



# The Utilization of Digital Platform in Social Studies Learning in the Pandemic Era

## **Triani Widyanti**

trianiw@institutpendidikan.ac.id  
Study Program of Social Studies Education  
Indonesia Institute of Education

## **Erlina Wiyanarti**

erlina\_w@upi.edu  
Study Program of Social Studies Education  
School of Postgraduate Studies, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

## **Tetep**

tetep@institutpendidikan.ac.id  
Study Program of Social Studies Education  
Indonesia Institute of Education

## **Ade Suherman**

adesuherman@institutpendidikan.ac.id  
Study Program of Social Studies Education  
Indonesia Institute of Education

**Abstract:** Education has faced new challenges since the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world and Indonesia. Learning was initially carried out face to face in the classroom immediately turned into distance learning online. This study describes teachers' digital platforms during online learning, especially in social science learning at the junior high school level in the Garut Regency. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative; the data obtained comes from observations, interviews, and documentation of the research object. The data analysis technique used descriptive analysis. The results show that at least three digital platforms are often used to support online social studies learning. These digital platforms include WhatsApp groups, Google facilities (Google classroom, Google forms, Google meet), and Zoom cloud meetings. In addition, teachers also use other media as support, such as Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram.

**Keywords:** Digital platform, social studies learning, pandemic period



## Introduction

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire order of human life has begun to be limited. Efforts to control and prevent the spread of the deadly virus continue to be carried out by the government in all aspects of life. The imposition of restrictions on activities in public spaces also impacts the implementation of learning at every level of education. The policy of limiting interaction and crowds causes teachers and students to adapt to pandemic situations and conditions and carry out a different learning process than usual, namely by indirectly implementing a face-to-face learning system or through an online learning process (in a network).

In the circular letter of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 4 of 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) provides directions regarding changing the learning system in schools to a distance learning system (PJJ). This directive is intended for all academic units in Indonesia, from PAUD to Universities. This regulation is intended to prevent educational institutions from becoming new clusters to spread the Covid-19 virus. The application of distance learning in question is online learning by utilizing information technology that is currently developing.

Information technology is the result of the development of science. Information technology in the world of education can become a means of connecting information from teachers to students. In a pandemic situation like now, information technology has a crucial role, namely as a transmitter of ideas, opinions, learning materials, and a place where learning activities are carried out. Dimiyati (2017) explained that online learning, known as e-learning, uses technology to support the distance learning process. This increases the rapidly changing learning style. Students carry out online learning activities at home during the current pandemic through their available information technology, such as gadgets, laptops, notebooks, computers, etc.

To avoid the broader spread of Covid-19, the government must take social distancing and physical contact policies in the form of staying at home, working from home, studying, and worshipping at home (Suherman et al., 2021). The Covid-19 virus pandemic has changed. The pattern of several activities is face-to-face (conventional) learning into online or online teaching and learning (Suherman et al., 2020).



This online learning activity also applies to Social Science subjects. In social studies subjects, various social science clusters are made into an integrated unit. Social studies subjects cover four disciplines at the junior high school level, namely economics, geography, history, and sociology. According to Soemantri (in Darsono et al., 2017), social studies education simplifies social science disciplines, state ideology, and other scientific disciplines and related social problems that are organized and presented scientifically psychologically for educational purposes at the primary and secondary education levels medium. Online learning is a learning process that utilizes the internet network in the learning process (Isman, 2017). Online learning provides students with the flexibility of learning time and wherever students and teachers are. Students can interact with teachers using several applications such as classroom, video conference, telephone or live chat, zoom, or WhatsApp group.

However, the success of online learning is primarily determined by many factors such as the ability of teachers to use information technology, the availability of technology-based learning media owned by students, and external factors such as networks and the availability of learning quotas. Based on this description, researchers are interested in examining the extent to which teachers and students can take advantage of various digital platforms that can be used to support social studies learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Methods**

The approach used in this research is through a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is an approach whose findings are not obtained through statistical procedures or other calculation forms. According to Kirk and Miller (in Moleong, 2011), qualitative research is a particular tradition in social science that is fundamentally dependent on observations of humans both in its area and in its terminology.

The research site was conducted in Garut district, West Java Province. The research focuses on teachers at the junior high school level who are members of the Social Sciences Subject Teacher Consultation (MGMP). Sources of data owned by researchers came from informants consisting of teachers and students and documents relevant to this research. The data collection technique used is through in-depth direct interviews with informants and documentation.



## Findings and Discussion

The Covid-19 pandemic that has hit the world and Indonesia today has caused significant changes in various aspects of human life. These changes also occur in the field of education. Learning activities carried out during the pandemic are distance learning through an online system. Learning is an interactive process between students and teachers and their learning resources in a learning environment (Abidin, 2016). Based on this understanding, learning is gaining knowledge through interaction activities between teachers, students, and learning resources in a learning environment. Based on this concept, learning will be of quality if there is multidirectional interaction such as teacher and student, student and teacher, between students, students with learning resources, and the learning environment.

Through the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud), the government issued Circular Letter Number 4 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Education Policies in the Emergency Period for the Spread of Covid-19. The learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic is carried out through distance learning. Distance learning is a form of modification of the learning process, usually carried out in schools but carried out at home to reduce interaction between teachers and students. This learning process aims to provide meaningful learning experiences for students and focuses on life skills education in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. This online learning activity is carried out through social media. Damian Ryan and Jones (in Abiddin, 2016), in their book “Understanding Digital Marketing: Marketing Strategies for Engaging the Digital Generation”, explains that social media is a web-based software that allows users to share online, discuss, and participate in all forms of social interaction.

