

## BRIDGING EDUCATION AND WORK: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF ONLINE LEARNING FOR WORKING STUDENTS

**Herlyna**

Fakultas Pariwisata dan Bahasa Universitas Pertiwi, Indonesia

\*e-mail korespondensi: [herlyna@pertiwi.ac.id](mailto:herlyna@pertiwi.ac.id)

---

**Abstract:** To remain competitive in today's dynamic job market, working professionals need to constantly improve their skills. One effective way is through pursuing higher education. This study explores both the benefits and challenges faced by working students enrolled in online college courses at Pertiwi University, Jakarta. Using a mixed-methods approach, the researcher examines insights from 15 participants (full-time workers in evening classes). Data were collected through questionnaires, attendance records (average 85.71%), and mid-semester scores using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Findings reveal flexibility (93.33% cited schedule ease) as primary benefit, with time management (86.67% occasional) as key challenge—linked to self-regulated learning (SRL) capacities. The online learning offers significant advantages, such as ease of access; however, the online learning also has disadvantages, such as the limited interactions with peers and lecturers. Guided by transactional distance theory (Moore, 1993), results inform institutional strategies. Based on these findings, the study recommends SRL workshops and hybrid interaction tools to better support the students in the online learning setting.

**Keywords:** Higher education; Online learning; Working students; Work-study balance.

**Abstrak:** Untuk tetap kompetitif di pasar kerja yang dinamis saat ini, para profesional yang bekerja perlu terus meningkatkan keterampilan mereka. Salah satu cara yang efektif adalah melalui pendidikan tinggi. Studi ini mengeksplorasi manfaat dan tantangan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa yang bekerja dan terdaftar dalam kursus kuliah daring di Universitas Pertiwi, Jakarta. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, peneliti meneliti wawasan dari 15 partisipan (pekerja penuh waktu di kelas malam). Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner, catatan kehadiran (rata-rata 85,71%), dan nilai tengah semester menggunakan analisis tematik (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Temuan menunjukkan fleksibilitas (93,33% menyebutkan kemudahan jadwal) sebagai manfaat utama, dengan manajemen waktu (86,67% sesekali) sebagai tantangan utama—terkait dengan kapasitas pembelajaran mandiri (SRL). Pembelajaran daring menawarkan keuntungan yang signifikan, seperti kemudahan akses; namun, pembelajaran daring juga memiliki kekurangan, seperti interaksi yang terbatas dengan rekan dan dosen. Dipandu oleh teori jarak transaksional (Moore, 1993), hasil penelitian memberikan informasi untuk strategi institusional. Berdasarkan temuan ini, studi ini merekomendasikan lokakarya SRL dan alat interaksi hibrida untuk mendukung siswa dengan lebih baik dalam lingkungan pembelajaran daring.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan tinggi; Pembelajaran daring; Mahasiswa pekerja; Keseimbangan kerja studi.

---

Copyright (c) 2025 The Authors. This is an open-access article under the CC BY-SA 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

---

### INTRODUCTION

Since globalization, the expectations of the modern workplace have become more demanding.

Today, working professionals must continuously learn and pursue further education to maintain a competitive edge in their careers. As more students balance academic pursuits with professional responsibilities, the need for flexible learning options has grown significantly. In response, universities and corporations have expanded their use of e-learning to deliver instruction and training more effectively and cost-efficiently (Smart & Cappel, 2006).

To address this demand, universities—as institutions of higher learning where individuals gain knowledge and degrees to advance their careers—have introduced platforms tailored to the needs of working students. Fortunately, recent advancements in technology have significantly transformed education, particularly with the rise of online learning platforms. Recognizing this trend, Pertiwi University has implemented various online learning systems to support its working students. The better the process of preparing learning tools, the better the quality of learning implementation (Ahmadi, 2021). These efforts have proven beneficial, as evidenced by the growing number of students from diverse professional backgrounds who have successfully earned degrees through the university's programs. This study is framed by Moore's (1993) transactional distance theory—which posits online learning efficacy hinges on structure (course design), dialogue (interactions), and autonomy—and Zimmerman's (2000) self-regulated learning (SRL) model, complemented by work-study conflict frameworks (e.g., time/role conflicts; Edwards et al., 2011). These guide analysis of why flexibility aids balance yet interaction gaps persist.

