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TRAINEES' PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE COACHING IN BASIC TRAINING FOR CIVIL SERVANT CANDIDATES

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Abstract. This research was entitled trainees' perceptions of online coaching in basic training for civil servant candidates (LATSAR CPNS). This research was aimed at finding out trainees' perception of online coaching in the training. This research used qualitative approach in which observation and online interview were deployed to collect the data. The observation was conducted in 2019 during the online coaching process. The interview was done online in 2020 after the online coaching process was accomplished. The participants of the research were the trainees of LATSAR CPNS coming from the Aceh province and some districts of the Aceh province and sharing the same coach. The research finding showed that most participants perceived online coaching as positive if some indicators were fulfilled, however, if they were not met, the participants preferred to have face to face coaching.

Keywords: Trainees' perceptions, online coaching, basic training for civil servant candidates.

Background

In response to the industry revolution 4.0 Indonesian government has promoted Dilan (Digital Melayani/Digital serves). To show their support, every government institution is trying to integrate digital technology in serving the society/stakeholders. Lembaga Administrasi Negara/National Institute of Public

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Administration of the Republic of Indonesia (LAN RI) as a governmental institution has also gradually integrated technology to its services including governmental trainings. One of the governmental trainings is Basic Training for Civil Servant Candidates (Pelatihan Dasar Calon Pegawai Negeri Sipil/Latsar CPNS). Latsar CPNS is formerly known as pre service training for civil servant candidates, which every civil servant candidate must attend any time during their one-year probation period. After successfully attending this training, civil servant candidates are permanently hired as civil servants.

This training organization has gone through some changes. The latest change has caused the training to be conducted on-class and off-class. On-class phase is allocated 21 days, while off-class phase is allocated 30 days (Perlan, 2018). When on-class, civil servant candidates (later in the text is referred to as trainees), normally consisting of forty trainees, will attend teaching learning activities led by widyaiswara (special term for governmental training trainer) in a class room. And when off-class (also called actualization phase), trainees will return to their office/workplace. During actualization, trainees are assigned to execute their own creative idea or an innovation to improve public service in their office under the supervision of a coach. A coach is widyaiwara guiding trainees to write a field project (innovation project) report. A coach will guide 10 trainees, unless stated otherwise.

But before returning to their office for actualization, the trainees must be able to identify some issues relating to their job descriptions when on class coaching. The issues are then analyzed with analytical tools such as USG, fishbone etc. This is done in order to identify a core issue. After identifying the core issue, trainees are asked to find the best solution (creative idea or innovation) to the core issue. The creative idea or innovation is hoped to be able to improve the quality of their job performance which finally will contribute to a better public service at each trainee's workplace.

The innovative idea will be broken down into some activities. A month is given to implement the activities and they must be documented in a report completed with evidences such as photos, videos, etc. While doing this, the trainees will be guided by

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their own coach. The trainees and the coaches will communicate using IT based communication channels to make sure the trainees' field project work well or to consult anything.

After the technological advancement on information and communication, the way people communicate has shifted. People tend to communicate to share information or message via phone call, email, text-messaging and very popular whatsapp application. Not only has this ICT advancement been applied in daily life communication, but also it has been applied in businesses, education, training, public service, etc.

ICT covers two elements, which are information technology and communication technology. Information technology is defined as a process, the use of aiding kits, manipulation and information management. While communication technology is everything relating to the use of aiding tools to process and transfer data to other devices (Darimi, 2017, Haviluddin, 2010), to receive data and to have either one way or two-way communication, and to acquire knowledge from one to another [using] communication device or application that encompassing radio, television, telephones, computers, network, hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as video conferencing and distance learning" (Khan et al., 2015 cited in Hussain, 2018). Today's society has been dependent on ICT. They keep utilizing this advancement in daily activities for various purposes (Syarifuddin, 2014). It can be concluded that ICT is a tool used by people of different background in this digital era to simply share or receive information, to communicate and learn knowledge.

Learning is effective when ICT is applied. Cyber learning or more popular call 'e-learning' is one of the learning method utilizing it (Hanum, 2013). E-learning is the example of the incorporation of ICT in education. Out of countless definition on e-learning, it can be synthesized that e-learning is a system or educational concept integrating information and technology in teaching learning process. E-learning is also called online learning, virtual learning, distributed learning, networked or web-

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based learning (Mutia dan Leonard, 2013). It uses different devices connected to the internet to communicate (Ariani, 2018).

