

## Islamic Elementary School Teachers' Uncertainty on Distance Learning

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Keywords:	Abstract
<p><i>elementary school teacher;</i></p> <p><i>distance learning;</i></p> <p><i>uncertainty reduction theory;</i></p> <p><i>forest edge village</i></p>	<p><i>Various obstacles were encountered by teachers during distance learning when covid-19 pandemi hit. Online teaching has become tough challenge for the forest edge villages' school teachers in Madiun regency, Indonesia. Online teaching obstacles were also felt by the first-grade teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah Plus Al-Makmun (MI Plus Al-Makmun) which caused uncertainty. This study aims to examine the types of the teachers' uncertainty and their uncertainty reduction strategies using uncertainty reduction theory. Descriptive qualitative method was used in this study and in-depth interview was conducted to gather data. The results of this study indicate that there are two types of uncertainty felt by the informants, the first is cognitive which is related to difficulties in understanding their students' character and their insecurity about students' understanding of school lessons, and the second is behavioral uncertainty which is related to how students respond and behave in learning process. Meanwhile, the teachers' uncertainty reduction strategy are (1) passive strategies through secret observation, (2) active strategies by seeking information through parents and fellow teachers, and (3) interactive strategies by communicating directly with students.</i></p>

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Study

Distance learning is a learning process that focuses on independent learning, where the presentation of teaching material and supervision of learning does not require direct face-to-face communication between teachers and students (Abidin et al., 2020). Within distance learning through online learning, teachers and students communicate through online platform such as instant messaging, learning management system, or web video conference (Fadhilaturrahmi et al., 2021).

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It turned out that the implementation of distance learning policies during the Covid-19 pandemic caused lost of learning where Indonesia education was left behind the other countries (Pattanang et al., 2021). MI Plus Al-Makmun an islamic elementary school which is located in Gemarang Village, Gemarang District, Madiun Regency, East Java also faced the lag. According to the results of the Integrated Plan and Medium-Term Infrastructure Investment Program (known as RPI2JM) Madiun Regency in 2016-2019, Gemarang District is located in highland area with an altitude between 1000-2000 mdpl which most of it is surrounded by forest. This district is categorized as forest edge villages, where people within the area are not yet familiar with information technology. They live far from urban areas, have inadequate infrastructure, limited human resource capabilities, and some live in below average economy level (Syahputri, 2017).

The Head of the Library and Archives Service of Madiun Regency also stated that the categorization of forest edge villages in Madiun Regency is due to the lack of knowledge possessed by people in rural areas regarding IT needs compared to those who live in urban areas. Regarding to this, the Library and Archives Service has been operating mobile library cars targeting all villages in the remote area (Ristanto, 2022). In addition, the lack of family financial income is also one of the factors in the categorization of the forest edge village. Where most of the residents of forest edge villages have a relatively low average economic income so they are unable to provide technology devices for their children to access education (Syahputri, 2017).

In terms of fulfilling economic needs, people in Gemarang District depend on plantation products. Plantation products do not always have big profits because they are very dependent on weather factors. From the results of the performance report of the Government Agencies of the Madiun Regency Agriculture and Plantation Service in 2021, it is stated that the decline in plantation production caused by weather factors often has an impact on the level of the community's economy (Dinas Pertanian dan Perternakan Kab. Madiun, 2021).

The gap in internet network access, limited knowledge of human resources regarding technology, and the lack of family financial income in an area due to geographical location and topographical shape are one of the inhibiting factors in the distance learning process. UNICEF stated that children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds and living in rural areas are at high risk of being left behind in distance learning. Globally, this figure reaches three-quarters of children without access to such learning (UNICEF, 2020).

### **Problem of the Study**

The existence of various obstacles that cause lost of learning in the distance learning process will affect the role of a teacher as the front guard in the world of education. Teachers have a role to make their students grow as quality students, both academic and non-academic (Alawiyah, 2013). But during a pandemic, distance learning given by a teacher to students, especially new students at the elementary school level, takes time to adjust, causing surprises in many ways (Arifin & Sukati, 2020). Adjustment to these new students is based on the premise that new students at the elementary school level are small class groups, where they have a high dependence on the presence of a teacher in the learning process (Palupi, 2020).