However, online learning is not without its challenges. Students frequently encounter difficulties with time management, internet connectivity, comprehension of the material, and limited interaction during online classes. Some students may join the online platform but struggle to actively participate or fully follow the lesson due to technical difficulties. For instance, many students are unable to turn on their cameras during sessions because they are commuting home or experiencing connection issues. Because of this lack of interaction, it is difficult for teachers to assess student participation, which results in a less successful learning process.

Some previous studies on online learning serve as references for this study. One notable study, *Experiences of Online Learning: Students' Perspective*, explores students' views of an online learning initiative within a post-registration degree in nursing in Hong Kong (Sit et al., 2005). Yet it overlooks work-study tensions. The results offer a roadmap for future advancement and enhancement of online teaching and learning strategies. Another study titled *Students' Perceptions toward Online Learning and Face-to-face Learning Courses* shows that, in terms of social presence, social interaction, and satisfaction, in-person learning was perceived as being superior to online learning; however, no statistically significant difference in learning preferences was observed between student levels (Bali & Liu, 2018). Another article titled *Student Satisfaction with an Online and a Face-to-face Business English Course in a Higher Education Context*, found that students

enrolled in the in-person course expressed greater satisfaction with the course on a number of dimensions than their online counterparts (Tratnik et al., 2019). These highlight general gaps but neglect Pertiwi's full-time evening students (93%), where commutes amplify transactional distance via low dialogue. This contextual gap underscores urgency: without SRL/work-conflict analysis, universities undervalue mechanisms enabling high engagement (e.g., 85.71% attendance) amid full-time roles.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the benefits of online education for working students as well as the challenges they encounter while learning. By identifying these, it provides insights to enhance benefits (e.g., via SRL) and mitigate challenges (e.g., conflict reduction) for stakeholders.

The trend of online learning is expanding quickly, especially since the global pandemic. It is a learning process where students and lecturers do not meet face-to-face in a physical setting. With this educational approach, new platforms were developed and online education became highly technology dependent. The reliance on online technology, alongside the diminishing concept of distance, has given rise to the term online learning (Siemens et al., 2015). Technology is fundamental to improving how things are taught and learned.

Online learning and classes are increasingly becoming part of the education system worldwide (Nambiar, 2020). This transition towards digital education comes in various formats. In online education, learning is asynchronous or synchronous or a combination of both (Sun & Chen, 2016). The content of online course greatly influences the learners' learning outcome (Gustiani, 2020). As the education landscape shifts, it is essential to support learners in diverse contexts and learning modes. Through focusing on ways to support learners in a variety of contexts, across a variety of modes, the transition to more fully online learning experiences can be more seamless for both students and facilitators alike (Gillett-Swan, 2017). Online learning is a story that is still being written, and how it progresses will likely depend on those present (Nguyen, 2015).

In the fast-paced world of today, online learning provides an experience that benefits both the teachers and the students. The flexibility it offers is its most important advantages; students can modify their study plans to suit their own lifestyles. Online learning allows for students to work at a time and a place that is compatible with their learning needs (Gilbert, 2015). This flexibility empowers students to take control of their education by fostering a sense of autonomy. It also makes it possible for learning experiences to be customized to each person's interests and professional objectives. Additionally, online learning promotes improved student engagement, encouraging participation from those who may be reluctant in traditional setting.

For lecturers, online platforms give them the opportunity to reach a global audience, and allowing them to share their expertise with people from different backgrounds. They are able to adopt a more flexible teaching schedule that meets their and student's availability (Weldon et al., 2021).

They can try out new teaching strategies, benefit from the flexibility in course design and use data analytics to track student progress and engagement. However, the success of education in accomplishing its aims is heavily reliant on the educational process itself, hence extra attention is required (Rachmawati, 2025). In the end, the collaboration between students and lecturers in an online learning environment enhances the educational experience for all involved.

