

The Perception Overview of Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers on School Readiness

Meria Susanti¹, Izzanil Hidayati², Nila Anggreiny³, Yantri Maputra⁴

^{1,3,4}Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia

²Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

Email: meriasusanti@med.unand.ac.id

Abstract

School readiness is one of important factors that is needed to help children enter the elementary education. However, the characteristic needed in school readiness remains unclear. Most of the school usually has different consideration in differentiating student admission process. This study aims to determine the kindergarten and elementary school teacher perception of student readiness entering elementary school. Cross-sectional survey designed is used as research approach involving 195 kindergarten and elementary school teacher in 5 cities in West Sumatera. 5 open-ended question were given to 91 kindergarten teachers and 104 elementary school teachers. Content analysis was carried out to analyze the answer and group them according to the themes that emerged. In general, the result of this research found that kindergarten and elementary school teacher has similar perception of school readiness. Around 81% kindergarten teacher and 92% elementary school teacher said that school readiness is crucial for children entering elementary school. In detail, kindergarten and elementary school teacher think that age is the main consideration in student admission for elementary school. Other consideration is cognitive, social, and emotional ability.

Keywords: *Perception, School Readiness, Teacher.*

----- ◆ -----

A. INTRODUCTION

School age is one of the stages where children begin to enter formal education. In Indonesia, school age is determined when a child is 7 years old or 6 years old by the upcoming July 1st (Regulation No. 17 of 2010). Upon entering elementary school, changes occur in children, where they transition from being a "home child" to a "school child." This introduces children to new roles and responsibilities, such as becoming students, interacting with new people, adjusting to a new environment, and developing new behavioral standards (Santrock, 2010). Various academic demands also face children, making readiness very important to help them navigate this transition period.

In helping children prepare for entering elementary school, parents undertake various efforts, such as enrolling them in kindergarten or participating in tutoring for reading, writing, and arithmetic. In fact, it is not uncommon for kindergartens to provide additional study time, focusing on teaching children to read so they can smoothly transition to elementary school. Although the government has actually prohibited schools from requiring literacy and numeracy skills as part of the elementary school admission criteria (Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010), in practice, some elementary schools still require their students to be able to read and

count to be admitted. This leads some parents to believe that reading ability is an important requirement for their children to be accepted into the school they desire. Furthermore, research by Rahwamati, Tairas, & Nawangsari (2018) shows that parents consider cognitive factors to be more important than non-cognitive factors for their children to be accepted into prestigious schools.

The concept of school readiness is complex and multifaceted (Scott-Little, Kagan, Frelow, 2006; Kokkalia, 2019). Morrison & Hidman (2008) state that school readiness refers to a child's readiness to transition into elementary school. This readiness involves a set of skills that children need to develop to help them enter formal schooling (Duncan, Anderson, Finders, Purpura, & Schmitt, 2023; Kokkalia, 2019). Children who possess these skills/knowledge before entering formal schooling tend to be more successful in their school education (Scott-Little, Kagan, Frelow, 2006).

There are various perspectives in interpreting school readiness. Meisels (1999; Docker & Perry, 2002) stated that children's school readiness can be viewed from four perspectives: the level of maturity the child possesses, the child's skills and knowledge, the readiness of the environment to support the child, and the readiness of the school to facilitate the child's needs. Meanwhile, Morrison & Hidman (2008) discussed school readiness from an ecological perspective and an interpersonal perspective. The ecological perspective views school readiness as inseparable from the environmental context (Dockett et al., 2014; Morrison & Hidman, 2008), while the interpersonal perspective sees school readiness as related to the child's competencies or the perceived competencies the child possesses (Dunlop, 2014). Other studies consider school readiness from both perspectives, namely the relationship between the interpersonal and sociocultural (Dunlop, 2014; Dockett & Perry, 2009). Dockett & Perry (2009) stated that understanding school readiness is a combination of maturation theory, environmental perspectives (skills/abilities that can be measured to determine whether a child is ready for school), and the sociocultural context, which involves the interaction between the child's characteristics and their environment.