Horton (2010 cited in Mutia and Leonard, 2013) divided e-learning to learner-led E-learning, facilitated E-learning, instructor-led E-learning, embedded E-learning, and telementoring and e-coaching.

Learner-led E-learning

This category is also known as self-directed E-learning. It is e-learning designed to enable students or trainees to study independently. It differs from computer-based training, in which trainees' study from CD-ROM or DVD and is not connected to the internet. In e-learning, all materials such as multimedia presentation, html, and interactive media prepared and sent via the internet or web.

Instructor-led E-learning

This kind of learning is the opposition of learner-led E-learning, it utilizes the use of technology to deliver lesson like in a conventional class. Consequently, It needs synchronous (real time) technology such as video conferencing, audio, chatting, bulletin board etc.

Facilitated E-learning

It is a combination of learner-led and instructor-led E-learning. In this kind of study, the material of study can be accessed independently via website such as audio, animation, video, texts and other formats supported with interactive and collaborative communication which is also conducted via website such as discussion forum, conference at a given time, chatting, etc.

Embedded E-learning

This is a kind of just-in time training design to give immediate support when someone wants to master skills, knowledge or others as soon as possible from the application installed on a website.

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Telementoring and e-Coaching

This is aimed at giving long distance mentoring or coaching and trainings. Tele conference (video, audio, computer), chatting, instant messaging, or telephone is used to guide trainees to master skills, knowledge or attitude. Like embedded e-learning, this kind of e-learning is widely used in industries or companies in this global era.

Mbira (2013) argues e-coaching has both positive and negative impacts. Positive impact it gives is fast and easy process of coaching which can be conducted everywhere as long as the internet connection is available. Meanwhile, less amount of meeting among lecturers and trainees result in negative impact on academic and behavior control issue.

According to Empy dan Zhuang (2005 cited in Mutia and Leonard, 2013) there are some advantages of E-learning among others: 1) cost-effeciency 2) time flexibility 3) standardization and learning effectivity. E-learning always has the same quality at any time it is accessed. However, e-learning has weaknesses i.e: 1) students must have computer and internet access 2) students must have computer skills and its programs 3) good internet connection 4) students will stop learning or confused about learning activities and task time allocation that will make them fail 5) students feels far from instructor 6) students must have good writing and communication skill, teachers and students are not face to face that will possibly result in miscommunication.

As formerly described, basic training for civil servant candidates comprises of on-class and off-class phases. When on-class, trainees learn in a conventional way in the classroom, however, if the organizers of the training (governmental offices assigned to organize the training) are ready, they can incorporate e-learning while on-class phases. Meanwhile, upon off-class training, the trainees are back to their own workplaces (offices) to apply the solution to the problem in their job scope in order to improve the public service in thirty days under the control of their coach. It means coaching process during this phase.

"Coaching is a process of guidance conducted directly or indirectly (using electronically based-communication and information technology) in a training activity" (Perkalan, 2015). During off-class the trainees will keep close contact to their coach. This online coaching utilizes mostly whatsapp text messaging and email. Both involve written communication, in which coach and trainees are linked together by the chosen communication channels. "Therefore, communication channels can be understood simply as the modes or pathways through which two individuals might communicate" (Rafique and Anwar, 2020). In addition, in this type of communication, coach and trainees are not face to face (Empy and Zhuang, 2005 cited in Mutia and Leonard, 2013).

There are a number of researches on ICT implementation on education and trainings, but less was researched on governmental trainings, more specifically on basic training for civil servant candidates. This research, therefore, is trying to discuss the topic.

ICT implementation on this training is an innovation allowing long distance communication between trainees and their coaches. Although ICT implementation in human activities has proved to be advantageous, but there are also disadvantages of this as showed by Hanum (2013) and Mbira (2013). Therefore, question is raised on how trainees perceive the online coaching. This qualitative research will investigate trainees' trainees' perception of online coaching in Basic Training for Civil Servant Candidates. There were five key points explored among others: 1) Trainees' preference on communication channels (face to face or non-face to face communication), 2) Trainees' preference on spoken or written communication, 3) Trainees' perception of online coaching 4) Trainees' perception of strengths and weaknesses of online coaching 5) Trainees' recommendation on online coaching improvement.

