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Parents' Perceptions Regarding the Urgency of Handwriting Readiness for Digital Native Children in Bengkulu City

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Abstract: Children who not be ready to handwriting but are forced to immediately have handwriting skills will make it difficult for children to be able to have good handwriting skills later. Parents' views on handwriting readiness will influence children's development because it will be a guide for parents in providing education for children. The purpose of this study was to see the percentage of parents' perceptions about the importance of paying attention to digital native children's handwriting readiness. The research subjects were of 45 parents of children who were in kindergartens aged 4-5 years in Bengkulu City with data collected using the survey method. The results of this study show that 44.4% of parents agree on the importance of handwriting readiness. This is shown from the results of interviews conducted, namely, parents believe that children will be able to have handwriting skills when the child's development is mature. For this reason, handwriting readiness is needed first so that children have handwriting skills. Whereas 55.6% of parents prioritized children having handwriting skills compared to children having handwriting readiness first. This is because according to parents, children in kindergarten need more handwriting skills for the readiness of children in elementary school.

Keywords: Handwriting Readiness, Digital Native

A. Introduction

Early childhood has a process of growth and development that takes place quickly; now, it is the ideal opportunity for children to learn to develop their potential. Child development has a specific pattern according to the timeline of development. Every child is different in development from other children, some are fast, and some are slow. Therefore, the learning given to early childhood must be adjusted from various sides according to the level and age group of the child (Suyadi, 2013). A correct understanding of early childhood development is fundamental to facilitating and designing learning appropriate to the age and needs of children. Learning must develop children's life skills from various aspects (the whole child). Various skills are trained so that children will become entire human beings. The part of the child that is developed includes physical-motor, cognitive, moral, social-emotional, and language.

The motoric aspect is a crucial ability for children to learn in the first year at school because the motoric aspect is related to the child's handwriting ability. Handwriting ability is closely related to reading and spelling skills (Schoonen, 2018). For this reason, handwriting readiness is an important ability for children to develop in the first year. Readiness to write is the starting gate for children to master other fields of study later when the child is in elementary

school. This is shown by research, which reveals that children in elementary school classes spend 30% to 60% of their time in class on fine motor activities, and the lion's share of this time is spent on other handwriting tasks (Annandale, 2019). Difficulties in this area can affect academic achievement and the consequences for a child's educational performance. For this reason, handwriting readiness is needed so children can write their hands well.

Children who tend not to be ready to handwriting but are forced to have handwriting skills immediately will make it difficult to have good handwriting skills. It can cause the development of children's handwriting skills to be hampered. Children with handwriting problems usually need help following handwriting activities that are usually done in elementary school. In addition, inadequate developmental progress in handwriting skills not only causes children's learning difficulties but also increases the possibility that children will develop individual emotional behavior problems, which can even affect adaptation and social development in adulthood and throughout the life span (Barnett et al. al., 2018).

Along with the times, technology began to colonize all age groups, including early childhood. Today's early childhood is no stranger to digitalization, such as gadgets. This illustrates the latest conditions in today's children, who are called digital natives. This is in line with research results which reveal that gadgets are sometimes used to distract children so they don't interfere with their parents' work, so parents provide facilities in the form of gadgets for their children who are still at an early age (Widiawati & Sugiman, 2014). To support existing research, the researcher conducted preliminary observations on parents whose children were attending Kindergarten in Bengkulu City. Observations were made by distributing Google forms sent to the child's parents. The data generated in the preliminary observation showed that 60 respondents (children's parents) gave answers to the intensity of using gadgets from 1 hours to >4 hours per day in children aged four, five, and six. Based on these observations, it can be proven that gadgets in early childhood have become widespread. This is the current situation in today's children, called digital native children.

From the problems described above, the purpose of this study was to see the percentage of parents' perceptions regarding the importance of paying attention to the readiness of digital native children's handwriting, which at this time children have high intensity towards using gadgets. This certainly influences the development of children. Parents' points of view regarding handwriting readiness can be a guide for parents in providing handwriting education for children. Through this research, it is hoped that parents will be able to find a detailed perspective on the importance of handwriting readiness in children when there is high use of gadgets of various ages.

