Optimism vs. pessimism: Exploring the dual realities of WFH among EFL tertiary learners during the COVID-19 pandemic

Abidin Pammu[1*], Budianto Hamuddin[2]

[1]*Universitas Hasanuddin, Makassar, Indonesia.*
[2]*Universitas Lancang Kuning, Pekanbaru, Indonesia.*

Corresponding author: Abidin Pammu (*Email: abidinpammu60@gmail.com*)

Abstract

This study focuses on English as Foreign Language (EFL) students at Hasanuddin University, Makassar, to explore the effects of the shift to Working from Home (WFH) learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered the educational landscape, especially in higher education. It aims to understand the psychological impact and the range of attitudes towards this new mode of learning among EFL students. This research involved students from two cohorts (2020 and 2021). A sample of 60 participants was chosen to complete an online perception questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The study employed content analysis within an interpretative paradigm to analyze the responses. Analysis of the data revealed a dichotomy in student perspectives, categorizing them as "optimisms" and "pessimisms" based on their attitudes towards WFH learning. The findings highlighted a variety of psychological impacts experienced by the students, encompassing both negative and positive aspects. The results indicate significant implications for EFL educators. They suggest a need for increased focus on online pedagogical methods and emphasize the importance of adaptability, flexibility, and productivity in the evolving educational environment. The study also sheds light on the diverse psychological experiences of students, underscoring the need for educational strategies that cater to these varied needs. This study provides critical insights into the perceptions and psychological impacts of WFH learning on EFL students at Hasanuddin University. It underscores the challenges and opportunities presented by the transition to online learning, offering valuable guidance for educators in similar contexts.

Keywords: Impact, Learning process, Perceptions, Psychological.

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Transparency: The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.
Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the Research and Community Service Institution (LPPM) Universitas Hasanuddin, Indonesia has granted approval for this study (Ref. No. 05571F.5.51AL.0412023_LPPM).

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has revolutionized the field of education, necessitating a rapid shift to online learning platforms. Online learning, also known as e-learning, has become the predominant mode of education delivery, enabling students to continue their studies despite the limitations imposed by social distancing measures and lockdowns. This shift has posed both challenges and opportunities for educational institutions and learners alike. Understanding the impact and perceptions of online learning, particularly in the context of Working from Home (WFH), is crucial for enhancing educational practices and ensuring the well-being of EFL tertiary learners.

The surge in online learning adoption necessitates a thorough exploration of this gap to enhance educational practices and ensure the well-being of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) tertiary learners. Existing literature underscores the importance of meticulous planning, teacher training, suitable teaching methodologies, effective online learning environment management, and robust support services [1-3]. However, it is imperative to delve deeper into the specific challenges faced by educators, such as fostering student interactions, accommodating diverse learning styles, managing technical disruptions, and ensuring equitable access to resources. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the pedagogical dimensions of online learning and consider the engagement and support provided by educational institutions to ensure optimal learning experiences [3-6].

Education plays a pivotal role in personal growth, career planning, and social change. It is highly valued for its ability to enrich life experiences, foster critical thinking skills, and provide opportunities for future employment [7]. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, education must persist and adapt to new circumstances. Thus, online learning has become a lifeline for maintaining educational continuity.

Working from Home (WFH) learning has emerged as a new paradigm in the realm of online education. Friend, et al. [8] argue that WFH requires different pedagogical approaches and strategies compared to traditional face-to-face learning. Scholars such as Fetherston [9]; Hardy and Bower [10]; Oliver [11] and Boling, et al. [12] have stressed the importance of distinct pedagogy and skills for effective online teaching. Educators face unique challenges when implementing online pedagogy, including facilitating student interactions, accommodating diverse learning styles, designing effective courses, managing technical disruptions, and ensuring equitable access to resources.

Research focusing on online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on its impact on learners' motivation to learn English, which is often a compulsory subject [13-15]. Studies have demonstrated both positive and negative effects on lecturers and students. Lecturers encounter challenges in lesson planning due to technical disruptions, while learners struggle to find adequate time for verbal conversation, affecting their language acquisition. These challenges necessitate further research to investigate the factors influencing online learning experiences and to identify effective pedagogical strategies to address them.

The success and acceptance of e-learning systems depend on various factors, including teacher and student characteristics, technology infrastructure, learning systems, online learning resources, support, and training [16, 17]. However, much of the previous research has primarily focused on the student perspective [18]. Therefore, it is imperative to explore the pedagogical dimensions of online learning and consider the engagement and support provided by educational institutions to ensure optimal learning experiences.

Debates surrounding online teaching revolve around the relative importance of teachers' pedagogical skills, instructional materials, and understanding students' needs and motivation. Some argue that teachers' pedagogical skills are paramount, while others emphasize the adaptation of applications and resources to meet students' evolving requirements. Additionally, there is a consensus among academicians, such as Alhabeeb and Rowley [17] and Lee, et al. [19], that students' characteristics, experiences, habits, computer proficiency, and internet usage competence significantly impact their online learning experiences. Moreover, the availability of well-structured and user-friendly course materials is deemed crucial for an effective e-learning system.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian Minister of Education has shown significant concern for implementing education in the context of WFH. To establish regulatory measures, a formal circular letter was issued, providing national guidelines for online teaching and the WFH concept. It is widely acknowledged that WFH learning offers a more convenient and comfortable environment for students, facilitating the transfer of educational and human values, especially for non-native learners.

