the elementary level, parents are required to be able to explain what is explained

by the teacher, and be able to help with children's homework assignments (Al Rawashdeh *et al*., 2021) [2]. Another important role of parents is to provide facilities such as cellphones, laptops, internet, quotas and materials for doing homework. This triggers gaps because during this pandemic there were many layoffs among workers, salary cuts due to the impact of the pandemic and reduced income for MSME actors. L*et al*one to provide educational facilities, just to eat is difficult.

Thus, when a child cannot follow learning, it causes despair and leads to dropping out of school; 4) The role of the government, the role of the government is very important in providing quality education to the nation's children, because education is the key to the success of a country's human resources. It is in the hands of children that in the future we can progress. The role of the government here is how to provide cellphones or laptops to children whose parents are less fortunate, provide quotas for school children and provide more funds for the daily basic needs of underprivileged families due to being laid off, termination of employment, perpetrators of MSMEs are experiencing a downturn and even now fishermen are sad because fish prices have decreased, while fish catches have also decreased (Sajida & Ranjani, 2020) [32].

In providing these funds, the Government must be selective, so that these funds can be targeted and effective to those who really need them (Bardosh *et al*., 2022) [5]. In addition, the Government plays a role in providing training to existing teaching staff and recruiting qualified teaching staff. It is no less important that the Government provides learning media facilities for educators, so that even during a pandemic they still produce quality education, creating superior generations to continue the nation (Engzell *et al*., 2021) [15].

The Role of a Change Agent
Change agents are individuals whose job is to influence the targets/goals of change so that they make decisions in the direction the organization wants. In addition, change agents must also be reliable in connecting sources of change, both innovation and organizational policies, with change targets. For this reason, there are a number of change agent roles that must be carried out as a change leader. Indonesia is one of the countries that realizes the importance of the presence of agents of change, especially when bureaucratic reforms are initiated.

The roles of change agents are: 1) As a catalyst, whose job is to provide confidence to all community members within their respective work units about the importance of changing work units towards a better work unit. This means that agents must be able to build awareness of all individuals to make concrete changes in each unit; 2) As a change driver whose job is to encourage and mobilize employees to participate in changes towards a better work unit. Agents must be able to encourage all employees to start moving towards making changes both from themselves to encouraging high performance in their respective units; 3) As a solution provider whose job is to provide alternative solutions to community members or leaders in work unit environments who face obstacles in the process of changing work units towards better work units (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006) [23]. This means that in every condition the agent must be able to think quickly and act on solutions in order to provide various alternative answers or solutions for his work unit and organizational leadership. Agents must also be accustomed to creating innovations in

order to become role models in their work environment; 4) As a mediator whose job is to help expedite the change process, especially solving problems that arise in the implementation of bureaucratic reform and fostering relationships between parties inside and outside the work unit related to the change process. An agent must be able to map problems and find sidelines for solutions both internally in the work unit and with external parties. Then the agent will continue to hone the ability to think and act in the best way for all members of society; 5) As a liaison in charge of connecting two-way communication between individuals in the work unit environment and decision makers. This means that agents can establish good communication between fellow employees and employees and leaders by creating trust in one another and trying to listen, learn and implement creatively through a family spirit. The work unit atmosphere will be more competitive in a better direction and progress without leaving family values if the agent of change can realize these five roles.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. According to Sugiyono (2017) [34] descriptive method is a method used to describe or analyze a research result but is not used to make broader conclusions. Meanwhile, according to Sugiyono (2016) [35] the qualitative research method is a type of research that is based on reality, used on natural object conditions, and the researcher is a key instrument, data grouping techniques are carried out by triangulation (combined), data analysis is inductive, and the results of qualitative research emphasizes real reality rather than reasoning. In the research context, the students in question are students in senior high schools and junior high schools who are sufficiently capable of critical thinking, independent and able to make guided decisions. This study describes the role of Indonesian students as agents of community change in learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

According to Creswell & Creswell (2018) [10] qualitative research is research conducted to understand an object of research with the results set forth in the form of descriptive sentences. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that qualitative descriptive research is a series of activities to obtain data that are as they are without being in certain conditions whose results emphasize meaning.

The type of data used in this research is qualitative. Qualitative research method is qualitative which is a type of research that is based on reality, is used on natural object conditions, and the researcher is a key instrument (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) [9], data grouping techniques are carried out by triangulation (combined), data analysis is inductive/qualitative in nature, and qualitative research results emphasize real reality rather than reasoning (Basri, 2014) [6]. Data is an important factor in research, it requires certain techniques in data collection. The data collection techniques that the researchers used in this study were observation, document analysis, and literature study.