This research is urgent to be done as part of the industry revolution 4,0 adaptation and covid 19 pandemic protocol in which governmental training should be conducted online. The recommendations from the trainees may be taken as considerations in

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organizing governmental trainings in general and online coaching specifically in the near future.

Research Method

This research applied qualitative descriptive approach. The data collection methods widely used in this kind of research were observation and interview in which the questions are open ended (Creswell, 2014). The observation was deployed to gather information on trainees' response to online coaching in the coaching process. The technique of the observation was participative in which the researcher was involved in the activity as the trainees' coach. As formerly mentioned, another method of data collection used in the research was interview. Face-to-face semi-structured or structured interviews have been the most common method of data collection in qualitative research, but with advances in technology, multiple options are now existing such as telephone, videoconference, email, internet interview and text message interview methods (Creswell, 2014; Hawkins, 2018). Thus, interview can be conducted online in written. So, in this research, online interview (the Google form) consisting of five open ended questions was created to collect data. The rationale to this was because the participants were spread across the Aceh province ranging from Banda Aceh (Capital of the Aceh province), Pidie District, Pidie Jaya District, Aceh Jaya District, Langsa District, Simuelue District, and Singkil District. The online written interview gained the data on 1) Trainees' preference on communication channels (face to face or non-face to face communication), 2) Trainees' preference on spoken or written communication, 3) Trainees' perception of online coaching 4) Trainees' perception on strengths and weaknesses of online coaching 5) Trainees' recommendation to improve online coaching.

The Google form was then sent to the former trainees attending Latsar CPNS in 2019 coming from the Aceh Province and some districts of the Aceh province as mentioned earlier. Each district had its own whatspp group (wa group) for online coaching in which the participants of the wa groups varied in number from 10 members (trainees) to 14 members each group namely The Aceh Province I (12 participants),

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The Aceh Province II (11 participants), Pidie District I (10 participants), Pidie District II (10 participants), Pidie Jaya District (11 participants), Langsa (14 participants), Aceh Jaya District I (13 participants), Aceh Jaya District II (12 participants), Simuelue (11 participants) and Singkil (14 participants). Just for additional information, one or two wa group members had left group before the online interview took place. Because there is no stated limit in the amount of participants or informants in qualitative research, the researcher asked the members of the population to voluntarily participate in the interview. Of all the participants, 46 trainees participated in the interview, and most participants gave almost the same answers (saturated data). Therefore, the researcher did not ask the rest of the participants to participate in the interview.

The data collected was analyzed using 6 phases proposed by Creswell (2014). The phases ranges from data organization and data preparation, data reading, data coding, data description, data presentation and data interpretation. According to the phases of the data analysis, the data of the research were first sorted and arranged into diverse types, and then they were read in order to be able to find general idea and reflect the overall meaning. Next, the data were then put into categories and labeled with a term to be described in detail. After that, the data were presented descriptively. Finally, the data were interpreted to convey the meaning of research findings based on the data obtained.

Result and Discussion

Observation
The researcher was the coach of the trainees of the participants of this research. The observation observed trainees' interest in communicating with their coach when on class (one day) and off class (thirty-day actualization). During one-day on class coaching, all trainees were standing in line to have face to face consultation with the coach about their field project plan. The off class coaching showed a contrary fact. The coach most of the time started contacting trainees via whatsapp group to check the progress of their field work and their report. Only a few trainees did initiate to consult

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about their field work and their report to the coach. However, there was also a few numbers of students communicating to the coach personally via various channels of communication ranging from personal whatsapp messaging (so often), email (quite often), whatsapp call, whatsapp video call and phone call (very seldom). When it came to comprehension, on class coaching eased the trainees' understanding to the message communicated by the coach, whereas IT assisted communication needed more effort to make sure the trainees understand what was conveyed. This signaled that trainees were very much interested in direct, face to face communication in coaching compared to online coaching which was non-face to face.

Interview
There were 5 questions asked to the interviewees (trainees) as follows: 1) Trainees' preference on communication channels 2) Trainees' preference on communication types, 3) Trainees' perception of online coaching 4) Trainees' perception on strengths and weaknesses of online coaching 5) Trainees' recommendation on online coaching improvement.