Furthermore, school readiness is crucial as one of the supporting factors for a child to successfully undergo formal education (Snow, 2006). Wesley & Buysse (2003, as cited in Niklas et al., 2018) stated that children who are ready when entering school will be more successful in transitioning from a family/early childhood education environment to a formal education environment. The environment faced by children when they enter elementary school differs from the one they have been in up until then. Children who were previously familiar only with their family or early childhood education are now entering formal education, which has more rules and demands. This makes school readiness an important factor in helping children adjust well to school. Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2006) stated that school readiness is important as a foundation for policymakers in creating programs for early childhood education.

A child's transition to school is not just a phase experienced independently by

the child or with family support alone, but it involves a broader context. The success of a child's transition depends on the interaction of several factors: schools that support the child's needs (Moss, 2012), a supportive home learning environment (Niklas & Schneider, 2017), as well as adequate cognitive and behavioral competencies of the child (Niklas et al., 2018). Miller & Kehl (2019) stated that identifying the characteristics of school readiness is important in preparing children to meet the demands of school.

However, the specific characteristics needed to help children transition to school are still unclear (Niklas, 2011, as cited in Niklas et al., 2018; Kokkalia, 2019). One of the challenges in understanding the concept of school readiness is defining the skills and knowledge deemed important and determining when and whether a child possesses these skills and knowledge (Scott-Little, Kagan, Frelow, 2006). A study conducted in Australia, Austria, Colombia, Germany, Nicaragua, and Slovenia found that independence, social skills, and concentration are considered the most important characteristics of school readiness (Niklas et al., 2018). Meanwhile, research by Serry et al. (2014) identified cognitive, social, self-care, emotional, and language aspects as important domains of school readiness. In contrast, the study by Rahwamati, Tiaras, & Nawangsari (2018) found that school readiness, as perceived by teachers and parents, can be grouped into two categories: cognitive factors (reading, writing, and arithmetic) and non-cognitive factors (social skills and emotional regulation).

This study aims to explore the perceptions of kindergarten and elementary school teachers regarding children's readiness for entering elementary school. It is hoped that this research will provide insights into the characteristics needed when children enter elementary education. This can serve as a guideline for parents and early childhood educators in preparing children for the transition to elementary school.

B. METHODS

The population in this study consists of kindergarten teachers and elementary school teachers in West Sumatra, with the characteristics of having worked for at least two years and being willing to participate as research subjects. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling with convenience sampling. Gravetter & Forzano (2018) state that convenience sampling refers to selecting research participants based on the availability and willingness of the subjects to participate in the research.

This study uses a questionnaire to explore the perceptions of kindergarten and elementary school teachers regarding children's readiness for entering elementary school. The questionnaire contains open-ended questions, allowing the subjects to freely provide answers based on their perceptions. In preparing the questionnaire items, the researchers involved expert judgment from three professionals, consisting of education practitioners and child psychologists, to obtain feedback/suggestions on the questions formulated.

This study employs a survey method using a cross-sectional design. A cross-sectional design allows data to be collected at a single point in time (Mertens, 2010; Cresswell, 2014). Data collection was conducted online by distributing the questionnaire link to teachers through schools and social media. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the researchers provided informed consent explaining the purpose of the research, the estimated time to complete it, and that subjects were free to participate in the study. Additionally, a reward in the form of mobile credit was offered as a token of appreciation for the subjects' participation in the research.

Content analysis was conducted to analyze the responses given by the subjects and group them according to emerging themes. A team of three researchers conducted the content analysis of the subjects' answers to ensure that the themes identified were consistent with the responses provided. The frequency of the identified themes was calculated to obtain an overview of the subjects' perceptions regarding children's school readiness for entering elementary school.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Overview of Research Subjects

Table 1. Overview of Research Subjects

No	Subject	Amount
1	Kindergarten Teachers	91
2	Elementary School Teachers	104
Total		195

From the table above, it is noted that the total number of research subjects is 195, consisting of 91 kindergarten teachers and 104 elementary school teachers.

