

Benefits of online learning according to recent studies

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ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran online merupakan sebuah inovasi dalam mode pembelajaran yang dibawa oleh keniscayaan teknologi informasi dan komunikasi. Studi ini menekankan pada manfaat pembelajaran online untuk otonomi siswa, motivasi, dan kemampuan kolaborasi sambil memberikan pembelajaran yang fleksibel bagi para pelajar. Penelitian ini termasuk penelitian kepustakaan, di mana penelitian sebelumnya tentang manfaat pembelajaran online digunakan sebagai sumber data. Terungkap bahwa pembelajaran online dikatakan secara positif mempengaruhi otonomi, motivasi, dan keterampilan kolaboratif siswa, serta memungkinkan siswa belajar secara fleksibel sesuai dengan ketersediaan tempat dan waktu mereka. Ketersediaan sumber-sumber online, sarana, dan koneksi internet memungkinkan siswa mengatur pembelajarannya sendiri. Implikasi penelitian ini bagi guru, pendidik, dan siswa adalah bahwa semua pihak harus merangkul pembelajaran daring dan berbagai aplikasinya untuk meningkatkan proses dan hasil belajar. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini berkontribusi menambah rujukan mengenai pembelajaran daring terutama kebermanfaatannya bagi siswa.

ABSTRACT

Online learning is an innovation in learning mode brought by the inevitability of information and communication technology. The present study highlights the benefits of online learning for students. The study was conducted as library research, where previous studies on the benefits of online learning were used as the data source. The study revealed that online learning is argued to have positively affected students' autonomy, motivation, and collaboration skills while providing flexible learning for the learners. The abundance of online sources, tools, and networking enables learners to navigate their learning. These results imply that teachers, educators, and students should embrace online learning and its supporting applications to improve learning processes and outcomes. The present study contributes to the limited literature on a general overview of online learning benefits seen from the learners' side.



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INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of technology has influenced many aspects of life (Diamandis & Kotler, 2012; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Nowadays, the affordability of digital devices for most people makes them part of people's daily lives, particularly in education (Arthana et al., 2018; Cahyani et al., 2021; Citrawati et al., 2021; Purwanti et al., 2022; Utami et al., 2021). Many educational changes have been made to compete in this globalization era, including new classroom cultures, policies,

teaching approaches, and materials (Alghasab et al., 2020). In 21st century learning, providing technological tools and Internet access has significantly maximized the educational process (Backfisch et al., 2021; Dantes et al., 2022; Suwastini et al., 2021). Most developments commonly occur in the learning media in which the learners do not only learn through books but also videos, games, and quizzes offered by online learning (Ammade et al., 2018). In this case, online learning enables the learning process to be conducted anywhere and anytime, regardless of time and place (Haryanto, 2021; Suwastini et al., 2021).

Online learning is an innovative education incorporating technical tools and the Internet into learning (Masrizal et al., 2020; Matsubara & Yoshida, 2018; Saeheng, 2017). Online learning is also defined as innovative teaching-learning activity conducted virtually using the Internet, online platforms, and online digital tools (Al-Ghazali, 2020; Ginting et al., 2021). Additionally, Cahyani et al. (2021) explained that online learning is classified into two forms: synchronous (i.e., real-time learning) and asynchronous (i.e., flexible learning). Online learning has been recently proven to impact education significantly (Prasetyo & Nurhidayah, 2021). Through online learning, learners and teachers can conduct the learning process with the help of electronic and digital media (Haryanto, 2021).

Many studies have argued that online learning offers many benefits for learners. Researchers believed that online learning creates an effective teaching-learning process (Backfisch et al., 2021). Furthermore, online learning can be an innovative strategy to enhance learners' language proficiency due to the use of technology (Dincer, 2020; Hazaymeh, 2021). Mukhtar et al. (2020) also stated that online learning can be more beneficial for learners as it is more accessible and manageable. Regarding many positive arguments for online learning, this study finds it essential to comprehensively summarize the benefits of online learning, especially how it could benefit learners' language proficiency. This review will provide teachers and researchers with a comprehensive synthesis of the benefits of online learning.