Online learning aims to reach massive and broad groups by utilizing the internet network (Yanti et al., 2020). The online learning process utilizes technological advances such as multimedia technology, video, virtual classes, animated online text, voice messages, email, telephone conferences, and online video streaming. Online learning can be done massively with unlimited participants and can be done free of charge or paid (Bilfaqih & Qomarudin, 2015). The implementation of online social studies learning carried out by students in Garut Regency is dominated by the use of various digital platforms that are considered to support the learning process. The online learning



process is carried out in two models, namely one-way and two-way. One-way online learning here is carried out when the teacher gives assignments or materials through online media. Students actively and independently study the material and do the assigned tasks. Meanwhile, two-way online learning is carried out when teachers and students are in a virtual space that is intentionally provided for the interaction between teachers and students. This interaction process can be delivered material, explaining assignments that can be directly followed by students and teachers.

The digital platform is a program that can support the success of online learning. Several platforms can be used to implement online learning, including Google Classroom, Edmodo, Learning House, Teacher Room, Your School, Smart Class, Zenius, Google Suite for Education, Microsoft Office 365 for Education (MirzonDaheri, Juliana, Deriwanto, 2020). In addition to these platforms, other digital platforms can be used during learning, including WhatsApp Group (WAG), Google Classroom (GC), Edmodo, and Zoom (Rachmawati et al., 2020). Social media that is often used by students in conducting social studies learning activities is WhatsApp social media.

Data from interviews with 30 teachers in Garut Regency who are members of the Social Sciences Subject Teacher Conference (MGMP) shows that three digital platforms are often used, namely WhatsApp groups, Google Facilities (Google Classroom, Google Form, and Google meet) and Zoom Cloud. The first digital platform is WhatsApp group. This is because the use of WhatsApp groups is simpler and easier to use. WhatsApp is a communication medium that is used to convey messages and communicate both individually and in groups. There are many features in WhatsApp that can be used as a communication medium and as a learning medium. In a pandemic situation like now, WhatsApp Group is one of the media widely used to interact between teachers and students. Teachers can send various things such as materials, evaluation questions, and explanations via video or voice notes. WhatsApp groups can also facilitate two-way learning through video call services, where students and teachers can meet in person to deliver material and assignments, even with a limit on the number of students. The data shows that all respondents use WhatsApp groups in conducting online learning.

In addition to using WhatsApp in conducting social studies learning activities, teachers also use the Google service platform to interact with students. Three



Google facilities can be used when learning online, namely Google Forms, Google Classroom, and Google meet. First, Google Form is one of several applications with a form display model as a working paper that can be used individually or in groups. Using Google forms in online learning is very easy. This is based on the researcher's analysis of all respondents who stated that all teachers use Google forms in online learning. Google this form is used as a learning evaluation tool. Ease of use as well as ratings makes Google Forms usable. The advantage of this Google form is that there are various templates that you can choose from in making quizzes. You can also use various types of tests that are made according to learning needs, can even add videos and pictures, and the results of responses from students can be saved automatically (Month & Zainiyati, 2020). The data obtained from the Google form are displayed in detail and make it easier for teachers to make assessments.

The second Google service that is widely used is Google Classroom. This service is an application created by Google. It aims to make it easier for teachers and students to carry out learning. This Google Classroom helps teachers efficiently learn and convey information precisely and accurately to students (Hakim, 2016). In online learning, teachers can take advantage of various features available in Google Classrooms such as assignments, grading, communication, time-cost, archive course, mobile application, and privacy (Sabran & Sabara, 2019). Third, the last Google service is Google meet. Google meet is an application that is almost the same as zoom cloud meeting. The difference between Google meet and zoom cloud meeting that is most visible is the screen display during learning. The use of Zoom cloud meetings in online learning is also a favorite. This feature is considered quite helpful for two-way communication between teachers and students. Learning activities are felt to be more interactive because everyone can meet each other virtually. In this application, the teacher can freely display learning materials through the available share screen feature.

The learning resources used by students to conduct online learning are not much different from offline learning in the classroom. In online learning like today, teachers experience many difficulties because they cannot directly explain social studies learning materials. In this case, the learning resources used by students are in the form of integrated social studies books and Youtube. Youtube is used as an alternative learning resource to explain social studies learning materials. In addition, to add variety to learning, teachers also



use social media such as Facebook and Instagram. The use of Facebook and Instagram is intended as a means for students to upload creativity and, at the same time, provide students with an understanding of how to use social media wisely. This is done, of course, because advances in information technology are getting faster and cannot be dammed; it will harm students if it is not accompanied by ongoing assistance.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The COVID-19 pandemic that hit Indonesia has made many changes in various fields: education. Education is an essential component in improving human resources. The implementation of distance learning through an online learning system is one of the government policies implemented to prevent the spread of this virus. In social science learning, teachers have made various efforts to continue to be able to organize ideal learning. The use and utilization of digital platforms are also increasing along with the demands of distance learning. Several digital platforms are widely available with various features according to the interaction goals to be achieved. The most frequently used digital platforms in social studies online learning include WhatsApp groups, Google Facilities (Google Classroom, Google Form, and Google meet), Zoom Cloud Meetings, and the use of Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram, which are used as alternative learning resources. Based on the studies several conclusions related to this research have been obtained, namely:

1. Advances in information technology are increasingly developing, have been able to help teachers to organize distance learning through an online system, which is supported by various digital platforms that are very supportive.
2. Teachers who are members of the Social Sciences MGMP in Garut Regency have successfully implemented online learning through the use of digital platforms for learning Social Sciences during the pandemic.
3. The interaction of teachers and students during the pandemic can still run well through various features available on various digital platforms that can be adapted to learning needs at any time.



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