Parents Perceptions on School Readiness: Descriptive Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the parents' perceptions on Children's School Readiness. The open-ended question was administered to 116 parents in Padang, Padang Panjang, Bukittinggi, and Sawahlunto, West Sumatera. Content analyses were used to categorize all the response from participants. Overall this study found that 84% participants' think that school readiness are very important for children to enter elementary school, 15% said that it's important, and 1% quite important. Most of the reasons are because school readiness helps children to be success in elementary school. Looking more closely about their perception on school readiness, participants think that school readiness is related to cognitive ability (27%), social skill (17%), emotional competence (14%), sufficient age (11%), physical development (11%). Another response is related to financial readiness and motivation. This finding indicated that many parents considered that cognitive ability such reading skill as one of significant factor for children to enter elementary school.

Keyword: *School Readiness, Perception, Parent.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Elementary school is the first formal level of education for children. Entering this first formal education level is one of the crucial periods in a child's learning process (Serry, Imms, Froude, Joffe, Heine & Merrigan, 2013). At this stage, children enter a new environment that is different from their previous one, both in terms of physical context, processes, or types of social interactions (Ladd et al. (2011) as cited in Serry et al., 2013). The ability to adapt to the demands of learning in elementary school is necessary for children to succeed in their future learning process. However, not all children demonstrate the same skills or readiness for learning (Claessens & Engel, 2013 as cited in Atkinson et al., 2022). This, of course, affects a child's adaptation to school, both socially and academically. To reduce the challenges faced by children and parents when entering school, it is important to understand the stages of development and skills required (Serry et al., 2013).

One of the terms frequently discussed when a child enters school age is school readiness. School readiness refers to a set of skills/abilities that a child needs to succeed in the educational process (Kokkalia, Drigas, 2019; Vanover, 2017; Snow, 2015). Furthermore, Curby et al. (2018) in An, Curby, & Xie (2018) state that school readiness encompasses a combination of academic and socio-emotional skills that can assist a child in participating in an educational program. In line with this, Rafoth, Buchenauer, Crissman, & Halko (2004) in Aslan & Cikar (2019) state that school

readiness is a combination of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills that are crucial for a child's learning and task completion.

In general, it can be concluded that school readiness is related to the abilities/skills a child possesses when entering school to support the learning process at school, not only in terms of cognitive abilities but also in terms of social, emotional, and behavioral skills. Many research studies have shown the connection between a child's school readiness and academic success (See Gregory et al., 2021; Duncan et al., 2017; Guhn et al., 2016). Additionally, Bassok & Latham (2017) also indicate that early academic skills are strong predictors of future educational outcomes.

Furthermore, Fayez, Ahmad, Oliemat (2016) state that there are two factors related to a child's school readiness: the child's readiness to learn, which refers to their readiness to receive education. This is typically marked by the attainment of certain developmental milestones considered necessary for future school success, such as a certain age at which a child is deemed ready to enter school. The second factor is related to the skills or abilities a child possesses for success in school. School readiness-related abilities are highly influenced by the child's environment, including family members, friends, teachers, and the community, making it essential for the community to support and encourage the child's learning process (Maxwell & Clifford, 2004 as cited in Vanover, 2017).

A child's school readiness doesn't happen overnight. The role of those around the child is crucial in helping the child acquire the necessary skills to enter elementary school. The preparation process begins early, not just when the child reaches the age to enter elementary school. Therefore, it's important to understand how parents perceive their child's readiness to enter elementary school. Knowing this can serve as a reference or guideline for early childhood education practitioners in guiding and assisting parents in preparing their children for elementary school. This research aims to explore the perceptions of parents with children in elementary school regarding school readiness and the aspects they consider important when their child enters elementary school.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

School readiness has different meanings depending on the perspective adopted. Meisels (1998) states that there are four viewpoints related to school readiness, namely the idealist/nativist view, the environmental view, the social constructivist view, and the interactionist view. The idealist/nativist view refers to the perspective that a child is ready for school when they reach a certain level of maturity, enabling them to sit still, focus on tasks, interact well with their peers, and understand instructions. On the other hand, the environmental view focuses on the behaviors exhibited by the child. This perspective emphasizes what a child can do and how they behave. A child's readiness depends on the skills and knowledge they possess, making it important for parents/teachers to facilitate these abilities. Furthermore, the social constructivist view relates to community readiness, where the community/environment has values and expectations regarding the child's abilities,

such as age, gender, and preschool experience. Readiness depends on the child's environment/community/school.