WFH entails a learning process that takes place within the home environment, providing students with the opportunity to learn in a flexible, adaptable, and sustainable manner. Transitioning from the traditional face-to-face mode of learning to the WFH approach requires extensive preparation, including support from the home environment and access to a reliable WiFi connection. The home environment plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional well-being of EFL learners and their overall learning experiences. Emotional support, characterized by expressions of concern, affection, assurance, acceptance, encouragement, and care, contributes to students' sense of value and facilitates positive learning outcomes [20, 21]. Furthermore, spending more time at home allows students to explore education beyond the school setting and establish stronger connections with their parents [22].

However, learning from home can have both positive and negative effects on students' psychological well-being. Factors such as stress, anxiety, depression, a lack of motivation, feelings of loneliness, and desperation may hinder their academic success and daily functioning [23]. Understanding these psychological effects is crucial for implementing appropriate measures and support systems to mitigate the negative impact and enhance students' motivation in the WFH learning environment.

This research aims to explore the perceptions and psychological impacts of online learning among EFL tertiary learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. By addressing research questions related to learners' perceptions, psychological

effects, and their contribution to motivation, this study aims to fill existing gaps in the literature and provide valuable insights into the pedagogical challenges and benefits of WFH learning. The findings will inform educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in developing effective measures and support systems to address prevailing issues and enhance the overall learning experience in the WFH environment.

2. Literature Review

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic marked a significant turning point in education, compelling institutions worldwide to swiftly adopt online learning platforms. While this shift was imperative for educational continuity, it unveiled a multitude of challenges, especially within the framework of Working from Home (WFH) learning. Existing literature has explored various facets of online education, emphasizing the importance of meticulous planning, teacher training, suitable teaching methodologies, effective online learning environment management, and robust support services [1-3]. However, a critical research gap persists in understanding the nuanced dynamics between educators' pedagogical skills, instructional materials, and the evolving psychological needs and readiness of students, particularly in the context of Eastern Indonesia's tertiary education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1. Pedagogical Challenges in Online EFL Education

In the specific context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the pandemic presented unique hurdles. Studies by Onyema, et al. [24]; Ismaili [25] and Riaz, et al. [26] shed light on the intricate interplay between online activities, learner motivation, and language acquisition. These studies illuminated the complex tapestry of factors impacting students' experiences, including technical disruptions and the struggle to find adequate time for verbal conversation. Despite these challenges, the resilience of EFL tertiary learners became evident, underscoring the need for further research to comprehend the factors influencing online learning experiences and to identify pedagogical strategies addressing these challenges.

2.2. Distinctive Pedagogical Approaches in WFH Learning

The landscape of online EFL education underwent a profound shift with the advent of WFH learning, necessitating distinctive pedagogical approaches compared to traditional face-to-face learning [27-29]. While scholars have emphasized the pivotal role of specific pedagogy and skills for effective online teaching [9-12], educators continue to grapple with unique challenges, including fostering student interactions, accommodating diverse learning styles, designing effective courses, managing technical disruptions, and ensuring equitable access to resources.

2.3. Complex Interplay of Factors in EFL Online Learning

Success in e-learning is contingent upon a complex interplay of factors, encompassing teacher and student attributes, technological infrastructure, learning systems, online resources, and training [16, 17]. While prior research predominantly delved into the pedagogical challenges faced by teachers, it is imperative to grasp their skills, instructional materials, and the evolving needs and motivations of students. This underscores the necessity for tailored applications and resources to meet these requirements [17, 19].

2.4. Emotional Well-being and Home Environment

The WFH approach, offering flexibility and adaptability, demands substantial preparation, including support from the home environment and access to reliable Wifi. The home environment significantly shapes the emotional well-being of EFL learners, impacting their overall learning experiences. Emotional support, encompassing expressions of concern, affection, assurance, acceptance, encouragement, and care, enhances students' sense of value and fosters positive learning outcomes [20, 21]. Moreover, increased time spent at home enables students to explore education beyond the school setting and establish stronger connections with their parents [30].

Despite the extensive literature on online learning, a critical gap persists regarding the intricate interplay between educators' pedagogical skills, instructional materials, and students' evolving needs in the WFH context, especially in Eastern Indonesia's tertiary level during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to bridge the existing gap by delving into the perceptions and psychological impacts of online learning among EFL learners at one of Eastern Indonesia's leading public universities. By offering valuable insights into the challenges and benefits of WFH learning, this research not only addresses existing gaps in the literature but also informs educators, policymakers, and stakeholders. These insights will prove instrumental in developing tailored measures and support systems, ensuring a robust and inclusive educational experience for EFL tertiary learners.