2. Overview of Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions Regarding School Readiness

a. How Important is School Readiness

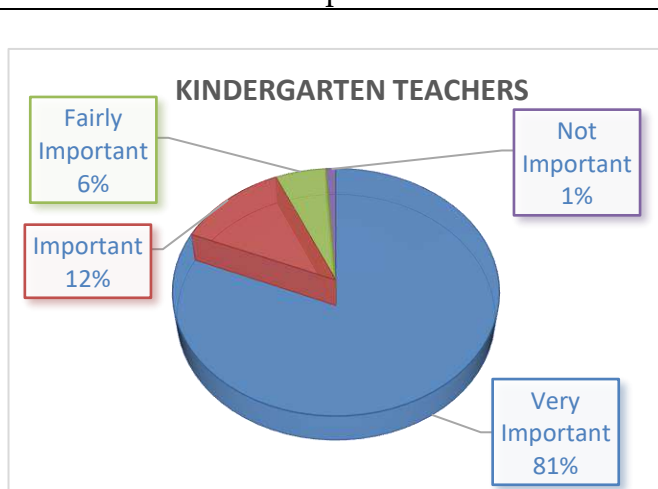


Figure 1. Overview of Kindergarten Teachers' Perceptions Regarding School Readiness

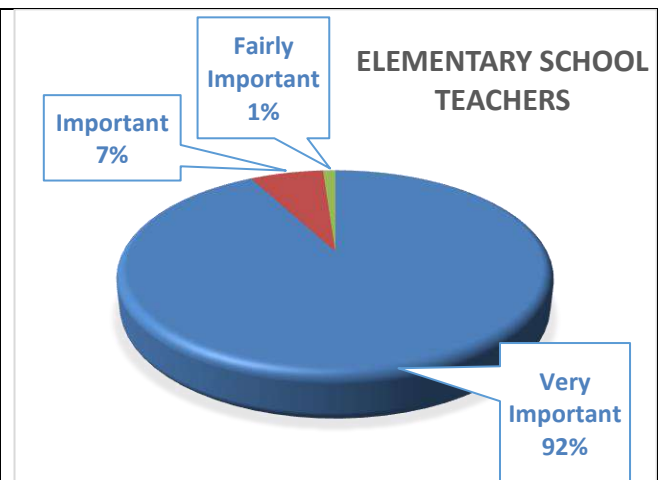


Figure 2. Overview of Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions Regarding School Readiness

The image above shows that both kindergarten teachers and elementary school teachers share the same view regarding the importance of school readiness. The majority of kindergarten teachers (81%) and elementary school teachers (92%) believe that school readiness is very important. This is followed by those who consider it important and fairly important. The reasons given are also quite similar. Most agree that school readiness is crucial because it helps children meet the educational demands of elementary school later on. Interestingly, among kindergarten teachers, 1% consider school readiness to be unimportant. Their reasoning is that school readiness is viewed as something that children will acquire after completing their education in kindergarten.

Table 2. Reasons Why School Readiness is Very Important (Kindergarten Teachers)

Reasons Why School Readiness is Very Important	F
To help children meet the educational demands of elementary school	56
To foster independence in children	13
To build children's confidence when entering elementary school	5
To enable adaptation	15
Total	89

Based on Table 2 above, the majority of kindergarten teachers believe that school readiness is very important because it relates to the educational demands of elementary school. School readiness will help children engage in learning activities in elementary school. Additionally, other reasons include fostering independence in children and enabling them to adjust to learning demands, as well as building confidence when entering the elementary school environment.

Table 3. Reasons Why School Readiness is Very Important (Elementary School Teachers)

Reasons Why School Readiness is Very Important	f
To prepare children to face the learning demands of elementary school	63
To help children adjust to the new environment/school	19
To foster independence in children	4
To influence learning motivation	2
Others	3
Elementary school teachers will feel overwhelmed if children are not ready	2
To develop children's abilities	2
To assess the abilities that children possess	1
In accordance with government programs	2
Because first grade is the foundation of education	3
To influence children's psychological development	1
Total	102

Based on Table 3 above, the majority of elementary school teachers believe that school readiness is very important because it relates to the educational demands

of elementary school. School readiness is crucial for helping children face the educational requirements in elementary school. In general, the reasons provided by kindergarten teachers and elementary school teachers are almost the same: school readiness helps children transition into education in elementary school.

b. What Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers Know About School Readiness