1. Handwriting Readiness

One of the readiness that should be achieved by children from an early age is literacy. Early childhood literacy skills are basic abilities that become the foundation for children to learn to write, read, and do arithmetic (Listriani et al., 2020). Readiness for handwriting needs to be owned by children aged 4-5 years. Although handwriting skills are not an aspect that is emphasized in preschool age, it does not mean that children aged 4-5 years cannot have handwriting readiness. Children should feel happy and not forced when given activities that involve handwriting. To make it real, the child must have handwriting readiness first. Stages of child development with a play-through-learning approach and learning through play can

support all aspects of child development, even though the main point is to see handwriting readiness.

Readiness for handwriting in children can be seen through the indicators of handwriting readiness. Following are nine essential skills to be stimulated before children are ready to handwrite based on the results of Andika et al., (2022) research, namely: core muscle strength, crossing midline, grasping the pencil correctly, eye-hand coordination, bilateral integration, upper body strength, object manipulation, visual perception, visual hand dominance. These nine skills show an indication of a child's handwriting readiness.

Core muscle strength, training core muscle strength, means the strength of the muscles of the fingers and hands when used to handwriting. This strength is important for controlling hand and finger movements when controlling the writing instruments. The more the muscles of the child's hands and fingers are trained, the less the impact of muscle injuries when coordinating various writing tools and other equipment. For this reason, it is very important to develop core muscle strength before the child is ready to handwrite to avoid injury and not optimal mastery of the child's competence in handwriting later. Furthermore, crossing the midline is a skill to move the hand across the body's midline to pick up or coordinate objects on the other side of the body. The skill of crossing the midline of the body can be stimulated by playing pegboard activities. From various research results on movement skills across the midline, it is very important to develop in children before they are ready to handwriting.

Grasping the pencil correctly is a skill in holding a pencil correctly. These skills have developed at a young age. The grip is a skill resulting from the coordination of the brain, hand, finger muscles, and eyes. The better the grip control, the later it will impact the child's readiness for handwriting. A 5-year-old child's pencil grip greatly determines visual motor integration, overall motor skills, and children's fine motor skills (Sheedy et al., 2021). Research states that there is a significant influence between the strength of holding a pencil and children's handwriting skills. Therefore, correctly holding a pencil is very important to be stimulated before children are ready to handwriting at school age (Kadaskar & Borkar, 2020).

Eye-hand coordination is a skill when children receive information from their sense of sight and then coordinate with their hands to do tasks such as handwriting. Eye and hand coordination is needed so that children can grip writing instruments. Visual perception, especially eye and hand coordination, significantly affects the readability of writing (Lee, 2021). Letters that children often encounter make it easy for children to write these letters. For this reason, eye and hand coordination is one of the important skills recommended to be stimulated before the child is ready to handwriting.

Bilateral integration is children's ability to perform the same or different tasks with both hands simultaneously. Bilateral integration is required for the child to be able to copy letters. If, when carrying out bilateral integration movements, the child experiences difficulties. This means that it will interfere with handwriting skills in the future (Fung & Tse, 2018). Stimulation of bilateral integration can be done with tasks related to the hands and tasks that use the feet. People with good bilateral integration will certainly find it easy to control their leg movements when walking and going downstairs. Bilateral integration involves hand and foot movements that can be used as stimulation so that children are trained to do different tasks simultaneously. This will certainly have an impact on the readiness of the child's handwriting.

Upper body strength, upper body strength is closely related to the power of a child's head, neck, shoulders, back, waist, and arms. For handwriting, the child must stabilize the body and neck to coordinate with the arms and hands. If stability is disturbed, it will make it difficult for children to write by hand, coupled with complaints about feeling tired and sore in the arms when handwriting (Erlianda et al., 2019). Improving children's fine motor skills can be done by providing stimulation (Agustina, 2018). For this reason, it is important to stimulate the strength of the upper body before the child is ready to handwrite.

Object manipulation daily activities will require object manipulation. The activity of manipulating objects can be trained with various objects before the child uses a pencil. Such as cutting, shoveling, scooping, stirring, and so on (Gajewski et al., 2019). Finally, Visual perception relates to the brain's ability to process information about the location of objects. This information will be passed on to the muscles and joints to make the child aware of the position of the objects being seen and how far the hands will move to reach and manipulate the objects being seen. This visual perception also requires "body awareness" to develop optimally.