3. Methodology

A qualitative research design was used to investigate the perceptions of tertiary English Department students studying from home (WFH) during the COVID-19 pandemic in two consecutive years (2021 and 2022). The primary focus was to explore the extent to which this learning mode had psychological effects on learners and its impact on their learning motivation. A random sample of 60 tertiary learners was selected from 232 students who experienced WFH learning. An open-ended questionnaire of two questions related to perceptions and psychological impact was developed and piloted to ensure its effectiveness. The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms. Data were collected over the first three months of the first semester, with 30 students from batch 2021 and the remaining period dedicated to batch 2022.In

order to ensure the validity and reliability of the completed questionnaires, data reduction was performed, resulting in a final selection of 56 questions. The collected data underwent content analysis using a qualitative interpretative paradigm.

4. Findings

The analysis of the collected data profiles showed a range of perceptions among learners, leading to diverse psychological impacts, both positive and negative. These impacts can be broadly categorized into two streams, namely, optimism and pessimism, as well as positive and negative psychological effects, as shown in Table 1.

4.1. Students Thought and Feeling About WFH

In this section, data was collected via concise, open-ended questionnaires, prompting students to share their WFH experiences in under 50 words. Their responses, encompassing varied perspectives, were summarized in Table 1, presenting unique insights from the students' viewpoints.

Table 1.
Students thought and feeling about WFH.

No	Optimism	Pessimism
1	I find it encouraging to join WFH sessions without the obligation to show my video. I can simply listen and partake. Students recording journal-7	I do not think WFH brings positive learning experiences for me. I often fall asleep during sessions until the lecturer leaves the Zoom. SRJ-36
2	I have no issues with WFH and prefer this learning method. I do not have to face intimidating lectures like in offline classes. SRJ-17	I do not see any benefits from WFH. Specifically, when the internet connection is obstructed, or there are disruptions from others. I definitely dislike it. SRJ-31
3	WFH helps me attend every session, even when I join late. I just need to click the link. SRJ-11	We should expect lectures to be conducted offline. Many students only show their videos and do other activities. SRJ-39
4	The WFH system is suitable during social distancing and is more efficient because students do not have to go to campus. It benefits financially disadvantaged students. SRJ-13	This learning system does not suit my personality. I prefer direct interaction and seeing my teacher in person. It is challenging to ask questions online. SRJ- 3
5	WFH is a unique learning system where we can stay at home. We can hide our videos when we are bored and just listen. SRJ-10	We should expect lectures to be conducted offline. Many students only show their videos and do other activities. SRJ-56
6	This new learning system is interesting because I do not have to go out or spend on transportation. SRJ-42	My experience of learning through WFH is a waste of time. I struggle to memorize and understand the explanations. SRJ-30
7	WFH makes everything possible. We can easily postpone and reschedule sessions with minimal cost SRJ-29	Since WFH was implemented, I do not feel motivated to learn something new. There are numerous distractions like internet problems. SRJ-51

The table briefly illustrates the varying perceptions of tertiary learners regarding the WFH system during the COVID-19 pandemic. It shows the prevalence of contrasting viewpoints, with some learners considering WFH as a beneficial factor while others view it as less influential. These variations in perception can be attributed to the diverse social, cultural, and learning backgrounds of the sampled individuals. The contrasting nature of these perceptions suggests that the WFH system generates a non-conclusive paradigm with the potential to enhance educational research inquiries.

One significant positive aspect of the WFH system is its accessibility and flexibility. The data show that learners were able to easily join every lesson by accessing the provided links. The flexibility of the system ensured that no learner missed a class, as it accommodated individual schedules and allowed them to participate after completing important daily activities.

Another positive aspect of WFH relates to its alignment with social and political requirements, particularly regarding social distancing regulations. In addition to supporting government mandates, it also benefited learners by enabling better financial planning. The system provided flexibility regarding time and location, allowing learners to avoid off-campus accommodations and manage their financial expenses effectively.

Scheduling flexibility is a significant contributing factor to the appeal of the WFH system. The data shows that the selected samples preferred the system due to its ability to be rescheduled when they could not attend at the scheduled time. The adaptability of the system to individual time preferences, along with the privacy aspect that allows learners to control their video presence, adds to its attractiveness. Generally, the findings affirm that the WFH system offers numerous personal and functional benefits.

In addition to its advantages, the findings also show that some samples perceived the WFH system as more detrimental than beneficial. From a pessimistic perspective, there is evidence of personal inconveniences, such as falling asleep during sessions that predict a negative view of WFH. This highlights the importance of considering pedagogical practices when selecting teaching materials that can engage learners and enhance productivity. It is crucial to address these personal inconveniences during the WFH process to avoid negative perceptions that may lead to learning loss during online teaching.

Another determinant factor contributing to pessimism towards the WFH system is the issue of preference and internet availability. The findings show that learners have a preference for offline learning when given the choice. Some individuals perceive the system as non-beneficial due to its heavy reliance on internet connectivity. This evidence supports the argument that the WFH learning system is seen as an emergency solution rather than an optimal one. Therefore, teachers need to impose the WFH system only in real emergencies.