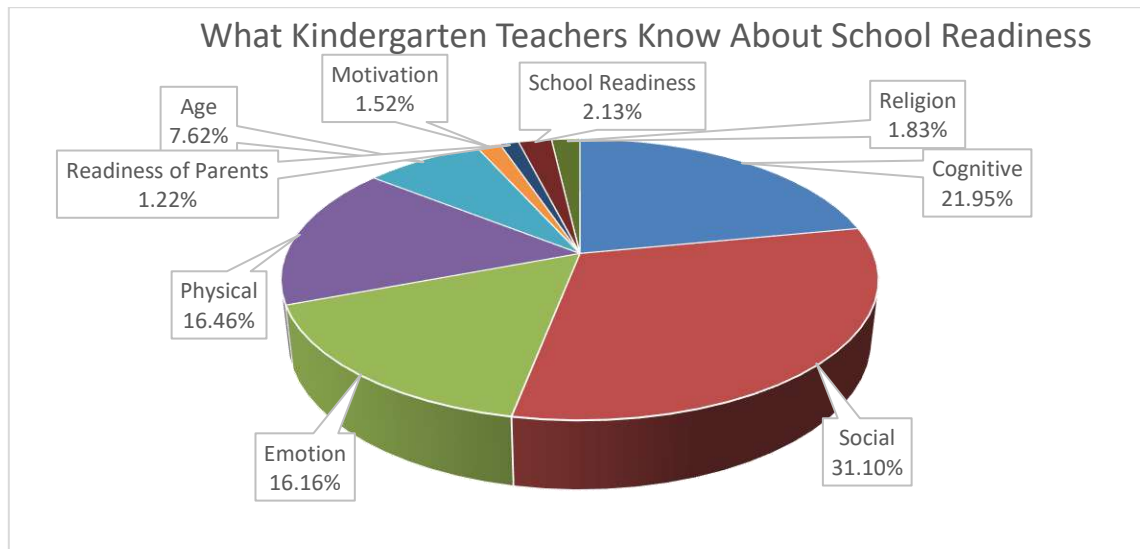


Figure 3. Aspects Known by Kindergarten Teachers Regarding School Readiness

Figure 3 shows the distribution of themes that emerged regarding what kindergarten teachers know about school readiness. In general, there are four dominant themes: social aspects (31.10%), cognitive (21.95%), physical (16.46%), and emotional (16.16%). The social aspect includes independence, socialization, and adjustment. The cognitive aspect encompasses the ability to recognize letters and numbers, reading, writing, counting, and communication. The physical aspect includes motor skills such as the ability to write. Lastly, the emotional aspect involves emotional skills.

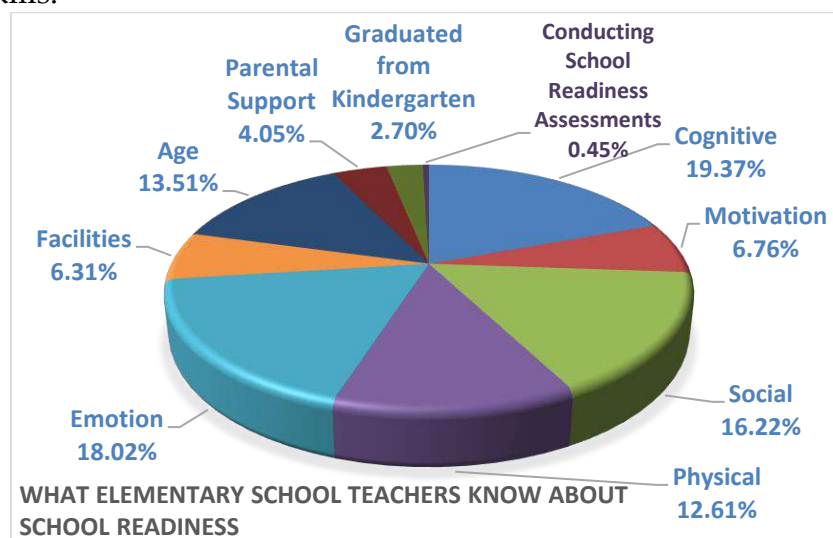


Figure 4. Aspects Known by Elementary School Teachers Regarding School Readiness

Figure 4 shows the themes that emerged regarding what elementary school teachers know about school readiness. In general, the dominant themes that emerged are quite similar to those of kindergarten teachers: cognitive aspects (19.37%), emotional aspects (18.02%), social aspects (16.22%), and physical aspects (12.61%). Additionally, the aspect of age was also mentioned frequently by elementary school teachers, accounting for 13.51%. The cognitive aspects referred to by elementary school teachers are similar to those mentioned by kindergarten teachers, specifically related to reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. In terms of emotional aspects, many responses were related to children's mental abilities. For social aspects, a significant number mentioned independence. Lastly, the age aspect refers to children being of an appropriate age to enter elementary school.

