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## Disadvantaged Students' Experiences with Social Studies Distanced Learning: A Phenomenological Study

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### Abstract

Distanced learning, for most people, is synonymous with internet-based education and high technology. High technology-based learning in distanced learning contrasts with the distributed learning experienced by children in disadvantaged areas. This topic is complex and requires attention so that no child is left behind; yet it is rarely discussed in literary works, especially the facts of distanced learning without the internet from students' point of view who directly experience the phenomenon. This study aims to explore students' experiences in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia regarding the implementation of distanced learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the process of in-depth individual interviews with seven participants, I used the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach. The results of this study indicate that although students in remote areas have a passion for learning, the distanced learning process without the support of adequate facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic is felt to be severe for the students. This condition causes psychological problems for junior high school students in remote areas; namely, students feel inferior and suffer a learning loss. In the future, it is necessary to develop an effective distance-learning model without internet-oriented for children in remote areas to develop students' well-being.

### Keywords

distanced learning, student well-being, without internet, disadvantaged areas, phenomenology

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# Disadvantaged Students' Experiences with Social Studies Distanced Learning: A Phenomenological Study

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Distanced learning, for most people, is synonymous with internet-based education and high technology. High technology-based learning in distanced learning contrasts with the distributed learning experienced by children in disadvantaged areas. This topic is complex and requires attention so that no child is left behind; yet it is rarely discussed in literary works, especially the facts of distanced learning without the internet from students' point of view who directly experience the phenomenon. This study aims to explore students' experiences in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia regarding the implementation of distanced learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the process of in-depth individual interviews with seven participants, I used the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach. The results of this study indicate that although students in remote areas have a passion for learning, the distanced learning process without the support of adequate facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic is felt to be severe for the students. This condition causes psychological problems for junior high school students in remote areas; namely, students feel inferior and suffer a learning loss. In the future, it is necessary to develop an effective distance-learning model without internet-oriented for children in remote areas to develop students' well-being.

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## Introduction

The closure of schools physically during the COVID-19 pandemic had many impacts on learning practices globally, including the emergence of learning disorders (UNESCO, 2020). Students' school fees debts are increasing because their parents became unemployed in the COVID-19 era, and the use of technology in distanced learning has grown as one solution to ensure that education is carried out correctly (Onyema et al., 2020). Distanced learning is a learning model that focuses on utilizing media and teaching materials to deliver teaching to students that are not bound by distance and time (Houston & Thompson, 2017). The implementation of distanced learning is not new, nor is it a big "challenge" for students in urban areas with digital facilities and support from parents to learn using high technology (Supardi & Hasanah, 2020). Currently, there are many platforms and modern learning media available and easy to use (Lampropoulos et al., 2019; Leontyeva, 2018). Teachers and students can easily use the features of supporting distanced learning (Hasanah et al., 2022), which is free or paid (Greenhow, 2011). In addition, online-based distanced learning has become a learning model that is considered more flexible and profitable in terms of cost and time effectiveness (Yamagata-Lynch, 2014). On the other hand, for children in underdeveloped villages, distanced learning is a learning process that is strenuous to carry out effectively because children in poor villages do not have learning support tools such as high technology

or a good internet network. However, students in disadvantaged areas must also carry out distanced learning during the COVID-19 pandemic as an effect of the physical closure of schools (Viner et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the learning process and reduced the quality of education services, and this impact is more severe for disadvantaged children and families, both experiencing economic deprivation (Arpaci et al., 2020) and those with special needs (Radha et al., 2020). Children from more marginalized areas, such as Papua, Indonesia, also face challenges in accessing distanced learning, due to the unavailability of regular or fast internet connectivity and partly because of the capacity of teachers or regions to support distanced learning (UNICEF, 2021). This fact requires a more in-depth study, especially to overcome various disruptions during the pandemic period, especially on students' academic and psychological development in disadvantaged areas, such as what happened in isolated regions in the Indonesian archipelago.

### **Research Background Context**

Indonesia is one of the developing countries in Southeast Asia, which consists of 16,056 islands. Based on the 2019 population census results, there were 3,655,385 students in Indonesia studying at both public and private schools (BPS Indonesia, 2021). Most students in Indonesia are currently familiar with e-learning as a form of distanced learning. The high use of internet-based learning has made Indonesia one of the largest e-learning markets in the world (Dilas et al., 2019). However, Internet-based learning in Indonesia still tends to be dominated by students in big cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Semarang, Denpasar (Bali), and others. Meanwhile, numerous remote areas are entirely unfamiliar with the internet-based learning system because the internet does not reach their residences. There are still 2,500 villages in remote areas of Indonesia that have not been contacted by electricity (NA, 2017).

In Indonesia, there is still inequality in education between one region and another (Harahap et al., 2020; Heyward & Sopantini, 2014; Widyanti, 2018). In dealing with the imbalance in the quality of education, the Indonesian government has issued various policies; however, the inequality of quality of education in Indonesia is still unresolved. The disparity in the quality of education between regions in Indonesia has become increasingly complex since the outbreak of COVID-19. During the COVID-19 quarantine period, the Indonesian government simultaneously implemented a policy of implementing distanced learning for all students throughout the territory of Indonesia in urban areas, rural areas, and remote areas. This educational policy (Young & Lewis, 2015) has widened the gap between urban students and students in remote areas, especially students who have no access to electricity and the internet (Muttaqin, 2018).

