

Analysis of The Impact of Late Arrival at School on The Focus Of Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

Delayed attendance at the Early Childhood Education (ECE) level is often regarded as merely an administrative issue, whereas it has the potential to disrupt children's cognitive stability during the golden age. This study aims to analyze the impact of lateness on children's learning focus at TK Negeri Pembina Ngadirojo. Using a descriptive qualitative method with a purposive sampling technique, the study focuses observations on two subjects with the highest levels of lateness. The research findings, obtained through a questionnaire instrument, indicate that lateness is predominantly influenced by internal factors (scores 12–15), such as poor time management due to gadget use, compared to external factors (scores 6–8). Observational findings confirm that lateness triggers a phenomenon of "attention interruption," in which children lose the momentum of initial apperception, resulting in reduced concentration throughout the learning process. This study contributes to the development of score-based intervention strategies for ECE educators to mitigate dysfunctions in domestic routines from an early stage.

Keywords: Early Childhood, School Lateness, Learning Focus, Early Childhood Education.

I. Introduction

School is a central formal educational institution in constructing character and improving the intellectual quality of children. Referring to Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003, education is defined as a planned effort to build a learning ecosystem that enables learners to actively develop their spiritual potential, self-control, and intelligence (Simanjorang & Naibaho, 2023). To achieve these goals, schools implement regulations and rules as instruments of behavioral control to internalize the value of discipline among all members of the school community. According to Nuriyah, school regulations are a set of binding rules that include obligations as well as sanctions for violators (Taha, 2021). Nevertheless, the reality in the field shows that disciplinary violations, particularly lateness, remain a persistent problem that requires an educational approach rather than merely formal punishment (Pratiwi, 2025). This phenomenon of lateness becomes highly crucial when it occurs in Early Childhood (EC), who are in the golden age period. Within the age range of 0–5 years, children's brain, physical, and emotional development occurs very rapidly, so disruptions in attendance rhythm can directly affect the stability of their focus in classroom learning. The impact of this behavior cannot be ignored; in the short term, children may experience obstacles in the Teaching and Learning Process (TLP) and difficulty concentrating, while in the long term, it may lead to decreased developmental achievement and potential unpreparedness for grade progression (Febriyanti, 2024).

The problem of lateness is triggered by two main interrelated factors, namely a) Internal factors: Factors originating from within the child, including weak time management (inability to regulate sleep patterns and morning preparation), low learning motivation, and irregular sleep patterns due to nighttime activities. In addition, aspects such as lack of self-discipline, psychological/emotional disturbances such as anxiety, and declining health conditions also contribute to delaying children's readiness to go to school on



time. b) External factors: Factors originating from the external environment, including dysfunctional family supervision (parents not habituating early waking routines), transportation constraints (traffic or distance), and social environmental influences from peers. In addition, household economic conditions that require children to assist parents, unpredictable weather conditions, and school operational hour policies that are too early also play a role. Several previous studies, such as that conducted by Priscilia Febriyanti (2024), describe the factors underlying late school attendance behavior at SMK Hatawana. Another study by Heronima Ghogha et al. (2023) analyzes the factors causing school lateness and its impact on learning outcomes. Although various studies have discussed children's focus, learning readiness, and factors of student lateness, there are still limited studies that directly link lateness behavior with its impact on early childhood focus.

Based on the above description, it is important to conduct research analyzing the impact of school lateness on the focus of Early Childhood (EC). This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions, especially for teachers and parents in understanding the importance of time discipline as a supporting factor in optimizing children's focus and readiness. Furthermore, it can serve as a basis for designing more effective learning strategies and classroom management to improve the quality of early childhood education.

II. Literature Review

Early childhood is a critical developmental period in which physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects grow rapidly and interact with one another. Research shows that fundamental motor skills (FMS), such as balance, coordination, and locomotor abilities, develop alongside cognitive functions including attention, self-regulation, and working memory (Logan et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2016). This indicates that children's physical development cannot be separated from their ability to focus and participate effectively in learning activities. Gross motor development plays a crucial role in supporting children's overall learning readiness. Early childhood is considered a foundational stage for acquiring motor skills, which later influence academic performance and cognitive outcomes (Barnett et al., 2016). Furthermore, interventions involving physical activity and motor skill development have been found to positively affect children's cognitive and academic abilities, particularly in preschool-aged children (Donnelly et al., 2016; Zeng et al., 2017). This suggests that learning approaches integrating movement such as dance can enhance both physical and cognitive domains simultaneously.