During the distance learning process, the teacher communicates with students through electronic devices. The use of electronic devices is actually a limitation especially considering the background of the problems regarding forest edge villages, where these problems include connectivity problems in the internet network which will have an important role in the smooth running of learning (Noor et al., 2020). Another obstacle is that the understanding of the device by new students in the

first grade at the elementary school level is still far behind that of students who are already in the upper grades (Ulum & Pamungkas, 2020).

According to the results of a survey conducted by the Central Statistics Agency for Madiun Regency, MI Plus Al-Makmun is the only Islamic education institution at the most basic level in Gemarang District (BPS Kabupaten Madiun, 2021). The learning process there has a variety of learning materials related to the Islamic religion such as Arabic, fiqh, Quran hadith, aqidah morals and Islamic history (Hakim et al., 2020). Apart from that, MI Plus Al-Makmun also has a mission to make students become hafidz Quran students at least in juz 30. Therefore, Islamic education requires meetings between teachers and students in learning related to the Quran such in tajwid (Quran reading rules) teaching (Prasetia & Fahmi, 2020). But in practice, learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was carried out remotely via online which turned out to have caused many changes to the learning system which affected the level of student understanding in receiving and responding to the material being taught (Basar, 2021).

The level of understanding of students in receiving and responding to material taught online is also influenced by the role of parents in assisting children's learning at home. However, the background of parents in forest edge villages is an obstacle for distance learning which is considered less than optimal because they do not have the skills to operate the device. The ability of parents is very limited in understanding the material. It is also difficult for them to accompany distance learning because it is difficult to divide between work and accompanying children to learn (Sutarti, 2021)

Parents who are Quran illiterate also influences the effectiveness of distance learning assistance, because the educational process at MI Plus Al-Makmun is inseparable from Quran learning. As a country with the second largest Muslim population, Quran illiteracy in Indonesia is still relatively high. The chairman of the central MUI da'wah commission stated that the interest of the people in Indonesia to read the Koran and want to become tahfidz is very much but from the existing survey there are still 65% of the Muslim population unable to read the Quran (Oktaviani, 2021).

### Research's State of the Art

Uncertainty Reduction Theory defines uncertainty as a person's inability to explain and even predict his own behavior or predict the behavior of other people when in a new environment and a new atmosphere (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Uncertainty can be divided into two types: cognitive uncertainty and behavioral uncertainty (Griffin, 2011). Cognitive uncertainty is uncertainty related to doubts about the beliefs owned by oneself and even others when interacting, while behavioral uncertainty is uncertainty related to how a person predicts his behavior when interacting. (West & Turner, 2008).

In uncertainty reduction theory, when a person meets a new person, a sense of uncertainty will arise by itself. The person will reduce the uncertainty so that communication will run smoothly. In addition, uncertainty may make the situation uncomfortable because someone will experience uncertainty with the thoughts and behavior of others (West & Turner, 2008).

According to Berger, the effort to search for information is a strategy to reduce uncertainty, where the strategy consists of three things. First, a passive strategy by observing the individual as our interlocutor secretly so that we will know how the individual interacts with other people. Second, the active strategy is to seek a third party to obtain information from the interlocutor. Third, the interactive strategy is by communicating face to face and asking specific questions so that later it will result in reciprocal communication (Griffin, 2011).

In this theory, Berger also assumed that there is an encouragement within a person to reduce uncertainty when meeting new people. First, there is anticipation for the future because the communication that occurs at this time will be continuous, this means that we are aware that we will meet our interlocutor again. Second, the incentive value is that we have our own goals in

communicating with other people. Third, by deviating, which means we do various ways to reduce uncertainty. This is because we are unable to predict the actions of others (Griffin, 2011).

Uncertainty may be experienced by the MI Plus Al-Makmun teacher towards new students during distance learning considering the distance learning process many face obstacles including the readiness of human resources such as parental support in student learning assistance, the absence of suitable curriculum, local government directives that are considered unclear, limited facilities and infrastructure in the area which include technology and internet networks (Arifa, 2020).

The limited information that causes this uncertainty is caused by interpersonal communication between teachers and new students that does not occur optimally. This is caused by the obstacles that affect the smoothness of communication because good communication will involve exchanging messages verbally and nonverbally (DeVito, 2016).