Children in urban areas in Indonesia also experience difficulties in implementing distanced learning because even though there is electricity in urban areas, not all students can afford the internet quota. A survey conducted by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI, 2020) showed that 42.2% of student respondents claimed to have no internet quota. This situation means that distanced learning through the internet is only done by 58% of students, while the rest carry out distanced learning within limited facilities. Children who don't have cell phones have to take turns with their parents when doing online learning, or sometimes, they can only access cell phones after their parents come home from work. It is also difficult because there are parents who come home from work during the day, in the afternoon, or even at night, meanwhile, in general, the online learning schedule in schools is carried out from morning to noon. As a result, students experience problems, such as being late for assignments given by the teacher (Husin & Sawitri, 2021). Based on several research results (Fruehwirth et al., 2021; Leontyeva, 2018), when teachers and students in disadvantaged areas carry out distanced learning, many things are identified as co-effects of this condition. Thus,

the conditions of distanced learning in remote areas of Indonesia may also lead to various co-effects for students, especially in social studies learning (Alemu & Shea, 2019).

Social study is a subject that is identical to civics learning (Marini et al., 2019), which requires direct or indirect interaction between students, as well as between teachers and students, to build students' social skills effectively (Brugar & Whitlock, 2018; Farisi, 2016; Robeva et al., 2020). However, the co-effect will differ from one student to another; it all depends on the students' point of view in interpreting all the events they experience (Hasanah et al., 2019; Hasanah & Supardi, 2020; Supardi & Hasanah, 2020). This study explores the meaning of distanced learning for children who live in underprivileged neighborhoods that do not have internet facilities. To facilitate the data collection process, I crafted the following research question: what is the meaning of social studies distanced learning for students in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia?

### **Role of the Researchers**

I am a researcher and associate professor at a university in Indonesia. Daily, I have direct exposure to education development in Indonesia, especially in preparing prospective social studies teachers. Therefore, this research has an essential role for the institution where I work because, from the research results, distanced learning models can be developed in remote areas to pay more attention to the students' well-being.

### **Method**

This study aimed to explore the meaning of distance social studies learning experience for junior high school students in disadvantaged areas, so the most suitable approach for this research is to use a phenomenological method. Based on literacy results in writing (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Hasanah & Supardi, 2020; Neubauer et al., 2019), when a researcher wants to explore the essence of a phenomenon from the point of view of people who have experienced it, the researcher can develop a design of research on a phenomenological philosophical perspective.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study consisted of seven junior high school students in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia, which I selected through purposive sampling (Jupp, 2015). This method refers to Langdrige's opinion (Hasanah & Supardi, 2020; Langdrige, 2017) that the number of participants in phenomenological research does not need to be large in quantities but rather enough between three and seven people because participants in phenomenology studies can only be people who have direct experience of the phenomenon studied. I determined specific criteria for participants; namely, junior high school students aged 15-16, obtained permission from parents, experienced with social studies distanced learning without internet, and living in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia. Indonesia has 122 underdeveloped areas (Putera & Rhussary, 2018), but not all areas can be easily reached. In the process of selecting research sites, I took into consideration the affordability of the area and the areas where it was possible to obtain research permits, both from the school and from the parents. I did this considering that the data collection was carried out during the COVID-19 outbreak, which was still high at the time in various regions in Indonesia.

At the beginning of the selection of participants, I sought information from several members of the National Social Sciences Teacher Association in Indonesia about which schools were conducting distanced learning without the support of the internet network. Then,

I contacted a social studies teacher in a junior high school in a disadvantaged area in west Indonesia. I then submitted a written request to research students' experiences in social studies distanced learning without the internet. This research is an educational study involving humans, but in the local context, it does not require third-party approval to ensure ethics and participants' safety, privacy, and confidentiality. However, as a researcher, I have obtained research permission from the school the students attend. I also obtained written permission from the parents of students who participated in this study. To ensure ethical practices and the safety, privacy, and confidentiality of participants, before conducting research, I included an informed consent which contains the procedures for the research to be carried out and the rights of participants while participating in the research (Mavroudis & Cook, 2020; Simpson & Innes, 2020). The informed consent also states that all personal data, including the school's address where the research was carried out, will be protected. In addition, the informed consent stated that all data obtained from the results of extracting research data were to be used solely for academic purposes.

### **Data Retrieval Process**

The data collection process was carried out through an individual interview process (Asadullina et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic (Carrillo & Flores, 2020), (I tried to make innovations to explore phenomenological data through the process of extracting data from participants directly while still ensuring that health procedures were up to the COVID-19 standards. Before I met and conducted in-depth interviews with the participants, I first asked them to write a short article about themselves and their experiences of participating in distance social studies learning. Since the participants do not have tools for long-distance communication (mobile phones) or e-mail, I asked the teacher for help sending the data submitted by the participants by taking a photo of the writing by the teacher, then sending it to me in the form of an image. After I got an overview of the distanced learning conditions experienced by the participants in writing, I compiled a more specific interview guide based on the participants' answers. I used the question guide during in-depth individual interviews in person. In this way, I could reduce the intensity of physical gatherings to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19. Each in-depth individual interview process was conducted for 25-40 minutes. With the participant's permission, I recorded the entire interview process. In the case of two participants, I conducted interviews twice. Because it was difficult to transcribe the first interview because the audio recording was not detected, and some of the voices were not detected (lost). Hence, I conducted re-interviews for some missing pieces of information. In the process of data extraction, I followed the interview guide, which contained three main questions:

- 1) How did you experience the distanced learning process?
- 2) What kinds of support and obstacles did you feel during the implementation of distance social studies learning?
- 3) How would the distanced learning experience without the internet mean to you?

