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Blended Learning Through The Lens Of Students' Perspectives

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Abstract
The present study investigates students' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning at Universitas Negeri Makassar. Utilizing a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 60 students through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative findings indicate that blended learning fosters autonomy in managing learning time, with 58% of respondents strongly agreeing and 25% agreeing. Additionally, 50% strongly agreed and 25% agreed that the model supports independent learning. A majority of students also found learning materials to be easily accessible online (47% strongly agree, 30% agree). However, only 37% of respondents strongly agreed and 33% agreed that they felt comfortable participating in online discussions, suggesting some degree of communication challenges. While student–lecturer interaction was perceived as generally well-maintained, it did not receive ratings as high as other aspects. Qualitative data further supported these findings, revealing that blended learning enhances learner independence and digital competence, yet also highlighting the need for strategies to promote more meaningful interaction. Overall, the study confirms that blended learning contributes to greater flexibility and accessibility in higher education but calls for more interactive approaches to strengthen student lecturer engagement.
Keywords*: Blended Learning, Learning Experience, Student Perspectives.*

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of digital technology has had a substantial influence on various aspects of life, one of them being tertiary education. According to Said (2023), digital technology is an important modern learning tool that reinforces the development of 21st-century skills. This evolution not only affects how institutions are managed but directly affects learning systems as well. Tertiary education institutions must now react to more adaptive, flexible, and technology-based learning paradigms. One of the articulations of this transformation is the advent of mix-method learning, a combination of virtual and in-person learning. This paradigm emerges as a response to the need for more efficient, personalized learning that is attuned to the nature of the present digital generation. Aulia Nur Hakim and Leni Yulia (2024) highlight that the use of digital technology has influenced the education sector greatly.

Mix-method learning has been a game-changer for tertiary learning, wedding the best of virtual and in-person learning. Mix-method learning, as Hockly (2018) states, offers language learners the flexibility of combining the best of on-site and online learning, empowering learners in the learning process more independently and at their own pace. According to Dzakiria et al. (2011), blended learning offers a more flexible and relevant pedagogical alternative in the context of higher education, particularly in supporting more effective and adaptive course delivery to meet students' needs. This approach promotes a more student-centered and flexible learning environment. On the

one side, face-to-face interaction within the classroom has space for dialogue, explanation of materials, and the establishment of relationships between students and lecturers. On the other side, online learning creates broader, independent access to learning that can be fitted to specific schedules and needs. The convergence of these two approaches is stated to maximize the effectiveness of learning and equip learners for the rapidly digital and dynamic nature of work environments.

Presently, mix-method learning has become commonly implemented in the majority of universities due to increased demands for an even more dynamic and flexible learning system. Almahasees et al. (2022) stated that students demonstrated a high level of acceptance toward blended learning, as it is perceived to enhance academic performance, offer flexibility in managing study time, and promote engagement, motivation, as well as the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This kind of flexibility enables students to become more independent in managing their study time without completely excluding the possibility of direct interaction with lecturers and classmates. Through the intervention of digital technology, universities can offer learning content, discussion forums, and online tests that are accessible on demand. Adopting a mix-method learning model has also emerged as a fundamental approach in addressing the challenges of higher education in the digital era, specifically in increasing access, enhancing efficiency, and personalizing the learning experience. Hrastinski (2019) remarks that involves more than a mix of online and face-to-face learning, but rather a complementary integration of the two modes in an attempt to design a more meaningful and effective student learning experience.

Blended learning is considered effective in addressing the needs of technology-native students who are accustomed to using technology in their lives. This generation favors a learning process that is technology-based, interactive, and flexible. Li and Wang (2022) confirmed that mix-method learning plays an important role in the academic performance of students as it integrates self-paced learning with real-time instructional support, which ensures increased understanding and retention of material. By combining web-based and face-to-face learning, mix-method learning facilitates a more personalized, accessible, and convenient learning experience for today's students. The method also allows students to learn at their own pace while still gaining the advantage of immediate feedback from teachers in on-campus sessions. According to Mesra (2023), the plans of learning in the 21st century must incorporate critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity so that learning and teaching are not lost focus when facing the challenges of the contemporary world.