The negative perception of the WFH system is also largely attributed to individual personality factors, specifically personal learning styles, and preferences. The absence of direct eye contact, a crucial element in communicative learning, contributes to the negative perception of the system. Some learners find learning more convenient when there is direct engagement with the teacher, reinforcing the belief that *seeing is believing*. This factor contradicts the behaviorist paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of human interaction in the learning process.

The final determinant leading to negative perceptions is that the WFH system wastes time. The data shows that learners consider teaching productive when they successfully learn and memorize new vocabulary items. The level of understanding achieved during the lesson is a significant predictor of whether the system is successful or unsuccessful. The findings suggest that WFH can be a versatile platform with both positive and negative outcomes. This phenomenon emphasizes the need for critical evaluation when choosing teaching techniques. Considerations such as the learning styles of students and preferences, cognitive factors, learning context, available Wi-Fi connection, independence, and privacy should be taken into account. The main streams within this perception are displayed in the following graphs:
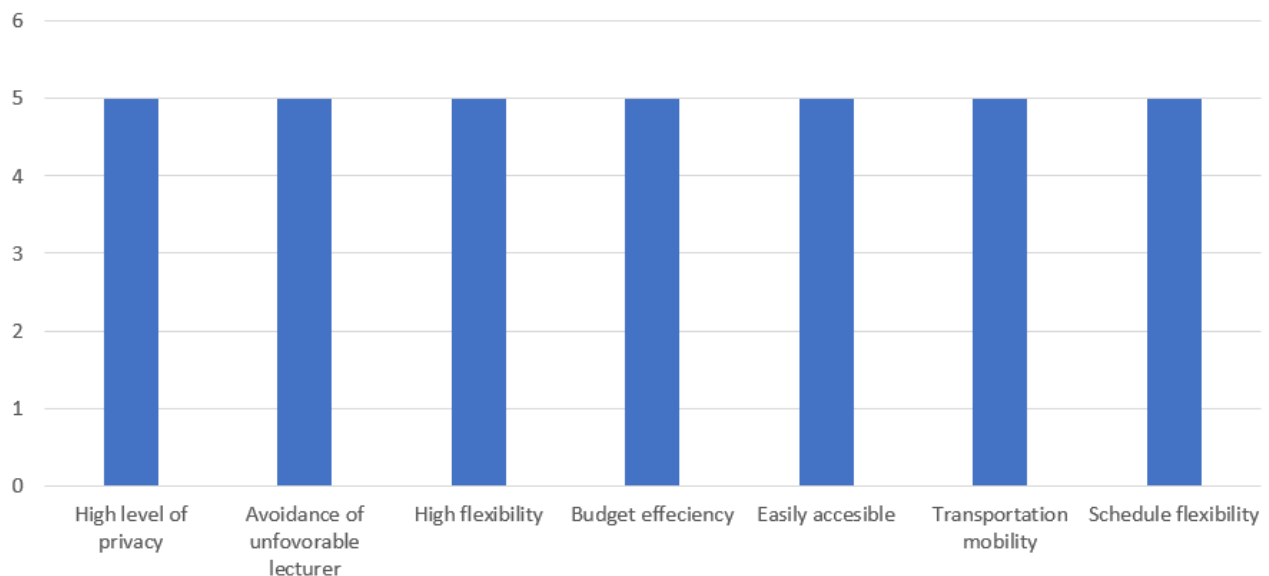

Figure 1.
Optimism group.

[Figure 1](#) represents the responses of learners who hold optimistic views towards the Work from Home (WFH) system during the COVID-19 pandemic. These learners perceive several positive aspects of WFH, leading to diverse psychological impacts. One prominent positive factor is the accessibility and flexibility of the WFH system. Learners in this group appreciate the convenience of joining sessions without the obligation to show their video, allowing them to participate comfortably. This flexibility ensures that learners do not miss classes and can adjust their participation based on individual schedules and daily activities. The alignment of WFH with social and political requirements, such as social distancing laws, is another advantageous feature that this group has highlighted. Learners acknowledge that WFH not only supports government mandates but also benefits financially disadvantaged students by eliminating the need to travel to campus and incur additional expenses. The scheduling flexibility of WFH, allowing sessions to be rescheduled with minimal cost, adds to its appeal for this group, enabling learners to manage their time efficiently.