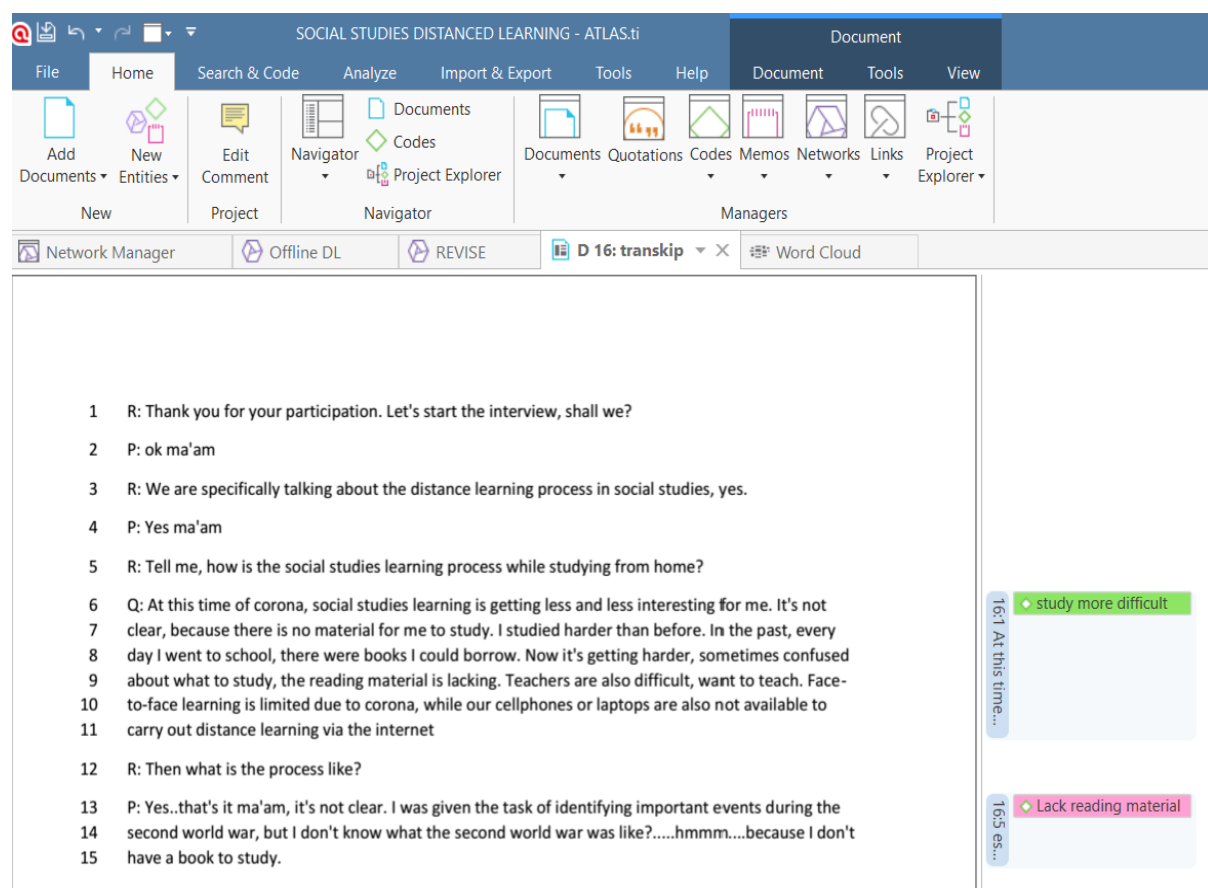
### **Data Analysis Process**

I transcribed all interview data and analyzed data using the phenomenological analysis method (Hasanah & Supardi, 2020; Moustakas, 1994) In more detail, the entire process of data analysis in this study is as follows:

1) I paid attention to field notes and logbooks to recall the entire process and context of the research that has been carried out. Then I made a transcript of the data based on the interview recordings. I also paid attention to the data written by the participants, which contained personal data and a description of the distanced learning activities experienced by the participants.

2) The next stage was horizontalization (Hasanah & Supardi, 2020). In this process, I paid attention to the statements of the participants that were conveyed explicitly, indicating the essence of the participants' experiences in distanced learning verbatim. Research questions become the main guide in the process of examining relevant participant statements and can be used as answers to research questions. I identified participant statements that explicitly told about (a) the distanced learning activities they experienced and (b) the meaning that occurred in the participants for every event they experienced related to the entire distanced learning process they experienced. The code generated is based on my interpretation based on the explicit responses given by each participant to each question. I carried out this analysis process with the data analysis software, (QDAS) atlas.ti (Paulus et al., 2019), as shown in Figure 1 below.