Results and Discussions
The Role of Students in Society

From the meaning of being an agent of change, students should be able to become a driving force that invites the whole community to change for the better. Taking into account the various knowledge, ideas and knowledge they have. It is no longer the time as a student to just stay silent

without caring about the problems of the nation and state. Because it is on their shoulders (students) that the point of revival of a country or nation is placed. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Indonesia, how were the student movements?

The first step is to become creative citizens and leaders. Students have the opportunity to take preventive measures against the virus for themselves (Bavel et al., 2020) [7], their families, and their environment by staying at home and going out if there is an urgent need. Because intellectuals should be able to set a good example. Students can take advantage of social media to be creative with students from one school to another or throughout Indonesia.

Students can invite the public through online media to comply with health protocols and maintain physical distance and can raise donations aimed at those in need amid a pandemic (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020) [12]. In addition, students can carry out social movements by directly becoming volunteers for the COVID-19 task force. Students can also become volunteers by distributing logistical assistance with nutritious food, vitamins, masks and so on. That way all existing elements work hand in hand to end the spread of COVID-19 (Isnaini & Ariyanti, 2020) [20].

Various steps that need to be taken by students in carrying out their functions in the midst of a pandemic to overcome all of this include:

First, student awareness to convey the voice of the community and ask the government as the authority to prepare a strong public health policy response with a plan to relax social activities towards a new normal.

Second, the role of students as social control, namely students are expected to be able to control a social life in society by providing suggestions, criticism, and solutions to social problems in society. So it is necessary for students to take their role and ask the government to provide free health access to all those who wish to be examined and treated for a confirmed corona virus. This is very important, don't let there be people who have been indicated to choose to stay at home because they are afraid of the shadow of the high cost of hospital treatment. Public service to the publication of this policy must always be echoed through various mass media.

Third, as a student who always wants to bring about change, always synergizes, thinks critically, with a willingness and sincerity to become a pioneer (Keiler, 2018) [21], convey aspirations and become a public servant. So it is necessary if students take their role and ask the government to provide stimulus for households. The creative economy at the household level must be encouraged. It is hoped that goods and services on a household scale that can provide great benefits to other communities can be enlivened so as to increase the income of the poor and vulnerable. Students can take on their role by being a conveyer of products or businesses owned by the community to the public in order to survive, for example marketing community product merchandise through various social media. And this program can be a breakthrough for student productivity in carrying out student functions in the midst of a pandemic (Limeri et al., 2020) [25].

Fourth, the government needs to make low-cost breakthroughs for all public services for the whole community. Improving the social safety net (JPS), as well as preparing various non-cash incentives that can be enjoyed by all poor people.

Fifth, encouraging the government to grow the economy as

the economic recovery has declined due to the spread of the corona virus, maintaining price stability, creating productive jobs, maintaining the investment climate, maintaining trade regulations, spurring the growth of the agricultural sector, and developing infrastructure in lagging areas.

Sixth, encourage the public to participate in the national vaccination program which has started on January 13, 2021.

Towards New Normal

The new normal life is currently being echoed to provide changes and new norms in the prevention and control of COVID-19 (DeSalvo *et al*., 2021) [11]. It is important for students to respond and assess government policies that were previously implemented in response to COVID-19 which they feel have not provided the right policies and several cases in the field are still constrained by technical issues and government negligence. Previously, the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that the 'New Normal' policy could only apply until it was emphasized and could only be carried out in countries that had successfully controlled COVID-19 cases, such as China, Taiwan and Germany (Riyan Rizaldi *et al*., 2021) [31].

Meanwhile in Indonesia, with a high number of cases, this policy is too dangerous. The government also needs to be careful in giving policies towards a new normal life because making plans to relax social activities will trigger a process of transmission that has great potential and is very likely to occur. Don't let the second big wave of infection become history in this country. Considering that the positive cases of Corona have not decreased significantly due to the inappropriate policies issued. Until now, the condition after COVID-19 is being predicted by experts (Abidah *et al*., 2020) [1].
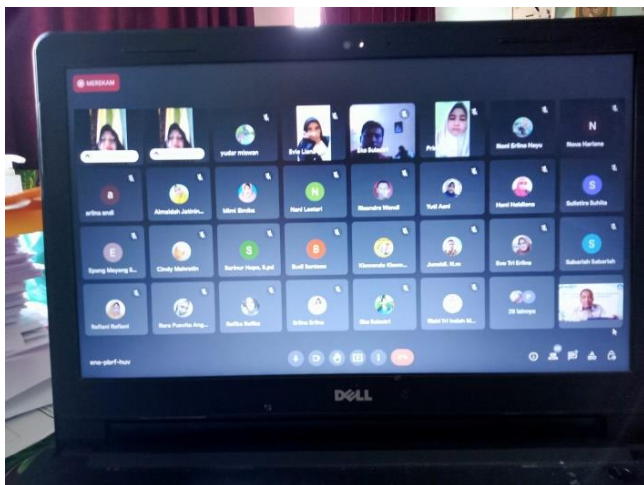

