

Evaluating factors affecting the readiness of children entering elementary school: the perspective of elementary school teachers



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ABSTRACT

Children who are ready to participate in learning at elementary school can be seen from various components, namely basic abilities, social, emotional, communication, age, and independence. This study aims to determine the problems that exist in children when entering elementary school. This study used a quantitative method with a descriptive quantitative design. The subjects in this study are 104 elementary school teachers (84 public; 20 private). The measuring instrument in this study uses an open questionnaire containing questions about the problems encountered by elementary school teachers regarding the readiness of children entering elementary school. The results showed that the problems encountered by primary school teachers who teach first-grade students in terms of school readiness could be divided into three categories: (1) basic abilities of children refer to a child's abilities that can support independence in learning (cognitive); (2) social abilities are defined by a child's ability to form friendships with classmates, collaborate, and play with peers; and (3) parental support associated with the presence of parents in accompanying the child's learning process and meeting the child's psychological needs and facilities. Thus, children who are ready for school are assessed from their cognitive abilities and other important aspects.



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1. Introduction

The early period in childhood is an important time for children to begin school-related experiences that relate to their social, emotional, and cognitive development and abilities [1]. In addition, Pan, Trang, Love, and Templin [2] state that a child's performance in the first year of academic activities is also the basis for their success in subsequent years, both academically and socially. A child's school readiness is also related to the skills that develop in the child when participating in learning. However, children who are not ready for school tend to experience barriers and difficulties in physical, emotional, cognitive, and psychosocial aspects [3]. Therefore, a child's readiness to participate in school activities is an important element to prepare for. A study by Blair [4] mentioned that school readiness refers to the state in which a child is prepared to enter and participate in learning activities at school. School readiness is also related to a child's nervous system maturity, allowing the child to develop various skills based on the stimuli received, emotional maturity, and executive function that continues to develop within the child. The components of school readiness include age, cognitive ability, health, communication ability, attitude, social and emotional competence, as well as early math and language skills [5]. Meanwhile, school readiness for children in Indonesia is indicated

through four components, namely academic ability, social skills, communication skills, and the child's age upon entering school [6].

The school readiness of children can be identified through the following three qualities: (1) intellectual ability, (2) motivation to learn, and (3) social-emotional support and capacity [7]. In addition, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) stated that there are three important points related to children's school readiness, which are from the child, family, and school perspectives. Children are effectively prepared to focus on learning and development in school, families and the immediate environment play a role in supporting the child's learning and early development, and schools efficiently prepare optimal conditions for learning and development [8]. Xie and Li [9] state that stakeholders (schools and related parties) can consider and implement the three constructs regarding school readiness. Children who have school readiness affect academic success, social communication skills, maturity, communication with parents, and areas of child development [10]. The family, especially parents, do various things to prepare their children to enter elementary school, such as enrolling them in pre-school, providing additional learning, requesting assessments of their school readiness from practitioners or school psychologists, and other preparations. This is aimed at making children ready to participate in learning activities at school by having basic skills, such as knowing numbers and being able to perform simple calculations, knowing letters, words, and simple sentences, being independent, and having communication and social skills. Attend preschool are considered more ready to enter elementary school. In addition, parents also play an important role in their children's school readiness, particularly in terms of the support and guidance they provide for their children's learning process [11].

Furthermore, the school, in this case, the teachers, also plays an important role in relation to children's school readiness. In the previous learning period, children tend to learn through playing concepts, so they will experience a transition from previous learning methods to academic learning methods in elementary school. This situation can be a challenge for elementary school teachers, especially those who teach first grade (1 SD). Teachers are expected to have various strategies that can help train children to become more independent, focused, and able to follow the established learning activities. In addition, parents and teachers have the same perception regarding children's readiness indicators to enter school, including cognitive and non-cognitive factors [12]. The similarity of parents' perceptions regarding school readiness is also explained by Zhang [13], who state that children's school readiness is closely related to their health, attention, parenting patterns applied by parents, children's confidence, and their interest in learning. However, elementary school teachers also focus on children's obedience and independence. Based on the above explanation, it can be said that the readiness of children to enter Elementary School is very important and certainly related to the success of their learning. The dynamics that arise in the early stages of learning in elementary school (the transition phase from kindergarten to elementary school) are expected not to become obstacles that can trigger difficulties and academic failures in children but can be an initial effort (prevention) against the possible negative impacts. Therefore, this study aims to identify the problems faced by students when entering elementary school from the perspective of teachers.

