

# Exploring The Challenges Faced by Secondary Students While Using Google Meet During Home-Based Teaching and Learning (HTL)

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## Abstract

The education sector has begun moving towards online teaching and learning that uses a variety of existing applications. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, home-based teaching and learning (HTL) was adapted to replace face-to-face learning in the classroom. However, HTL using technology like Google Meet is a very challenging experience for those who have never taught and learned online. Various challenges have been encountered by educators and students when teaching and learning were fully implemented online. Therefore, this study is conducted to identify the challenges faced by secondary students while using Google Meet during HTL. Responses and data were gathered through interview and observations. The respondents consist of two boys and three girls from secondary schools around Kuala Terengganu. The findings show that the implementation of HTL has impacted students' level of understanding and challenged both the students and educators. Difficulty in accessing computers and materials, inappropriate devices, lack of information, time constraints, technical problems and technological concerns were among the challenges they faced.

**Keywords:** Home-based Teaching and Learning (HTL), Google Meet.

## Introduction

In the 21st century, education has changed parallel to current technological advances. Previously, teaching and learning only took place in classrooms, and now it has become more flexible by using the medium of technology. Technology has been used at school level and higher education in teaching and learning process such as e-learning, blended learning, and mobile learning. Technology, which is constantly evolving, has profoundly changed modern world education. It facilitates the teaching and learning process (TL), attracts students' interest and saves time. Online teaching and learning continues to grow and play an important role in Malaysian education (Gunawan et al., 2020). The world of education in today's era has

begun to move towards online teaching and learning that uses a variety of existing applications. Online learning, teaching, and facilitating have become easier through the application of digital technology and the Internet. This digital learning approach does not require the students and educators to have face-to-face communication. Besides that, the learning materials can be accessed easily, quickly and without boundaries. The materials can come from different sources and in various forms of graphics and multimedia.

Online learning also allows students to communicate with other students via computer-based learning. It shows that this approach emphasizes on efficient and independent learning. As quoted by Faridah and Afham (2019), online learning employs an active learning method. Even though students are far away and separated in different locations, educators use all their creativity to interact with them (Jafar et al., 2020). The schools and institutes of higher education (IPT) are changing their way and strategy in applying online teaching and learning. This coincides with Herman's (2015) study, which explains that online learning can create a learning system that is easy to change and expand. It is an ideal decision in the face of a situation that threatens the teaching and learning situation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which hampers all economic activities, including the education sector. As stated in the Special Message of the Prime Minister of Malaysia in 2020, the world has witnessed the spread of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) which has caused all sectors to lose the strength to continue their daily routines.

Since COVID-19 hit the world in 2019, many sectors were forced to close temporarily in an attempt to stop the virus from spreading. Malaysian government has implemented a Movement Control Order (MCO) starting in March 2020. The education sector was affected the most by this Movement Control Order (MCO) since all the school students could not attend school. In response to that, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has introduced Home-based Teaching and Learning (HTL) to replace physical classes. This new norm has taught students to learn online with minimal guidance from the teacher. Besides, history students become more independently collecting primary sources from digital archives such as HaitiTrust Digital Library and the Internet Archives (). This online learning is a relatively new experience, especially for elementary and high school students in Malaysia.

The execution of home-based teaching and learning was not easy, especially during the current state of the Movement Control Order (MCO) situation, as it has never happened before in Malaysia. Both teachers and students have faced many challenges during online lessons since many students did not have access to the Internet and digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, and computers. Home-based teaching and learning (HTL) is the most suitable approach for students who must study at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Abdullah & Amran, 2021). Another limitation found in online learning involved primary school students since they must be monitored and supervised by their parents during the online class. Primary school students require guidance from their parents or someone older in the house since they are not skilled enough to operate the Internet and digital devices during home-based teaching and learning (HTL).

Furthermore, teachers also must deal with various challenges in teaching online (Apfandi et al., 2021). Some students could not fully comprehend the syllabus during the HTL. Therefore, this has forced teachers to provide students with "extra workout" (extra activities and notes) to help them comprehend the subject taught. According to Rosli et al (2021), the use of technology in education and appropriate learning methods help in improving students' understanding during HTL. The students who needed to be given attention by teachers during HTL were the ones involved in national exams, the Malaysian Education Certificate (SPM).

