

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

The attention span of early childhood children, especially in the context of early childhood education, is a critical factor related to the formation of developmental foundations. Children in the early childhood stage undergo the process of gross and fine motor development, which also affects their ability to focus attention. Along with physical growth, their ability to walk, run, and participate in other physical activities can impact their level of attention. Cognitively, building language skills and understanding basic concepts such as numbers and shapes involve different levels of attention. Mastur and Triyono (Rahman, 2021) explain that concentration is focusing attention and thoughts on something we are learning. Meanwhile, according to Nurhayati (2021), study concentration is a focus of the mind on one thing being studied while setting aside unrelated matters. This focus is directed toward the lesson's content and acquisition process. On the other hand, Cecep et al. (2022) state that achieving learning outcomes will be maximized if supported by adequate study concentration. From the three opinions above, study concentration is a condition in which individuals focus their attention and thoughts intensely on the subject matter or learning activities. This involves focusing on the lesson's content or what is being done now, disregarding distractions or irrelevant things. Adequate concentration is a critical factor in achieving optimal learning outcomes both academically and socio-emotionally. Fiedacan et al. (2018) stated that

The opinions mentioned above are also acknowledged and expected to occur in the learning process of Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ. According to informal interviews conducted by the researcher with classroom teachers, it was found that Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ have difficulty maintaining their attention span when instructions are given, both in homeroom settings and specialist settings (music and art). In a homeroom setting, the decrease in student attention span can be seen from their gestures, such as fidgeting, looking elsewhere, or doing other unrelated activities, and these changes in posture and gestures occur quickly after the teacher starts teaching or giving instructions. In specialist settings, it can be seen from students' difficulty in following instructions for transitions before, during and after activities. ST1, a music teacher, mentioned that the Kindergarten 3 students are out of control in most of their music class. Kindergarten 3 students came to the classroom without having self-control and were not ready for the class. The homeroom teacher also mentioned that during art class, ST2 the art teacher was sitting in front of them and was ready to read a story for them but they were busy talking and doing something else even after ST2 tried to ask them to pay attention to her. According to the homeroom teacher, she had a talk with the students and most of them said that they can not sit still during music class and were not able to pay attention to the art teacher because they were busy talking to each other. Brain Balance Center reveals that the attention span of humans is two to three times their age, so the ideal attention span for Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ, who are five years old, should be between 10 to 15 minutes. However, based on the reality expressed by the classroom teachers and the results of informal

observations, Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ have an attention span shorter than the minimum expected attention span.

Many factors can influence the dynamics of the attention span of early childhood children. Fiedacan et al. (2018) stated that a lack of interest in activities, poor health, and excessive screen time can shorten the attention span of kindergarteners. This makes it harder for them to focus on tasks and participate in class, ultimately hindering their learning. This is also recognized by the teachers and assistant teachers who interact with them every day. Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ were raised amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which presents challenges and dynamics in their development process. Restrictions on social interaction and a lack of direct stimulus from the environment, especially during distance learning or restrictions on activities outside the home, can affect the development of their senses. Limiting indirect experiences with the physical environment can impact the development of gross and fine motor skills, understanding of concepts, and social interaction abilities. According to Piaget (1952), humans' ability or cognitive development results from the development of the brain and nervous system as well as experiences that help individuals adapt to their environment. Additionally, increased exposure to digital media at an early age is a potential additional factor that affects the dynamics of these children's attention spans. The use of digital devices from an early age can affect their attention patterns, given the adequate technological capabilities in their environment. Zauderer (2023), CEO of Cross River Therapy, revealed research results from the National Center for Biotechnology Information, which found that human attention span decreased from 12 seconds in 2000 to 8 seconds in 2015. Oaten (2022) stated

that the average human attention span has decreased. Constant digital stimulation is one of the main reasons why children's concentration abilities have become shorter. Every time they receive a notification on their phone or see updates on social media, their attention is diverted from what they should be focusing on. This makes it difficult for children to retain information and focus on tasks due to constant distractions. According to Santrock (2018), young individuals are highly influenced or immersed in various forms of media, implying that they are, in a sense, "encapsulated by media." This implies that media, in its diverse and widespread forms, plays a vital role in shaping the younger generation's views, behaviors, and experiences.