2. Method

This study used a quantitative method with a descriptive quantitative design. The subject of this study is primary school teachers who teach in first grade in the West Sumatra region. The selection of subjects is based on the research objectives that examine the problems encountered when children enter primary school. The number of primary school teachers involved in this study is 104, consisting of 84 public school teachers and 20 private school teachers. The measurement tool used in this study is an open-ended questionnaire consisting of several questions regarding the problems faced by teachers when dealing with first-grade students. The research subjects were given the opportunity to answer in detail about the problems encountered when teaching first-grade students. The data collection process in this study was carried out in several stages, namely (1) the preparation stage and (2) the implementation stage. In the preparation stage, the research team first prepared a questionnaire to be distributed to the subjects, then validated the questionnaire through assessment and feedback from several experts on the measurement tool that had been created (professional judgment). After obtaining the results from the professional judgment, improvements were made based on the feedback and suggestions provided by the experts before being distributed to the research subjects. The questionnaire contains the research subject's agreement (inform-consent) at the beginning, followed by a number of questions regarding the perception of SD teachers regarding the problems encountered

by first-grade students. Furthermore, the research questionnaire was printed as needed and also prepared in g-form. The second stage is the implementation or data collection stage of the research. The data collection was carried out by distributing the research questionnaire to the subjects in two ways, offline and online. Offline questionnaire distribution was done by directly distributing the questionnaire (hard copy) to the research subjects, and online distribution was done through online media such as WhatsApp groups, g-form, and Instagram. This study has weaknesses due to the limitations of the researchers. First, there is an inequality in the number of subjects offered by public and private high schools. Because the number of subjects from private schools was lower than the number of subjects from public schools, the study's findings did not fully indicate differences between the two schools. The difference in subject matter is also related to educational background and regional origin. The larger the number of subjects that are close to balance, the better the results. Second, the open-ended questionnaire is related to the measuring instrument used. The measuring instrument was built by the research team, and it was feared that it would cause issues with validity and reliability.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the data in [Table 1](#), it can be seen that out of a total of 104 elementary school teachers, 84 teachers taught at public elementary schools and 20 teachers taught at private elementary schools. In addition, in terms of the teacher's educational background, it can be seen that one teacher has a master's (S2) education background, 101 undergraduate (S1) students, one diploma (DIII) teacher, and also teachers who graduated from high school/vocational high school or equivalent just one person. Thus, it can be seen that most of the subjects (97%) are teachers with undergraduate degrees (S1). Then the distribution of subjects was based on regional origin, where teachers came from the city of Padang as many as 34 people, Pariaman as many as 18 people, Padang Pariaman as many as seven people, Sawahlunto as many as 15 people, Padang Panjang as many as 13 people, Bukittinggi as many as 15 people, and Tanah Datar as many as two persons. From these data, it can be seen that, generally, the subjects of this study were elementary school teachers from the city of Padang. Furthermore, the following is categorization data regarding the problems encountered by elementary school teachers who teach students in grade 1 in participating in learning activities. The following is the distribution of research subjects which can be seen through the data in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Demographic data of research subjects

Subject	Variable	n	
	The type of school	Public Elementary School	84
		Private Elementary School	20
Elementary school teachers	Educational background	Master (S2)	1
		Bachelor (S1)	101
		Diploma (DIII)	1
		Senior high school	1
	Regency	Padang City	34
		Pariaman	18
		Padang Pariaman	7
		Sawahlunto	15
		Padang Panjang	13
		Bukittinggi	15
		Tanah Datar	2

[Table 2](#) shows that there are a variety of issues concerning children's school readiness in grade 1 elementary school students. From a broader perspective, the graph below shows the categories of problems encountered by elementary school teachers in connection with students' readiness to participate in learning. According to [Fig. 1](#), children's problems in entering elementary school include social aspects (68.04%), cognitive aspects (8.25%), emotional aspects (1.03%), lack of parental support (attention) (10.31%), children who are not old enough (3.09%), lack of interest in school (3.09%), and children who are unable to use stationery (1.03%). In general, elementary school teachers' assessments of the problems they face when teaching grade 1 students about students' school readiness focus on the social aspect. Problems in this social aspect are related to the child's ability to relate to those in his or her immediate environment, such as teachers and classmates. The findings of this research indicate that there are various problems that arise when children enter elementary school, which are categorized into six aspects, including (1) cognitive abilities, (2) social

and emotional aspects, (3) parental support, (4) age, and (5) independence. Children who have good school readiness will help adjust to the learning environment (school), overcome academic challenges and issues, and also have an impact on children's academic performance [14][15][16][17].

Table 2. Data on the Characteristics of Grade 1 Students' school readiness problems

Categories of teacher problems related to student school readiness	f
Cognitive	47
Not yet ready for reading, writing, or counting	39
being unable to focus on learning	5
Capability for understanding	3
Social	61
No ability to socialize	3
Lack of confidence	12
Not yet independent.	34
Not yet disciplined	3
Not yet adaptable	9
Emotional	3
Children cry during class	3
Parental support	10
Lack of support	5
Lack of attention	5
Age	5
Children are not of adequate age	5
Interest	3
Children's lack of interest in school	3
School supplies	1
Inadequate school supplies for children	1
Total Opinion	130

Children's cognitive ability includes their creativity, which can be maximized during preschool by providing stimuli that help develop children's creativity [18]. Cognitive abilities are also related to children's executive function and working memory, which have a positive impact on children's academic success in following learning in school [19]. Children who have academic knowledge and basic thinking skills are considered to have adequate readiness to follow learning in elementary school [15]. School readiness in terms of cognitive factors includes reading, writing, and arithmetic (*calistung*) abilities [12]. These three basic skills are considered important elements that affect children's school readiness. The social-emotional competence of a child is also an important factor that can affect their success in learning. This relates to a child's ability to regulate their emotions, focus on given directions, provide adequate attention, and collaborate and cooperate with classmates in various classroom activities [20]. This research finding is consistent with the results of a study conducted by Im [21], which found that a child's social-emotional competence is a predictor of school readiness, mental health, and academic success. Social-emotional learning is an essential component that supports successful learning, involving a process in which individuals can effectively apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are important to understand and control emotions, regulation, achieve positive goals, build positive relationships with others, and also related to decision-making abilities [22][23]. The implementation of social-emotional learning can help overcome hazardous situations that pose negative risks that may arise during a child's learning in school [24].

