

ICT Facilities and Student Motivation after COVID-19: Parental Challenges in Children's Learning

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on children's learning processes, simultaneously transforming the traditional role of parents into that of learning facilitators at home. This qualitative study aims to explore the strategies parents in Malaysia use to manage and motivate their children in the post-pandemic context. In-depth interviews were conducted with six parents to examine the challenges faced during home-based teaching and learning (PdPR), post-pandemic learning management strategies, and approaches adopted to enhance children's motivation. Thematic analysis revealed that parents encountered various challenges, including technological constraints, limited access to devices, internet connectivity issues, children's gadget addiction, and the responsibility of monitoring daily learning activities. Identified recovery strategies included restructuring daily routines, reviewing schoolwork, supervising supplementary classes, and providing both emotional and material support. The findings highlight the pivotal and dynamic role of parents in maintaining children's academic engagement, as well as the need for sustained support to help families adapt to the realities of post-pandemic education.

Keywords: Post-Pandemic Learning, Parents, Student Motivation, COVID-19 Education, Parental Strategies

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the global education system, including in Malaysia. The sudden shift to online learning created numerous challenges, particularly for primary school students, who required a high level of self-discipline and strong parental support. During the Movement Control Order (MCO), parents were compelled to take on a more active role in ensuring the continuity of their children's learning at home. Problems encountered during online teaching and learning (PdP) were primarily attributed to students' inability to afford electronic devices and to a lack of stable internet connectivity (Arwansyah et al., 2021). These were among the key challenges parents faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2022, Malaysia entered the endemic phase after two years of grappling with the pandemic's far-reaching implications. This transition marked a new beginning, particularly for students who faced the major challenge of adapting to new norms, especially those from middle and low-income families. Such drastic changes contributed to shifts in psychological well-being and academic performance across a significant portion of the population (Umi Hamidaton Mohd. Soffian Lee et al., 2023). Now that schools have resumed face-to-face learning and these children have progressed to secondary school, a pertinent question arises: how have parents adjusted their roles during the post-pandemic recovery phase after a prolonged period of self-directed learning and disruptions to formal education routines? It is crucial to understand the strategies parents employ to support their children's learning and motivation in this post-pandemic era.

Learning motivation is a vital element of academic success. Recent studies indicate that students with a growth mindset are more likely to sustain autonomous motivation when facing the challenges of online learning. Such thinking fosters resilience, problem-solving abilities, and receptivity to feedback and mistakes. Furthermore, students who believe their abilities can be developed through effort and appropriate strategies are more

motivated to persist in their learning (Benneker et al., 2023). Within this context, the parental role is highly significant. Proper support, encouragement, and strategies from parents can help reignite students' enthusiasm for learning. However, limited research has examined how parents in Malaysia manage their children's education and enhance their children's motivation in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by examining the strategies parents employ to enhance their children's motivation in the post-pandemic context. The findings of this study highlight parents' perspectives, including their involvement in their children's learning, their consistent concern for sustaining motivation, and their commitment to ensuring that their children can navigate the learning process effectively.

Research Questions

The three research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. To identify the challenges faced by parents during their children's online learning (PdPR) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To examine the strategies employed by parents in managing their children's learning after the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. To explore the approaches adopted by parents in enhancing their children's learning motivation after the COVID-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have found that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted students' academic progress, with some reporting a decline in motivation due to the lack of social interaction, structure, and engagement typically present in physical classrooms (Xu, 2022; Oliveira et al., 2021). The sudden shift from the traditional classroom system to online learning made it difficult for both parents and students to adapt. Research indicates that the abrupt transition to distance learning posed both physical and psychological barriers for students. As the pandemic reshaped students' learning experiences and academic progress, parental involvement emerged as a crucial factor in managing student learning. During this period, parents assumed dual roles as both caregivers and learning facilitators, thereby multiplying their daily responsibilities. Parental involvement, such as creating a structured learning environment and providing emotional support, significantly impacted students' ability to remain engaged in their education (Wang et al., 2021). Research by Tan et al. (2022) further suggests that parents who were actively involved in their children's education during the pandemic reported higher levels of motivation and academic performance among their children in the post-pandemic period. Thus, parental involvement has played a pivotal role in shaping students' learning experiences and educational outcomes.