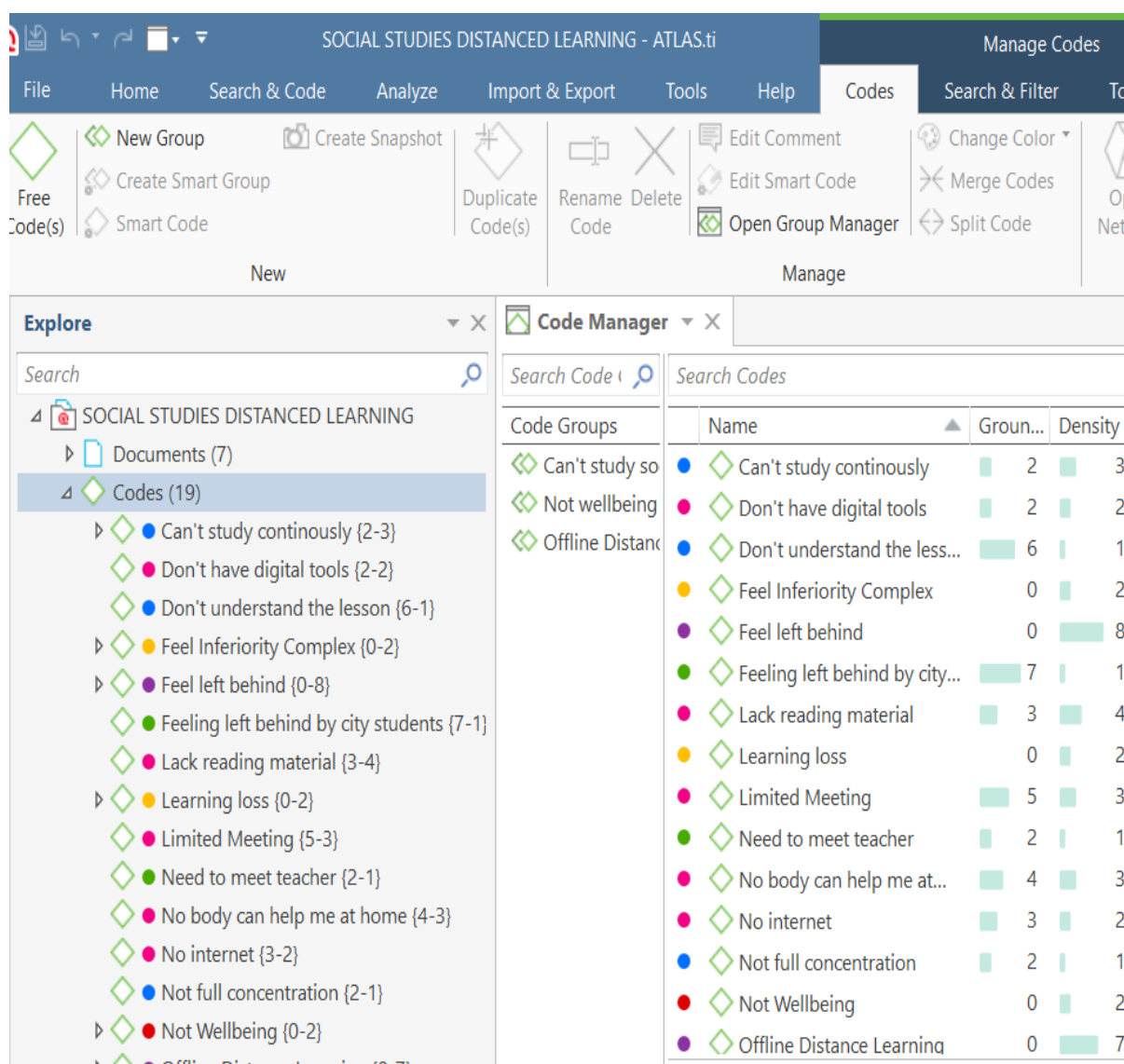
**Figure 1**  
*Initial code generation*



All relevant statements from participants from the transcript (blocked, as depicted in Figure 1) were then coded to record the essence of each sentence explicitly stated by the participants (Kalpokaite & Radivojevic, 2019; Wicks, 2017). I conducted the coding process without any prejudice: I have an open view and understand that every statement has the same value.

3) The next step was the collection of relevant statements that had the same meaning in the research themes. After coding for all relevant statements, I analyzed all the code that had been formed. After that, I collected the principles that had the same meaning into one theme. For example, in the code collection, I found the same purpose for the codes: “no digital tools,” “no teaching materials,” “nobody can help me at home,” and “no internet,” which are combined with various other codes to indicate a condition that they perform: Offline Distanced Learning. For more details, the whole process of grouping code into themes can be seen in Figure 2 below:

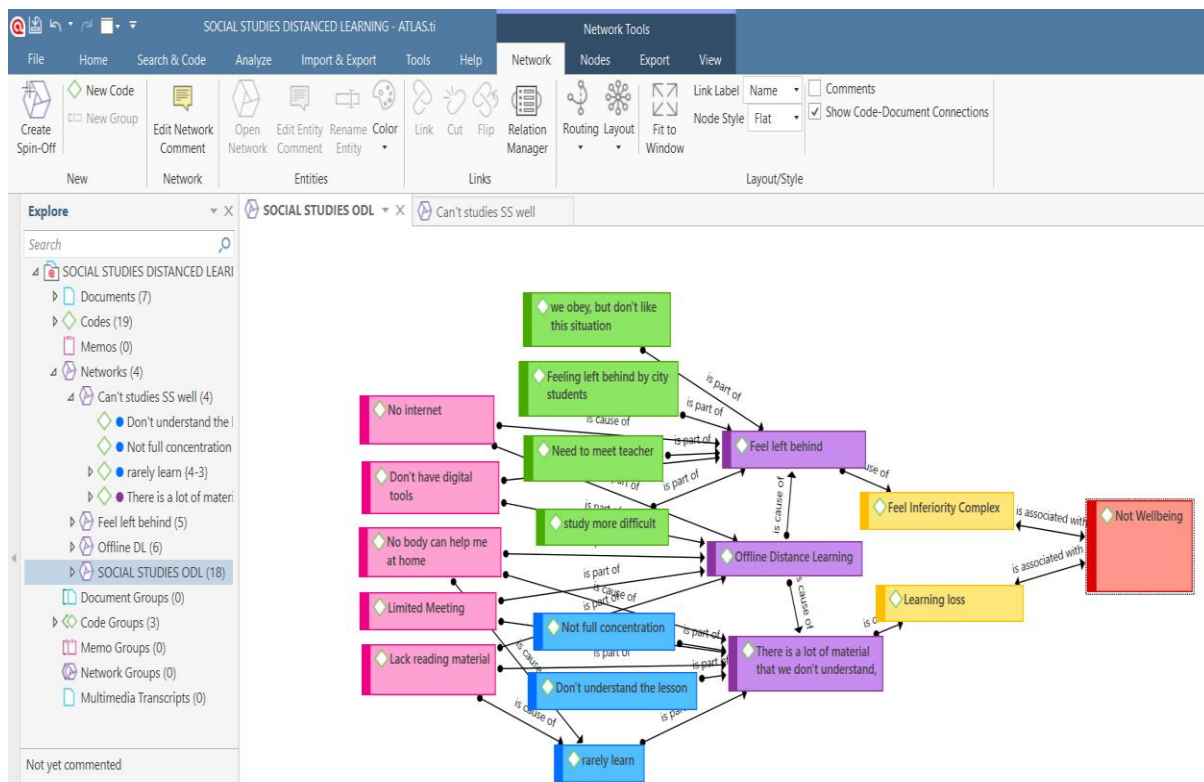
**Figure 2**  
*Creating themes*



4) After forming the research themes, I arranged the Composite Textural Description (CTD). In this step, I interpreted each theme to explain how the phenomenon occurred for each theme created. Then I built a network of relationships between themes. Below is a picture of the network formation process for each theme (Figure 3).



**Figure 3**  
Network formation



4) The final stage in the data analysis process was to interpret it from the point of view of educational theory, the results of which are presented in the field of discussion.

## Research Result

Based on the results of data analysis, three main themes show an overview of the experiences of junior high school students in implementing social studies distanced learning in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia. The themes are namely: “offline distanced learning,” “can’t learn social studies well,” and “I felt left behind.” In detail, we discuss these themes as follows:

### Offline Distanced learning

The first theme that was found in this research is the offline distanced learning process experienced by students in remote areas. There are five codes that can represent the description of the implementation of distanced learning offline; namely, “no internet,” “don’t have digital tools,” “lack of reading material,” “limited face-to-face,” and “nobody can help me at home.”

#### No Internet.

In participating in distanced learning, the participants stated that there was no learning using the internet because there was no internet or electricity coverage in their area. In addition, the students said that they did not have digital equipment. Students learn through limited face-to-face learning every two weeks. They do not learn together but rather take turns in small groups. The teachers form study groups at certain gathering points, then take turns leading the study group. The formation of small groups is intended to make learning more effective and to

prevent the spread of the virus among students and teachers. Below is a relevant statement from one of the participants regarding the distanced learning process he experienced:

I study harder than before. Previously, every day I went to school, there were books that I could borrow. Now it is more difficult. Sometimes, I am confused about what to study, and I lack reading material. Teachers are also troubled when they teach. Face-to-face learning is limited due to corona, while we also don't have cellphones or laptops to carry out distanced learning via the internet (P1, lines 7-10).

### **Lack of Reading Material.**

P2, an 8<sup>th</sup>-grade junior high school student in the same school as P1, also expressed the same sentiment about the distanced learning practice they experienced. Here is P2's statement regarding the matter:

Yes... I learned as little as I could, following the teacher's instructions that were delivered in writing to us. Sometimes it was delivered in person in a limited meeting because everything was more difficult due to corona. Sometimes I learn something; sometimes, I don't know what I'm learning at all,.... Anyway, it's hard, and I get behind in lessons. Maybe the city children are okay, they have everything to study, it's different with us here, everything is very limited. We lack reading material here; we don't have internet, and we don't have cellphones or laptops (P2, lines 5 to 11).

Below is the relevant statement from P3:

There is no internet. We study as usual, but the number of students is limited. We meet directly with the teacher every two weeks, but now it's more limited. He said it is to prevent the spread of COVID, so you shouldn't hang out with too many people. My meeting with the teacher is not as routine every day as it used to be. We meet every two weeks to get explanations and assignments (P3, lines 14-21).

### **Limited Face-To-Face.**

P4 also experienced the same thing as P3, who conducted distanced learning during COVID-19 without the internet. P4 stated that the teachers would periodically come to the students to provide an explanation of the teaching materials that the students had to study, then give assignments for the next two weeks. The following is an explanation from P4:

The teachers come to us every two weeks. The place is not in school because it is not allowed. We met the teacher at the house of one of the students, only six people for each study group. The teachers also often give messages so that we continue to be enthusiastic about learning even in these conditions, but sometimes we are lazy and feel that we don't understand the content of the lesson (P4, lines 13-19).