METHOD

This study was conducted as library research focusing on the benefits of online learning by adopting a model from George (2008). The model was adjusted into a qualitative design by Ariantini et al. (2021). The procedure is illustrated in Figure 1. Figure 1 explains that the first and second steps included deciding the topic and listing research questions. The next step was identifying the data sources of the study. At this stage, published research articles were used as the primary sources. Then, determining the database and browsing application was conducted in the fourth step. As a result, the study used an online database, namely Google Scholar. Some keywords were entered for retrieving sources: benefits of online learning, advantages of online learning, strengths of online learning, challenges of online learning, and weakness of online learning. Sources like book reviews, webpage articles, and articles with unavailable full text were excluded, limiting the sources related to the focus of the study. Meanwhile, forty (40) articles published in 2017-2022 were chosen to be reviewed in this study. In this case, twenty-six (26) articles were from accredited national journals indexed by Science and Technology Index (SINTA) and fourteen (14) others were from reputable international journals indexed by Scopus. Then, the sixth step was reading each article, focusing on the discussion and conclusion section to begin data collection.

The data analysis was done through thematic data analysis approach to examine the discussion section of each article reviewed in this study. Results regarding the benefits of online learning identified in those forty (40) articles were recorded in tabulation tables. This table provided the theme and summary of each article's main points of online learning benefits. After tabulating the detailed information, data analysis was begun by synthesizing similar arguments and drawing comparisons of different main points. It helped in providing insight to illustrate the findings. Thus, the findings related to the benefits of online learning are presented in a table. Furthermore, in the ninth step, the data were described qualitatively in the results and discussion section. Lastly, concluding the findings was done in the tenth step by presenting four main categories of online learning benefits: autonomy, motivation, collaboration, and learning flexibility.