Blended learning also supports creating active, collaborative, and technologically enhanced learning. Students may engage more heavily in discussions, group work, and interactive exercises of learning which stimulate peer to peer collaboration with the help of online platforms. Features such as discussion forums, interactive quizzes, and online presentations are those which create broader participative opportunities. This approach makes the students more independent and active learners and familiarizes them with the use of technology as a necessary part of learning. Windasari et al. (2024) recognize that the

mix-method learning model supports students' conceptual understanding, especially when linked to their level of self-confidence in learning.

The success in implementing blended learning is not entirely a matter of the quality of curriculum planning or the sophistication level of technology; it is equally influenced by student acceptance and impressions as the prospective users. Student response to this learning approach, whether they become comfortable, encouraged, and aided in understanding the content, holds a crucial role in determining its success. Gultom et al. (2022) that the hybrid learning model is an effective approach to optimize the learning system in higher education because it combines the strengths of online and face-to-face learning in a synergistic manner.

Students, being the primary consumers of the mix-method learning model, are central to its success. Bizami, Tasir, and Kew (2023) emphasize that effective blended learning hinges on the embracement of new pedagogical approaches in conjunction with technologies that support meaningful interaction, personalized learning, and active student engagement. Therefore, understanding students' experiences, perceptions, and challenges they face is essential in determining the effectiveness of this model. Their views not only reflect the level of satisfaction and engagement but also serve as significant feedback for institutions to reflect and adjust their learning approaches. Neglecting students' views, education innovations risk becoming misguided in addressing actual demands and shortchanging in delivering effective learning results.

Although mix-method learning has been widely implemented across higher education institutions, scholarly research focusing on students' real-world experiences of the blended approach remains relatively limited, particularly in regional settings or within a single institution. Even more so, institutional context, learning culture, and support infrastructure heavily influence how students adapt to and respond to blended learning settings. Success with blended learning is contingent upon a judicious combination of technologies and suitable pedagogies to enhance the impact and learning motivation to their highest level. Lacking sufficient student-centered studies leads to a knowledge gap regarding the applied performance effectiveness and obstacles of executing blended learning. According to Widyaruli Anggraeni et al. (2022) argue that blended learning makes the learning process more flexible by combining the strengths of both online and face-to-face classes. This approach helps students become more engaged and actively involved in their learning

Case study approach is considered appropriate to explore the unique dynamics of using blended learning. Through the employment of such approach, researchers are in a position to gain context-specific understanding of how students interact with learning resources, technology, instructors, and classmates within the blended learning environment. It also allows for a deeper and more comprehensive exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and difficulties of students, thereby enabling rich and meaningful information for developing blended learning practices within higher learning institutions. Suprobo and Novembriani (2023) emphasize that students' readiness and

positive dispositions towards learning are paramount factors in the effective application of such approaches within university settings.

This study aims to determine how students understand the implementation of blended learning, for example, how they perceive the perceived benefits of the model, the issues that they encounter during the learning process, and how they imagine future development of the model. With a focus on students as the main consumers of the system, this research is anticipated to provide useful knowledge for policymakers, curriculum developers, and instructors in formulating more resilient, inclusive, and efficient learning approaches in the age of digital technologies. Fadillah et al. (2024) highlight that adaptive learning design is a key element in creating more personalized and meaningful learning experiences that cater to the needs of students in this era of digitalization.

This study not only strives to represent students' experiences but also to provide practical implications for curriculum designers, lecturers, and higher education institutions in creating learning strategies that are more effective, relevant, and student-oriented. According to Purwanto (2021), effective learning strategies must be compatible with the nature of the learners and learning outcomes to enable the learning process to be optimum and meaningful. By being aware of the needs, attitudes, and issues of blended learning students, institutions can devise more sensitive strategies that are aligned with the new dynamics of contemporary education.

METHOD

The research applied a mixed methods approach in its investigation of students' views about blended learning at university level. The application of the mixed methods was adopted due to its ability to combine the advantages of quantitative and qualitative data in order to offer a richer understanding of student experience. Justan et al. (2024) note that mixed methods research enables greater and more in-depth understanding through the integration of quantitative and qualitative knowledge in a single study. The research was conducted at Universitas Negeri Makassar, involving 60 students of the Educational Technology Study Program who had taken blended learning courses. Data collection consisted of closed-ended questionnaires to gather quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews and observations to provide richer qualitative results.