1) Trainees' Preference on Channels of Communication

Table 1. Preference on Communication Channels

No	Communication channel preference	Amount of participants
1	Face to face	39
2	Non- face to face	3
3	Both	4

Of all 46 participants (trainees), most trainees (39) preferred face to face communication, 3 trainees liked non-face to face communication better, and 4 trainees promoted both kinds of communication. One of the trainees who preferred the later argued the selection of communication channel was conditional. If face to face communication was possible, face to face communication was chosen, however when it was mostly unlikely, non-face to face communication (IT based

communication) was a solution. It suggests that face to face is still a favorable option in this digital era. Rafique and Anwar (2020) confirmed this. They found out that face to face communication became the first option for the subject they research followed by face-to-face, Short Messaging Service (SMS), online professional groups/forums, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Skype etc.), telephone and instant messaging. It is quite surprising given that all the participants were born in 1988 to 1990's, categorized as Y generation or millennial generation, in which their daily life is familiar with ICT (Putra, 2016).

2) Trainees' types of communication preference

Table 2. Types of Communication

No	Communication types	Amount of participants
1	Spoken	37
2	Written	7
3	Both	2

When asked about their preference types of communication, most trainees (37) promoted spoken communication over written communication, 7 trainees preferred written communication and 2 trainees liked both. Those who promoted spoken communication argued spoken communication was two-way communication. It was transparent or open, rich in information, clearer, easier to hear than read, easier to understand and remember, and easier to convey messages. Furthermore, in this type of communication facial expression could be read, feeling was employed, intonation could be heard and messages was clear and well delivered miss communication would not occur, for if there was no clarity it could be asked again. Those who preferred written argued written communication was detailed, easier to understand, could be used as evidence and stored, could be repeatedly read if needed, so nothing was forgotten. Those who liked both argued it was easier.

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3) Trainees' perception on online coaching

When asked about their opinion on online coaching, various responses were obtained. Most firmly perceived online coaching was a good idea. A few thought it was less efficient and another response thought it would not give the best result if compared to face to face communication. However, it can give the best benefit if good communication was created.

Effective and efficient
Most trainees agreed on online coaching because coach and coaches are sometimes obstructed by distance and time, thus, using IT based coaching was effective. Some other participants in this category said it made it easy to consult regardless the distance issue due to the presence of IT. It showed an act to adapt to the era advancement, urging everything to be fast and more efficient. Besides, they added it was easier to use, easy to communicate, eased them to share information and save (time, effort, cost), gave easy access for those living far away and more effective as long as the communication flow was ensured to run well. Others argued this kind of method could be very beneficial at the millennial era for it can be conducted any time without having to ride a long away to do face to face coaching because of the use of IT.

Quite effective and efficient
Trainees in this category perceived distance coaching did not give the most benefit compared to direct coaching, but somehow it could offer most benefit if good communication was created. Another trainee said he / she actually preferred face to face communication and met his / her coach directly. The last one added online coaching could be easier and efficient, yet, some things should have been considered in order coaching can be effective and efficient.

Less effective and efficient
Those trainees in this category gave firm and short answers. Most trainees dissatisfied with online coaching for some reasons such as weak internet connection

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in some areas, less maximal impact of online coaching, uncomfortable feeling towards online coaching, and high preference to face to face coaching.

4) Strengths and weaknesses of online coaching

Tabel 3. Strengths and Weaknesses of IT-based Coaching

Strengths	Weaknesses
Can be accessed anywhere	Network problem
Easy (easy access, easy guidance)	Less IT proficiency
Efficient (time, money, virtual proximity, practical, transportation cost, simple, fast)	Not optimal
Supportive participants	No emotional bound
Effective way to save time	Less intimacy
Facilitate long distance communication	Communication matters (use of vocabulary, miscommunication and misinterpretation due to the absence of intonation)
Short discussion period	Indirect communication (non-face to face, less in-depth communication, reluctant to ask).
Unlimited time of coaching	Limitation (time, Q & A, limited information sharing limited guidelines and unable to understand through writing)

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The table showed some strength associated with online coaching as being easy, efficient, and effective. For practical trainees online coaching is an option because it facilitated long distance communication which could be done anytime and did not spend so much time on discussion. On the contrary, online coaching was regarded not optimal at some point. It was affected by technical problem for example network problem, skill deficiency for instance less IT proficiency, psychological problems such as no emotional bound and less intimacy, communication channels e.g. face to face and non-face to face. It was even surprising that indirect communication could made trainees reluctant to ask over again so that it hampered in-depth communication. Another interesting finding was communication problem due to the use of language. For some, it could lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding.