The last perspective, the interactionist view, sees school readiness as a two-way process, involving both the child's current abilities and the school's capacity to meet the needs of the students states that there are three important qualities that children need to be ready for school: intellectual ability, motivation to learn, and the extent of social-emotional capacity and support. Meanwhile, Kokkalia & Drigas (2019) suggest that school readiness refers to the child's development, school readiness itself, and family and community readiness. School readiness consists of multiple factors, including the child's behavior, child development, and cognitive skills (Forget-Dubois et al., 2009, as cited in Serry et al., 2013). Research findings indicate that children who possess school readiness are better equipped to adapt and engage in learning at school. However, the specific characteristics needed to assist children in transitioning to school are not yet fully clear (Niklas, 2011).

Children who are ready for school will exhibit positive characteristics, such as self-confidence, comfort in school even without parental presence, curiosity, motivation to learn, and high social skills for interacting with peers and adults (Pacey, 2013 as cited in Rahmawati, Tairas, Nawangsari, 2018). Moreover, these children are also more likely to succeed in completing their education in secondary school, secure employment, and make positive contributions to society (Doherty, 1997). On the contrary, children who are not school-ready are at a higher risk of grade retention, requiring school assistance, and dropping out of school (Doherty, 1997).

C. METHOD

This research is descriptive quantitative research with survey research. The subjects of this research were parents who had 116 grade 1 or grade 2 elementary school children from the cities of Padang, Padang Panjang, Bukittinggi, and Sawahlunto, West Sumatra. The basis for selecting elementary school parents as research subjects was because these parents already had experience accompanying their children entering elementary school so they had knowledge related to the ability to support their children's school readiness.

The research instrument for this study is a questionnaire that explores parents' perceptions of their child's school readiness. The questionnaire consists of open-ended questions, allowing the subjects the freedom to provide answers based on their understanding. There are five questions posed to explore parents' perceptions of their child's readiness to enter elementary school, namely: What do parents know about their child's school readiness?; 2) How important is the preparation for a child entering elementary school according to parents and why?; 3) What are the necessary qualities or attributes a child should have to enter elementary school?; 4) What steps do parents take to prepare their child for entering elementary school?; 5) What are the primary criteria schools consider when admitting students to elementary school?

The data collection process was conducted both online and offline. The researcher distributed questionnaires directly to schools and shared questionnaire

links through social media. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the researcher provided an explanation of the informed consent regarding this research, including the research objectives, estimated completion time, and the subjects' freedom to participate in the study. Additionally, a reward in the form of mobile phone credit was offered as an expression of gratitude for the subjects' participation in this research.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this research, we aim to understand how parents of elementary school children perceive their child's school readiness. From the data analysis of the research, the following results were obtained:

1. What Parents Know about School Readiness

   What Parents Know about School Readiness presented in the following data:

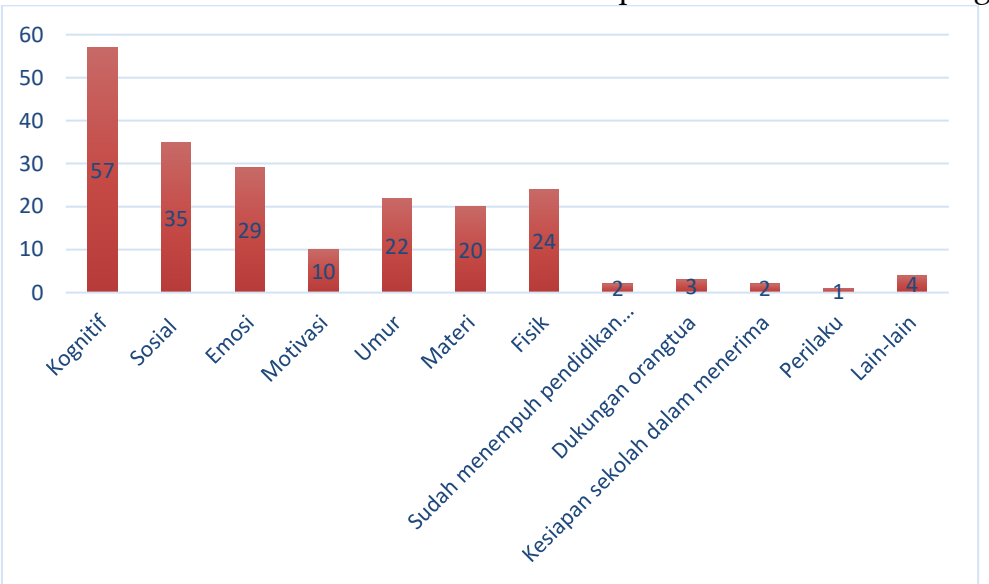


Figure 1. Parental Understanding Regarding School Readiness

From the table above, it can be seen that the cognitive aspect is the most frequently mentioned aspect by parents regarding school readiness. A total of 57 individuals stated that school readiness is related to cognitive abilities. Following that, there are mentions of social skills (38 individuals), emotional skills (29 individuals), physical readiness (24 individuals), age (22 individuals), curriculum (20 individuals), motivation (10 individuals). The remaining responses included school readiness being related to parental support, school readiness itself, behavior, and prior education before elementary school.

2. How Important is it for Children to Prepare to Enter Elementary School?

   How important is it for children to prepare to enter elementary school presented in the following data



Figure 2. How important is school readiness according to parents

From the figure above, it can be seen that 84% of parents consider school readiness to be very important for children entering elementary school. Meanwhile, 11% find it important, and 1% find it somewhat important. This indicates that parents, in general, perceive school readiness as a highly important aspect for a child before entering elementary school. The reasons given for why school readiness is very important/important are:

Table 1. Reason given for why school readiness

Very Important/Important Reasons Regarding School Readiness	F
So that children are able to meet the demands of education at school	83
So that children can adapt	17
So that children are emotionally ready	3
So that children are motivated to go to school	3
etc.	10
Total	**116**

From the table, it can be observed that the majority of parents consider school readiness important because it supports the child's readiness to attend elementary school and helps them succeed in elementary education (83 individuals). The second most common reason is that school readiness is important for the child's adjustment to school (17 individuals), followed by ensuring the child is motivated for school and emotionally prepared, each mentioned by 3 individuals.

3. Things that Children Must Have when Entering Elementary School

Things that children must have when entering elementary school presented in the following data:

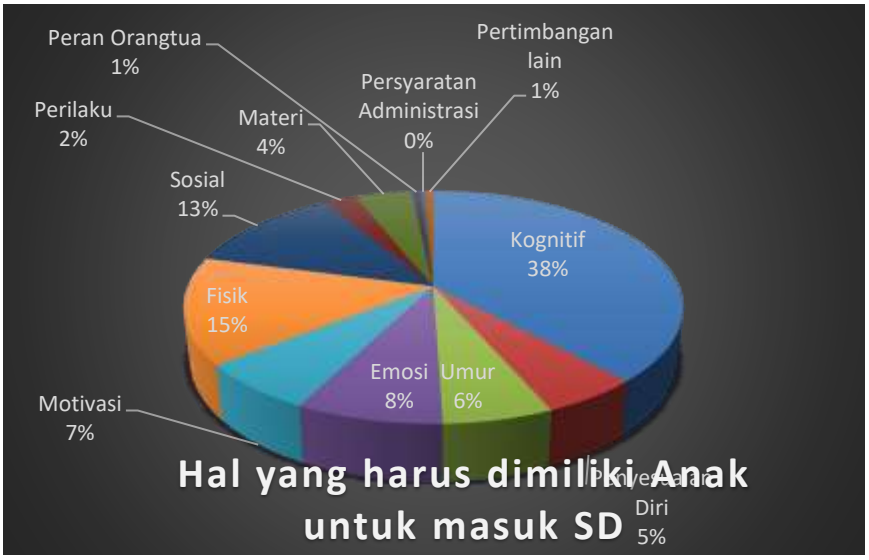


Figure 3. Things that Parents Think Children Must Have to Enter Elementary School

From Figure 2, it can be seen that the majority of parents indicate that the cognitive aspect is the ability that children should possess when entering elementary school. Cognitive abilities include reading, mathematical skills, memorization, language skills, and the ability to read the Quran. Among these cognitive abilities, the ability to read is the most frequently mentioned by parents as a skill that children should have when entering elementary school.