### **Nobody Can Help Me at Home**

The picture of distanced learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in disadvantaged areas is increasingly real with the explanation from P6. He explained how teachers and students continue to struggle amidst limited facilities. There are things that need attention according to P6; namely, he feels that the learning that was distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic: is only learning in moderation.

No... there is no learning using the internet. Never mind the internet; many don't have electricity. In our place, electricity is only used for the lights at night. So there is no learning using the internet. I learn in a rudimentary way; what I understand, I do; what I don't understand, I leave because I don't know what to do. I don't have a brother I can turn to for an explanation. Even so, sometimes the teacher came to us to the villages. That is just sometimes and also limited. So, studying is rough (P6, lines 17-23).

In line with the statements of his other colleagues, P7 also felt that the contributed learning he experienced had many weaknesses. Lack of educational facilities, limited learning resources, and lack of support in the form of support facilities and knowledge from parents are all obstacles to studying well for students living in disadvantaged areas. The following are the relevant statements from P7 regarding this matter:

To be honest, I mostly don't understand the lessons being learned. I also don't have a complete book, nor do I have internet or cellphone facilities to support learning. The teachers occasionally provide sheets of lesson notes and assignments to do independently. We are also often motivated to stay enthusiastic about learning (P7, lines 12-17).

P5 explicitly explained that he did not own a cellphone as well as other modern electronic devices, so it was impossible for him to participate in mobile distanced learning activities. In this case, P5 seems to have a desire to try distributed learning through online learning, but it cannot be implemented due to limited facilities. P5's statement regarding this matter appears in the following statement:

I heard from the teachers that in that city, they use Zoom and the internet. They learn many things. We can't be like that. We used to borrow books from the school library. There are books that all students can borrow, but books that can only be used in turns. It's also troublesome. Sometimes I wonder, it would be nice if I could normally study like before the corona... Hhhhhhhhhhhhhmmmm [pause for a moment] ... Actually, I want to try online learning. What's it like? (P5, lines 6-12).

### **There Is a Lot of Material that We Don't Understand**

The participants stated that they must be independent in learning. Whatever the result, you have to do it yourself when you have assignments from school. This thing happened because their parents were mostly illiterate. Even though some can read and write, they also do not understand current junior high school students; as a result, the children give up on the reality they face. Some of the participants' statements implicitly indicate the conditions that exist in the codes: "don't understand the lesson," "not total concentration," and "rarely learn."

## **Don't Understand the Lesson**

Participants said that they often did not understand what they were learning. This is in line with P1's statement regarding this matter:

Well... I taught myself at home; my friends are the same. I feel that we are forced to be independent in studying in this condition. How come? Many of our parents did not go to school and could not read or write. Luckily my teacher is very patient, and her house is close to mine. Sometimes I go to the teacher's house to ask questions that I don't understand ... [pause] ... Sometimes I also don't study or do assignments because I feel the material is too difficult to understand ... to be honest, there's more material which I don't understand in this distanced learning. I spend less time studying because I am confused what to study (P1, lines 21-25).

P3, who is a grade 9 student, has feelings and views that are almost the same as his other peers regarding the importance of independence for them so that they can continue to learn amidst their limitations. That spirit is implied by the words he conveyed as follows:

Before or after the pandemic is just the same for me. I have to be independent in studying because no one can help me study at home ... [pause] ... but the difference is that in the pre-pandemic, I could go to school every day to meet friends and teachers, but now I am mostly at home. Even though my parents are at home, no one helps me study. My father and mother can both read and write, but they cannot help because, according to them, today's lessons are very difficult (P3, lines 22-25).

Researcher: So what do you do when there are things you don't understand in learning?

P3: Yes ... I just keep quiet, and sometimes I do other things besides studying. It is difficult to learn alone without materials; moreover, no one is teaching.

Furthermore, P6 recounts the experience of studying social science in minimal conditions as follows: "For me, distanced learning is boring. Especially for social science lessons because many things need to be known, while I don't have the materials."

## **Rarely Learn**

Coinciding with the statements of his other colleagues, P7 also felt that the distanced learning he experienced was learning that had many weaknesses. Lack of educational facilities, limited learning resources, and lack of support in the form of facilities and knowledge from parents are obstacles to studying well for students living in disadvantaged areas. The following are the relevant statements from P7 regarding this matter:

To be honest, I mostly don't understand the lessons being learned. I also don't have a complete book, nor do I have internet or cellphone facilities to support learning. The teachers occasionally provide sheets of lesson notes and assignments to do independently. We are also often motivated to stay enthusiastic about learning, but it's difficult to do (P7, lines 12-17).

P7 also stated the same thing with his friends. He is more often confused with the assignments he got from the teacher during school closure. The same problems exist with his friends: there are no supporting facilities, and parents cannot help learning because they do not understand the contents of junior high school class 9. Even so, P7 still tries to learn as optimally as possible. The following is the P7 statement that is relevant to this:

When I got the assignment sheets from the teachers, I tried them myself. Done as best I could. No one can teach. I did not understand more of the tasks because there was no place for me to ask questions, nor did I have books. In the end, I didn't study ... well ... my friends didn't too ... hmmm .... many of my friends, like me, couldn't learn (P7, lines 23-25).

### **Often not Concentrated**

Another participant said he felt tired of studying alone without any support facilities, nor did he have friends. These conditions make him less likely to concentrate on studying. Here is his statement:

I find it challenging to study, especially studying social science subjects. Besides requiring a lot of ingredients, I wouldn't say I like it because there are too many things that I have to memorize. Too many obstacles make me often not concentrate on studying. So I can't keep learning; I'm tired (P1, lines 46-50).