The optimistic group's positive perception of WFH is linked to their ability to stay at home, hide their videos when bored, and focus on listening to lectures. They appreciate the convenience of not having to go out or spend on transportation, which contributes to their overall positive experience with the learning system. Overall, the optimistic group highlights the advantages of WFH, particularly its accessibility, flexibility, alignment with social requirements, and convenience, which positively impact their learning experience.
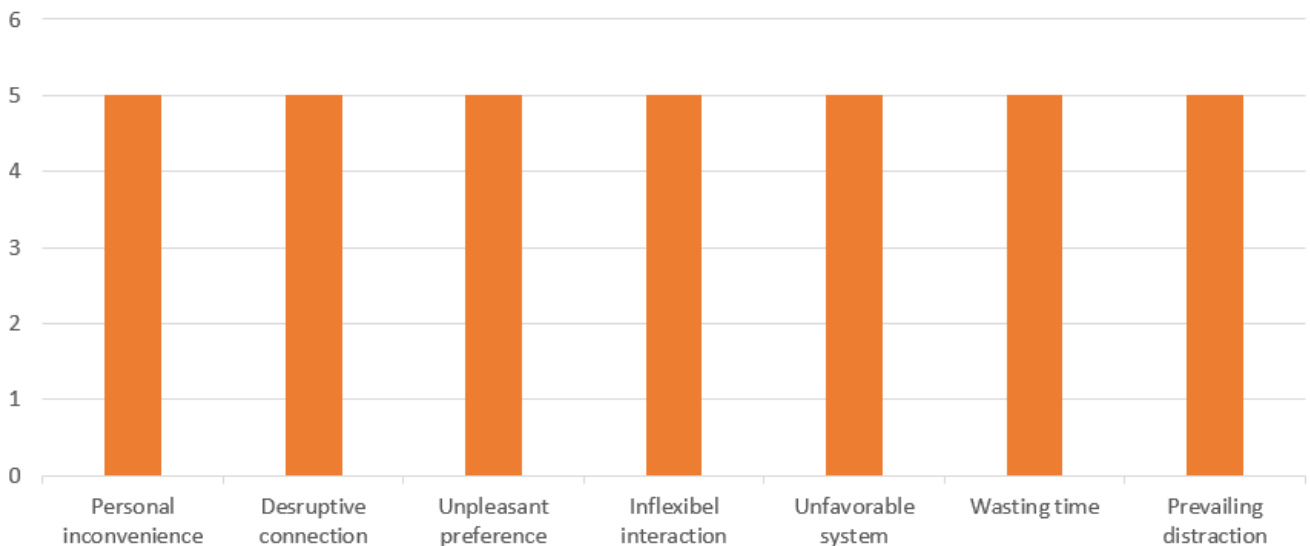
Figure 2.
Pessimism group.

[Figure 2]{.underline} displays the responses of learners who hold pessimistic views towards the WFH system during the COVID-19 pandemic. This group perceives the WFH system as having negative psychological impacts on their learning experience. The inconvenience some students personally experience during online sessions is a significant negative factor. Some participants report falling asleep during WFH sessions, indicating a lack of engagement and suggesting potential challenges in maintaining focus and motivation.

The issue of preference and internet accessibility is another significant drawback that this group brings up. These learners express a preference for traditional offline learning with direct interaction, emphasizing the importance of human engagement in the learning process. The reliance on internet connectivity during WFH poses challenges for these learners and contributes to their negative perception of the system. The negative perception of the WFH system is also linked to individual personality factors, such as learning styles and preferences. Learners who prefer direct interaction with teachers may find the WFH system less effective, as it lacks the direct eye contact and physical presence that they value in their learning process.

Additionally, some learners in this group perceive WFH as a waste of time, struggling to memorize and understand the explanations provided during online sessions. They emphasize the importance of productive learning and suggest that WFH may not always achieve the desired level of understanding and retention. Overall, the pessimistic group highlights the disadvantages of WFH, particularly in terms of personal inconvenience, internet reliance, and the absence of direct interaction, which negatively impact their learning experience.

4.2. Students' Psychological Impact on WFH
This section primarily draws on responses gathered through an open-ended questionnaire, prompting students with the query, "Please state whether WFH has direct or indirect psychological impacts on your learning in 50 words or less." The data unearthed a spectrum of viewpoints, showcasing both optimistic and pessimistic sentiments. These diverse findings are detailed in Table 2, shedding light on students' nuanced feelings and thoughts regarding the psychological implications of WFH on their learning experiences.

The table shows that the learning mode employed has both disruptive and positive psychological effects on tertiary EFL learners. Individual factors, such as cognitive abilities, perceptions, learning styles and preferences, daily habits, and socio-cultural backgrounds, largely influence the range of psychological impacts. These findings provide valuable insights into the diverse perspectives of non-native tertiary learners within the online teaching model.

A notable positive aspect of this group is time management and confidence. Some participants expressed a personal belief that they have been able to acquire new vocabulary and actively engage in classroom activities. Therefore, while some individuals may view the system as disruptive for specific reasons, others perceive it as psychologically beneficial. The findings suggest that personal preferences play a crucial role and should be considered when aiming to enhance the learning process.

The WFH system's flexibility in terms of learning is another crucial aspect to emphasize. It positively impacts the perception of learners and contributes to their psychological well-being by enabling independent learning management. The system allows learners to manage their autonomy and privacy through options like the ability to choose whether to show their video or not. Additionally, the system encourages personal punctuality, facilitating timely study and engagement.

Table 2.
Students' Psychological Impact on WFH.

