

KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' DIFFICULTIES IN DEVELOPING EARLY CHILDHOOD ATTENTION SKILLS IN PADANG CITY

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Abstract

Attention ability is important for young children because it helps them develop well, especially academically. However, based on phenomena in the field, it can be seen that children's attention skills are still not optimal; this is caused by various things, including a lack of stimulation provided by the environment, such as teachers. This research aims to determine kindergarten teachers' difficulties developing children's attention skills from an early age. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method where the researcher describes what obstacles kindergarten teachers have in developing the attention skills of children aged 5–6 years. Data analysis includes data reduction, display, and conclusion. The research results show that the obstacles for kindergarten teachers when developing attention skills for children aged 5–6 years lie in the teacher's lack of understanding about the importance of attention skills from an early age and planning learning activities. Teachers have difficulty designing activities suitable for developing attention skills in children aged 5–6. This difficulty also causes problems in implementation and evaluation, so the attention skills of children aged 5–6 years in kindergarten cannot develop well. It can be concluded that the difficulty teachers have in developing attention for children aged 5–6 years lies in the teacher's lack of understanding, which results in them being unable to design, implement, and evaluate children's attention skills well.

Keywords: Teacher Difficulties, Attention Skills, Early Childhood Education, Cognitive Development, Educational Intervention.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a diamond that must be looked after well because children are a very valuable asset for parents, religion, and the nation. Early childhood is also an individual's development and growth stage (Ariyanti, 2016). At the beginning of birth, children experience very rapid development. Therefore, the care provided by parents is important for the child's growth and development in the future (Sumiyati, 2012). The presence of a child is also a dream for all parents because the child will be the next generation in various aspects of human life. So, parents and teachers around children need to pay close attention to their children's growth and development and provide the proper stimulation to help them grow and develop optimally in their various aspects.

Stimulation and strategies are things that early childhood needs in order to develop optimally. Stimulation is also expected to optimize all the basic aspects in children, so extensive knowledge and skills are needed in planning and choosing the proper stimulation to help accelerate the basic aspects children need. Therefore, strategy is important in the learning process. Strategies in early childhood learning are all forms of efforts made by teachers in applying several methods to achieve a learning goal,

as well as general patterns involving the actions of teachers and children to realize teaching and learning activities (Nuraeni, 2014)

This teaching and learning activity can take place within the school environment. The school environment is the second part of stimulating children after parents (Shofiah & Raudatussalamah, 2014; Wardani, 2020). Teachers are the spearheads who help optimize basic abilities (Hazizah, 2019a; Rahayu, 2018). For this reason, teachers must provide extensive knowledge regarding how to stimulate children, what basic aspects must be properly stimulated at the beginning of a child's life, and strategies and approaches suitable for children. Therefore, teachers must be one step ahead and constantly update and upgrade their knowledge and know-how in providing stimulation and education to children. It is limited to providing knowledge, and teachers must also develop all the potential in children (Slamet, 2020).

Attention ability is important for teachers to pay attention to and optimize from an early age. Based on the developmental theory of Piaget (Anggia et al., 2020; Atabik & Burhanuddin, 2016; Hazizah, 2019b), other experts say that one of the characteristics of early childhood is having low attention skills. When children experience concentration disorders, they tend to move quickly to other activities in the learning process. This is what makes children lag behind their friends. This is something that teachers must pay attention to in order to prioritize getting stimulation because improving the child's attention skills from an early age helps the child be ready to take part in further levels of education.

A developing phenomenon is that teachers and parents focus more on children's reading, writing, and arithmetic skills so that children are ready to learn, let alone master other abilities (ali et al., 2024; Delyana et al., 2024). Helping children focus their attention optimally will make it easier for them to master various competencies and other skills. For this reason, teachers and parents must pay attention to the level of early childhood education and know which aspects should be prioritized to stimulate children.

Teachers seem to ignore the fact that attention skills are crucial for children. Attention requires practice and consistency in developing it; if teachers and parents ignore this, many children will experience difficulties in developing their potential and participating in both academic and non-academic activities (Aisyah, 2013; Ismaniar, 2018a; Education, Culture, and Indonesia, 2014; Ismaniar & Hazizah, 2019; Thew et al.).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ismaniar (2018a) stated that the ability to concentrate attention is the child's ability to participate in activities that involve the child physically and mentally for quite a long time. Attention has a very crucial function in a child's development, according to Gall et al. (2003), helping children to be able to control and regulate the way they think. This is very important for children in developing better and maximum cognitive abilities, where children can optimize all aspects of their cognition, such as analytical and problem-solving abilities, from an early age (Fatwikingasih nd; Setianingsih nd).

Attention is the same as the child's concentration in the learning process. Learning concentration is the ability to focus attention on learning. According to Pratiwi and Nur (2017), concentration focuses attention on an object. When a child's attention is focused on the ongoing learning process without doing other things, this is called learning concentration (Eleti et al., 2021). When a child cannot concentrate on the

learning process, the child cannot enjoy the process. Therefore, attention is very important; when the child is focused on doing an activity, the child will not experience difficulties in the learning process.