### **I Feel Left Behind**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students in disadvantaged areas have to live life in minimal conditions. There is a feeling of disappointment with the situation, but they still obey the orders of teachers and parents to stay enthusiastic about learning. The participants are teenagers who live in developing countries that are very large and have extraordinary natural resources but are trapped by technological backwardness in their regions. There is something they feel behind their obedience to parents and teachers in the context of distanced learning in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic; namely, "we obey but don't like this situation," "study more difficult," "need to meet teacher," and "feeling left behind by city students." Following are the relevant P2 statements regarding this matter:

Since childhood, I was taught to be obedient and respectful to parents and teachers, so even though I am under such a limitation, I am still obedient, but I want this situation to be over as soon as I feel tired. Sometimes I also feel sorry for the teachers and teachers who do more work during this distanced learning (P2, lines 69-72).

Another participant (P3) shared the feelings he experienced when doing distanced learning without adequate facilities during the COVID-19 period, have made learning more difficult than before:

During this corona pandemic, learning social studies is getting less and less interesting for me. It's not clear because there is no material for me to study. I studied harder than before. In the past, every day I went to school, there were books I could borrow. Now it's getting harder, sometimes confused about what

to study, and the reading material is lacking. Teachers are troubled when they teach. Face-to-face learning is limited due to corona, while cellphones or laptops are also unavailable to carry out distanced learning via the internet (P3, lines 6-10).

P5 also felt the same way when experiencing distanced learning. Here are the relevant P5 statements to describe the feelings they felt:

Actually, we don't really understand why we have to limit meetings at school, our school is far from the crowd, and people rarely go outside the area. We could still carry out face-to-face learning. Learning model like today is very difficult for me to understand. I'm also tired of assignment sheets. It made me tired, more tired than usual. Even though I was tired, I still obeyed the orders of the teachers because in our village, all the students really respect the teachers, and I also really respect the teachers (P5, lines 55-61).

P6 also hopes that the corona will end soon so that life can return to the way it used to be. Even though they both must study without the internet, at least, he can play with friends comfortably at school. P6 expressed his desire for the corona pandemic to end as follows:

I want corona to pass soon so that I can go together with friends to school. Even though now I still study and obey, I am tired. Sometimes I feel bored like this. Our life is already very limited, added like this. I am bored if I have to continue to follow this kind of learning (P6, lines 61-64).

P7 also states the same thing as P2, P5, and P6. He's facing the corona sooner away. P7 admitted that he was still obedient to continue learning as best he could, but he did not like the current situation. Distanced learning without the internet adds new problems for children in disadvantaged areas. Following are the relevant P7 statements regarding this matter:

During the period of distanced learning, I obeyed the orders of both my teacher and parents, but I didn't like this situation because even though I was studying, I still didn't understand a lot of material. We want to go back to school like before; I also miss my friends (P7, lines 42-44).

## Discussion

Of the three themes that were found in this study, it is known that individually and as a group, students in marginalized areas cannot follow the synchronous mode of teaching and learning; this hurts the development of students' studies (Tsolou et al., 2021), and the mental health of students (Hasan & Bao, 2020). In this condition, students are forced by circumstances to be able to deal with various challenges that are much more difficult than their lives before the pandemic occurred. The three themes of the results of this study are a realization of the psychological conditions of the participants, which can be broadly grouped into two essences of the experience of following distanced learning without the internet that is felt by junior high school students in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia (Sitompul et al., 2018). Participants felt the effects directly from the physical closure of schools (Faulkner, 2020; Poole et al., 2021); they were forced to take part in distanced learning without the support of adequate educational facilities such as the internet and other high-tech devices. Apart from the lack of educational facilities, students living in disadvantaged areas also do not get knowledge support from their

mostly uneducated parents. On the other hand, junior high school children in disadvantaged areas know that students in urban areas can still follow distanced learning in much better conditions because everything is easier and more accessible to the community in cities. This condition has caused feelings to emerge in the hearts of the participants.

The distanced learning process without the internet is considered an ineffective learning process by students. Academically, the participants found it difficult to understand the material they were studying. This phenomenon shows that distanced learning in disadvantaged areas can demotivate student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). In addition, children in disadvantaged areas still have to obey the orders of teachers and parents in the distanced learning process because the culture of Indonesian society places great emphasis on respecting older people, even though the participants claimed to be obedient and would learn even though they didn't like it. This is in line with research that states that culture positively correlates with the implementation of learning (Littlewood, 2000). When culture shapes students' learning behavior, that is a positive thing, but it needs to be considered from a mental health perspective: in this context the students feel less well off. From this explanation, it can be concluded that the meaning of distanced learning experiences can be seen in Figure 4 below:

**Figure 4**

*The meaning of students-experience of offline distanced learning in disadvantaged areas*