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using percentages, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify emerging patterns, perceptions, and experiences throughout the blended learning process. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was employed by comparing results from multiple sources and methods namely, questionnaire responses, interview transcripts, and field observation notes. These different data sources were cross-examined to identify convergence and divergence in the students' responses and behaviors, allowing the researcher to validate key themes and interpretations. Methodological triangulation also helped in confirming findings across quantitative and qualitative strands, thus enhancing the robustness of the conclusions. Through this integration, the study offers a balanced and corroborated perspective of the strengths, challenges, and attitudes of students toward the implementation of blended learning in higher education.

Sample

This research was carried out at Universitas Negeri Makassar, and the study sample was 60 students. The students were chosen by using purposive sampling, in accordance with their active involvement in blended learning activities in certain courses. This sample was used to obtain a representative picture of the attitudes of students toward the application of blended learning at the higher education level at Universitas Negeri Makassar.

Measurements

A semi-structured interview guide and a questionnaire served as the instruments for the study. The questionnaire aimed to measure students' attitudes toward blended learning in terms of perceived advantages, challenges, comfort, flexibility, and effectiveness of learning. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." In contrast, the interview guide sought to explore students' subjective experiences more deeply, such as how they engaged with the mixed-method learning model, the challenges encountered, and their future expectations for the application of this model.

To determine the content validity of the questionnaire, the items were reviewed by three experts in instructional design and educational technology who rated each item in terms of relevance, clarity, and alignment with the intended constructs. Based on their feedback, several items were rephrased to improve linguistic clarity and conceptual consistency. This expert validation process helped to ensure that the instrument was adequately representative of the key dimensions of student attitudes towards blended learning. A pilot study with 20 students who were not part of the main study was also conducted to filter for item clarity and internal consistency, which contributed to the instrument's validity.

Data Analysis

Results of this study were interpreted by the mixed methods where both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to create a comprehensive picture about students' perception of blended learning. Quantitative results produced by questionnaires were descriptively analyzed in percentages to determine trends within students' opinions on different aspects of blended learning like effectiveness, convenience, flexibility, and problems. Qualitative results produced through interviews were thematically analyzed. This included coding the data, determining major patterns, and grouping the information into main themes, including learning experiences, technical issues, motivation to learn, and students' future expectations of blended learning implementation. In this way, the researcher was able to capture the richness and complexity of students' experiences that could not be captured in the quantitative data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research exposes that students have a clear comprehension of the application of blended learning at Universitas Negeri Makassar. In regard to flexibility, most respondents indicated that this model of learning enables them to manage study time more

effectively. 58% of the students strongly agreed and 25% agreed that blended learning offers flexibility in learning, which suggests that this mode of learning accommodates students' needs in juggling academic and non-academic pursuits. Aside from this, blended learning is also perceived as a means of enhancing student autonomy. 50% of the participants agreed strongly and 25% agreed that this model enables them to be more responsible in learning the content on their own outside of class sessions.

Convenient access to the learning resources is also identified as one of the most significant advantages of blended learning. Most of the students (47% strongly agreed and 30% agreed) indicated that learning resources were readily accessible online, supporting the popularity of technology-based and flexible learning modes. Student response was mixed however when it came to feelings of comfort in engaging in online discussions. Though 37% strongly agreed and 33% agreed that they felt comfortable participating in online discussions, 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed, showing that some students continue to have issues with successful digital communication.

On engagement with lecturers, 33% strongly agreed and 30% agreed that academic relationships were still in good stead even with the blended mode. But the 20% who were neutral and 17% who disagreed point to the reality that this is an area that still needs to be developed further so that students can feel academically and emotionally connected to lecturers. In general, blended learning is seen by the majority of students as an effective means of facilitating flexible and independent learning. The results also highlight the importance of more attention being given to the quality of interaction and the ease of digital communication as a key element of successful blended learning.

The result of this study shows that most students are in favor of the application of blended learning at Universitas Negeri Makassar. Students reported that such a learning model offers more flexibility in accessing the course content, increases their learning motivation, and improves the quality of learning interaction between lecturers and students. The high percentage of students who perceived they were more engaged and motivated indicates that e-learning is very appropriate to the learning style of the digital-native generation. That would confirm existing literature emphasizing the application of technology-enabled learning to develop more meaningful and contextualized learning experiences. A number of challenges were also confirmed, however, such as connectivity issues with the internet, time management issues, along with differences in personal learning styles. These issues indicate that although blended learning has many advantages, its success relies to a great extent on access to proper infrastructure, efficient teaching methods, and quality academic support.