c. What Children Should Have When Entering Elementary School

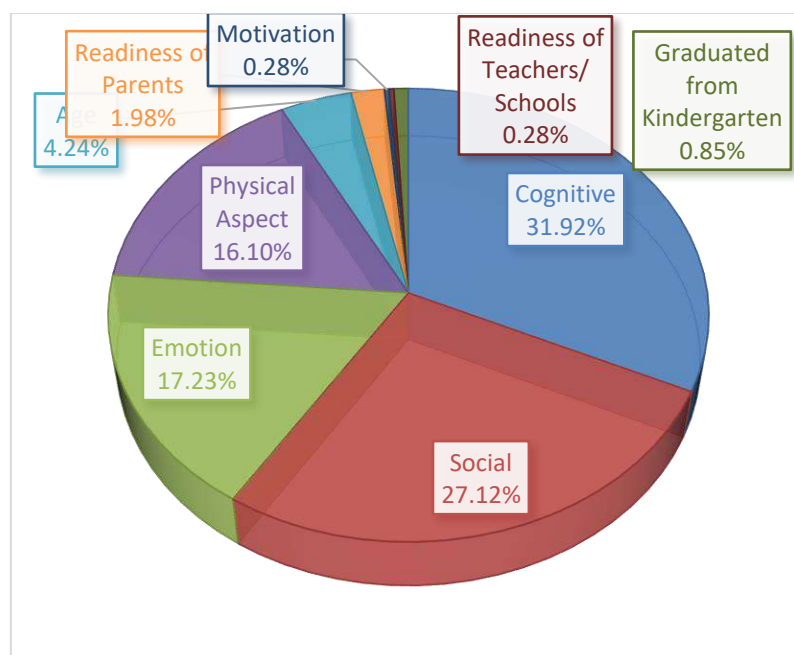


Figure 6. Kindergarten Teachers' Perceptions of What Children Should Have When Entering Elementary School

Based on the figure above, it is evident that kindergarten teachers most frequently chose cognitive aspects as essential for children entering elementary school. Several cognitive aspects mentioned by the subjects are related to communication skills, thinking, reading, and arithmetic. The second most cited aspect is social aspects. Some skills frequently mentioned in relation to social aspects include the ability to interact with others and independence. The third most mentioned aspect is emotional aspects, specifically the ability to manage emotions.

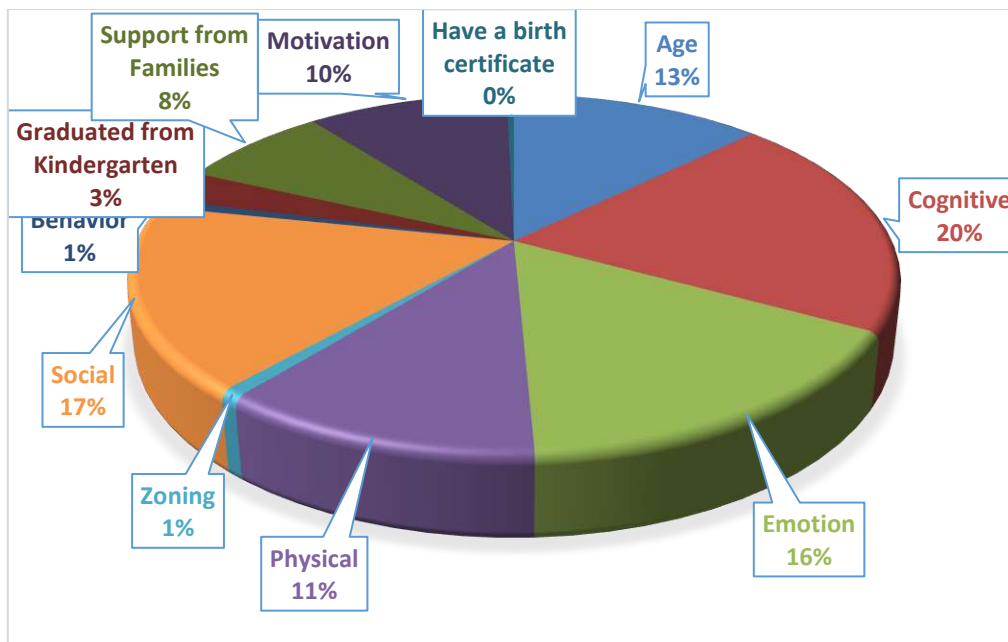


Figure 7. Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of What Children Should Have When Entering Elementary School

