Teaching and Learning Online During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Malaysia: Challenges, Motivation, and Lessons from the Hadith "Man Salaka Tariqan"

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Abstract
Online teaching and learning (T&L) were introduced when COVID-19 began to spread in Malaysia. This can be seen in its application across educational institutions, both formal and informal. Many platforms were introduced to achieve educational goals. However, every matter inevitably comes with its challenges, particularly online T&L. Numerous issues arose,

such as weak internet connections, insufficient devices for school children, stress-induced deaths, and a lack of respect from students towards teachers, among others. Therefore, this qualitative study, utilizing data analysis methods, aims to analyze the challenges of online T&L during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia and the motivation to face these challenges through the lessons derived from the popular hadith, "*Man Salaka Ṭarīqan*." This study found that the challenges of T&L can be resolved with support from all parties, including the government, schools, and students, such as alleviating the burden on students who cannot afford to purchase gadgets for T&L. Additionally, the government, through the Ministry of Education Malaysia, should seek ways to make learning more engaging and less burdensome. Ultimately, through reflections on the lessons from the aforementioned hadith, society will be more motivated and less likely to give up in their pursuit of knowledge, even through online means. This is important to ensure that the culture of knowledge continues to thrive in society in line with the changing times.

Keywords: Online Teaching And Learning, Covid-19 Pandemic, Challenges, Islamic Perspective, Hadith Studies.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered the educational landscape worldwide, with online teaching and learning (T&L) becoming a necessity rather than an option. In Malaysia, as in many other countries, the sudden and widespread shift to online education introduced a range of new norms that society had to quickly accept and adapt to. This transition has had a profound impact on all stakeholders, from students and educators to parents and policymakers.

The importance of studying the challenges associated with online T&L during this period is critical. The pandemic exposed significant gaps in access to education, particularly in regions with limited resources. Despite these challenges, the resilience of students and teachers became evident as they continued to strive for knowledge through virtual means. This study seeks to explore these challenges and provide insights drawn from the Hadith "Man Salaka Ṭarīqan," which emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge as a path leading to paradise.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to guide educational policies and practices during and beyond the pandemic. By understanding the specific challenges faced by Malaysian students and educators, this study aims to offer practical solutions and motivational lessons that can help sustain and enhance online education. The Hadith provides a spiritual framework that motivates perseverance in the face of adversity, making it particularly relevant in the current context.

This research will benefit a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, students, and parents. The insights gained can inform more resilient and inclusive educational strategies, ensuring that the pursuit of knowledge remains a priority even in challenging times. By linking the lessons from the Hadith with contemporary educational challenges, this study bridges traditional Islamic teachings with modern-day issues, offering a unique perspective on how to navigate the evolving landscape of education.

Importance of the Study

The relevance of studying the challenges of online T&L during the pandemic cannot be overstated. As educational institutions worldwide grapple with the new normal, understanding the obstacles faced by students and educators in Malaysia offers valuable insights that can guide future educational policies and practices. This area of study is crucial because the rapid shift to online learning has exposed significant gaps in access, infrastructure, and readiness, particularly in regions with limited resources.

Significance and Beneficiaries

This research is significant because it not only identifies the challenges of online T&L but also provides actionable solutions and motivational insights grounded in Islamic teachings. The lessons drawn from the Hadith "Man Salaka Ṭarīqan" are particularly relevant in a time of crisis, offering both spiritual and practical guidance to overcome the hurdles faced in the pursuit of education. The findings of this study will benefit a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, students, and parents, by providing them with a deeper understanding of the issues at hand and offering a framework to enhance the effectiveness of online education.

Utility and Effectiveness

The utility of this study lies in its potential to inform and influence educational practices during and beyond the pandemic. By highlighting the experiences of those directly involved in online T&L, this research contributes to the development of more resilient and inclusive educational strategies. Moreover, the integration of lessons from the Hadith into modern educational challenges bridges traditional Islamic knowledge with contemporary issues, making this study particularly effective in a predominantly Muslim country like Malaysia.

Problem Statement

Online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia is discussed due to the various problems that have arisen over time. Numerous types of challenges and obstacles had to be faced by students during the learning period. In the effort to implement online teaching and learning, not all parties were able to do so without encountering any issues. Among the challenges and problems that needed to be addressed were internet access issues in rural and remote areas. An unconducive environment has created problems due to limited two-way interaction. This arises as the home situation influences students' responses to the questions posed by the teachers.

