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The college students' struggles in far-flung areas to learn in distance learning mode due to COVID-19 outbreak: An interpretive phenomenological analysis

Purpose and context of the presentation

The change to online learning has had impacts across the world and in Indonesia, the experiences of students depends on whether they are in cities or remote, rural areas. This study sought to identify the experiences and perspectives of students living and learning online in these remote areas. Using concepts of interpretive phenomenology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students living and studying in remote areas to identify themes and create two vignettes of the experiences of two of these students, both living in Central Java.

Vignette 1

The first student was a first-year, first-semester student who never had an opportunity meet her peers before lockdown occurred. She has found this to be a challenge when trying to communicate with her peers online, e.g. during group discussions, as she has not been able to build relationships with them. She explained that her house is 10 kilometres distant from the town centre along a narrow and bumpy road. There was no wi-fi access in her area so she had to rely on her phone's internet. The only place she could get a good signal on her phone was in the nearby rice fields, and even there, the signal was intermittent. For her, distance education was 'quite annoying'.

Vignette 2

The second student also lived around 30 minutes from the nearest centre. The village's wifi didn't reach as far as his house, and so he also had to go to the fields to get a signal which, again, often dropped out. Due to deadlines set by his lecturers, he sometimes found he had to go out into the fields in the middle of the night to finish and submit online work. His summary of his perceptions of online work: 'I don't feel comfortable at all.'

Conclusions

This research is still underway, and the analysis is ongoing. This presentation provided a brief summary of what is known so far about students in remote areas and their experiences of online education.