In line with the responses from kindergarten teachers, elementary school teachers also perceive cognitive aspects, social aspects, and emotional aspects as important for children when entering elementary school. However, unlike kindergarten teachers, elementary school teachers also frequently mentioned the aspect of age as an important factor for children to have when starting elementary school.

d. Main Considerations for Children to Enter Elementary School

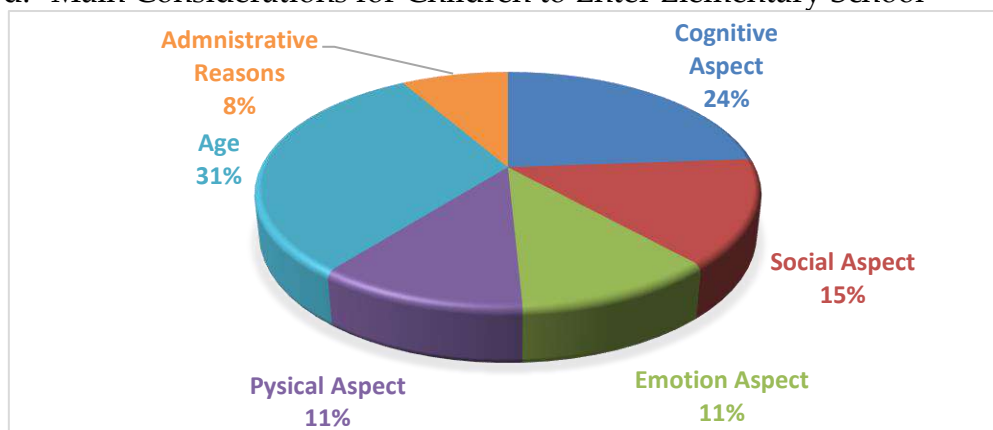


Figure 8. Kindergarten Teachers' Perceptions of the Main Considerations for Children to Enter Elementary School

Based on Figure 8 above, it can be observed that, in general, kindergarten teachers believe that the main considerations for schools to accept students into elementary school are cognitive factors at 13%, social factors at 13%, emotional factors at 10%, physical factors at 11%, age factors at 29%, administrative factors at 8%, and others at 7%. Overall, it can be stated that the majority of kindergarten teachers believe that cognitive aspects are very important regarding the considerations for schools accepting students into elementary school.

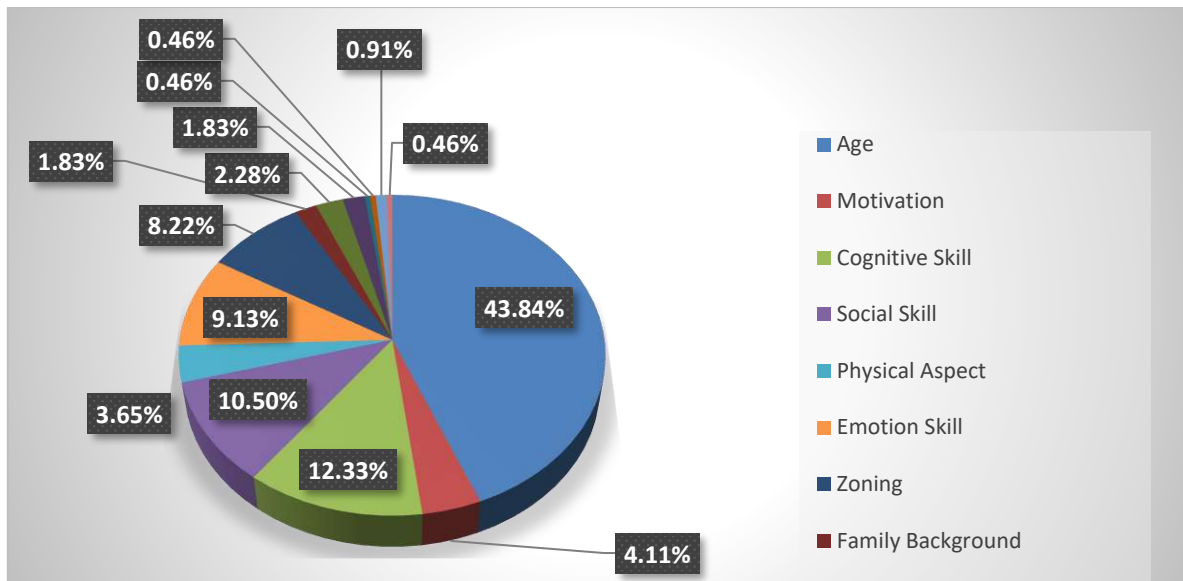


Figure 9. Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of the Main Considerations for Children to Enter Elementary School