Many challenges were faced by school students in Malaysia during HTL. One of the challenges was ineffective time management by the students in handling online classes at home. Some online classes start as early as 8.00 in the morning, but a number of students join in late. Since physically they were still at home, they were not familiar with the new routines of online learning. Some students had no choice but to share electronic devices with their other siblings to attend their respective online classes. Students who did not own electronic devices were not able to attend online classes and eventually were left behind.

There are several difficulties faced in conducting smooth online teaching and learning. The challenges faced have affected students' level of understanding. Therefore, this study is conducted to identify high school students' level of understanding, and challenges faced by them while using Google Meet during HTL.

## **Literature Review**

### **The application of Google Meet**

Google Meet is a video communication service developed by Google that can be accessed via smartphones. This application has become a medium of communication between teachers and students during HTL. Online learning is an activity that involves connecting to a system using technology tools like the Internet (Saifudin & Hamzah, 2021). Google Meet is an alternative medium for students' online learning since it is free and no registration is required, unlike other services. The widespread use of Google Meet is seen today as it is not only used by students but also working adults, who regularly use it as a means of communication among themselves at workplace.

It is easy to find Google Meet on the web, Android, and iOS applications (Sawitri, 2020). One of the advantages of Google Meet is it is an accessible application and can be accessed using a computer or smartphone anywhere, at any time.

### **Online Learning**

The use of the latest technology, which is easily accessible, provides many benefits to students and makes learning efficient even if there are some limitations (Nur Hazirah & Masayu, 2020). Although school students today have become used to online learning, their level of understanding towards the lessons taught during the HTL has become a concern. Thus, the use of technology in education and appropriate learning methods help increase students' level of understanding (Hamzah & Mahamod, 2021). Online learning is a new method introduced to make sure that school students do not fall behind in education during the pandemic. During the home-based teaching and learning sessions, teachers continuously checked on their students' understanding of the subject content but received no responses from the students. Therefore, most teachers assumed that either the students understood the lessons, or they find it too hard and embarrassing to respond during the online lessons.

### **Challenges Faced during Home-based Teaching and Learning (HTL)**

The COVID-19 outbreak has created many challenges for all people around the world. This includes school students, who faced some challenges when they were not allowed to attend school, as all schools in Malaysia were instructed to close. Thus, physical learning has been replaced with online learning and students were required to be present in the online application that has been set up by their schoolteachers. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on online learning used by school students (Zakaria et al., 2020). Some students who come from low-income families struggle to have their own devices and

get access to the Internet. Not all parents can provide communication devices such as computers and smartphones to their children for online learning purposes, and this can lead to some students falling behind in their studies.

A study conducted by Jafar et al (2020) found that socioeconomic is a significant factor which contributes to the readiness of students' online learning. The struggles between low household income students are different compared to the higher household income students. As stated by Muniroh et al (2020), since parents' income has also been affected because of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of low-income families put priority on supporting the basic needs of the family rather than providing their children with communication devices for their online learning. Socioeconomic factor has affected the online learning process tremendously during the pandemic. According to Zamri and Anita (2020), the lack of support from parents affected students' motivation for online learning. This is because most parents did not give attention to their children's education since, they were busy coping with work during the MCO period. The lack of support and encouragement from parents is the cause of decreased online learning motivation. Therefore, parents need to understand their obligations and responsibilities towards their children's learning by providing the basic needs used for online learning. Their emotional support is also required in making sure that their children are present during online learning throughout the MCO.

Students also face problems in using the communication devices for their online classes. Home-based teaching and learning (HTL) faces two challenges. The first one is the parent's ability to provide gadgets such as computers and tablets, and another one is the limited access to the internet. It shows that having Internet access is very important for students to be able to do online learning. The data from UNICEF in 2020 shows that as many as 9 out of 10 children use mobile phones as a tool for online learning, while 8 out of 10 children do not have access to computers. Most students have no choice but to share their mobile devices with their parents and other siblings for online learning purposes.