The use of uncertainty reduction theory in this study is expected to be able to find out how the types of uncertainty and how uncertainty reduction strategies are carried out by MI Plus Al-Makmun teachers to new students in the distance learning process.

### Gap Study & Objective

The focus of this study is to determine the types of uncertainty and uncertainty reduction strategies used by madrasah ibtidayyah teachers in forest edge villages against new students in the distance learning process. Although there has been communication between the teacher and new students during distance learning, but a teacher does not really understand how the student is. In the process, there are many communication barriers, including the readiness of human resources such as parental support in assisting student learning and the limited facilities and infrastructure in the area which include technology and internet networks. (Arifa, 2020).

Previous research done by Putri (2020) showed that the uncertainty experienced by new students of the Diponegoro University Tax Accounting Study Program due to the use of online learning methods during the Covid-19 pandemic can be reduced using 3 strategies: passive strategy through searching for information from the experiences of friends who have conducted online lectures and studying the guidelines provided by campus, active strategy by seeking information through intermediaries or intermediary media, and interactive strategy by direct involvement in online lectures through Microsoft Teams.

Malestha & Kusumaningtyas (2020) said that uncertainty is also experienced by deaf salon workers when facing new customers, where the uncertainty consists of cognitive uncertainty and behavioral uncertainty. This uncertainty are reduced by proactive and retroactive processes through verbal communication processes, expressions in non-verbal communication, information seeking, close relationships, feedback and preferences. These findings also show 3 strategies used by research informants: passive strategies through observation, active strategies through information seeking with the help of third parties, and interactive strategies through face-to-face interactions.

Drawing from research background, the research questions arise are what the types of uncertainty and how uncertainty reduction strategies are carried out by the elementary school teachers in forest edge villages to new students in the distance learning process?

## METHOD

### Type and Design

This study is qualitative descriptive research. By using this method, researchers will obtain clear information from research subjects regarding reducing the uncertainty of MI Plus Al-Makmun teachers which school is located in the forest edge village to new students in the distance learning process

during the Covid-19 pandemic. The subjects of this study are four teachers who teach in the first grade of MI Plus Al-Makmun while the object of the research is about the type of uncertainty and the strategy for reducing uncertainty in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers to new students in the distance learning process.

### Data and Data Sources

Data in this study came from two types of sources. First is the primary data source, which are be obtained by researchers directly and second is the secondary data source, which is obtained through books, reports, research journals and the Central Bureau of Statistics and others (Suyitno, 2015).

**Table 1.** Informants data

Informant Code	Sex	Position
T1	Female	Homeroom teacher A, general subject teacher
T2	Female	Homeroom teacher B, general subject teacher
T3	Male	Islamic subject teacher
T4	Male	Islamic subject teacher

### Data collection technique

Primary data in this study were obtained through in-depth interviews in order to obtain in-depth information from informants (Sugiyono, 2013). The selection of informants in this study was carried out through purposive sampling involving four teaching teachers in the first grade of MI Plus Al-Makmun with the following criteria: (1) Islamic subject teacher, or(2) homeroom teacher.

### Data analysis

The data analysis technique in this study uses interactive data analysis techniques from Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman because the researcher wants to simplify, focus, and conclude through drawing conclusions from the results of the data obtained by collecting all the data. Furthermore, the data is reduced, presented and concluded in accordance with the objectives of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## RESULTS

The focus of this research is on the types of uncertainty and how the uncertainty reduction strategies are carried out by teaching teachers at MI Plus Al-Makmun to new students in grade 1 in the distance learning process during the covid-19 pandemic. The results of interviews conducted by researchers with 4 informants were analyzed into 5 categories: teacher uncertainty in interacting with new students, teacher uncertainty in estimating new student behavior, indirect observations of new students, observations of new students through third parties and direct observation of new students.