In addition, several studies highlight the close relationship between motor performance and executive functioning in early childhood. Executive functions, including attention control, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility, are essential for maintaining focus during learning (Diamond, 2016). Motor activities that involve coordination and rhythm have been shown to stimulate these executive processes, thereby improving children's ability to concentrate and follow instructions (Pesce et al., 2019). Similarly, physical fitness components such as agility and speed are associated with better working memory and attention outcomes in preschool children (Willoughby et al., 2017). Another important aspect influencing children's development is movement behavior, including physical activity, sedentary behavior, and sleep. Balanced movement behaviors contribute positively to motor development, emotional regulation, and cognitive performance in young children (Carson et al., 2017). In contrast, irregular routines such as inconsistent sleep patterns can hinder motor and cognitive development, ultimately affecting children's readiness and focus in school settings (Chaput et al., 2016). This is relevant to the issue of school lateness, as disrupted routines often correlate with reduced concentration and learning engagement.

Environmental factors also play a significant role in shaping children's motor and cognitive development. Opportunities for active play, including outdoor and structured physical activities, enhance gross motor skills and overall development in early childhood (Tandon et al., 2016). Moreover, early childhood education settings play a crucial role in promoting physical activity and reducing sedentary behavior, both of which are associated with better developmental outcomes (Pate et al., 2016). This highlights the importance of designing engaging and movement-based learning environments in schools. In the context of learning focus, self-regulation and executive function development are key determinants. Interventions targeting self-regulation in preschool settings have demonstrated effectiveness in improving children's attention, behavior control, and learning engagement (Pandey et al., 2018). These findings support the idea that structured, interactive, and challenge-based learning approaches can enhance children's motivation and participation, ultimately improving their focus during classroom activities.

Overall, the literature indicates that children's motor development, physical activity, and daily routines are closely interconnected with their cognitive functions and learning focus. However, while many

studies have examined motor skills, executive function, and learning readiness, limited research directly explores the impact of behavioral factors such as school lateness on early childhood focus. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing how lateness affects children's concentration and learning engagement, particularly within the context of early childhood education.

III. Method

The research method used in this study is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. This study aims to understand phenomena related to everything experienced by the research subjects (Moleong, 2016). Qualitative research seeks to describe phenomena in accordance with the research focus, namely students' behavior of arriving late at school. The descriptive method in this study includes observation, interviews, and data analysis, supported by additional data in the form of attendance records, academic history, and observations of students' behavior at school. This research was conducted at TK Negeri Pembina Ngadirojo, located at Jalan Raya Lorok Km 41, Ngadirojo District, Pacitan Regency, East Java Province. Data collection was carried out through interviews with classroom teachers and students who frequently arrived late over a two-week period, from April 6, 2026, to April 17, 2026, using a purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which participants are selected from the total population based on specific considerations, criteria, or objectives relevant to the research. Furthermore, classroom behavior was observed through questionnaires completed by the classroom teacher. Finally, all collected data, including additional data, were analyzed using triangulation techniques.

IV. Results and Discussion

This study involved a population of 52 students at TK Negeri Pembina Ngadirojo; however, the in-depth analysis focused on two specific subjects, namely Student C and Student K. The selection was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, in which both subjects demonstrated the highest intensity of tardiness compared to other students during the ten-day observation period. When interviewed, the first student, identified as C, arrived late to school due to poor time management caused by excessive mobile phone use that extended beyond bedtime, resulting in the morning starting later than usual. The second student, identified as K, arrived late due to low learning motivation; at times, the student felt reluctant to wake up early, and despite persuasion from parents, still attended school although arriving late. In addition, there were interview results with the classroom teacher when these students arrived late. Student C is a child with special needs. As a classroom teacher, it is understood that before participating in learning, the student needs time to play first. Therefore, when Student C arrives at school, the student plays briefly outside the classroom until ready to engage in learning activities, accompanied by a teaching assistant. Depending on mood, the student may sometimes refuse to enter the classroom altogether. Consequently, to ensure the student receives the same learning as classmates, tasks and learning activities are conducted outside the classroom with the assistant teacher.