Teachers were also affected by the work-from-home norm. This could also become an issue as not all educators have expertise in using technology. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the challenges and lessons that can be derived from the hadith "*Man Salaka Tariqan.*"

Literature Review

Zahiah & Abdul Razaq (2010), conducted a study on the role and challenges of e-learning via the Internet in lifelong learning for adults in dealing with the evolution of the Internet in education. Globalization and the information explosion have brought drastic technological changes to society. The study found that computers and internet technology help enhance learning capabilities and individual professional development. The internet provides

opportunities for everyone to continue teaching and learning activities in various ways. It even helps the societal system towards information sharing.

Noraini et al (2013), examined the relationship between demographic factors, readiness for acceptance, and innovation attributes with the use of technology in teaching by using surveys on secondary school teachers. Multiple linear regression analysis proved that aspects of ICT knowledge, product training, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, computer self-efficacy, and specific technological innovation were among the factors contributing to the use of technological innovation in teaching.

Ashraf, Khazri & Hudaa (2020), conducted a study on the challenges of teaching and learning Quran memorization online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the challenges faced by students were difficulties in focusing on corrections made by teachers, teachers' inability to hear students' recitations, as well as internet accessibility issues.

Mahathir & Wardatul (2021), analyzed the challenges faced by students, particularly Public Higher Education Institution (IPTA) students, in undergoing online learning processes using in-depth virtual interview methods. The study found that the challenges faced by IPTA students in using online learning included internet access, internet costs, unconducive learning environments, and the effectiveness of virtual learning. Based on previous studies, many challenges and problems occur during the online learning process, so this study focuses on the problems faced during the online learning process, their solutions, and the lessons and motivation from the hadith "*Man Salaka Ṭarīqan*."

Challenges and Problems
Lack of Devices During Online Learning
The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on everyone, especially those less fortunate. Since the government declared the closure of schools and learning was conducted online, many parents have become anxious. Not all parents can afford to buy devices for all their school-going children (Anuar, 2020). A study by UNICEF (2020) showed that 9 out of 10 children used mobile phones as devices for online teaching and learning, while 8 out of 10 children did not have access to computers.

Unconducive Environment
Families with comfortable homes will not experience this problem. However, for those living in cramped homes and having to share rooms with other siblings, this is different. Additionally, UNICEF (2018) also found that 8 out of 10 marginalized children studied in the living room. This shows that the environment is less conducive for these marginalized students to study on their own. This situation will likely be one of the challenges of online learning for them, especially for students who will face major exams like SPM. The noisy environment at home and uncomfortable study spaces make it difficult for them to focus during e-learning sessions.

Unsatisfactory Internet Access
Not all students have good internet access at their homes, especially in rural and remote areas. This causes them to lag in understanding the subjects they are taking. Some of them failed to download the teaching materials provided due to low internet access or running out

of data (Yahaya & Adnan, June 2021). Unsatisfactory internet connection, even after adding credit, may be due to many users or rain, which also disrupts the learning process for a student and hinders them from understanding better (Noor Shaheerah & Tajul, 2020).

Teachers' Skills in Using Digital Technology
Not all educators in Malaysia have expertise in using technology in education, which indeed has a significant impact on the learning process (Shahfiezul & Farizul, 2017). However, the dedication shown should be praised, as they still strive to give their best, even if it takes a bit longer to learn a digital application.

Solution Suggestions
Providing Computers & Free Internet Data Plans to Students
The Ministry of Education needs to provide computer or internet facilities to make it easier for students to follow T&L. The Ministry should focus only on those who are truly in need through the school's student database. Several countries have taken proactive steps by distributing devices to classes and increasing access to online connections. In Finland and some states in China and the United States, students are allowed to borrow digital devices from schools to make it easier for them to access online learning platforms (Wan, 2020). However, the initiative of providing gadgets or the internet cannot be applied in remote school areas. In remote schools, educators themselves need to play a role in giving students an understanding of the subjects taught.

Provision of a Specific Place for Learning Sessions
To create a good learning environment, students can sit in a place far from noisy surroundings during T&L, such as in a room or outside the house (still within the house compound). Students now need to be creative; to prevent the situation from becoming more uncomfortable, they can invite younger siblings to engage in activities they enjoy to keep them quiet during T&L sessions.