### Teacher Uncertainty in Interacting with New Students

Informants experience uncertainty in distance learning. The uncertainty experienced was due to obstacles related to the school location in the edge of the forest area. This is as stated by T1: *“The doubt that I feel is if the child does not understand the material provided online, especially for those who are unable to read yet.”*

The uncertainty felt by T1 occurred because of doubts whether new students understood the subject material given, considering that online communication did not run smoothly. However,

according to T3, he felt cognitive uncertainty regarding students' feedback when getting assignments from their teachers during distance learning. As he said: *"The doubts were about marking, I was not sure whether it was the kid or the parents who did the assignment."*

The cognitive uncertainty experienced by MI Plus Al-Makmun teachers towards new students is in the form of the teacher's inability to predict the level of students' understanding of the material provided and regarding assessment measurements.

Other uncertainties are related to limited HR digital knowledge and skills, difficulty accessing the internet, and the low economic level of families in the MI Plus Al-Makmun area. T1 said: *"When it comes to distance learning, there must be doubts that I feel. Some parents can use the app, some can't. Parents find it difficult if they don't use WhatsApp. When it comes to doing assignments and submitting them, it's difficult for me to give deadlines, because usually they only have one mobile phone which is also used by mom or dad for work."*

As T2 also explained: *"Especially regarding the internet signal. It is difficult to get internet signal in the village. There are some children who have not received the subject material due to the absence of internet signal."*

In addition to the several factors above, there are inhibiting factors related to children's learning abilities, especially in the field of subjects related to learning the Quran, such as memorizing surahs in the Quran and the accuracy of recitation. The distance learning only relies on the WhatsApp application which lead to the lack of students' responsibility because they are too dependent on their parents.

T3 stated that: *"The problem is that the first grade students cannot write Arabic letters and read Arabic correctly. If it's online, children usually don't pronounce well because they laugh and joke, or someone sounds like their parents are guiding them from behind."*

As T1 illustrated: *"For memorization, we use WhatsApp voice notes. You can see the problem is that the child actually doesn't memorize it yet, but the parent was whispering from behind. On the other hand, if they have memorized it, they recite too fast and the tajwid is sometimes not correct."*

Based on this statement, the uncertainty felt by the teacher was caused by constraints related to the ability of students when learning online, so that the informants were not sure about teaching material during the distance learning.

### **Teacher Uncertainty in Estimating New Students' Behavior**

In distance learning, teachers want to create learning that is fun and accessible to all their new students. However, in practice a teacher experiences doubts related to behavior. When distance learning took place, informants used learning media through the WhatsApp application to communicate and attract student enthusiasm in participating in studying. As T4 said: *"We make quizzes, or sometimes guesswork so that students don't get bored with lessons, especially because the lessons are online."*

T1 explained: *"When teaching, I sing while teaching, I record it first, then we make a live video, I share it. After that, the next day the children were told to practice it."*

MI Plus Al-Makmun teachers put forward a fun learning system because they feel that the enthusiasm for distance learning from students is starting to decrease, this is seen from the student's behaviour in learning process.

Responses from new students are not able to show their actual behavior when learning online, causing concern for informants. T1 said: *"When I used a video call, I made a reading test, some students passed, some didn't. So, I am as the teacher still worried, whether the students did their assignment by their own or not."*

But in the opinion of T2 and T4, the uncertainty of behavior that they feel is more about how to understand the character of children, where each child has a different character, the way the teacher communicates with students will also be different.

The different character of the student is the cause of the behavioral uncertainty felt by the teacher. The boredom experienced by students in distance learning is also a cause of uncertainty. When students start to feel bored in online learning, teachers will also find it difficult to communicate with them, as stated by T3: *"They complain that they are bored, that too much writing on their phone screen hurt their eyes, or that copying study material is too tiring. If I make subjects summary, it is made as little as possible, so that it is more concise and shows the core of the learning."*

### Indirect Observations of New Students

Observing students through the way they interact with others is a passive strategy to reduce uncertainty during the distance learning process. To understand new students, the teacher observes quietly from distance when face-to-face learning begins, such as observing through the responses that students give when they interact with people around them. T3 said: *"What I see is the attitude, see if the child is active or not in speaking, maybe there are those who like to tease, maybe there are those who are quiet, there are those who are super active, there are those who love joking around, that's what we observe."*