The teacher's ability to develop and provide appropriate stimulation determines early childhood *attentional abilities*. Teachers must have a broad enough understanding to be innovative in developing teaching and learning activities for early childhood (Abu Bakar, 2013; Novelia & Hazizah, 2020; Rosida et al., 2013). However, many teachers still experience difficulties and limited knowledge in developing learning activities for early childhood, which can influence the stimulation of children and practical learning activities.

Educating young children is neither easy nor very difficult; however, if the stimulation provided is inappropriate, it will cause problems for the child, both developmentally and mentally, affecting subsequent development. So teachers are genuinely prepared with adequate knowledge, especially regarding the characteristics of child development, good pedagogical skills, and other skills that are considered important and support their professionalism in pursuing a career as educators (Nurlela & Amelia, 2021; Richardo, 2016)

METHOD

This article uses a quantitative method through a survey approach, with a population of PAUD teachers in Padang City, and data collection techniques using questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire given to respondents was in the form of a questionnaire using "yes" and "no" answers; the results obtained were processed using the Arikunto percentage formula (Tambusai, 2020). The following research instruments were used:

Table 1: Research Instruments

NO	Instrument Components	Statement Items
1	Teacher knowledge of <i>attention</i>	Do you know about the urgency of developing early childhood <i>attention</i> ?
		Do you know about aspects of early childhood <i>attention skills</i> ?
2	Teachers' difficulties in designing learning activities to develop <i>attention</i>	Are you having difficulty including <i>attention development</i> in the RPPH?
		Are you having difficulty developing learning activities to stimulate <i>attention</i> ?
3	Teachers' difficulties in carrying out learning activities to develop <i>attention</i>	<i>Ability-oriented</i> learning activities?
		Do you experience problems stimulating your child's <i>attention</i> when studying and participating in designed activities?
4	Teachers' difficulties in determining instruments for assessing and evaluating <i>attention development</i>	Are you experiencing problems determining the instrument for assessing children's <i>attentional development</i> ?
		Do you experience obstacles in assessing the development of children's <i>attention skills</i> ?

The teacher questionnaire used a dichotomous questionnaire with two answers, "yes" and "no." The data obtained is calculated using the Arikunto percentage formula (Ranti, 2019).

$$N = \frac{f}{n} \times 100$$

Teachers' obstacles in developing attention skills in early childhood use the following categories;

Table 2: Categories of Teacher Constraints

No	Percentage	Comprehension Category
1	< 21%	Very low
2	21%–40%	Low
3	41%–60%	High Enough
4	60%-80%	Tall
5	81%-100%	Very high

RESULTS

The instrument used to measure and determine teacher difficulties was first carried out with a validation test using SPSS using a significance value (P-value). An instrument can be considered valid if the Sig value is <0.05, and if the test results have a Sig value >0.05, it can be concluded that the instrument used is invalid. Meanwhile, to test reliability, use the testing criteria from Sugiyono, which is said to be reliable with a Cronbach Alpha value > 0.05. Based on the test results, there is a *Cronbach Alpha* result of 0.660, which states that the questionnaire is reliable.

The results that researchers obtained in the field found that children's *attention skills* were not developing optimally. Optimizing the development of this aspect is influenced by the teacher. Based on the results of a survey conducted by researchers in the field, the following results were obtained:

Table 3: Research Results

NO	Instrument Components	Results/%
1	Teacher knowledge of <i>attention</i>	59 %
2	Teachers' difficulties in designing learning activities for attention development	59 %
3	Teachers' difficulties in implementing learning activities to develop attention	61 %
4	Teachers' difficulties in determining instruments for assessing and evaluating attention development	69 %

Table 2 shows the results of a survey conducted in the field with teachers to determine teachers' understanding and difficulties in developing *attention skills* in children. The data showed that 59% of the teachers who filled out the questionnaire had low knowledge about *attention*. In component 2, 59% of teachers experienced difficulties designing learning activities. There is also a large number in component 3, namely 61% of teachers who experience difficulties carrying out learning activities for developing *attention*. Furthermore, in component 4, 69% of teachers experience difficulty determining instruments for assessing and evaluating *attention development*.

Data collected through interviews with PAUD teachers showed that many teachers experienced difficulties developing children's attention skills. The interviews found that starting with teachers' minimal understanding and knowledge of the importance of *attention* from an early age, they experienced difficulties in planning, implementing, and determining instruments for assessing the development of *attention skills* in schools. This causes teacher activities to be less than optimal in stimulating *attention skills*, so many children are less ready to take part in learning activities at the higher education level.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this research, kindergarten teachers in Padang City have difficulty assisting their students, who are between the ages of five and six, in developing their attentional abilities. According to studies, there are considerable gaps in teachers' awareness of the relevance of attention skills and their critical role in supporting early cognitive development and preparation for learning (Hazizah, 2019b; Nuraeni, 2014). These gaps are associated with instructors not being well prepared to teach. As a result of a lack of theoretical understanding, it would seem that teachers' capabilities are undermined in various areas of practice.