Fig 1: Distance Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic at SMPN 2 North Rupat

What is clear is that humans will depend even more on technology. A battle of ideas is going on in the world of academics, experts and scientists, whether after COVID-19 we will return to the way we were before or bring different changes and new norms. We do not really know what they argue that what is clear are these scientists who will shape our culture (Maison *et al*., 2021) [27].
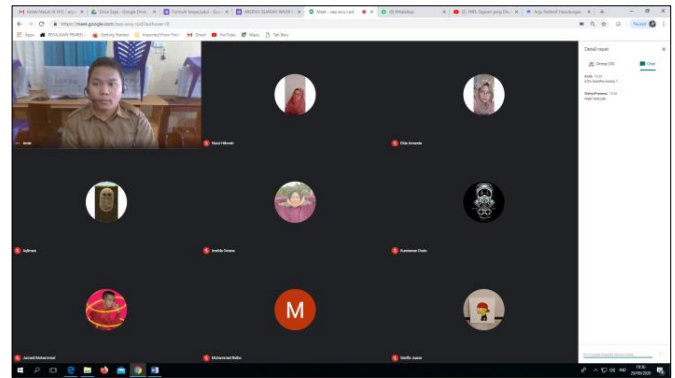

Fig 2: Distance Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic at SMAN 1 Rupat

Those are some key points that can be thought about together and reorganized the student movement and carry out its roles and functions in the midst of a pandemic.

The Role of Students in the Field of Education

A student is known as a learner who is certain to take an education level, therefore it is hoped that the knowledge that has been obtained can be useful in social society (Kim *et al*., 2019) [22]. Especially students engaged in education and community service. The knowledge gained while studying at school is very much needed in solving various problems that exist in education in Indonesia. Because those who have a big contribution in the world of education are students, or various other professions related to the world of education.

As an agent of change, students are expected to encourage or motivate students (Hugo, 2022) [19]. As a student we must open our eyes wide to the problems that exist in education in Indonesia. Even though we are the younger generation, we should not be shy or afraid to convey our aspirations, criticisms and suggestions for the world of education in Indonesia. However, as students who are in an educational environment, we must convey our aspirations and criticisms and suggestions in the right way. So that no party feels disadvantaged, both from our own side, namely students and other parties.

The role of students in the world of education is not only to study at each school. But also take part or participate in building and contributing to Indonesia (Andriyana & Masyitoh, 2018) [3]. The function of an agent of social change that is attached to the identity of students at this time should not be limited to slogans, but a reconstructive and solutive thought to problems surrounding education in this nation that students can contribute to related parties, and exercise control over government policies (Yuliani & Hartanto, 2016) [36]. In the world of education. Especially considering that students are currently critical and creative in conveying and actualizing themselves through social media.

So that a communication between students, the community and the government can run well by producing arguments and suggestions as a solution to deadlocked educational or social problems (McConnell & 't Hart, 2019) [29]. Students in understanding their own role in service and contribution in Indonesia should have a clear frame of reference and

interpretation or more often we hear ideological awareness. That is, strive for every potential that exists to carry out and maintain its ideology. Every behavior of this individual or group is an interpretation of ideology.

Students as an intellectual generation can only be valued for their existence with their intellectual qualities (Gamage *et al*., 2021) [16], not with anything else. If students can no longer rely on their intellectual brilliance, what other abilities can students risk for this country. Students must free themselves from pragmatic interests, including the political interests of certain groups and themselves and their families. The success of students in pulling the train of change so far is more due to their pure idealism.

Conclusion

The real manifestation of the role of students as agents of change is to provide services to the community for changing times as a result of the spread of the corona virus. In this case, the impact of the corona virus is felt by children who are currently studying, both primary and secondary education. Therefore, students must play an active role in supporting government programs so that they can run properly. Students as learners are believed to be powerful in terms of intellectuals, so students are expected to have solutive reasoning and high sensitivity so that they are able to make a valuable contribution to the people in their environment, especially in the fields of education and social society. Therefore their role is needed in society. The role of students as Agents of change in the field of education during the COVID-19 pandemic includes; become a facilitator in learning activities, create fun learning, provide education about healthy lifestyles, instill *adab*, impart skills to children. Through this research, recommends several things, namely; first, students are more optimal in devoting themselves to society, not only limited to the COVID-19 pandemic but at every opportunity. This is intended to train student sensitivity to everything that happens in society. Second, the community should give real appreciation for the various roles that have been shown by students, especially the role of students as agents of change in the field of education and social society.

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