To observe how students interact, respond, and communicate with other people, the teacher also uses WhatsApp to find out the real character of the student so as to reduce their sense of uncertainty. T1 responded: *"If I use WhatsApp's voice note, I can find out whether the student can understand the material or not. He can fluently answer whether his parents are whispering or not, can also be heard. If the student thinks too long, it means that he doesn't really understand the material we teach."*

However, according to T3, observing children's character secretly through online is very difficult because when the online learning process there are several obstacles, especially network problems so that communication between students and teachers will also be hampered. He explained: *"We still can't judge children's behavior online, it's very difficult. Especially with a very difficult internet signal"*

Informants make indirect observations not only through ways of communicating students with others and through online platforms only, but they also take advantage of school activities to observe their students. From these observations, informants are able to conclude what character students have. This is likely reducing the teachers' feeling of uncertainty and as soon as possible adapt to new students.

T1 said: *"The habits in this school are Duha prayer, Quran recitation, and midday prayer. Students' personality can be seen if they have good Quran memorization, it means that the student really pays attention to the Islamic subjects, it means that student is responsible for his memorization."*

This strategy was also carried out by T2 and T4. However, according to T3, he observed the character of students not only in activities or habits related to academics, but rather observed at the level of child discipline over health protocols during the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

### Observations of New Students Through Third Parties

Teachers at MI Plus Al-Makmun also carry out active strategies to reduce their uncertainty towards new students when learning distance through third parties. The third party here is the students' closest person and someone related to the learning process. Informants involved students' parents to dig up information about their new students, because in the distance learning process parents have an essential role in monitoring their children during studying at home.

T1 responded: *"The role of parents is very helpful, usually parents tell me that their children have not been able to learn certain subject. They ask how to make their child develop better, and I will give a solution."*

To get information through the parents of students, informants asked questions to increase their knowledge about new students. The teacher also wants to know how the personality of students is so that they are able to adapt as soon as possible to the habits and deficiencies that students have during the distance learning process.

T2 said: *"I usually ask, how does your child study at home, ma'am? Do you child understand the subject material? How many hours a day their child plays on mobile phone at home."*

In addition to getting information directly from parents, the informants also made observations from the way parents assist their children's learning considering that first grade students are students who still need assistance from their parents. This is the importance of the role of parents in shaping children's character in learning.

But T4 has a different opinion from the other three informants. According to him, the role of parents does not necessarily describe the character of their children when accompanying the child's learning process. He has experiences that there are parents who say that their children have been able to take lessons when in fact the students are still being taught by their parents, the following is an explanation from T4 explained: *"The parents said that their child had finished memorizing the Quran, it turned out that their child had not memorized it. It seemed that they have memorized it because the student read the juz amma."*

Efforts to actively reduce uncertainty by informants also involve seeking information from fellow teachers. The four informants asked each other what habits students had when they were carrying out the teaching and learning process, the information obtained was used as a reference in the teaching process. As stated by T2: *"Usually, I ask about how the learning process in other teachers' classes, for example, by playing games or singing, can identify the character of the students. I immediately put it into practice in my class what I had obtained from a fellow teacher."*

After asking how the students' character is to their fellow teachers, the four informants are able to minimize their uncertainty because they have received information to change their learning system so that the learning materials will be easily accepted by students.

### Direct Observation

Communicating face to face is an effort made by informants to reduce uncertainty during distance learning. Direct communication with new students begins with self-introduction. T2 said: *"At the beginning, I don't go directly to the learning material, I usually asked for their address, hobbies, what they want to be when they grow up to reduce students' fear."*

On the other hand, informants also approach students not only during learning, they also try to approach students during breaks and become good listeners. Thus, students will show their character from the communication process, as explained by T4: *"They usually have someone to confide in directly face to face with me, usually one or two students talk about conditions in their homes."*

The use of nonverbal cues can reduce the uncertainty felt due to obstacles during distance learning. New students in the first grade are still classified as minors who still need a fun way of communicating from others. They find it difficult to focus on heavy conversations. Nonverbal communication is carried out by informants to be able to find out how the character of the new student is through the responses given by students. As explained by T2: *"Nonverbals, for example, shake hands with a smiling face when children enter and exit the classroom."*

T4 also responded: *"Giving applause to students if there are questions which they can answer."*

Based on informants' answers, nonverbal communication is used to approach children. It makes students more disclose to their teachers, so that interpersonal relationships become much more open.