Activities that are designed to develop attentional abilities, such as sustained concentration, filtering out distractions, persisting on tasks, and cognitive flexibility, have proven to be challenging for many educators when it comes to the preparation of curriculum and the design of instructional materials (Nuraeni, 2014; Rosida et al., 2013). Teachers who do not completely understand the role that attention plays in the domains of attention, self-regulation, and larger executive functions may not be able to prioritize and systematically cultivate competencies such as attention, self-regulation, and bigger executive functions. Due to the fact that attentional abilities are interconnected with other aspects of development, early childhood education should adopt a holistic and integrated approach (Abu Bakar, 2013).

Even for teachers aware of the advantages of attentional skill nurturing, the fast-paced and stimulus-rich environment of a kindergarten classroom may make it very challenging to use the skill consistently. In addition to other pedagogical responsibilities, such as managing a class of busy young children, addressing individual needs, transitioning from one activity to another, and using attention-building strategies, the interviews revealed that instructors often find it challenging to do so (Shofiah & Raudatussalamah, 2014). Possessing professional classroom management abilities to offer students opportunities to practice paying attention in complicated surroundings is necessary.

The evaluation and monitoring of the attentional development of young children is another difficulty that many kindergarten teachers have to deal with. Due to the fact that teachers are not well-versed in the appropriate assessment techniques for attentional capacities, it is difficult for them to evaluate the development of their pupils, identify attention deficits or specific needs, and change courses based on their findings. When there is a lack of precise information on every child's attentional baseline and growth trajectory, it becomes a significant problem to provide individualized and adaptive help.

The significance of these findings lies in the fact that there is an urgent need for comprehensive programs that aim to enhance the professional capabilities of kindergarten teachers in attentional development. The importance of robust training programs for pre-service and in-service teachers cannot be overstated. These programs should cover topics such as the theory that underpins attention, how it functions in the learning process, how to teach in a manner that is appropriate for the developmental stage of students, and how to conduct real assessments (Novelia & Hazizah, 2020; Richardo, 2016). Teachers who have a strong understanding of this vital subject are in a better position to direct their pupils toward developing this essential cognitive ability.

In his article from 2020, Slamet claims that kindergarten teachers should have access to complete instructional resources such as curriculum, activity guides, and technology that are especially intended to boost children's attentional skills via interactive and multi-modal techniques. Teachers can get additional assistance via classroom coaching and communities of practice as they endeavor to use attention-building strategies in the demanding environment of a kindergarten classroom. If kindergarten teachers want to keep their abilities current and up-to-date, they need access to high-quality professional development opportunities that concentrate on the most recent discoveries in attention research and effective teaching approaches. This is the last, but not the least, need.

If we adopt a comprehensive approach to assisting kindergarten teachers in improving their attentional abilities, we can help children reach their full academic and personal potential by helping them become focused and self-regulated learners. Investing in teachers' knowledge, resources, and competencies in this area is an important investment that can be made to ensure the cognitive foundation and overall welfare of young students.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the issues Padang City kindergarten teachers have in helping their five- to six-year-old students develop their attentional abilities. The results showed that teachers do not know enough about attention skills, how to incorporate them into lesson plans and classroom management, how to consistently implement these strategies despite their many demands, and what evaluation tools to use. These factors make it tougher for teachers to assist youngsters in acquiring the attentional skills needed for brain development, emotional control, and learning preparedness. We must assist instructors improve in this area to help many students succeed. Provide good training, appropriate teaching materials, and professional development opportunities. Investing in children's cognitive development helps kindergarten teachers overcome these issues and gain full abilities. Teachers may emphasize attentional development at this stage to help youngsters become focused, self-regulated learners ready for life. This will prepare students for academic success. This study has limitations, yet it provides valuable information. Since the sample only comprised kindergarten teachers from one place, the findings may not apply to other scenarios. Most of the data was collected via interviews and self-report questionnaires, which may skew the results. Third, there was little information on teachers' attentional development classroom practices. Fourth, the research did not examine how instructors' experience or education affected the difficulties.

Further study should involve kindergarten teachers from various regions and socioeconomic backgrounds to make the results more generalizable. A mixed-methods strategy might triangulate outcomes by combining quantitative assessments, classroom observations, student outcome data, and instructor self-reports. It would be interesting to compare novice and experienced kindergarten teachers' approaches to attention development. Studying how pre-service training programs and professional development opportunities affect teachers' skills would be useful. Another intriguing research topic is how various cultures prioritize attentional talents in early childhood schooling. Developing and piloting interventions to improve kindergarten teachers' attentional knowledge and pedagogical strategies could help fill critical gaps in their ability to optimally cultivate these foundational attentional

competencies that provide a cognitive blueprint for lifelong learning and growth. The results might influence classroom improvements for children.

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