Teachers' Readiness in Using Digital Technology
Teachers, as the backbone of the education system, need to always be prepared to enhance their self-competence and teaching professionalism. Teachers need to constantly be ready to improve themselves and change their teaching approaches in line with technological developments and current career needs (Nor Amalina & Zanaton, 2018). Teachers need to align themselves with the changes that are taking place. Technological skills and knowledge, as well as the strategies used, are crucial for all teachers. The wisdom of teachers in choosing an approach and efficiency in planning learning methods and techniques will have a better impact on students' understanding of the learning process (Ee, 2003). Motivation among students, teachers, and parents also needs to be increased so that the challenges of implementing T&L can be overcome effectively.

Hadith Study

Hadith Text (Matn al-Ḥadīth)

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "وَمَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا؛ سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ".

Meaning: *Abu Hurayrah, said: The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, "Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge, Allah will make the path to Paradise easy for him."*
[Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Dhikr wa al-Duʿāʾ wa al-Tawbat wa al-Istighfār, Bāb Faḍl al-Ijtimāʿ ʿalā Tilāwat al-Qurʾān, hadith number 2699]

Hadith Verification (Takhrīj al-Ḥadīth)

1. Reported by Al-Tirmidhi, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Abwāb al-ʿIlmi, Bāb Faḍli Ṭalabi al-ʿIlmi, hadith number 2646:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الجَنَّةِ"

Meaning: *"From Abu Hurayrah, he said: The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, 'Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge, Allah will make the path to Paradise easy for him.'"*

2. Reported by Abu Dawud, Sunan Abu Dawud, Awwalu Kitābu al-ʿIlmi, Bāb al-Ḥaththi ʿAlā Ṭalabi al-ʿIlmi, hadith number 3641:

عن كثيرِ بن قيس، قال: كنت جالساً مع أبي الدرداء في مسجدِ دمشقَ، فجاءه رجلٌ، فقال: يا أبا الدَّرداء، إني جئتك من مدينةِ الرسولِ -صلَّى الله عليه وسلم- لحديثٍ بلغني أنَّك تُحدِّثه، عن رسولِ الله - صلَّى الله عليه وسلم -، ما جئتُ لحاجةٍ. قال: فإني سمعتُ رسولَ الله -صلَّى الله عليه وسلم- يقول: "مَنْ سَلَكَ طريقاً يَطلُبُ فيه علماً سَلَكَ الله عزَّ وجلَّ به طريقاً من طُرُقِ الجنة، وإنَّ الملائكةَ لتَضَعُ أجنحتَها رضاً لطالبِ العلم، وإنَّ العالمَ ليستغفِرُ له مَن في السَّماواتِ ومَن في الأرضِ والحيتانُ في جوف الماء، وإن فضلَ العالمِ على العابِدِ كفضلِ القَمَرِ ليلةَ البدرِ على سائر الكواكِبِ، وإنَّ العلماءَ ورثةُ الأنبياء، وإن الأنبياءَ لم يُورِّثُوا ديناراً ولا دِرهماً، ورَّثُوا العِلْمَ، فمن أخَذَه أخَذَ بحظٍّ وافِرٍ"

Meaning: *"From Katsir bin Qais, he said: 'I was sitting with Abu Ad Darda in the Damascus mosque, then a man came to him and said, "O Abu Ad Darda, indeed I came to you from the city of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) for a hadith that reached me that you narrate it from the Messenger of Allah (SAW). And I did not come for any other need." Abu Ad Darda then said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) say, 'Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge, Allah will make the path to Paradise easy for him. Indeed, the angels lay down their wings in approval for the seeker of knowledge. A scholar will seek forgiveness from those in the heavens and those on earth, even the fish in the depths of the water. The superiority of a scholar over a worshipper is like that of the moon over all the stars. Scholars are the heirs of the prophets, and the prophets do not leave behind dinars and dirhams, but they leave knowledge. Whoever takes it has taken a great share.'"*

3. Reported by Ibn Majah, Sunan Ibn Majah, Abwāb al-Sunnah, Bāb Faḍli al-ʿUlamā wa al-Ḥaththi ʿAlā Ṭalabi al-ʿIlmi, hadith number 223:

عَنْ كَثِيرِ بْنِ قَيْسٍ، قَالَ: كُنْتُ جَالِسًا عِنْدَ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ فِي مَسْجِدِ دِمَشْقَ. فَأَتَاهُ رَجُلٌ، فَقَالَ: يَا أَبَا الدَّرْدَاءِ! أَتَيْتُكَ مِنْ الْمَدِينَةِ،
مَدِينَةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - لِحَدِيثٍ بَلَغَنِي أَنَّكَ تُحَدِّثُ بِهِ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ -. قَالَ: فَمَا جَاءَ
بِكَ؟ تِجَارَةٌ؟ قَالَ: لَا. قَالَ: وَلَا جَاءَ بِكَ غَيْرُهُ؟ قَالَ: لَا. قَالَ: فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - يَقُولُ: "مَنْ
سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَتَضَعُ أَجْنِحَتَهَا رِضًا لِطَالِبِ الْعِلْمِ.