Several studies have examined the long-term effects of parental involvement on children's motivation and learning outcomes. Özyıldırım (2024) suggested that increased parental engagement during the pandemic generated long-term benefits for children's academic attitudes and self-efficacy. Children whose parents were actively involved in their education demonstrated higher levels of enthusiasm, greater confidence in their abilities, and improved academic achievement even after returning to regular schooling routines (Musengamana, 2023). This shift in parental roles from passive observers to active participants was found to have a significant impact on sustaining students' motivation. Ribeiro et al. (2021) found that parents' negative emotions influenced their children's motivation to learn. Limited emotional support not only reduced encouragement but also heightened children's perception of negative emotions. It is therefore essential for parents to maintain positive emotional well-being to provide a supportive learning environment and enhance their children's motivation. Consequently, parental well-being and their ability to manage stress play a crucial role in fostering a conducive learning environment for their children, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed the education system, leading to greater reliance on online and hybrid learning. The shift to digital platforms affected students' engagement, interaction, and academic success. Post-pandemic students have become more accustomed to hybrid learning models; however, notable

differences remain in how students adapt to these environments (Imran et al., 2025). In the aftermath of the pandemic, digital literacy remains a critical predictor of academic performance, underscoring the need for students to adapt to new learning experiences (Mastam et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, parents often struggle with the technological demands of supporting their children's education.

Chavez et al. (2023) highlighted that parents frequently encounter challenges such as their children's difficulty in understanding academic subjects and their overreliance on technological devices. Despite these obstacles, parents adopted various strategies to enhance learning, emphasizing the importance of empathy and understanding in addressing these challenges. In conclusion, parental involvement has a significant influence on students' learning motivation both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, research focusing specifically on the Malaysian parenting context remains limited. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine parental strategies in fostering students' learning motivation within the post-pandemic environment.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to understand the challenges, explore strategies, and identify motivational approaches adopted by parents in managing their children's learning in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Approach

A phenomenological approach was applied to explore and describe parents' experiences as they navigate their children's post-pandemic learning. The focus was placed on the values and meanings conveyed by parents based on their personal experiences. This approach enabled the researcher to examine parental strategies from the parents' perspective.

Research Participants and Data Collection Procedure

Respondents are parents of at least one child aged 13-15 (lower secondary school level) who experienced online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents are selected through purposive sampling to ensure the information obtained is relevant to the study's objectives. A total of six parents participated in semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth information about their experiences in handling their children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews are conducted face-to-face or via an online platform such as Google Meet, depending on the participants' comfort. Each interview session took between 30 and 60 minutes and was recorded. The demographics of the selected respondents, classified by pseudonym, age, and the number and ages of their children, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of the Participants

Respondent	Age		Number of Children	Child's Age (Year)
Tan Lee	54		2	15 & 13
Hartini	46		1	17
Hidayah	52		2	16 & 13
Hasanah	50		1	15
Azizah	49		1	16
Sazali	54		1	16

All respondents are working mothers and fathers in various fields, including education and finance, aged 46 to 54. They come from small families, with one to two children. This diversity of backgrounds provides various perspectives on parental challenges in children's learning after COVID-19.

Research Instrument

The research instruments consisted of two main components. First, participants' background information was collected using a demographic form that included details such as name, age, number of children, and their children's ages. Second, a set of interview questions was designed to collect information on the strategies parents employed to manage learning and the motivational approaches they adopted after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from interview sessions were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. Verbatim transcription means the interview recordings were rewritten exactly as spoken by the respondents, including words, pauses, repetitions, or linguistic styles used. This is crucial as it preserves the authenticity and context of the respondents' statements for accurate analysis. The method used was manual, with repeated listening and note-taking until the transcripts were complete. The process involves several key stages: First, repeated reading to understand the overall content. Second, the initial code, followed by the identification of central themes and subthemes. Next, reviewing and refining themes, and finally determining and naming the final themes relevant to the study's objectives.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the study's validity and reliability, two main strategies were implemented: member checking and peer debriefing. Member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries to participants for verification, ensuring that the recorded information truly reflected their views. This helped strengthen the credibility of the data.

Peer debriefing was carried out in two stages. Before the interviews, the draft questions were reviewed together with a research colleague to assess their appropriateness and alignment with the study objectives. After the interviews, the thematic analysis was also discussed collaboratively to evaluate the accuracy of interpretations and reduce researcher bias. The reliability of qualitative data concerns the researcher's observations of the challenges parents faced in their children's learning after COVID-19, and whether these challenges were internally or externally consistent. External consistency, on the other hand, was ensured by verifying observations across multiple data sources (Marican, 2005).

Research Findings

Three main themes were identified through interviews with six parents, exploring their roles and strategies for managing and motivating their children after the COVID-19 pandemic. These themes were developed based on the research questions and are supported by relevant sub-themes. Table 2 summarizes the main themes and their sub-themes.

Table 2: Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Research Questions	Themes	Sub-Themes
What challenges did parents face during their children's home-based learning (PdPR) in the Covid-19 pandemic?	Technology and management of learning during PdPR	Internet access issues and a lack of devices.
		Children struggling to focus and gadget dependency.
		Restructuring study and rest schedules.
What strategies were employed by parents to manage their children's	Routine management and monitoring of learning	Homework review and monitoring of supplementary classes.

learning after the COVID-19 pandemic?		
How did parents approach enhancing their children's learning motivation after the COVID-19 pandemic?	Emotional support and motivation	Verbal encouragement and rewards.
		Goal-setting and consistent reinforcement.