Various issues related to children's school readiness, viewed from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory, show that a child's development is influenced by social contexts, starting from close interpersonal interactions to the influence of sociocultural contexts [25]. As part of the microsystem, the family plays a role through reciprocal interactions between the child, parents, and peers (the immediate environment). Meanwhile, at the mesosystem level, it involves interactions between parents and the school. This can be seen through parental support in children's learning, which involves active communication between parents and teachers or facilitators about the education development that the child is going through. Research by High [7] also found that the quality of a child's school readiness is also influenced by health and well-being in the family and neighborhood where the child grows up. Thus, it can be said that a child's readiness to enter elementary school is not only influenced by factors that come from within the child, such as cognitive abilities, independence, and others, but also by other external factors, such as the role of the environment, namely parents, family, and neighbors around the place where the child grows and develops.

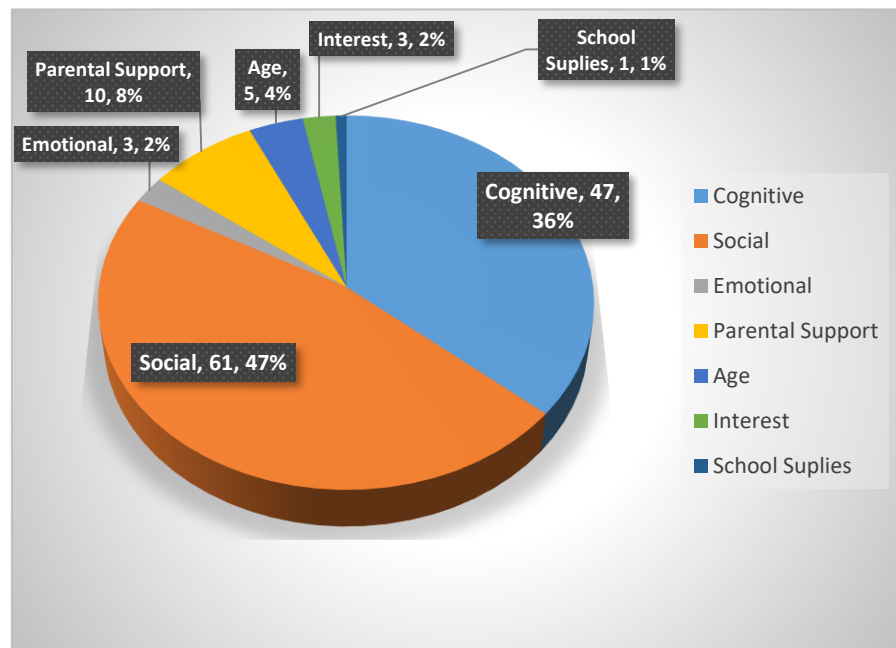


Fig. 1. Problem Categories for Elementary School Students

Puccioni [26] explains that parental involvement is positively related to children's school readiness, especially during the transition period from kindergarten to elementary school. In addition, the school readiness of children is also related to age. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 1 of 2021, prospective new students of grade 1 (elementary school) must meet the age requirements of 7 years or at least 6 (six) years on July 1st of the current year (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 1 of 2021). However, in some (private) elementary schools, age is not always the main requirement prospective students must fulfill. Students under the age of 7 can be accepted as elementary school students. In the implementation of learning, problems are often encountered where students under the age of 7 tend to have difficulties in terms of independence, communication, making friends, and so on.

4. Conclusion

Based on the above explanation of the research findings, it is possible to conclude that the problems encountered by primary school teachers who teach first-grade students in terms of school readiness can be divided into three categories: (1) basic abilities of children, (2) social abilities related to peer relationships, and (3) parental support. Basic abilities refer to a child's abilities that can support independence in learning, such as reading and writing simple words, using stationery, and cleaning up, such as going to the toilet and cleaning up table spills. Social abilities are defined by a child's ability to form friendships with classmates, collaborate, and play with peers. This social ability contributes to children's academic success. Then, parental support is associated with the presence of parents in accompanying the child's learning process and meeting the child's psychological needs and facilities. Therefore, the problems that arise when children enter primary school are not only in terms of cognitive abilities, such as children being required to be able to read and write simple things and know numbers (literacy). In addition, school readiness is related to children's social abilities (making friends) and requires the role and support of parents in preparing children to carry out learning activities at the beginning of primary school.

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