Based on the understanding described above, it can be concluded that handwriting readiness is related to children's fine motor development to carry out handwriting activities. So that in early childhood, a child's motor skills are usually sufficient to get the child to write their letter shapes and names. From the several points above, a child needs to facilitate the child's need for handwriting. Then the adults around the child should also set an example by handwriting directly in front of the child. The child can do this as a model of imitation that the child shows.

2. Digital Native

A digital native is a description of someone (especially children to adolescents) who, since their birth, has been exposed to the incessant developments in digital technology (Kemendikbud RI, 2016). The parents who were born between 1960 and 1980 are known as Generation X. This generation is a generation that is not familiar with the internet, so their activities are carried out independently without the help of the internet, even though technology emerged in the late 80s. Meanwhile, the generation born between 1980 to 1990 is known as Generation Y. In this generation, technological developments such as the internet and gadgets emerged. Hence, this generation is more innovative and open-minded than Generation X. After Generation Y, it is also known as Generation Z. This generation was born in the late 90s when it was easier to access technology and innovation. Almost all of Generation Z have carried out activities via the internet. After Generation Z came to the Alpha Generation, the age group was born in 2010-2025. This Alpha generation is commonly known as a digital native.

The characteristics of a digital native include: 1) tend to be active in expressing their identity to the world, especially the virtual world; 2) are more open, outspoken, and open-minded; 3) like freedom, so they don't like to be controlled and restrained; 4) trying to control something (Azizah et al., 2017). Children in the digital era tend to depend on gadgets (the internet), so what they do dramatically influences character formation in the millennial age. Children in the digital era are very active on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram as well as other social media. Increasingly advanced digital technology influences the character and development of children in the family. The internet, which is one of the digital technologies, can have both positive and negative impacts on children.

Warisyah (2015) revealed that proper modeling from parents is needed for the use of gadgets in children. Good modeling dramatically influences children's behavior, namely that children learn what children see from their surroundings. Based on the explanation above, the researchers surveyed 45 parents to understand their role in assisting digital native children. Every informant in the initial survey said they always accompanied their children when using the device. However, in reality, more children are allowed to use their gadgets to play freely while parents are still busy with their activities and activities.

B. Methods

The type of research used in this research is quantitative research using survey methods. The survey research method aims to collect field data to reach a conclusion that represents the situation in the field, namely regarding the readiness of digital native children's handwriting. Place and time of research, this research was conducted in Kindergartens in Bengkulu City. The time of research was conducted from May to June 2023.

Data collection techniques by conducting questionnaires to obtain data on parents' perceptions regarding the readiness of children's handwriting. The sample of this research was conducted on 45 parents whose children were 4-5 years old in Bengkulu City. The sample used in this study was a simple random sampling technique with 45 parents in kindergarten. The research sample consisted of 45 parents with children aged 4-5 years attending kindergarten in Bengkulu City.

C. Results and Discussion

The results of the research are based on survey data analysis, namely a questionnaire with 10 questions asked to parents who have children aged 4-5 years. It was found that 20 parents gave answers indicating the importance of handwriting readiness. Parents think that handwriting readiness is very necessary for children to support developmental processes that are appropriate to their level of development so that children can master handwriting skills well later. Readiness for handwriting for parents is important for children aged 4-5 years before children are given handwriting activities. While 25 parents gave answers that handwriting readiness in digital native children was not the main thing, parents revealed that the most important thing was not ready but children's proficiency in handwriting. Some parents argue that children will have handwriting skills if they teach handwriting, so without readiness, children can still have handwriting skills.

The following are 3 essay questions and 1 validation question which shows the conclusions of parents' answers to the questionnaire submitted to parents who have children aged 4-5 years, namely as follows: 1) At what age are children introduced to handwriting and stationery 2) What was before there are special activities given to stimulate children's fine motor skills in handwriting readiness 3) What do parents think about children having the ability to handwrite or children having handwriting readiness first 4) Should children at this time (age 4-5 years) has the ability handwriting, or just enough to have handwriting readiness.