Besides that, teachers also face their own challenges in running the HTL. Since teachers are used to conducting face-to-face teaching at school, online learning has lowered teachers' motivation to teach. The significant difference between face-to-face and online learning is the responses that they got from students. Unlike online learning, teachers can get an immediate response from students in the face-to-face classroom setting. According to Nor Aziah and Taufiq (2016), teachers' motivation in online teaching needs to be taken seriously in facing the challenges of online HTL. The relational regulation theory developed by Lakey and Orehek in 2011 states that social support, which is obtained or given continuously will increase the level of mental well-being. An individual's mental well-being is in a good state when the person can regulate their emotions, thoughts, and behavior well through effective communication. In addition, this theory explains how relationships and support through surrounding individuals can reduce a person's stress (Abdullah & Amran, 2021). Therefore, this shows that the social support obtained from family, significant others, friends, and students can make teachers more enthusiastic and motivated about conducting online teaching.

Krishnamurthy (2020) stated that educators face challenges in adapting themselves to the progress of modern era, especially in using increasingly technological tools during online teaching. Thus, teachers need to apply a suitable approach in creating teaching materials that are comprehensive and interactive. The students need this kind of learning materials since there is minimal guidance from teacher during online learning. Abdullah and Amran (2021) state that the diversity of the duties of teacher needs to be understood and appreciated.

Teachers have their own lives that come with a set of challenges in life. Teachers should be supported and motivated to perform their duties as educators appropriately. This opinion is also in line with the statement of Aziah and Taufiq (2016), who stated that the use of appropriate methods, strategies and approaches can impact the efficiency of online teaching. The difficulty of creating a two-way communication between students and teachers has made online learning difficult or impossible to be implemented properly. This is another challenge faced by teachers in accomplishing the objectives of teaching and learning.

Lack of knowledge in searching for necessary data through the Internet is one of the reasons teachers do not feel comfortable using technology in their home-based teaching and learning (HTL). Jafar et al (2020) suggest teachers, who have less knowledge of technology to provide appropriate learning materials to their students. Teachers are also worried that their weaknesses will be found out by their students. They prefer to use textbooks and reference materials as their teaching aids (TA). A study conducted by Shida et al (2019) proved that there are still teachers who still lack adequate knowledge in integrating technology into their HTL. Teachers who are less skilled in preparing their TA find all the information via websites and search portals.

### **Methodology**

This study was conducted using interview and observation methods. Respondents were selected among secondary school students around Kuala Terengganu. Interview method was used to obtain information and responses from the respondents themselves to find out their level of understanding throughout the Online Home-based Teaching and Learning (HTL) during the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO). Observation was also done to gather some information on the types of problems faced by the students.

The five chosen respondents consisted of 2 male students and 3 female students from secondary school. This interview was done individually and at different times. Two of the respondents were accompanied by their parents during the interview as some questions needed guidance from their parents. The questions were designed to identify the problems faced by the students during online HTL, to check their level of understanding towards the lesson taught and to find out whether they still think this HTL should be continued.

This interview was conducted at the end of June 2022. Each question was designed to represent respondents' experience throughout Home-Based Teaching and Learning (HTL), which was conducted in 2021. The age of the respondents was also considered to be able to represent the data in 2022 as well.

### **Results & Discussions**

Based on the interview and observation conducted, it was found that all five respondents faced several challenges during the Home-based Teaching and Learning (HTL) with Google Meet as the medium. They stated that it was difficult for them to fully comprehend the lesson, and they individually faced their own set of obstacles every day with HTL.

#### **I. First respondent: Ahmad Ezriel, 15 years old, form 3.**

*"Ahmad Ezriel was relieved because he did not have to take the Form 3 Assessment (PT3). It has been announced by the Minister of Education, Datuk Dr Mohd Radzi Jidin on the 2nd of June 2022 that the Malaysian Ministry of Education has officially decided to abolish the PT3 exam starting in 2022. Ahmad admitted that one of his challenges during HTL was time constraints, as he could not focus during the online classes. Ahmad also found it hard to fully*



*understand the online lesson, especially the mathematics class. Ahmad stated that if the HTL continues, he may be worried because of his lack of understanding."*

**II. Second respondent: A'in Qistyna, 14 years old, form 2.**

*"A'in stated that the challenge she was facing was poor Internet access in the area where she lives. She had to change to different telco companies twice to get good Internet access. As for A'in, she understood the lesson well during the online class. However, she found it a hassle to keep contacting her teacher separately whenever she has questions regarding the lesson. A'in also stated that she doesn't like the idea of continuing the HTL. She prefers having physical class as it makes her happier."*