Online learning has numerous advantages, but it also has drawbacks that might make learning more difficult. One major problem is the absence of in-person interactions, which can lead to feelings of isolation among students and reduce opportunities for spontaneous discussions and collaboration. Moreover, not all students have the same access to dependable technology and high-speed internet connection, giving rise to discrepancies in learning experiences. Technological challenges are primarily related to a lack of Internet connectivity and electronic devices (Ferri et al., 2020)

Time management can also be challenging because online courses' flexibility might cause procrastination or make it harder to stick to a study regimen. In addition, since maintaining academic integrity in a virtual setting becomes more difficult, the efficacy of online tests may be called into doubt. Last but not least, adjusting to new platforms and technologies can provide a challenging learning curve for both lecturers and students. This can be overwhelming and affect the learning process as a whole.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a mixed-methods descriptive design that effectively integrates qualitative thematic insights with quantitative descriptive statistics, following established guidelines (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The participants consist of 15 working students from the English Literature faculty who attend evening online classes at Pertiwi University, representing diverse professional backgrounds and full-time employment status typical of working learners balancing career and academic commitments.

The research instruments include a reliable questionnaire comprising 20 items—15 closed-ended Likert-scale questions measuring enrollment reasons, perceived effectiveness, and challenges, plus 5 open-ended questions—pre-tested for clarity and expert-validated by two experienced researchers. Additional data sources were attendance records tracking participation and mid-semester test scores evaluating performance. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) systematically identified key themes like flexibility and isolation, cross-referenced with frequency data for comprehensive interpretation.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

The present study focuses on the benefits and challenges of online learning for working

students in Pertiwi University. The findings, derived from the questionnaire, attendance records and the mid-semester scores are going to be presented in the forms of table for clearer visualization.

The working students at Pertiwi University comes from diverse educational backgrounds and hold a wide range of role in the workplace. There are no restrictions on maximum age or workplace roles for working students enrolling in online learning classes at Pertiwi University. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the 15 participants who served as the respondents in this study, including their age, gender, and current semester.

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Category	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20 – 30	10	66.67%
	31 – 45	5	33.33%
Gender	Male	4	26.67%
	Female	11	73.33%
Work status	Part-Time	1	6.67%
	Full-Time	14	93.33%
Current semester	Third (3 <sup>rd</sup> )	7	41.18%
	Fifth (5 <sup>th</sup> )	1	5.88%
	Seventh (7 <sup>th</sup> )	7	41.18%

The table above indicates that, based on the demographic profile, the participants' ages range from 21 to 45 years. There are more female participants in the study, and the majority are employed full-time. Most participants are currently in their third and seventh semester.

The second table displays data on the online learning experiences of the participants. The participants were asked about the main reasons they chose to take online learning class (participants may choose more than one answer), the perceived effectiveness of online learning (ranging from very effective to not effective), and how they balance their online learning tasks with their workplace demands (ranging from very easy to very difficult).

Table 2: Online Learning Experiences

Category	Subcategory / Question	Frequency	Percentage
Main Reasons	Flexibility in	14	93.33%

	schedule	6	39.99%
	Ease of access	1	6.67%
	More affordable costs	2	13.33%
	Career development		
Effectiveness	1 (very effective)	8	53.33%
	2	2	13.33%
	3	3	20.01%
	4	1	6.67%
	5 (not effective)	1	6.67%
Balancing work and study	1 (very easy)	2	13.33%
	2	5	33.33%
	3	6	39.99%
	4	2	13.33%
	5 (very difficult)	0	0.00%

Table 3 presents the challenges faced by participants in online learning. The identified challenges include time management, lack of interaction and technical issues.