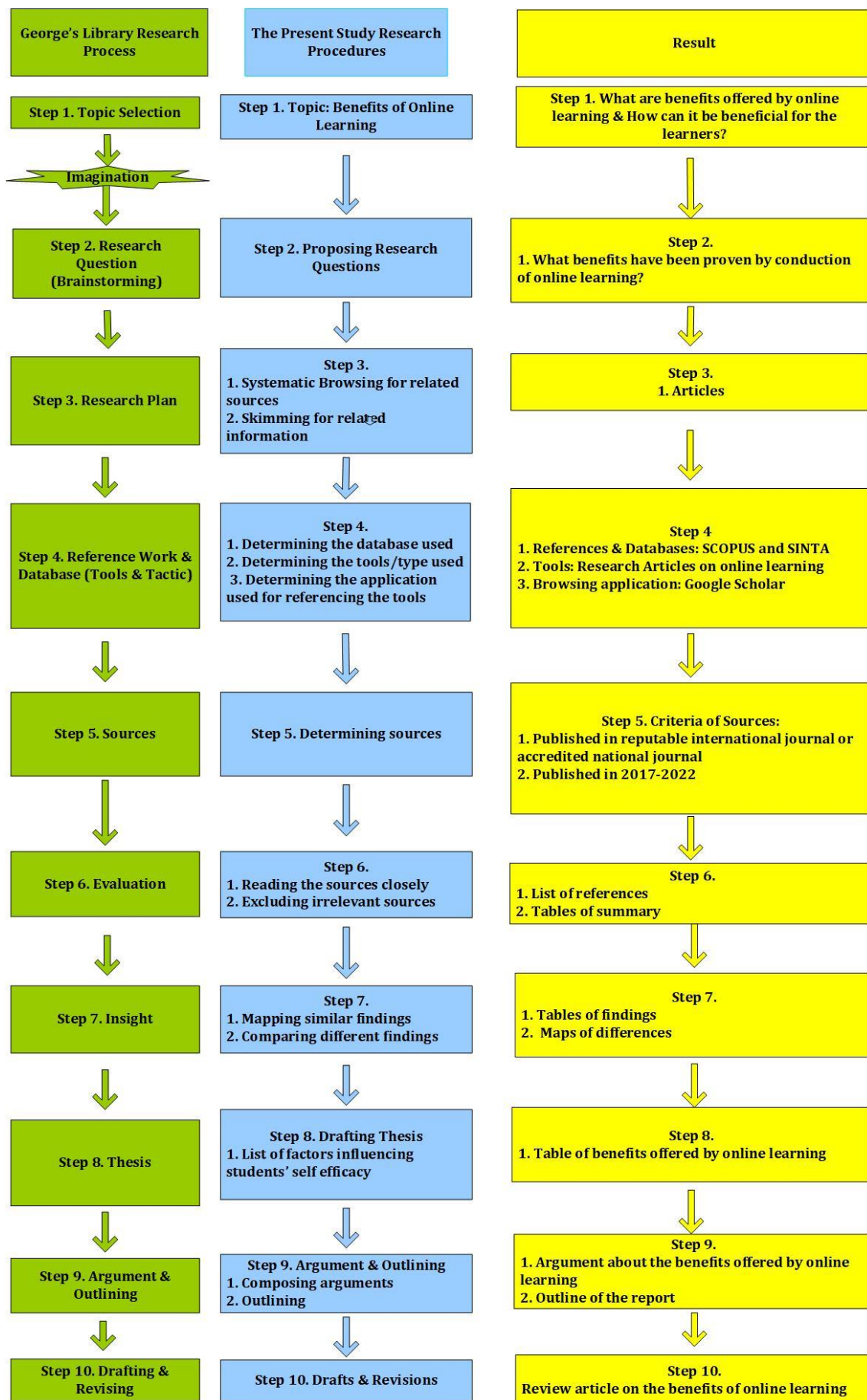


Figure 1. The procedure of George's model of library research

RESULTS

Many studies have proven that online learning could successfully facilitate language learning. Figure 2 illustrates the benefits offered by online learning.

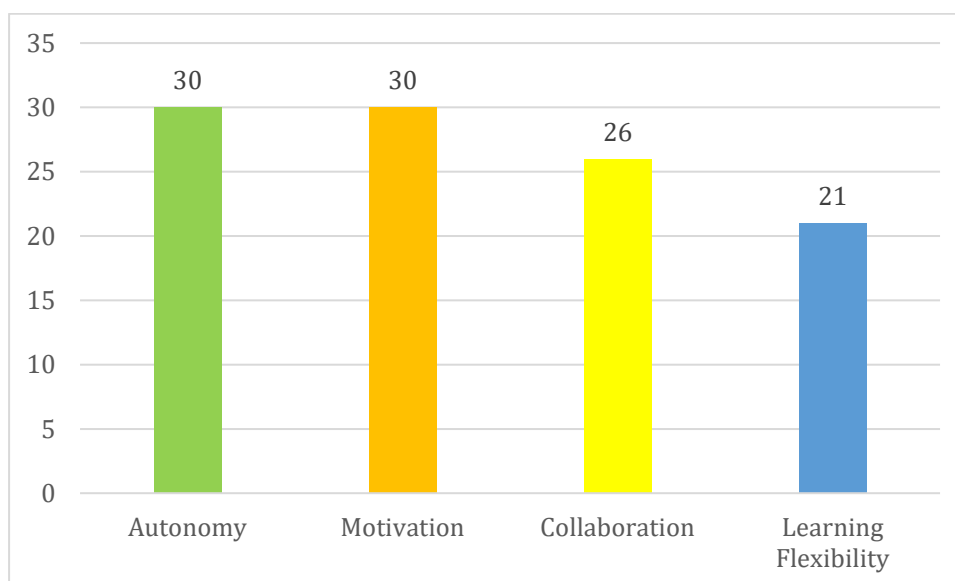


Figure 2. Benefits of online learning

Figure 2 shows that thirty articles claim online learning enhances learners' autonomy and affects learners' motivation. Then, only twenty-six articles argue that online learning increase learners' collaboration skills. Lastly, twenty-one studies among the thirty articles recognize the flexibility of online learning. Therefore, online learning could promote learners' autonomy, motivation, and collaboration skills while offering learning flexibility for the learners.