Based on Figure 9 above, it can be observed that, in general, elementary school teachers believe that the main considerations for schools to accept students into elementary school are age at 43.84%, cognitive factors at 12.33%, social factors at 10.50%, emotional factors at 9.13%, physical factors at 3.65%, zoning factors at 8.22%, motivation at 4.11%, family background at 2.28%, and prior education before elementary school at 1.83%. Overall, it can be stated that the majority of elementary school teachers believe that age is a very important factor regarding the considerations for schools accepting students into elementary school.

This study aims to understand the perceptions of parents, kindergarten teachers, and elementary school teachers regarding children's school readiness. Several findings emerged from this research related to the subjects' perceptions of children's school readiness, including the importance of readiness for entering school, the qualities children need to possess when starting elementary education, and the criteria teachers consider when accepting students into elementary school.

Both groups of subjects had similar responses regarding the importance of school readiness. Both kindergarten and elementary school teachers overwhelmingly stated that school readiness is very important for children when entering elementary school. The majority of the reasons provided also shared similar themes, primarily related to helping children adjust to the learning demands of elementary school. In general, school readiness is associated with a set of skills and competencies essential for children to adapt to learning activities in elementary school. Elementary school is the first formal school for children, making this transitional period critical for their success in school. Snow (2006) stated that school readiness is an important trait for children to possess.

Furthermore, the research findings also indicate that kindergarten and elementary school teachers have nearly identical perceptions of what they know regarding school readiness. The cognitive, social, physical, and emotional aspects

were predominantly mentioned. In this context, cognitive abilities pertain to reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Social abilities relate to children's capacity to adapt to the learning environment and peers. Emotional abilities are associated with children's emotional conditions when entering school age. Lastly, physical aspects refer to the adequate physical condition of children upon entering school.

There is consistency between the findings of this study and those of Pekdogan and Akgül (2017) regarding teachers' perceptions of kindergarten children's school readiness, which includes the necessity for readiness across all developmental areas, cognitive, motor, social-emotional, language, and self-care, as well as the presence of adequate prior knowledge. Additionally, this aligns with the research conducted by Fayez, Ahmad, and Oliemat (2016), which demonstrated that for kindergarten and elementary school teachers in Jordan, academic knowledge, basic thinking skills, social-emotional maturity, health and motor development, discipline, and communication skills are vital for children's school readiness.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that the qualities children need to possess when entering elementary education include cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities. The cognitive abilities relate to skills such as recognizing letters and numbers, recognizing Arabic letters, reading, writing, literacy skills, language or communication skills, attention, memorizing short verses, and the ability to read daily prayers. Meanwhile, social abilities are related to children's capacity for socialization, independence, self-confidence, courage, and discipline. Additionally, the emotional aspect includes maturity, mental readiness, and psychological preparedness. From a physical standpoint, it is perceived as children having physical readiness, which includes fine and gross motor skills.

The results of this study align with Kagan's (1995) assertion that physical, social-emotional, language abilities, and knowledge are dimensions of school readiness. Similar findings are presented in the research by Pekdogan and Akgül (2017), which state that the qualities children should possess regarding school readiness include three aspects: (1) having daily life skills such as the ability to wash hands, go to the toilet independently, eat by themselves, and dress independently; (2) demonstrating appropriate behavior across all areas of child development, including language, motor skills, self-care, cognitive skills, and literacy; and (3) possessing adequate communication skills with their social environment, such as being able to initiate communication, maintain it, and make eye contact.

In general, the themes that emerged related to school readiness among both groups of subjects primarily focused on cognitive, social, emotional, and physical aspects. These aspects relate to the abilities considered necessary when children undergo education in elementary school. This is consistent with the findings of Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2006), who state that school readiness is defined as a set of skills and knowledge that can contribute to children's future success in school. This aligns with the survey conducted by Serry et al. (2014) among teachers, where school readiness generally encompasses cognitive, social, self-care, and language abilities. Similarly, Pamela (2008) suggests that children's experiences in early cognitive and

social-emotional development are essential elements in assessing school readiness.