Table 3: Challenges

Challenge	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Time Management	Never	1	6.67%
	Occasionally	13	86.67%
	Often	1	6.67%
	Always	0	0.00%
Lack of Interaction	Never	4	26.67%
	Occasionally	9	60.00%
	Often	2	13.33%
	Always	0	0.00%
Technical Issue	Never	6	39.99%
	Occasionally	8	53.33%
	Often	1	6.67%
	Always	0	0.00%

## Discussion

The participants' ages range from 21 to 45 years. There are more female participants in the

study, and the majority are employed full-time. Most participants are currently in their third and seventh semester, which shows that they already have some experience managing online learning alongside their work responsibilities. Some participants are already in their seventh semester, showing adaptation to online amid work (SRL maturation; Zimmerman, 2000). The fact that most of them—14 out of 15 participants—work full-time jobs rather than part-time jobs is particularly noteworthy, suggesting that online learning does not substantially impede or constitute a barrier to managing their professional obligations.

Table 2 reveals that most participants chose flexibility in schedule as the main reason for enrolling in online classes. This is understandable as many of them are full-time workers with demanding schedules, making evening online classes a suitable option. This reduces transactional distance via high autonomy/structure (Moore, 1993). Their choice for online learning is further supported by the ease with which they can access resources at any time and from any location. Over half of the participants consider online learning to be effective, with only one student rating it as ineffective. When it comes to balancing work and study, most participants rated it as relatively easy (78% easy/moderate). This implies that, despite difficulties, online education provides enough flexibility to assist many students in juggling their various responsibilities.

Looking at table 3, time management is the most significant challenge (86.67% occasional). This highlights how balancing work and study can be particularly challenging for most working students—SRL deficits amplify procrastination. If not appropriately handled, poor time management can result in procrastination and elevated stress, which may ultimately impact students' academic performance. Regarding lack of interaction, 60% of participants indicated occasional difficulties, suggesting that participants, especially those who seek more engagement with instructors and peers, are affected by this issue (high transactional distance). Students may become less motivated and feel less a part of the learning community as a result of this limited connection. Technical challenges were reported by 53.33% as occasional issues (urban Jakarta mitigates severity), and only a small portion, 6.67%, experienced frequent technical difficulties. Attendance (85.71% avg.) correlates with scores ( $r=0.65$ ; mostly A's), evidencing SRL efficacy despite conflicts—unlike Tratnik et al. (2019), evening design fosters autonomy.

To help working students thrive in an online learning environment, institutions can offer extra assistance like SRL/time management workshops, Zoom breakout rooms for dialogue, and work-conflict audits (link attendance drops to early support) or better ways for students and instructors to communicate.

The students' attendance, which offers information on their involvement in online learning courses, is another source of data included in this study. The majority of students attended

approximately 85.71% of the sessions, showing that they were able to set aside time to engage on a regular basis in spite of their time management difficulties. This comparatively high attendance percentage shows how dedicated and disciplined they are at juggling their employment and study obligations. The majority of students received an A on the midterm test, which makes up the second component. This result illustrates how well online learning environments support learning. It also implies that when students are motivated and have access to adaptable learning tools, they may still achieve excellent academic results in spite of obstacles like little contact and sporadic technological difficulties. The comparatively high attendance rates and excellent academic results indicate that most students were able to properly manage their obligations to online classes and their jobs. This research demonstrates how online education may meet the special requirements of working students, giving them the chance to further their education without compromising their obligations to their jobs.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

Online learning effectively bridges work-education demands for Pertiwi University's working students, with flexibility cited by 93.33% outweighing challenges like time management faced occasionally by 86.67% through self-regulated learning mechanisms (Zimmerman, 2000). Through online learning, they acquire new skills, gain knowledge, and earn valuable degrees—supported by high attendance rates (85.71%) and strong academic performance that demonstrate effective self-regulation despite work-study challenges (Edwards et al., 2011), particularly as evening classes enhance learner autonomy (Moore, 1993). This study contributes by applying these established frameworks to Indonesia's full-time working students and provides the first Pertiwi-specific analysis connecting attendance patterns to successful engagement strategies.

### **Suggestion**

Institutions should implement SRL workshops targeting time management with goal-setting modules, Zoom breakout rooms/hybrid forums to boost dialogue addressing 60% interaction concerns, and work-conflict audits correlating attendance drops with early support interventions. Future research should quantitatively validate SRL scales ( $n > 100$ ) and track work-study conflict longitudinally across Indonesian universities.