Based on the results of the answers given by the parents, namely, 1) Children are introduced to writing instruments starting from the age range of 3-5 years, but most of them answer at the age of 4 years. 2) The majority of parents' answers are that children are allowed

to play activities that children like, from these answers, many parents do not understand the activities that can provide stimulation to children. Parents tend to answer "If the child likes the activity the parents support it by facilitating it, for example playing plasticine, playing collage, and so on". 3) According to most of the parents' answers, children need to have handwriting skills when children are 4-5 years old. This is because the child is in preparation for the transition to elementary school. The demands in elementary schools make parents think that children must have the ability to handwriting. Readiness for handwriting will later emerge along with children who are often given handwriting activities. Furthermore, on the validation questions given to parents, the results were arranged in the form of a percentage based on the answers to the questions asked. The results of this percentage, namely 44.4% said that it was important to have handwriting readiness for digital native children aged 4-5 years, while 55.6% answered that handwriting skills must be possessed by children aged 4-5 years. Even to make this happen, some parents give tutoring to learn handwriting. This is because according to parents, children in kindergarten need more handwriting skills for the readiness of children in elementary school.

There are different achievement goals for children regarding handwriting readiness. Some parents have a purpose for their children to be proficient in handwriting so they don't experience difficulties in formal school. On the other hand, parents have goals to achieve so that children's development can develop according to their needs, that handwriting skills are not a focus for parents, but the process that the child goes through is more important, namely the readiness to handwriting. However, many demands from parents require children aged 4-5 years to handwriting so their children can easily enter the next level of education, such as elementary school, and be accepted into public elementary schools. Kindergarten teachers have no other choice but to teach their students to be able to handwriting.

Readiness for handwriting in early childhood is a foundation that can be mastered through a gradual process during the child's development period. Because there is a gradual process, it is not wrong if children are prepared from an early age to recognize and master pre-handwriting skills. And, of course, it is adjusted to their abilities and development so that children feel happy and not burdened, often parents demand that their children be able to handwriting quickly, especially when they see other children who are the same age as their children can handwriting, even though children's abilities are different, don't let children stress because of demands parents to children. The world of children is a world of play, so all efforts made by parents to stimulate the growth and development of children must be in a way that is fun for children, including handwriting readiness. Because it is not easy for children to concentrate, sit still, and focus on learning with their relatively active character at this age.

This event gave teachers and children anxiety, which should be at the age of four to five children should not be able to handwriting like elementary school children. Various studies and opinions support that children under seven are not encouraged to learn to handwrite. The reason for this was because, at that time, the children could not think concretely operationally, so it was feared that the lessons would burden children who were not yet able to think in a structured way. Meanwhile, handwriting is an activity that requires a structured way of thinking, so it is not suitable if taught to children under seven years old. Early childhood education emphasizes playing while learning or learning while playing, so it is necessary to be prepared beforehand before children are given handwriting activities.

Based on the previous description, it can be interpreted that the readiness of children's handwriting is essential for their success in further education. When gadgets are rampant in the technological era, it does not make handwriting skills unimportant. Children must still possess handwriting skills, and they can get these skills when they have handwriting readiness. Because in reality, using gadgets that tend only to wipe the screen still requires handwriting skills, such as making symbols such as numbers and letters when using a device.

D. Conclusion

The development of the era as it is currently happening has an impact on the child's environment. This is shown in the daily lives of children who are not spared by digital devices such as gadgets. The conditions that occur in these children make children become digital generations who are called digital natives. This condition is the latest condition which is the time setting for this research. Readiness to handwriting is an essential ability that children need to have before children master other skills. Even in the digital era, where children are digital native children, they also need handwriting skills. Good handwriting skills can be obtained when children have handwriting readiness.

Based on the results of the survey data analysis, namely the questionnaire. It is known that 20 parents agree on the importance of handwriting readiness for digital native children in Bengkulu City. The results of this study show that 44.4% of parents agree on the importance of handwriting readiness. This is shown from the results of interviews conducted, namely, parents believe that children will be able to have handwriting skills when the child's development is mature. For this reason, handwriting readiness is needed first so that children have handwriting skills. Whereas 55.6% of parents prioritized children having handwriting skills compared to children having handwriting readiness first. This is because according to parents, children in kindergarten need more handwriting skills for the readiness of children in elementary school. Handwriting readiness is a necessity in the development of children's education. There are still many parents who do not adequately understand the developmental needs of their children's education. This makes the percentage of parents' perceptions regarding the importance of handwriting readiness to be less than parents who have the opposite perception.

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