Challenges Faced by Parents During PdPR

Internet Connectivity Issues and Lack of Devices

The most significant challenge during PdPR was the limitation on digital infrastructure, such as internet access and device availability.

“The internet connection itself is a big problem...sometimes it keeps cutting off, and the children cannot focus with three kids studying at the same time, the house becomes noisy.” (Tan Lee)

“The government aid tablet is not powerful enough...the children use prepaid credit, and it runs out quickly when doing Quran recitation through video call.” (Sazali)

Difficulty Focusing and Gadget Addiction

This subtheme highlights that children became unfocused and addicted to the gadget.

“We knew their attention could deviated or switched to games. And it happens so many times as well.” (Hidayah)

“Children are already used to holding smartphones, and there are negative influences when they start becoming addicted to use them.” (Sazali)

“Now he goes to school, and after coming back from school, he immediately looks at his phone. He has become like... addicted.” (Hasanah)

“Apart from online teaching methods, there are also ways of delivery that bore students and some teachers often get angry when students fail to answer questions.” (Hartini)

Parents' Strategies in Managing Learning After PdPR

Reinstating pre-COVID-19 routines such as monitoring homework and additional classes

“I will make sure they wake up on time, go to bed early and get back to their usual schedule.” (Hidayah)

“I will check the homework, make sure he does what the teacher asked and complete the work.” (Azizah)

“I make sure that my children revise their subjects and attend online extra classes according to the schedule set by the school.” (Sazali)

“I will personally monitor them in doing their homework and assist them in revising their lessons. I will ensure that they complete their homework according to the teacher's instructions.” (Hartini)

Parents' Strategies for Enhancing Children's Motivation

Providing Rewards and Verbal Encouragement

Parents applied various forms of encouragement to enhance motivation, including praise, support, and rewards such as dining out

"Sometimes, when they do well, I treat them to a meal or take them out, as a way to show that I appreciate their efforts." (Tan Lee)

"I approach my children closely and always ready to listen to their grievances. I talk with them as friends while still maintaining my role as a mother in motivating them to stay focus on their studies." (Hartini)

Setting Future Goals and Providing Consistent Encouragement

"I set small goals...they must finish their homework first, then only they can watch television." (Tan Lee)

"He must finished his homework first then can start playing." (Hidayah)

DISCUSSION

This discussion addresses the study's findings in light of three main objectives. First, the results indicate that parents faced various challenges in implementing home-based teaching and learning (PdPR) during the pandemic, particularly due to unstable internet access, insufficient devices, and children's difficulty maintaining concentration amid gadget distractions. These challenges required parents to take on roles beyond that of caregivers, acting also as facilitators and supervisors of learning at home. This finding aligns with Marlina et al. (2021), who emphasized that parental support during PdPR was critical to ensuring continuity in children's learning. Similarly, Garbe et al. (2020) reported that parents in the United States experienced comparable challenges, including fatigue, limited time, and a lack of skills to support their children's education.

Second, in managing learning after the pandemic, parents adopted proactive measures such as restructuring their children's daily routines, setting study schedules, and monitoring homework and attendance in supplementary classes. These strategies illustrate the active role of parents in helping children readjust to face-to-face learning, which demands greater discipline and focus. As reported by Dong et al. (2020), direct parental involvement can help establish a more stable learning structure during crises.

Third, regarding children's learning motivation after the pandemic, parents employed various approaches, including rewards, praise, short-term goal setting, and verbal encouragement. These strategies not only provided external stimulation but also nurtured intrinsic motivation for continued academic achievement. Emotional support from parents, such as listening to their children's concerns and offering encouragement, proved to be vital in helping them adjust psychologically after the prolonged PdPR period. This is supported by UNESCO (2021), which highlighted the importance of emotional and psychological well-being in ensuring learning recovery post-pandemic.

Overall, active parental involvement after the pandemic is seen as a key factor in supporting both academic recovery and children's psychosocial well-being. Therefore, schools and the wider educational community should collaborate closely with parents to ensure the implementation of more effective and holistic educational interventions.

CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought significant changes to the education system, particularly for schoolchildren who had to adapt to online learning. The findings of this study demonstrate that parents' role is highly significant in managing the challenges of PdPR, restructuring learning after the pandemic, and

sustaining children's motivation. Positive and active parental involvement not only supports academic achievement but also contributes to children's emotional stability and motivation. Therefore, parental support must continue to be strengthened through collaboration between home and school to ensure that post-pandemic educational efforts are more effective and resilient.

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