No.	Optimistic	Pessimistic
1	Ever since I started working from home, I have effectively managed my time, allowing me to confidently learn new vocabulary and practice my English skills without any hesitation. SRJ-42	Working from home has not led to an improvement in my confidence, and instead, I often find myself feeling unmotivated and lazy to pursue learning. SRJ-22
2	Throughout my tertiary education, I found immense pleasure in freely asking questions without any shyness, making the learning experience highly enjoyable. SRJ-10	Initially, I had a negative perception of the WFH system during my study program, which made me reluctant to ask questions. SRJ-39
3	In traditional offline or face-to-face settings, I always used to feel reserved about approaching the lecturer with inquiries. However, with online learning, I have overcome this shyness and now feel comfortable expressing my thoughts and making comments. SRJ-59	The implementation of WFH has not resolved my learning challenges. SRJ-3
4	Working from home has eliminated the challenges of rushing to attend classes. I can effortlessly showcase myself through video, which means I no longer have any issues with joining the class. SRJ-42	The WFH system has introduced unwanted emotions into my learning experience. SRJ-56
5	In the past, I had developed a habit of waking up late when attending classes in person. However, with online classes, I rarely find myself oversleeping due to the scheduled nature of the sessions. SRJ-42	Since transitioning to WFH, my hesitation to actively participate, specifically in discussions, has become more apparent. SRJ-30
6	I have noticed a significant improvement in my English skills due to my heightened motivation during online learning. SRJ-7	I have not witnessed significant improvement in my learning during the WFH period. I often feel unmotivated and struggle to maintain productivity. SRJ-51
7	Prior to online learning, I struggled with planning effective strategies to enhance my English proficiency. However, now I feel much more confident in my approach and have developed a solid plan to overcome my language challenges. SRJ-11	My level of learning awareness has significantly decreased during the WFH period. SRJ-58

This research also highlighted a positive psychological factor regarding planning and motivation. The data showed that a specific sample experienced improvements in vocabulary acquisition, proficiency, and overall learning management. This sample reported a heightened motivation to enhance their English competency due to the WFH system. Despite individual differences in perception and psychological states, these findings provide valuable pedagogical insights, allowing teachers to adopt more creative and innovative approaches to their academic responsibilities.

In addition to these positive impacts, contradictory psychological effects manifested in disruptive ways. The WFH system was found to have a detrimental psychological impact, leading to unsuccessful learning outcomes. Confidence, a crucial element in language learning, was disrupted, leading learners to become passive and unmotivated. The system also hindered students from actively participating and asking questions during classroom interactions.

Another psychological disruption in language learning was the difficulty in resolving learning problems within the WFH system. The system failed to function as a solution to the existing challenges faced by students in their learning process. Students experienced a disruptive feeling that made them passive and unmotivated learners, primarily due to increased hesitation, specifically during classroom discussions. Generally, the findings confirmed that the system fostered the prevalence of disruptive attitudes, leading students to feel psychologically underperforming. The two main streams of psychological impacts are shown in the following graphs.
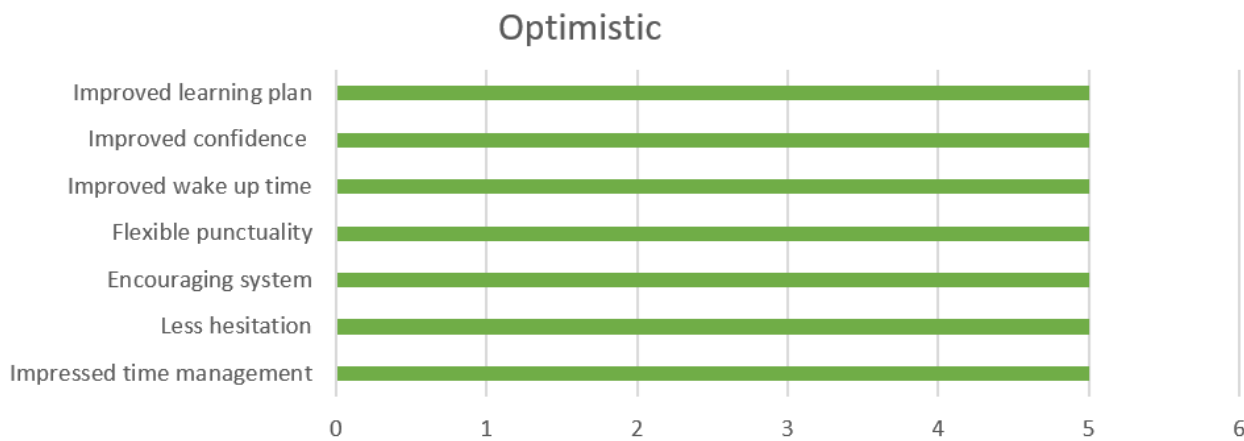
Optimistic

Figure 3.
Optimistic group.