Meaning: *"From Katsir bin Qais, he said: "When I was sitting beside Abu Darda in the Damascus mosque, suddenly someone came and said, "O Abu Darda, I came to you from the city of Madinah, the city of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) because of a hadith that reached me, that you narrated it from the Prophet (SAW)! " Then Abu Darda asked, "Did you come for trade?" Katsir bin Qais replied, "No," Abu Darda asked again, "Did you come for any other reason?" Katsir bin Qais replied, "No," Katsir bin Qais said, "Indeed, I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) say, 'Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge, Allah will make the path to Paradise easy for him. The angels will lay down their wings in approval for the seeker of knowledge. And a seeker of knowledge will be sought forgiveness by the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth until the fish in the water. Indeed, the superiority of a scholar over a worshipper is like that of the full moon over all the stars. The scholars are the heirs of the prophets, and the prophets do not leave behind dinars or dirhams, but they leave knowledge. Whoever takes it has taken a great share.'"*

Explanation of Hadith (*Sharḥ al-Ḥadīth*)
Shaykh ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-ʿAbbād (1432H), when explaining this hadith, said:

فيه الحثُّ على طلب العلم الشرعيِّ وسلوك الطرق الموصلة إلى تحصيله، سواء كان ذلك بالسفر لطلبه؛ أو بالأخذ بأسباب
تحصيله، من اقتناء الكتب المفيدة وقراءتها والاستفادة منها، وملازمة العلماء والأخذ عنهم وغير ذلك، والجزاء على ذلك
من الله تسهيل الطريق التي يصل بها طالب العلم إلى الجنَّة، وذلك يكون بإعانته على تحصيل ما قصد، فيكون بذلك
محصِّلاً للعلم، ويكون أيضاً بإعانته على العمل بما علمه من أحكام الشريعة، وذلك يفضي به إلى دخول الجنَّة.

Meaning: *"This hadith encourages people to seek religious knowledge and to follow the paths leading to its acquisition, whether by travelling to seek it, or by taking various means to acquire it, such as obtaining useful books, reading them and benefiting from them, staying with scholars, learning from them, and so on. The reward from Allah (for those who seek knowledge) is to facilitate the path they follow to reach Paradise. This also includes helping them in practising what they have learned about the rulings of the Shariah, which will lead them to enter Paradise."*

Research Findings
This study found that all parties, whether the government or the people, need to work together to find solutions to uphold knowledge during the COVID-19 pandemic. The government, in particular, needs to introduce new and effective methods to address this issue.

The study also found that without education, the current generation will lag and regress in achieving personal and national progress. Therefore, solutions should be adapted to the changing times. Even in scarcity, knowledge should still be prioritized so that the value of life remains alive based on knowledge.

Additionally, this study suggests that the spirit of the Prophet's Companions in seeking knowledge, as mentioned in the hadith of this study, should be emulated. Despite having various commitments in life, they still made efforts to acquire knowledge from the Prophet (SAW).

Finally, this study found that spirituality should always move in tandem with education so that the younger generation will continue to be motivated to seek knowledge, even when faced with challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Without the element of spirituality, people would be walking in darkness, and every aspect of their lives would not be based on knowledge.

Conclusion

Religion has made us aware of the importance of seeking knowledge throughout the ages. Just as the Companions strove to acquire knowledge, so must we, even when tested with various challenges. We see how many people's lives have advanced because they prioritize education and knowledge in their lives. When one becomes a person of knowledge, Allah (SWT) will elevate the status of a person of knowledge in His sight. Therefore, all parties should take education seriously in line with the changing times.

Allah SWT says:
"O you who have believed, when you are told, 'Make room [for others]' in gatherings, then make room; Allah will make room for you. And when you are told, 'Arise,' then arise; Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do."
[Surah Al-Mujadalah, verse 11]

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