**III. Third respondent: Azira Balqis, 14 years old, form 2.**

*"Azira said the challenge that she faced was having to share a laptop with her sister during online classes. Even though Azira was able to understand and follow the lesson well, sometimes she was easily distracted during HTL. Just like the others, Azira also will not be happy if the HTL continues because she believes that it might affect her academic performance."*

**IV. Fourth respondent: Ezdiha Awatif, 16 years old, form 4.**

*"Ezdiha is one of the respondents who was accompanied by his parents during the interview. The challenge that Ezhiha faced was the difficulty in handling online classes. She also found it hard to understand the lesson and was not able to focus during HTL. Ezhiha admitted that she does not like HTL to be continued in the future."*

**V. Fifth respondent: Ezhairie, 13 years old, form 1.**

*"Ezhairie is the youngest respondent being interviewed. The challenge that he faced was having to use his mother's mobile phone to access Google Meet for HTL. Ezhairie was not able to focus well and had a hard time completing the homework as he did not entirely understand the lesson taught in class. He also mentioned that he doesn't like HTL because he could not meet his classmates."*

Based from the interview, it reveals that the respondents were affected by the online Home-based Teaching and Learning (HTL) because they had difficulty understanding what was taught during an online class. Besides that, the delayed school reopening causes students to lose interest in learning at home. Some subjects like mathematics, which involve calculations, are much harder to grasp and learn using Google Meet. This is because the students believe subjects that require calculations need to be taught in class so teachers can give full attention to them. As we know, mathematics lesson involves formulas and requires students to use a calculator to solve each question. Learning it online makes it much harder to show your teachers exactly what you are struggling with therefore the probability for students to master this subject is very low.

In addition, poor Internet connection is also considered the main problem for students in conducting HTL. There are residential areas that do not have a reliable Internet connection. Therefore, some students are forced to get a new sim card from different telco companies for better Internet access. This shows that Malaysia's Internet coverage is still insufficient, and the speed is much slower compared to its neighbouring countries. The lack of a stable internet connection can disrupt students' online learning and eventually makes students feel demotivated to learn online. Lagging Internet ruins students' online learning and cause them

to miss out on chunks of information from the ongoing online class. This problem contributes to students falling behind academically. As a result, students either have to ask their teacher for guidance or revise the lesson on their own.

Next, the lack of technical knowledge in using technology during HTL has also affected students' level of understanding. Most primary school students do not yet own a smartphone and do not have the skills to access the Internet for online classes. Some students use their parents' smartphones for HTL and need them by their side during ongoing online learning for guidance and supervision.

### **Conclusion**

Despite its many challenges and concerns, technology in education brings many benefits to students. Besides being able to explore a wide variety of learning materials, the online learning application helps save time and energy. Interactive graphics used during online learning also make the learning process easier to comprehend. However, there are some challenges faced by teachers and students with the implementation of technology into education. Among them are difficulty accessing the learning materials, lack of digital devices, time constraints, digital literacy, and technical issues. The availability of digital devices and stable Internet access can optimize the implementation of online learning. In addition, early exposure to technology and appropriate digital training should be given to teachers and students. The efficient use of technology in online education provides many benefits, in line with the government's goal towards the digitalization of education.

Various challenges are faced by the students during HTL. Online learning has affected their level of understanding. However, COVID-19 is far from over, as nothing is certain yet. It is still a difficult time for everyone in the world. While it's hard for everyone to go through this situation, technology helps people to stay sane and get through daily life. Hoping for the world to be like before the pandemic will only make you feel stressed out and left behind. Instead, we should embrace the challenges of the current world and try to live life with new norms set by the government.

Government should assist underprivileged students in ensuring they do not fall behind in their studies. The government should also send their representatives to the rural areas and see for themselves the real situation these less fortunate students are going through to get the best education. In the government's effort to combat the spread of COVID-19, education matters also need to be taken seriously so academic performance of students will be improved.

Students still have a long journey ahead of them, and they will face lots of other school challenges along the way. As for now, they should only prioritize on what matters most which is staying focused on the lesson during online learning. Unlike online learning where students meet their teachers and friends virtually via smartphone or computers, classroom learning allows them to meet and interact with others physically.

Students should not feel like this is the biggest challenge they have ever encountered in life. There are many more tough hurdles that they are going to face later on once they enter adulthood. Students should accept this challenge and take it as a motivation for success. Success does not happen overnight. It requires hard work, sweat and tears. Make today's challenges a catalyst to keep striving for the best in the future.

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