Table 1. Student Questionnaire Analysis on Blended Learning (n = 60)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Blended learning provides flexibility in study time	35 (58%)	15 (25%)	7 (12%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)
I can study independently with blended learning	30 (50%)	15 (25%)	10 (17%)	5 (8%)	0 (0%)
Learning materials are easily accessible online	28 (47%)	18 (30%)	8 (13%)	6 (10%)	0 (0%)
I feel more comfortable discussing online	22 (37%)	20 (33%)	10 (17%)	6 (10%)	2 (3%)
Interaction with lecturers is maintained in blended learning	20 (33%)	18 (30%)	12 (20%)	8 (13%)	2 (4%)

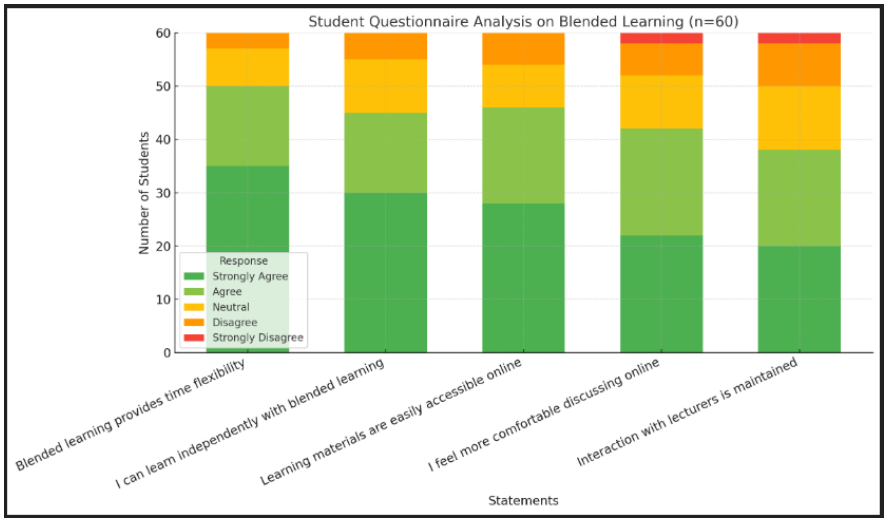

Figure 1: students' perceptions of blended learning

The implications of the findings of this research are several and are significant in informing the growth of learning systems within universities, specifically the use of blended learning. Firstly, the findings call for a more adaptable and receptive curriculum design that apportions online and face-to-face learning proportionately based on the needs of students. Secondly, the university must train lecturers and provide ongoing support to enable them to design and organize technology-mediated instruction. Third, there should be effective technological infrastructure—like reliable internet connectivity and easy-to-use learning platforms—that would facilitate the process of teaching and learning. Fourth, there needs to be an adoption of a student-centered approach, given that students are the immediate consumers of the system. A clear understanding of students' experiences and needs should be one of the bases for institutions to implement ongoing assessment and enhancement. Malahayati and Zunaidah (2021) highlight that needs analysis of instructional materials is a significant initiation in curriculum development because it reveals the gap between desired and available competencies, thus making learning more meaningful and effective. Finally, the study also reveals the necessity to develop academic

policies that will support learning innovation, provide time and mode flexibility in learning, and expand academic services that support a holistic learning experience.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have the implications that blended learning was well received by the students overall. This method was seen by students as providing flexibility in study time management, enhancing comfort, and giving the impression of more effective learning. The combination of online and face-to-face learning simplified many students' understanding of the content and enabled them to be more class involved. Yet, there are still several challenges faced, such as technical issues and the need for more intensive lecturers' support. These findings indicate that the success of blended learning is greatly dependent on institutional readiness, which includes the availability of technological infrastructure, sufficient training for lecturers, and adequate support for students.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that universities establish clear and consistent policies to strengthen the implementation of blended learning. This includes:

1. Investing in stable and accessible digital infrastructure, such as learning management systems and internet connectivity support for students.
2. Providing continuous professional development for lecturers, focusing on digital pedagogy, blended course design, and student engagement strategies.
3. Creating institutional support systems, including blended learning helpdesks, peer mentoring, and technical assistance for both lecturers and students.
4. Encouraging participatory planning, where students' feedback is systematically gathered and used to refine blended learning practices and policies.

These strategic policy directions will ensure that blended learning not only becomes a sustainable learning model but also contributes to improved educational equity and quality in higher education.

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