Giving special treatment is also an interactive strategy carried out by informants for new students in grade one. This special treatment is given to provide a sense of comfort and openness to



new students so that the uncertainty felt by the teaching teacher is minimized, as explained by T2: *"I give special treatment by giving clear, precise language according to the context that I'm talking about to students... because underage children don't think like children who are already in the upper class who have started to be able to think broadly."*

Unlike T1, T2, and T4, T3 felt that the special treatment he gave to children in grade 1 could increase students' understanding of learning material, so that his sense of uncertainty about the level of understanding of the material students had during online learning decreased.

## DISCUSSIONS

During the distance learning process, all learning activities are carried out from home by utilizing online learning media as the main medium for communication between teachers and students. But in practice there are still obstacles that cause communication between teachers and students not running optimally, causing uncertainty. This uncertainty is also experienced by Islamic elementary school teachers in the forest edge village with new students in the distance learning process. The uncertainty reduction theory explains that uncertainty occurs due to limited information that a person has about people he/she has just met (Malestha & Kusumaningtyas, 2020). By using this theory, the researcher looks at the types of uncertainty and the uncertainty reduction strategies used by informants to new students in first grade in the distance learning process.

The results of the study show that in distance learning the teacher cannot predict how the actual condition of the students is regarding the learning. In distance learning for students in the forest edge forest there are various inhibiting factors such as internet network connectivity problems, device operating capabilities, quality of human resources, and family economic problems that have an impact on parents' readiness to meet technological needs. Some of these inhibiting factors are the background of the categorization of forest edge villages in an area. The area is not yet familiar with information technology, far from urban areas, limited human resource capabilities, and minimal average family economic conditions (Syahputri, 2017).

The economic conditions of families in the MI Plus Al-Makmun area in Gemarang District are included in the category of forest edge villages affecting the distance learning process, where the average economic condition of families in this sub-district depends on plantation yields which fluctuate depending on the weather. If the weather is erratic, they will suffer losses (Dinas Pertanian dan Peternakan Kab. Madiun, 2021). Whereas the level of the economy owned by parents will affect the learning process of students (Ardhiyah, 2019).

There are other findings behind the delay in education due to the economic level of the parents of students. Parents think that with the economy being below average and living in remote areas, the education their children receive is created only to go to the fields. They don't think differently that by providing proper education to children, they can later develop plantation potential from the knowledge they have gained at school (Adhi, 2015).

From the results of the study, there is cognitive uncertainty and behavioral uncertainty felt by informants during the distance learning process. This uncertainty arises due to inhibiting factors such as internet network problems and the readiness of parents to support the smooth learning process. The cognitive uncertainty includes uncertainty about the understanding of the material that students have and doubts in measuring assessments. Meanwhile, behavioral uncertainty refers to the teacher's inability to predict student behavior. This is one of the causes of the constraint of the internet network due to geographical location. In addition, parents of students find it difficult to use WhatsApp as the main medium of learning. This is also caused by low economic factors. On average, there is only one mobile phone in a family that is used interchangeably. This condition causes communication difficulties between teachers and students.

Research conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Technology through the Ayo Guru Berbagi program explained that the existence of online learning has become a controversy, because

people living in rural areas, especially parents of students, have difficulty because most of them do not understand the use of technology. This is also supported by family low economic condition so that they are not able to provide adequate communication tools to support distance learning (Arifin, 2021).

In reducing uncertainty in a person, they will have different opinions where this opinion becomes their strategy to minimize uncertainty. There are three strategies for reducing uncertainty, namely passive strategies, active strategies, and interactive strategies (Griffin, 2011).

First, the strategy used by the teacher is a passive strategy, where the teacher will observe students secretly to gain information (Mujiono & Susilo, 2021). The passive strategy used by the teacher for new students is to observe how they interact with others. The teacher also makes observations through school activities such as Quran memorization as well as students' habit in implementing health protocols. This is in line with research where youth at PPSA Wiroso Salatiga carried out a passive strategy by observing people they had just met through the way they interacted with other people. (Anazuhriah, 2019). According to Berger, this passive strategy is a fly on the wall strategy where we are able to see how the people we observe react to the environment and habits around informally (Griffin, 2011).