An interesting aspect of this study is the views of kindergarten and elementary school teachers regarding the criteria for accepting children into elementary school. In previous questions, cognitive skills were mentioned most frequently by both kindergarten and elementary school teachers as essential for children entering elementary school. However, when addressing the primary considerations for schools in accepting elementary students, the majority of responses from both kindergarten and elementary school teachers focused on the children's age. Most kindergarten and elementary school teachers believe that age is a key factor when children enter elementary school. The age in question refers to children being old enough for school, specifically in the range of 6.5 to 7 years old. This might partly be due to the regulation from the Ministry of Education and Culture number 19 of 2017, which states that children enter elementary school at the age of 7, making this consideration the most frequently mentioned by teachers. Scott-Little, Kagan, and Frelow (2006) indicate that chronological age is one of the bases for assessing school readiness. Children are considered ready to enter school when they reach a certain age established by educational policies and regulations.

D. CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it is known that the majority of kindergarten and elementary school teachers share the same perception, stating that school readiness is very important for children when entering elementary school. Furthermore, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical aspects are the most frequently associated with school readiness. Although related to the primary considerations for accepting students into elementary school, age is the most commonly mentioned factor as the main basis for acceptance.

REFERENCES

1. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
2. Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2002). Who's Ready for What? Young Children Starting School. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 67-89.
3. Dunlop, A.-W. (2014). Thinking About Transitions: One Framework or Many? Populating the Theoretical Model Over Time. In B. Perry, S. Dockett, & A. Petriwskyj, *Transitions to School-International Research, Policy, and Practice: International Perspective on Early Childhood Education and Development* (pp. 31-46). London: Springer.
4. Duncan, R. J., Anderson, K. L., Finders, J. K., Purpura, D. J., & Schmitt, S. A. (2023). Factor Structure of School Readiness Skills: Conceptual vs. Statistical Distinctions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 1-13.
5. Duncan, G. J., Dowsett, C. J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A. C., Klebanov, P., . . . Japel, C. (2007). School Readiness and Later Achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 1428-1446.

6. Fayeze, M., Ahmad, J. F., & Oliemat, E. (2016). Jordanian Kindergarten and 1st-Grade Teachers' Beliefs About Child-Based Dimensions of School Readiness. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 293-305.
7. Gravetter, F. J., & Forzano, L.-A. B. (2018). *Research Methods for the Behavioral Sciences, Sixth Ed.* Boston: Cengage.
8. Kokkalia, G. (2019). School Readiness from Kindergarten to Primary School. *ijET*, 4-17.
9. Meisels, S. J. (1998). *Assessing Readiness*. Ann Arbor: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement.
10. Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity With Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
11. Miller, M. M., & Kehl, L. M. (2019). Comparing Parents' and Teachers' Rank-Ordered Importance of Early School Readiness Characteristics. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 445-453.
12. Morrison, F. J., & Hindman, A. H. (2008). School Readiness. In M. M. Haith, & J. B. Benson, *Encyclopedia of Infant and Early Childhood Development* (pp. 61-73). Academic Press.
13. Niklas, F., Cohrsen, C., Vidmar, M., Segerer, R., Schmiedeler, S., Galpin, R., . . . Tayler, C. (2018). Early childhood professionals' perceptions of children's school readiness characteristics in six countries. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 144-159.
14. Rahmawati, A., Tairas, M., & Nawangsari, N. A. (2018). Children's School Readiness Based on Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions. *International Journal of Pedagogy and Teacher Education*, 9-20.
15. Scott-Little, C., Kagan, S. L., & Frelow, S. (2006). Conceptualization of readiness and the content of early learning standards: The intersection of policy and research? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 153-173.
16. Serry, T., Imms, C., Froude, E., Joffe, B., Heine, C., & Merrigan, C. (2014). Preparatory Teacher's Perceptions of School Readiness: A Survey of Victorian Teachers. *Aust. Educ. Res.*, 109-124.
17. Snow, K. L. (2006). Measuring School Readiness: Conceptual and Practical Considerations. *Early Education and Development*, 7-41.