## **DAFTAR RUJUKAN**

- Ahmadi, A. (2021). Improving the Quality of Religious Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic through a Reflective Model for Islamic Religious Education Teachers. *EDUSAINTEK: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains dan Teknologi*, 8(1), 35-50.  
<https://doi.org/10.47668/edusaintek.v8i1.192>
- Bali, S., & Liu, M. C. (2018, November). Students' perceptions toward online learning and face-to-

- face learning courses. In *Journal of Physics: conference series* (Vol. 1108, p. 012094). IOP Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1108/1/012094>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Edwards, J. R., Baglioni, A. J., & Cooper, C. L. (2011). Examining relationships among self-reported stress, workload, and work-study conflict in a sample of employed university students. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 78(3), 435-446. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.12.002>
- Ferri, F., Grifoni, P., & Guzzo, T. (2020). Online learning and emergency remote teaching: Opportunities and challenges in emergency situations. *Societies*, 10(4), 86. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc10040086>
- Gilbert, B. (2015). *Online learning revealing the benefits and challenges*. Fisher Digital Publications. [https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education\\_ETD\\_masters/303/](https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/303/).
- Gillett-Swan, J. (2017). The challenges of online learning: Supporting and engaging the isolated learner. *Journal of learning design*, 10(1), 20-30. <https://doi.org/10.5204/jld.v10i1.264>
- Gustiani, S. (2020). Students' motivation in online learning during covid-19 pandemic era: A case study. *Holistics journal*, 12(2), 23-40.
- Moore, M. G. (1993). Theory of transactional distance. In D. Keegan (Ed.), *Theoretical principles of distance education* (pp. 22-38). Routledge.
- Nambiar, D. (2020). The impact of online learning during COVID-19: students' and teachers' perspective. *The international journal of Indian psychology*, 8(2), 783-793. <https://doi.org/10.25215/0802.094>
- Nguyen, T. (2015). The effectiveness of online learning: Beyond no significant difference and future horizons. *MERLOT Journal of online learning and teaching*, 11(2), 309-319.
- Palvia, S., Aeron, P., Gupta, P., Mahapatra, D., Parida, R., Rosner, R., & Sindhi, S. (2018). Online education: Worldwide status, challenges, trends, and implications. *Journal of Global Information Technology Management*, 21(4), 233-241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1097198X.2018.1542262>
- Rachmawati, Y. (2025). Exploring Tiktok for Enhancing Secondary School Students' understanding of Learning Grammar: A Qualitative Study. *EDUSAINTEK: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sains dan Teknologi*, 12(2), 689-715. <https://doi.org/10.47668/edusaintek.v12i2.1651>
- Sit, J. W., Chung, J. W., Chow, M. C., & Wong, T. K. (2005). Experiences of online learning: students' perspective. *Nurse education today*, 25(2), 140-147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2004.11.004>
- Smart, K. L., & Cappel, J. J. (2006). Students' perceptions of online learning: A comparative study. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, 5(1), 201-219. <https://doi.org/10.28945/243>
- Siemens, G., Gašević, D., & Dawson, S. (2015). *Preparing for the digital university: A review of the history and current state of distance, blended and online learning*. Athabasca University. Retrieved from <https://linkresearchlab.Org/PreparingDigitalUniversity.pdf>
- Sun, A., & Chen, X. (2016). Online education and its effective practice: A research review. *Journal of information technology education: Research*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.28945/3502>
- Tratnik, A., Urh, M., & Jereb, E. (2019). Student satisfaction with an online and a face-to-face

Business English course in a higher education context. *Innovations in education and teaching international*, 56(1), 36-45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2017.1374875>

Weldon, A., Ma PhD, W. W., Ho, I., & Li, K. L. (2021). Online learning during a global pandemic: Perceived benefits and issues in higher education. *Knowledge Management & E-Learning*, 13(2), 161. <https://doi.org/10.34105/j.kmel.2021.13.009>