Figure 3 represents the responses of learners who experienced positive or optimistic psychological impacts due to the WFH system. This group perceives WFH as beneficial for their language learning journey and highlights several positive factors contributing to their improved psychological well-being. One significant positive aspect is the improved time management and confidence experienced by these learners. They express greater confidence in learning new vocabulary and honing their English skills and credit their improvement to WFH's efficient time management. Learners in this group feel more comfortable asking questions and expressing their thoughts during online sessions, which contributes to a highly enjoyable learning experience. Another benefit is the flexibility that WFH provides. Learners appreciate the convenience of showcasing themselves through video, eliminating the challenge of rushing to attend classes. They find themselves more punctual and actively engaged in online sessions, leading to improved learning outcomes.

Additionally, the positive group emphasizes the motivational aspect of WFH. Learners report increased motivation to enhance their English proficiency due to the opportunities provided by the system. This heightened motivation contributes to their language development and overall learning management. Overall, the positive group highlights the benefits of WFH, particularly in terms of improved time management, confidence, learning flexibility, and motivation, which positively impact their language learning experience.
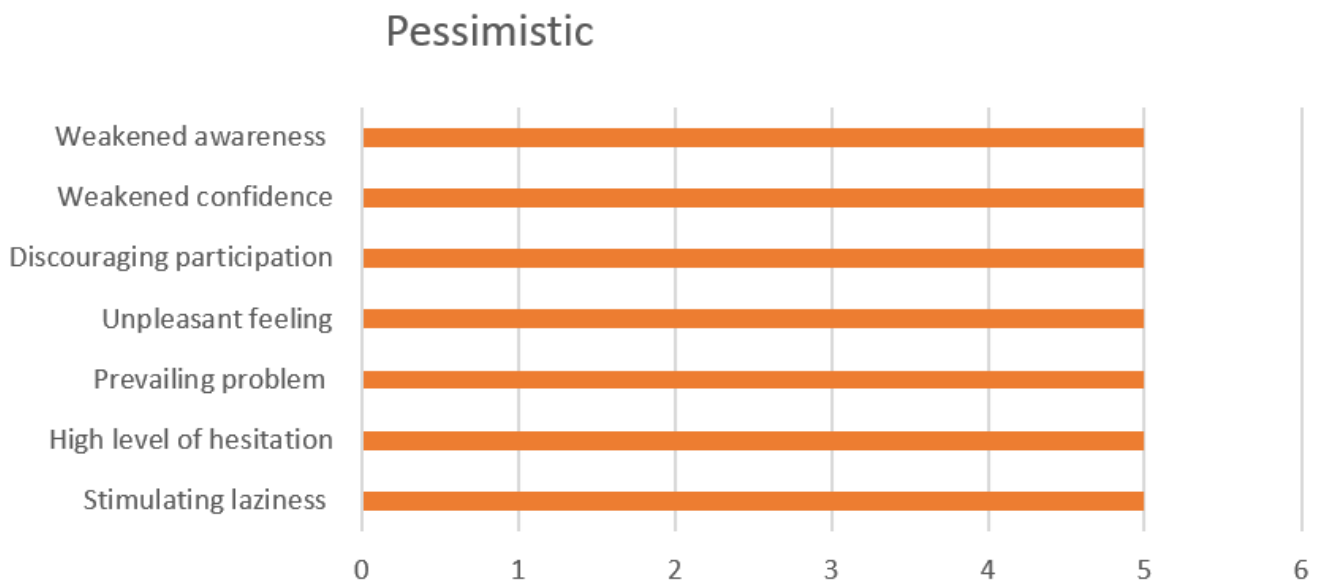
Pessimistic

Figure 4.
Pessimistic group.

Figure 4 displays the responses of learners who experienced negative psychological impacts due to the WFH system, which brings them into a more pessimistic view of WHF. This group perceives several disruptive factors within the WFH learning environment, leading to negative outcomes for their language learning. The disruption of motivation and confidence is one significant negative impact that this group mentions. Learners report feeling unmotivated and lazy to pursue learning during WFH sessions, leading to reduced productivity. The absence of direct engagement and interaction may contribute to their passiveness and lack of enthusiasm during online learning. The negative group also highlights the disruptive effect on active participation and willingness to ask questions. Learners express hesitation in actively participating, especially in discussions, which hinders their language learning progress.

Furthermore, this group emphasizes the lack of resolution for existing learning problems within the WFH system. The online learning environment fails to function as an effective solution to their challenges, leading to further psychological disruption and dissatisfaction. Overall, the negative group highlights the disruptive nature of WFH, particularly in terms of confidence, motivation, active participation, and problem resolution, which negatively impact their language learning experience.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the perceptions and psychological impacts of the Working from Home (WFH) learning system on EFL tertiary learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis of the collected data revealed a range of perceptions among learners, leading to diverse psychological effects, both positive and negative [31, 32]. These impacts can be broadly categorized into two streams: optimism and pessimism, as well as positive and negative psychological effects.

Optimism was observed among some learners who found the WFH system encouraging and beneficial, which is shown from the data, inline with some previous studies [31, 32]. They appreciated the flexibility and accessibility of online sessions, the ability to hide their videos when needed, and the convenience of joining classes from home [32, 33]. These learners highlighted the advantages of the WFH system in terms of time management, financial savings, and alignment with social distancing regulations [32]. They perceived the system as an opportunity to engage in learning without the pressure and intimidation they experienced in traditional offline classes [31, 33]. These positive perceptions reflect the adaptability and convenience offered by the WFH system, allowing learners to participate in classes according to their own schedules and comfort levels.