These findings matched some barriers of communication proposed in Kurti and Dollani (2019). They synthesized some research findings concluding some barriers to communication among others organization structure barriers, position-related barriers, the use of language, excessive information, time pressure, prejudice, emotional condition, and distraction.

 A more balanced study was conducted by Subrahmanyam K, Frison E and Michikyan M (2020). They cited most findings from previous researches indicating more positive affordances experienced by people involving in face to face communication than digital communication. Nonverbal cues such as gesture, gaze, tone, and body language used in face to face communication resulted in intimacy and positive emotions. However, digital communication enabled an asynchronous communication in which people can respond at their own convenience.

5) Online coaching improvement

a. Internet connection
When asked what should be improved on online coaching, some trainees responded that internet connection should be supported. If not, this will lead to communication

noise (disruption). In this case, technology does not ease the online coaching, yet it obstructs it instead.

b. Coach

Coach should arrange the online coaching schedule before the online coaching officially starts and should be available on the scheduled time. He / she should also ensure to provide session for direct question and answer via other communication channels such as telephone. And they should put the use of language into consideration so there will not be a chance of miscommunication and misinterpretation.

c. Trainees

Trainee's IT proficiency should be improved because not every trainee is proficient in IT skills. Therefore, there must be socialization and IT-based training such as features that can be used and so on. The frequency of communication should be increased, especially from participants in needs of improving fluency in communication. Trainees should frequently monitor incoming chats and give a fast response.

d. Online coaching process

It is an excellent coaching method in which information can be obtained quickly. In online coaching paper is no longer used. However, face-to-face discussion should be organized for it will foster closeness between individuals. In addition, phone call should also be deployed in the coaching process.

e. Alternative application

There are other applications available to support online coaching such as Google Drive (online storage) enabling document sharing more easily or Google Classroom provided by Google as a virtual classroom which is free of charge. They should be taken advantage from. It is also suggested, the use of media allowing spoken language rather than the use of digital messaging such as whatsapp texting. This kind of media will result in better coaching process and result.

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CONCLUSION

This research was aimed at finding out trainees' perception of online coaching in Basic Training for Civil Servant Candidates. There were 5 questions asked to the interviewees (trainees) as follows: 1) Trainees' preference on communication channels 2) Trainees' preference on communication types, 3) Trainees' perception of online coaching 4) Trainees' perception on strengths and weaknesses of online coaching 5) Trainees' recommendation on online coaching improvement.

Most participants (trainees) interviewed preferred to have face to face over non face to face or IT-based communication. When it came to choose between spoken or written communication, most trainees decided spoken communication. These findings showed trainees preferred having face to face communication where trainees and coach could have direct spoken communication. When it was not possible, then the preference was to have spoken communication such as phone call. It indicated that written communication via email or whatsapp chat / text messaging was surprisingly not a preferable option. However, the trainees had to go with those two communication channels for online coaching, for the channels were widely used by their coach.

Although online coaching has been proven to be out of trainees' favor, they somehow admitted online coaching as being effective and efficient for those living far away from their coach. Online coaching should still have been the choice for them regardless some weaknesses it had either internet connection problem, less IT proficiency, non-face to face communication leading to no intimacy and no emotional bound or miscommunication and misinterpretation.

There are some recommendations to make this out of favor online coaching contribute to the best benefit. First, attention should be paid to the internet connection. However, it is not under either trainees' or coach's capacity to intervene. Thus, understanding should be given for those trainees living in remote areas. Second, coach should utilize various communication channels and consider the use of

language better understood by coachees coming from diverse educational backgrounds. Third, trainees with less proficiency of IT skills should be given basic introduction to ICT. Fourth, on the coaching process, communication channels enabling direct communication should be deployed. Face to face coaching should be organized in between online coaching period for the trainees living nearby, if not with those living far away, and the devices allowing spoken communication such as phone call should also be encouraged on the coaching process. Fifth, variation of the applications on online coaching process should be put into consideration.

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