Autonomy is viewed as the learners' capability and willingness to learn independently to enhance their language proficiency and promote lifelong learning (Khulaifiyah et al., 2021; Meisani & Rambet, 2017; Phuong & Vo, 2019). In this sense, the learners are responsible for their learning, such as making learning decisions, selecting methods and techniques, finding learning sources, evaluating their learning, and solving problems (Desta, 2020; Jianfeng et al., 2018; Lengkanawati, 2017). Research has proven that online learning is an effective way to enhance learners' autonomous learning. Thirty articles revealed that online learning could provide opportunities to connect learning with abundant learning sources. Learners can find abundant learning sources independently by utilizing online platforms and fun online learning apps (Al Ghazali, 2020; Cahyani et al., 2021; Dantes, Suryandani et al., 2022). They could use various online platforms beyond the classroom for autonomous learning (Dincer, 2020; Hazaymeh, 2021; Saputra et al., 2021; Putra, 2021; Rahmayanti et al., 2021). Online learning also allows the teacher to integrate technology tools to boost the learners' autonomy, such as blogging and online quizzes (Eva et al., 2022; Lee, 2016; Matsubara & Yoshida, 2018). In this case, the learners select their learning strategy, access the materials, and find the sources independently outside class time. The learners access the online learning system by attending the class synchronously, sending their answers, and joining the discussion forum (Putri & Sari, 2021; Saeheng, 2017; Zhong, 2018).

Motivation plays a crucial part in the efficiency of a class. Alshenqeeti (2018) argues that the common factor the learners face is often demotivated to learn. This issue happens because when the learners do not desire to learn, they are unwilling to cooperate and participate in the learning process (Alshenqeeti, 2018; Putra, 2021). Thus, this learning desire will help the learners enhance their language proficiency. The present study revealed that online learning incorporates various games and applications that stimulate learners. In this case, digital technology integrated into online learning is commonly designed to be more challenging than the traditional classroom (Dincer, 2020; Hazaymeh, 2021; Putra, 2021). Besides, ICT and gamification in online learning can significantly increase learners' motivation (Gamlo, 2019; Matsubara & Yoshida, 2018).

Meanwhile, [Hazaea & Alzubi \(2018\)](#) argue that low motivation among learners could be developed by allowing them to select the materials on an online platform. [Saeheng \(2017\)](#) also proposes that e-learning could increase learners' motivation by providing online discussion, online tasks, and the selection of materials for the learners ([Lee, 2016](#); [Putri & Sari, 2021](#)). Through e-learning, the learners will enjoy learning since it provides rich materials and allows them to learn at their own pace and time ([Cahyani et al., 2021](#)).

With the development of 21st-century learning nowadays, collaboration skills among learners are essential to be developed ([Puspawati et al., 2021](#); [Suwastini, Puspawati et al., 2021](#)). Collaborative learning supports a student-centred approach involving group-work activities to solve problems and complete a particular task during the teaching-learning process ([Chen, 2017](#); [Coffin, 2020](#)). Many researchers argue that online learning could promote learners' collaboration skills. The articles revealed that various applications in online learning allow learners to collaborate on a particular task that could improve their collaborative skills. According to [Hazaymeh \(2021\)](#), using digital tools, such as Microsoft Teams (i.e., Office 365), allows learners to work collaboratively. This tool enables the learners to create team conversations, video meetings, workplace chats, and file storage that all members can access. Thus, the learners can complete their tasks together without involving physical location. In addition, online tasks provided in online learning can also involve collaboration skills since they are required to do peer feedback during practice ([Lee, 2016, 2017](#); [Shi & Han, 2019](#)). Furthermore, [Zhong \(2018\)](#) adds that online tools (i.e., discussion forums and online chats) allow learners to socialize and work collaboratively in a meaningful way to practice their collaborative skills.