On the other hand, pessimism was evident among some learners who viewed the WFH system as less beneficial. They expressed dissatisfaction with the online learning experience, citing issues such as falling asleep during sessions, disruptions from others, and a preference for direct interaction with teachers, which is similar to findings also revealed by [32, 34, 35]. These learners perceived the system as lacking the personal connection and engagement they valued in face-to-face settings [31, 35]. They also highlighted challenges related to internet connectivity, interruptions, and the difficulty of asking questions online [32, 35]. These negative perceptions reflect the limitations and drawbacks of the WFH system, particularly in terms of maintaining active participation, addressing individual learning preferences, and ensuring effective communication between learners and teachers.

The positive psychological impacts reported by learners included improved time management, increased confidence, enhanced language skills, and a sense of autonomy in learning [31, 32, 35]. These learners experienced motivation and a positive learning environment, which facilitated their language acquisition and proficiency [31, 32]. The WFH system provided them with the flexibility to plan their learning strategies effectively, overcome shyness in expressing thoughts and asking questions, and develop a solid plan to address language challenges [31, 35]. These positive psychological effects demonstrate the potential of the WFH system to support learner autonomy, motivation, and self-directed learning.

However, the negative psychological impacts reported by learners revealed disruptions in confidence, motivation, and active participation [32]. Some learners experienced decreased motivation, feelings of being unmotivated and lazy, and hesitation in actively engaging in discussions [31, 35]. They struggled to maintain productivity, had difficulty resolving learning problems within the WFH system, and felt psychologically underperforming [31, 32, 35]. These negative psychological effects indicate the importance of addressing barriers to engagement, maintaining a supportive and interactive learning environment, and implementing pedagogical strategies to enhance motivation and participation in the WFH context.

The findings of this study align with previous research that has highlighted the benefits and challenges of online learning [32, 36]. The different thoughts and feelings that EFL college students had show how important it is to use personalized methods that take into account each person's unique traits, preferred ways of learning, and teaching method [31, 36]. Teachers should be aware of the potential advantages and drawbacks of the WFH system and strive to create engaging and supportive online learning environments [36, 37]. They should adopt innovative teaching methods, provide opportunities for active participation, and address the psychological well-being of learners to maximize the benefits of the WFH learning system.

It is essential for educators and policymakers to consider the findings of this study in designing effective online learning practices [32]. Strategies to promote engagement, motivation, and active participation should be implemented, such as incorporating interactive activities, encouraging peer collaboration, and providing timely feedback [31, 35, 37]. Additionally, addressing technical challenges, ensuring reliable internet connectivity, and offering support services to address psychological well-being are crucial in mitigating the negative impacts of the WFH system [35-37].

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The research was conducted with a specific group of EFL tertiary learners at Hasanuddin University, Makassar, and the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts. The study also relied on self-reported perceptions, which may be subject to biases and variations in interpretation [31, 38]. In the future, researchers might look at using a bigger sample size, qualitative methods to get a better sense of what learners are going through, and testing the usefulness of certain pedagogical interventions to fix the problems found and make the WFH learning system better [32, 35].

Lastly, this study sheds light on the perceptions and psychological impacts of the WFH learning system on EFL-tertiary learners [32]. The findings highlight the diversity of learner perspectives, ranging from optimism to pessimism, and the presence of both positive and negative psychological effects [31, 32]. Understanding these perceptions and impacts is essential for designing effective online learning practices that promote engagement, motivation, and active participation

[39]. By addressing the challenges and leveraging the benefits of the WFH system, educators and policymakers can optimize the online learning experience for EFL tertiary learners, ensuring their academic success and well-being in the ever-evolving educational landscape.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings confirmed that the WFH learning system has both disruptive and beneficial effects. These effects were observed across domains, such as learning style preferences, privacy and independence factors, and cognitive and metacognitive aspects. Additionally, the research highlighted the interplay between psychological factors and feelings of underperformance after two years of engagement with the system. Despite the emergence of negative and positive perceptions, using platforms like Zoom for teaching during pandemic-induced emergency situations has the potential to keep shaping teaching methods in various ways.

The existence of both positive and negative effects does not imply that institutions should support or forbid the WFH system universally. Lecturers and practitioners should consider variables such as flexibility, availability, adaptability, and utility while acknowledging the disruptive aspects. In the Indonesian context, EFL teachers should adopt a more flexible approach that considers the diverse constraints and benefits offered by the system while maintaining an innovative and constructive mindset when setting their teaching objectives. Future research should aim to expand the sample size and include more homogenous student groups in order to provide a more comprehensive and evolving understanding of educational practices. Finally, conducting a systematic review of the empirical literature is crucial to facilitating the practical implementation of these findings in future pedagogical practices.

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