Table 2. Things Parents Do to Prepare Their Children to Enter Elementary School

What parents do to prepare their children to enter elementary school	f
Cognitive Ability	
Children know letters	13
Children know numbers	9
Teaching religious knowledge	2
Preparing children's academics	1
Teaching material to children	1
Teaches basic concepts to children	1
Counting	14
Reading	22
Language	1
Total	64
Social skills	
Children's independence	6
Teaching children to socialize	8
Teaching children to care about others	1
Total	15
Emotion	
Preparing children mentally	13
Preparing children's emotions	2

Total	15
Physique	
Motor maturity	2
Writing	14
Prepare children physically	4
Total	20
Age	
School age	1
Adaptation	
Teach children to adapt to the school environment	3
Introducing school to children	7
Total	10
Costs and Equipment	
School Supplies	25
Preparing school fees	17
Total	42
Motivation	
Give encouragement to children	5
Provide support so that children are confident	3
School motivation	1
Give direction to children	10
Establishing communication with children	1
Total	20
Behavior	
Teaching behavior	1
Give responsibility to children	3
Child discipline	1
Total	5
Enter the tutoring place	
Sending children to tutoring places	11
Sending children to Kindergarten	
Sending children to Kindergarten	18
Implementing health protocols	
Implementing health protocols	2
Others	5
Others	5



Figure 4. Things Parents Do to Prepare Their Children to Enter Elementary School

From the figure, it can be observed that 30% of parents state that the cognitive aspect is what they most frequently prepare their children for when entering elementary school. This includes teaching children to read and do math. Additionally, financial aspects and supplies are also part of the preparations made by parents. They mention that financial readiness is necessary for entering elementary school. Interestingly, 9% of parents enroll their children in tutoring or extra classes to prepare them for entering elementary school.

4. Basic Considerations for Schools when Accepting Students to Enter Elementary School

Basic considerations for schools when accepting students to enter elementary school presented in the following data:

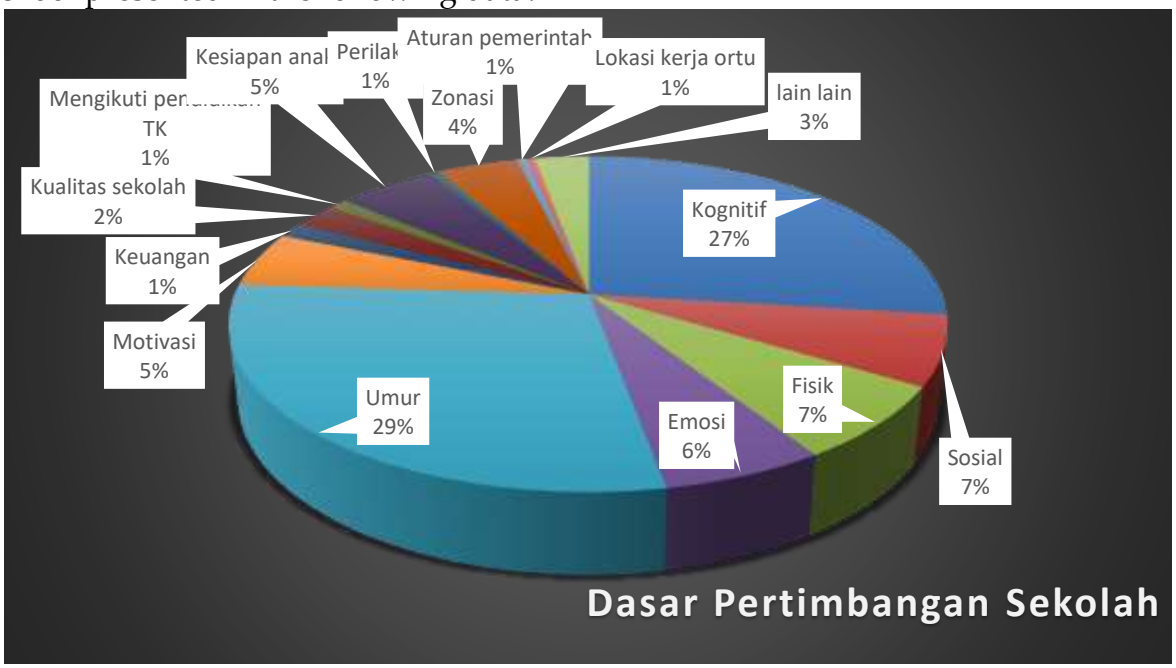


Figure 3. Basic Considerations

For the fundamental question of school considerations, age is the most frequently mentioned aspect (29%). It is followed by the cognitive aspect (27%), social and physical aspects, each with 7%, emotional aspect with 6%, and the rest are varied.

School readiness is a crucial factor in helping children adapt to the demands of their education in the future. This research aims to examine the perceptions of parents who have children in elementary school (Grade 1/Grade 2) regarding school readiness. The research findings indicate that the majority of parents believe that school readiness is highly important for children before entering elementary school. Several reasons were provided by parents to support this perspective, including the belief that school readiness enables children to meet the educational requirements, adapt, be emotionally prepared, and motivated for school. This demonstrates that parents are aware of the importance of school readiness and understand its role in their child's education process.

Furthermore, the cognitive aspect is the aspect most frequently associated by parents with school readiness. Subsequently, social skills, emotional skills, physical readiness, age, material readiness (financial preparedness and facilities), and child motivation are mentioned. In line with this, when asked about the abilities that children should have when entering elementary school, the cognitive aspect is also the most commonly mentioned. This indicates that for the majority of parents, school readiness is closely linked to cognitive abilities. Cognitive abilities such as recognizing numbers and letters, counting, reading, grasping concepts, and language skills are considered as key components of a child's school readiness. This aligns with the findings of the study by Rahmawati, Tairas & Nawangsari (2018), which also found that cognitive abilities are perceived by parents as crucial in a child's school readiness. Furthermore, within the cognitive aspect, reading skills are the most frequently mentioned. This may be because reading is an activity that children will encounter frequently and is highly essential for understanding study materials.

Another aspect that parents consider related to school readiness is social skills. These skills involve teaching children to interact and build good relationships with peers and teachers. Independence is also perceived as a component of school readiness. Furthermore, physical abilities, especially writing skills, are mentioned by many parents as something children should possess.

However, different results were obtained when parents were asked about their personal opinion on what should be the basis for schools in accepting students into elementary school. A total of 29% of parents answered that age should be the primary consideration for schools. This was followed by the cognitive aspect, with most of the focus on reading and counting abilities. The significance of cognitive abilities led parents to facilitate these skills to prepare their children for elementary school. Teaching children to read and count was the most frequently mentioned activity by parents. Besides facilities and financial preparation, 9% of parents even enroll their children in tutoring centers to teach them reading and writing to prepare them for elementary school.

This may be because parents often have specific schools in mind for their children. These favored schools typically have a selective admissions process, where only children who pass the selection criteria are admitted. Some schools require reading skills as one of the criteria, so parents enroll their children in tutoring to teach them to read, hoping that this skill will increase their chances of being accepted into those schools. Additionally, some parents believe that current academic demands require children to be able to read before entering elementary school. If a child cannot read, they may have difficulty keeping up with the curriculum at school. Although the education curriculum in Indonesia for early childhood education only introduces reading, writing, and counting, current demands have led early childhood education teachers to teach these skills to ensure that children are ready for elementary school.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that school readiness is a crucial factor in elementary-level education, and parents have a strong understanding of its importance. The research findings indicate that the majority of parents consider school readiness, especially in cognitive aspects such as reading, counting, and conceptual understanding, to be highly crucial. Additionally, social skills, independence, and physical abilities are also seen as important. While some parents view age as the basis for school considerations, many emphasize the child's cognitive abilities as the primary factor. This may be related to the competition for admission to certain favored schools that require children to have reading skills before enrolling. Therefore, parents' understanding of school readiness encompasses various aspects that reflect the importance of preparing children before entering elementary education.

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