Online Learning for Providing Flexibility Learning

Despite the other benefits, many researchers agree that an online environment could provide learners with flexibility. Flexibility refers to a learning situation that offers the learners various learning choices to meet the needs of individual learners ([Al-Ghazali, 2020](#); [Alghasab, 2020](#)). It can be in the time and place of learning, learning resources used, instructional approaches, and learning activities ([Al-Ghazali, 2020](#)). Related to flexibility, [Alghasab \(2020\)](#) argues that online learning provides flexible learning time for learners. In this case, various platforms and digital tools used in online learning allow learners to learn at a time of their convenience ([Al-Ghazali, 2020](#); [Dincer, 2020](#)). Moreover, digital tools facilitate better learning for learners since they can repeat the materials at any time ([Dincer, 2020](#)). Thus, when the learners feel missed in a particular topic, they can easily repeat the material by accessing or discussing it in e-learning discussion forums. The digital technology tools in online learning are also beneficial for learners in terms of the location of learning ([Hazaymeh, 2021](#); [Saputra et al., 2021](#); [Putra, 2021](#)). The learners can learn anywhere as long as the digital tools are in hand. Moreover, they also can join the course directly at home ([Suharsih & Wijayanti, 2021](#)). [Tsai \(2021\)](#) concludes that online learning can provide the mobility and accessibility of learning resources for learners.

DISCUSSION

This study has summarized results of previous studies concerning the benefits of online learning for students in terms of their autonomy, motivations, and collaborative skills. At the same time, online learning also provides students with considerable flexibility. However, previous studies have also pointed some challenges during the implementation of online learning, especially with students whose autonomy and motivation are low, which may affect online learning's benefits for developing students' collaborative skills. Furthermore, the flexibility offered by online learning may also posed problems, while students with limited access to compatible digital device, internet access, and electricity.

Teachers may face challenges in building learners' autonomous learning in online learning. It is difficult for the teacher to set certain expectations for the students since each student has a different learning pace ([Alsayed & Althaqafi, 2022](#); [Alwasidi & Alnaeem, 2022](#); [Hamad, 2022](#); [Lien, 2022](#); [Tomlinson, 2001](#); [Tomlinson, 2014](#)). In this case, scaffolding has been proposed as a strategy to provide differentiated guidance in an online context by [Ersani et al. \(2021\)](#), which may require differentiated time allocation for achieving a particular learning objective needs to be considered ([Abuhassna et al., 2022](#); [Alsayed & Althaqafi, 2022](#); [Hamad, 2022](#); [Lien, 2022](#)).

Moreover, in building learners' autonomous learning, teachers often face students' time management issues (Hamad, 2022; Lien, 2022). Procrastination is one of the challenges in building students' autonomous learning since teacher monitoring is not as intensive as on-site learning (Abuhassna et al., 2022; Alwasidi & Alnaeem, 2022; Bhatnagar & Many, 2022; Hamad, 2022; Lien, 2022). There will be a tendency for the students to postpone finishing the assignments. Besides monitoring issues, the lack of guidance and feedback in online learning can be a challenge in building learners' autonomous learning (Abuhassna et al., 2022; Alsayed & Althaqafi, 2022; Bhatnagar & Many, 2022). Autonomous learning can only be maximized when teachers provide sufficient guidance and feedback in online learning.

Students with low motivation may be further demotivated in online learning. The presence of digital divide among the students may divide the students further, dividing the haves and the have-nots even further (Artini et al., 2020). Such gap may affect students from financially disadvantaged families, demotivating them to participate in online learning or to participate properly. In some cases, teachers and students may have access to the digital device needed, yet they may not display technological readiness that enables them to use the device effectively (Dantes, et al., 2022; Puspitasari et al., 2021; Suwastini, et al., 2021). Furthermore, students with low intrinsic motivation may be further demotivated to participate in online learning because they need to feel the presence of their teachers and friends (Dantes, Rinawati et al., 2022; Purwanti et al., 2022). This case often happens in asynchronous online learning, where a lack of interaction between students and their teachers and friends could diminish their motivation to study (Cahyani et al., 2021). These challenges can be coped with by providing motivating comments and feedback to stimulate students' motivation and encourage them to participate more during the class and the asynchronous discussions (Dwiyanti & Suwastini, 2021; Ersani et al., 2021; Suwastini, Nalantha, et al., 2021).