Student K, on the other hand, is adaptive; therefore, upon entering the classroom, the student immediately joins the ongoing lesson. If there is something not understood, Student K personally asks the classroom teacher about the worksheet or material due to feeling shy toward peers. The classroom teacher patiently re-explains the material, recognizing that the student missed the initial part of the lesson. The teacher also consistently provides motivation to discourage the habit of arriving late to school. To analyze the research data, supporting data such as attendance records and questionnaires were required. Attendance records over 10 school days indicate that Student C was present every day, while Student K was absent once due to illness. The following is the recap of the questionnaire completed by each classroom teacher. Recap of questionnaire on children's tardiness in arriving at school:

Table 1 Questionnaire Summary

No	Type Of Factor	Student C	
		Student C	Student K
Internal Factors			
1	The child has difficulty waking up on time.	3	3
2	The child sleeps late at night, making it hard to wake up.	3	2
3	The child lacks enthusiasm for going to school.	1	3

4	The child often delays while getting ready.	2	2
5	The child feels anxious/lazy about going to school.	1	3
6	The child is often sick/fatigued, causing lateness.	2	2
Total Score		12	15
External Factors			
1	Parents are inconsistent in waking the child.	1	1
2	The child must help with household chores before leaving.	1	1
3	Transportation issues (traffic, long distance, delays).	1	2
4	Weather conditions (rain, flooding, extreme heat).	2	2
5	Peer influence (following others in being late).	1	2
Total Score		6	8

Based on the established score categories, the recapitulation of the questionnaire instrument reveals a significant difference between the influence of internal and external factors on students' tardiness patterns. The findings indicate that internal factors are more dominant, with Student K obtaining a score of 15 and Student C a score of 12, placing them in the moderate to high tardiness category. This suggests that the primary causes of lateness are related to poor morning time management and low learning motivation. In contrast, external factors show relatively low scores, ranging from 6 to 8, indicating that environmental aspects such as weather conditions, transportation issues, or distance from home are not the main contributors to tardiness. Therefore, these results imply that the most appropriate intervention should focus on behavioral modification within the family environment, particularly in improving children's time management, rather than solely relying on adjustments to school administrative policies. The findings regarding the influence of nighttime gadget use duration (Student C) and motivational fluctuations (Student K) are consistent with the argument of Hudaya (2018), who states that digital activity before sleep can distort children's circadian rhythms, thereby reducing their physical and mental readiness in the morning. This reinforces the proposition that discipline in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is highly dependent on external structure and control applied within family parenting patterns.

Furthermore, classroom observations revealed a phenomenon of cognitive attention interruption. Children who arrive late miss the "apperception" stage or opening activities, resulting in a transition shock when entering an ongoing learning process. In contrast to the study by Astuti & Lestari (2020), which examines self-management in adolescents, this research shows that at the ECE level, tardiness more often triggers social anxiety and desynchronization of learning rhythms. These findings also extend the study of Febriyanti (2024) by highlighting that for children with special needs (Student C), tardiness can become a serious barrier to inclusion and social adaptation in the classroom. The results of this study confirm that tardiness in ECE is a strong indicator of dysfunction in daily routines. Preventive efforts require strengthening collaboration between schools and parents through education on the importance of regulated screen time. Without synchronization of routines between home and school, stimulation during the golden age will not reach optimal potential, as children's focus is already disrupted by psychological pressure caused by early morning tardiness.

V. Conclusion

Based on data analysis and observations conducted at TK Negeri Pembina Ngadirojo, this study concludes the following empirical findings: a. The results indicate that tardiness in the subjects (Student C and Student K) is significantly more influenced by internal factors than external ones. Internal factor scores ranging from 12–15 show that poor time management due to prolonged nighttime smartphone use and low motivation to wake up early are the main causes, compared to external factor scores (6–8) such as transportation or weather conditions. b. Tardiness has been proven to hinder the stability of children's learning focus due to the disruption of readiness rhythms at the beginning of the day. Children who arrive late lose the momentum of emotional and cognitive "warm-up" activities (such as morning prayers and apperception), resulting in unstable attention and requiring longer adaptation time when entering ongoing learning activities. c. Specifically for students with special needs (Student C), tardiness increases dependence on individual assistance outside the classroom, which indirectly hampers the effectiveness of social adaptation with peers in the classroom. d. This study provides a practical contribution through the development of a Score-Based Questionnaire Recapitulation instrument. This instrument can be implemented by ECE educators to map the urgency levels of student tardiness, allowing for more measurable and targeted

intervention strategies.

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