Based on the above explanations, this research is initiated to conduct a more in-depth and comprehensive investigation regarding the dynamics of the attention span of Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ. This research aims to understand various aspects and factors that may influence their attention span, focusing on identifying the factors that have the most significant influence. This research aims to provide deeper insights to teachers and the school so that they can take appropriate policy steps to improve the attention span of Kindergarten 3 students. With a better understanding of dominant factors, it is expected that more effective and sustainable learning strategies can be developed to support the development of children in this critical stage. Tedd and Margy (2008), in their book "Instructing a Child's Heart," state that we must actively teach our children and live in the reality that God defines life. God communicates and reveals the truth about the things that hold value, the aspects worth living and dying for, meaningful pursuits and existence, and what imparts significance to our lives. In Proverbs 22:6, God says,

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it." From this verse and the statement of Tedd and Margy, teachers and parents are expected to be able to consistently provide fruitful teachings to Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the background problem mentioned above, the problems related to attention span and learning in Kindergarten 3 at Sekolah XYZ can be described as follows:

- 1) The decreased attention span of Kindergarten 3 children at Sekolah XYZ was below the minimum expected range.
- 2) Difficulty in maintaining attention and response during instructions, both in homeroom and specialist settings.
- 3) Difficulty in determining which factors have the most significant impact on the decreased attention span of Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ.

Identifying this problem is a fundamental basis for this research. Decreasing levels of student attention, difficulty in maintaining attention and providing appropriate responses, and the difficulty for teachers to determine which factors contribute significantly to the decrease in student attention are significant issues in the context of education at Kindergarten 3 Sekolah XYZ and may also be experienced by other schools. Awareness of these challenges motivates the researcher to conduct this study with the aim of exploring the dynamics of children's attention span in more depth. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to a deep

understanding of the decrease in attention span in a classroom setting at Sekolah XYZ.

1.3 Problem Limitations

In this study, the focus will be on investigating the low attention span of Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ in homeroom settings (English and Mathematics) and specialist settings (Music and Art) and determining the aspect that most affect their low attention span through a Case Study research method. The research will be conducted on Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ. Data will be collected through classroom observations, student questionnaires in the form of pictures, and interviews with teachers, Junior School principal, Student Support Services Director and K3 students. The duration of the research will be limited, and the results will be used to conclude the factors that most affect the low attention span of Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ.

1.4 Problem Formulation

The problems that will be further examined in this study can be formulated as follows:

1. Why do Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ have a low attention span in learning settings?
2. What are the negative impacts of low attention span of Kindergarten 3 students and the learning process at Sekolah XYZ?

3. What strategies do teachers and the school use to help Kindergarten 3 students maintain their attention span in both homeroom and specialist classes?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To have a deep understanding on why Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ have a low attention span in learning settings.
2. To describe the negative impact of low attention spans on Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ .
3. To investigate the strategies used by teachers and the school to address the low attention span of Kindergarten 3 students at Sekolah XYZ.

1.6 Research Benefits

1.6.1 Theoretical Benefits

This study can contribute to the academic field by better understanding the complexity of attention span in early childhood development. It is also hoped that this research can contribute to the literature on early childhood education and provide a theoretical basis for developing more effective and inclusive educational strategies, specifically in Sekolah XYZ.

1.6.2 Practical Benefits

The findings of this study can provide practical recommendations for developing more effective learning strategies in the context of early childhood

education in Sekolah XYZ. Additionally, this research can serve as a foundation for developing new theories and provide valuable contributions to the academic literature on child development and the complexity of attention span during early childhood education.

1.7 Research Systematics

There are five chapters, with details on each chapter as the framework for writing the thesis.

Here is a brief detail of each chapter:

1. Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the author presents the background for conducting the research. The background and the importance of problem limitations identify the problem. This will help the research to focus on problem formulation and research objectives. The research benefits are also explained in this chapter.

2. Chapter II: THEORETICAL BASIS

In chapter two, the theoretical foundations are explained, including the variables in the research. This chapter will outline the literature review used to explain the theory of attention span in early childhood, strategies for early childhood learning, development, and the learning environment for early childhood. In addition, supporting theories such as student physical development and condition, mental state, cultural factors, and scheduling of core subjects (English and Math) and specialist subjects (Music and Art) related to attention span in early childhood are also provided.

3. Chapter III: RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter explains the research methodology and describes the measurement tools used. Additionally, the research setting, and subjects are also described.

4. Chapter IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will present the results of the study in a clear, concise, and systematic manner.

5. Chapter V: RESEARCH DISCUSSION

This chapter will interpret, analyzes, and explains the significance of the findings in relation to the research questions or hypotheses, existing literature, and theoretical framework.

4. Chapter VI: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter will summarize the conclusions and end with recommendations that can be useful for future research.