In the domain of Islamic education, guiding students through Quranic studies poses a considerable challenge for teachers, especially those instructing first-grade students. The adaptation process requires dedicated time for adjustments, giving rise to various challenges (Arifin & Sukati, 2020). In the context of distance learning, it is crucial to acknowledge that technology cannot substitute the presence of teachers; rather, its role is confined to that of a knowledge transfer tool (Asmuni, 2020). Furthermore, MI Plus Al-Makmun is located in a village at the forest's edge, where the quality of human resources falls below the average, potentially influencing the success of distance learning. This situation is exacerbated by the literacy factor in the Madiun district. A survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics on National Social Economy in 2018 revealed that illiteracy in Madiun Regency affected 46,146 out of 543,177 people aged 15 years and over in 2018 (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Bengkalis, 2019). Consequently, parents with a low educational background may also impact their children's success in the learning process.

The second strategy in this study is to use an active strategy. Active strategy is an effort to find information through a third party (Anazuhriah, 2019). This strategy includes observation through parents and observation through fellow teachers. Observations through parents are carried out by teachers to identify and explore the character of their new students (Na'im & Fakhru Ahsani, 2021).

Observations through fellow teachers were carried out by asking how the learning method used by other teachers as a reference for use in subsequent learning methods. From the results of the study, students in grade 1 MI Plus Al-Makmun preferred learning interspersed with songs and games. According to them, the information that has been obtained from fellow teachers can increase their knowledge to deal with the different character of students. As research on participants on the job training program who seek information through third parties to reduce uncertainty (Febriani, 2015).

The third is interactive strategy, by communicating face to face with people who want to be observed by asking specific questions to produce reciprocal communication (Febriani & Iqbal, 2015). During the distance learning process, children tend to feel bored and even the level of enthusiasm of students decreases greatly. In addition, there are various inhibiting factors due to a background of the forest edge village, making communication between students and teachers unpleasant.

To minimize uncertainty, teachers employ direct communication through face-to-face interactions, often reiterating introductions to foster openness. Building a sense of comfort is integral, achieved through intensive verbal communication to alleviate uncertainty (Anazuhriah, 2019). Given

the challenges of smooth online communication in rural school areas during distance learning, face-to-face communication emerges as a suitable strategy to mitigate uncertainties (Arifin, 2021).

Direct communication encompasses nonverbal cues, including handshakes, smiles before entering or leaving the classroom, and applauding students for successful responses. Nonverbal communication enhances self-expression, employing eye contact, facial expressions, and tactile gestures to cultivate comfort (Peranganing & Perbawaningsih, 2017).

Another interactive strategy involves providing special treatment to students, constituting a teacher's responsibility. This entails addressing academic needs, employing appropriate teaching methods, and establishing positive relationships with students (Kim et al., 2021). Clear and concise language is utilized by the teacher, tailored to the learning material's context. Repetition of the delivered material occurs until students grasp the concepts. This approach aligns with the common practice of clear and specific communication during initial interactions, emphasizing repeated interactions (West & Turner, 2008).

The authors are encouraged to delve into the results, interpreting them in the context of previous research and the initial hypotheses. Discuss the findings and their broader implications, while also suggesting potential directions for future research.

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that teachers in forest edge villages have two types of uncertainty towards new students: cognitive uncertainty and behavioral uncertainty. Cognitive uncertainty is shown by the teacher's disbelief in the level of students' understanding of learning material and students' feedback during distance learning. Behavioral uncertainty is shown by the teacher's inability to know the actual behavior or character of students as a result of the limited information possessed by the teacher due to various obstacles in distance learning. The teacher also carried out three strategies for reducing uncertainty. First, a passive strategy in which the teacher makes observations independently or interprets how to act and how to communicate with new students in an environment. Second, an active strategy by seeking information through third parties, namely parents and fellow teachers to obtain information about new students. Third, an interactive strategy where teachers can communicate directly with students through face-to-face communication, non-verbal communication, and giving special treatment. The third strategy was carried out by teachers because of demographic and geographical limitation of the forest edge village where the MI Plus Al Makmun is located, making it difficult for teachers to communicate with their students.

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