According to Puspawati et al. (2021) and Suwastini, Puspawati et al. (2021), developing collaborative skills requires students to work together during the formulation of goals and the process of achieving the decided goal. In the context of online learning, these discussions can be challenging for students without sufficient digital devices, unstable & unaffordable internet connection, and low motivation (Artini et al., 2020; Dantes, Audina et al., 2022; Dantes, Rinawati, et al., 2022; Purwanti et al., 2022; Suwastini, Nalantha, et al., 2021). Meanwhile, low-motivated students can easily evade collaborative discussions by pinning a lousy internet connection or device error as their excuses (Dantes, Rinawati et al., 2022; Eva et al., 2022; Suwastini, Nalantha et al., 2021). Dwiyanti & Suwastini (2021), and Ersani et al. (2021) suggested that detailed feedback could motivate students to participate more. Dwiyanti & Suwastini (2021) believed that students given more specific and personalized feedback in their online writing class were positively affected to be more motivated to progress better. When students have better progress in their learning, they would more actively participate and may enter the collaborative process more enthusiastically.

The "anywhere, anytime" flexibility offered by online learning may be a myth when faced with students with low autonomy, low motivation, or limited access to devices and infrastructure needed for online learning. The time-flexibility in online learning could be a double-edged sword for students whose learning autonomy and learning motivation is low. Such students may be tempted to procrastinate and postpone reading the material or finishing the exercises (Suwastini, Nalantha et al., 2021). Dantes et al. (2019) offered the solution to this predicament by placing students as agents of learning by using online learning platform that can trace students' readiness to carry on with the learning material, jump level, or go back to the previous level for reviewing the material. Time constraint is a persistent problem in instructional problem, including in online learning. School curricula are designed to set specific goals to be achieved in a certain period (Nation & Macalister, 2009; Richards, 2001). Students and teachers need to heed the timelines to ensure an optimal learning process (Puspitasari et al., 2021; Suwastini, Nalantha, et al., 2021). Teachers may provide scaffolding, personalized feedback, and differentiated approaches to facilitate each student's unique learning profile (Ersani et al., 2021; Tomlinson, 2001, 2014). Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged that such differentiated instruction would always be constrained by time (Mirawati et al., 2022; Suwastini, Rinawati, et al., 2021). Thus, the teacher's

skills in designing the e-learning content, managing the classroom, and motivating students to progress in their online learning activities is instrumental in tackling this time issue. Lastly, the flexibility of place in online learning is further constrained by the availability of device, electricity, quality of internet connection and the affordability of internet quota (Artini et al., 2020; Dantes, Rinawati, et al., 2022; Purwanti et al., 2022; Rahmayanti et al., 2021). In areas where electricity is sparse, online learning is very challenging. Students residing in areas where the internet connection could be more stable would find problems accessing the learning material (Purwanti et al., 2022; Rahmayanti et al., 2021). It is a problem that school management, parents, and governments should tackle together to provide better devices and infrastructure to support students' online learning.

CONCLUSION

Online learning has been argued to benefit learners by increasing their autonomy, motivation, and collaboration skills while delivering flexible learning. However, these benefits come with a set of drawbacks. While online learning has been believed to promote learning autonomy, students with very low autonomy may feel overwhelmed by the lack of a teacher's presence and definitive deadlines for their homework and exercises. Similarly, those with low motivation may be tempted to procrastinate, find reasons to skip online classes, or join online classes without participating. This lack of participation may hinder their collaborative activities. Lack of device compatibility, unstable internet connection, or power blackout may become excuses for these students. However, there are also cases where these technical problems do occur. In such cases, the so-called "anytime-anywhere" flexibility of online learning is highly challenged. Solutions to these challenges lie in the hands of the students, teachers, and stakeholders. While students may train their autonomy through online learning, teachers can stimulate their internal motivation and provide external motivation to learn. However, digital devices, internet quota, stable connections, and secure electricity need support from parents, school management, and the government. Nevertheless, in no way is this study inclusive since it includes limited results of previous studies. Methodological weakness is also present in this study, where the data sources needed to be rigorously selected, screened, and analyzed quantitatively. Thus, the present study suggests future research to employ more rigorous methods and analysis, while those concerning the solutions to overcome challenges in online learning can be conducted. Future studies may direct towards more in-depth mapping of other sources. Topics on online learning, such as online assessments, AI tools, academic integrity, and plagiarism, may be interesting for further exploration.

Author contributions

The authors made significant contributions to the study's conception and design. The authors were in charge of data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of results. The final manuscript was read and approved by the authors.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no potential conflict of interest.

Data availability statement

All data are available from the authors.

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