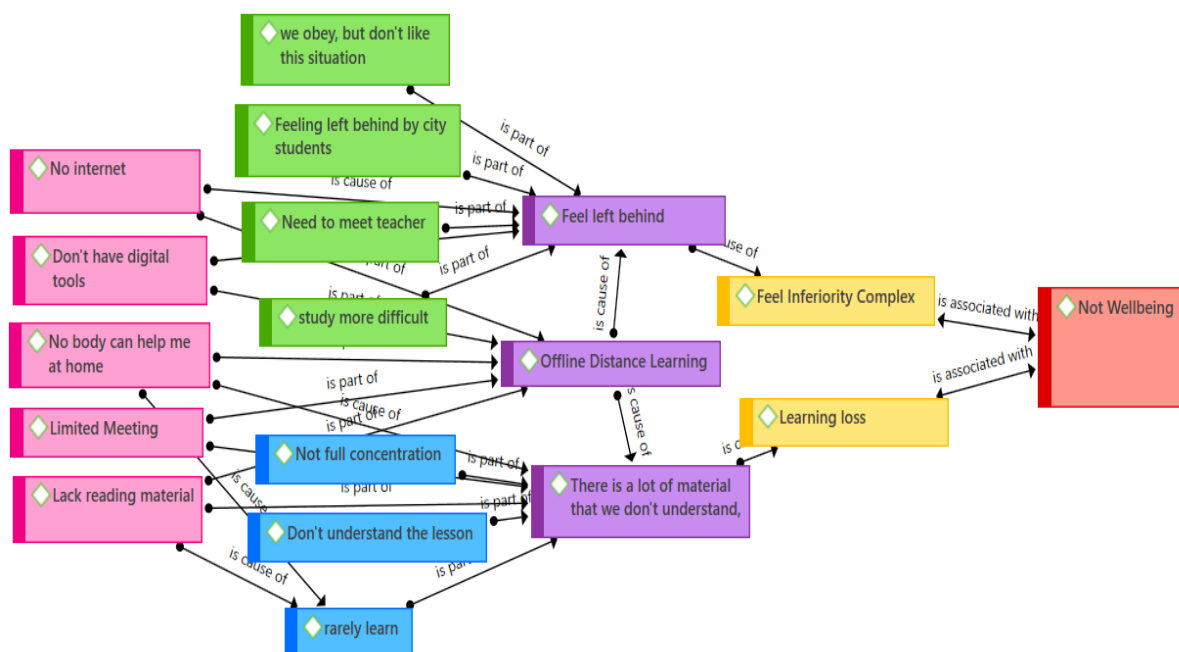


Figure 4 shows the flow of meaning that appears in students as an effect of not fulfilling the requirements for implementing distanced learning. In more detail, image one can be explained as follows:

### 1) Inferiority Complexes Among Students

This study indicates that during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a learning process that did not meet ideal standards among students living in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia. The students feel left behind by the city children and feel how bad it is to learn in terms of limitations. Psychologically, distanced learning without the support of adequate educational

facilities is not good for the development of students, especially when the students know that other students can learn better with sufficient support and facilities. The minimal educational facilities and the lack of support for parents in distanced learning in underdeveloped areas are a threat that can cause the decline in the quality of education in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia. This condition can cause the widening gap in the quality of education in Indonesia (Muttaqin, 2018)

The participants' feeling of being left behind and being completely limited arises because of the lack of support for learning facilities and support for adequate human resources. This matter is something that needs to be considered so as not to reduce the psychological development of students in disadvantaged areas (Ma et al., 2019; Magayang et al., 2020). The feeling of being left behind by students in urban areas is a source of the emergence of an inferiority complex in the participants' minds (Kabir, 2018; Kolisnyk et al., 2020; Sultana & Kabir, 2018). This condition is bad for the development of students' mental health (Burns et al., 2020) because complex inferiority can cause frustration among adolescents (Kenchappanavar, 2012).

## **2. Learning Loss**

The lack of supporting factors for implementing distanced learning causes students in remote areas to feel that distanced learning is more complex than face-to-face learning models. That situation indicates that there are many things that they cannot learn independently as long as they participate in distanced learning during the COVID-19 period. The results showed that the participants experienced learning loss. The participants felt that there were many things that students did not understand, and there was no place to ask questions, which were statements that showed a loss of optimal learning opportunities for students in disadvantaged areas (Magayang et al., 2020). The students had no place to ask the questions they wanted to ask, nor did they have enough teaching materials to be able to study independently. This shows that students in remote areas need communication with their teachers. This condition is the fact that both educators and policymakers need to pay attention to. Losing learning opportunities is a destructive phenomenon for children in disadvantaged areas because of missing learning opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic season; there is a decrease in new knowledge that students can obtain and a reduced chance for students to build social skills as their life (Clark et al., 2020).

The participants can remain independent in learning because their parents do not have the supporting capacity in terms of facilities or knowledge. In addition, the participants remain obedient to the teacher's orders to carry out the learning instructions given by the teachers. This phenomenon shows that students who live in disadvantaged areas tend to have maturity in responding to the conditions they experience. Based on several research results (Sari et al., 2020; Wardany, 2019), the obedience of children and adolescents to the regulations provided by teachers and parents is due to the lifestyle they receive from their family and community environment, which emphasizes discipline and religious values. Even though students remain obedient in carrying out the orders of teachers and parents, educators and parents need to understand that behind the maturity of positive attitudes and moral development, there is resentment towards pandemic conditions that require them to employ distanced learning.

The results of this study indicate that distanced learning is learning that requires adequate support facilities. Ideally, distanced learning is carried out using the help of high-tech tools. However, for students living in disadvantaged areas, where it is impossible to take advantage of high technology, it is necessary to develop distanced learning strategies to improve effective communication between educators and learners. This condition illustrates



that during school closures in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, students in remote areas experience negative psychological co-effects, namely, the absence of student wellbeing.

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