

Student Lateness and Academic Performance: Unraveling the Behavioral Impact on Learning

Siti Aminah Nadhira Mohamed Farais, Siti Maryam Jasman, Siti
Aminah Othman, Siti Najwa Abdullah, Siti Kausar Zakaria*

Faculty of Education & Humanities, UNITAR International University, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author Email: sitikausar.zakaria@unitar.my

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of student unpunctuality on academic performance among Year 5 students at a public school in Segamat, Johor, Malaysia. Unpunctuality has become a gradually regarding behavioral problem in many schools, as it not only disturbs classroom learning but also reproduces wider trials associated with student discipline, time management, and emotional well-presence. The study implements a quantitative descriptive design using a cross-sectional survey disseminated to 40 students nominated through convenience sampling. Data were composed via a self-administered questionnaire involving 25 structured items intended to discover the reasons, occurrence, and consequences of unpunctuality on students' academic engagement. The results show that both behavioral features, such as poor time management, late sleep, and absence of motivation, and logistical limitations, such as transport problems and traffic crowding, donate significantly to tardiness. Additionally, tardiness was created to undesirably impact academic performance by reducing classroom involvement, attentiveness, and preservation of learning materials. Students who regularly reached late also informed of higher levels of pressure, embarrassment, and disengagement from classroom activities. Teachers and parents were identified as critical participants in justifying this problem through effective supervising, care, and positive support. The research highpoints the necessity for an all-inclusive and cooperative method to address student lateness that takes part in behavioral interferences, parental participation, and structural improvements in transportation and school strategy. Eventually, encouraging timekeeping not only improves academic achievement but also nurtures important lifespan skills such as accountability, self-control, and respect for time. Recommendations are made for coming study to observe the long-term effects of unpunctuality and assess the efficiency of intervention approaches within similar educational settings.

Keywords: Student Lateness, Academic Performance, Punctuality, Behavioral Impact, Educational Strategies

Introduction

Discipline is an important element of effective education, encouraging responsibility, self-regulation, and respect for institutional rules (Karaoulas, 2024). In schools, preserving

discipline supports not only academic accomplishment but also character development (Sabty et al., 2025). Amid the numerous features of student discipline, punctuality plays a predominantly vital role. Meanwhile, punctuality is a central feature of student discipline that replicates accountability, assurance, and admiration for institutional rules (Murni et al., 2024). In educational situations, punctuality not only safeguards ideal learning opportunities but also donates to the smooth functioning of schoolrooms and the total academic setting. However, continuing tardiness has become a gradually predominant behavioral problem in schools wide-reaching. Students who arrive late to class tend to miss vital instructions, interrupt ongoing lessons, and have trouble catching up with peers, which collectively leads to lower academic achievement (Maile & Olowoyo, 2017).

This issue is not confined to one province, it has occurred as a global educational concern. In Malaysia, schools have detected an increase in student tardiness, mainly among upper primary students, because of shifting life patterns, city transport encounters, and inadequate parental monitoring (Karuppannan et al., 2021). Alike discoveries have been documented in South Africa and Nigeria, wherever lateness has been labelled as a “persistent educational epidemic” that challenges classroom efficiency and student results (Maile & Olowoyo, 2017). Lateness disturbs instructional endurance and distresses not only the latecomer but also the teacher’s time and the motivation of other students (Roxas et al., 2020). Recurring lateness relates with decreasing academic performance and condensed inspiration to learn (Gano et al., 2024).

Given the growing pervasiveness and costs of lateness, understanding it as a different academic and behavioral problem has become gradually significant. Though widespread research has been directed on absenteeism and its outcome on learning, less studies have focus lateness as a separate behavioral phenomenon persuading academic accomplishment. Present works tend to flux lateness with nonappearance, thereby obscuring the specific psychological, emotional, and pedagogical dimensions of incoming late to class (Okoronkwo et al., 2021). Furthermore Warne, et al., 2021) said that inadequate experiential data occur regarding the Malaysian context, mostly in primary education where cultural, familial, and infrastructural features may relate contrarily compared to Western settings. This research thus requests to address this break by investigative both the roots and consequences of unpunctuality amongst primary school students, with an emphasis on behavioral and logistical factors.

The justification for this study stalks from the acknowledgement that unpunctuality is not just a punitive violation but a complex social issue that reproduces underlying motivational, emotional, and logistical issues. Insistent lateness leads to damage of instructional time, lesser grades, and weaker social alteration in school (Gelig, 2025). Moreover, according to Brobbey (2021) emotional features such as worry, embarrassment, and low self-worth often accompany habitual lateness, added worsening academic underperformance. Additionally, parents and teachers play a dynamic role in determining regularity behaviors. Strong family and school corporations can pointedly decrease tardiness and absence through constant communication, strengthening, and supervising (Kearney et al., 2023). Therefore, understanding the sources and effects of lateness inside a contained educational context is serious for evolving targeted interventions.

To address these gaps, this study emphasizes on the causes and effects of student lateness within the Malaysian primary school setting. Hence, the main objective of this study is to explore the connection between student lateness and academic performance among Year 5 students at public school at Segamat, Johor. The study aims to recognize the important behavioral and environmental reasons of student lateness, observe how lateness impacts classroom engagement and academic consequences, and endorse evidence-based approaches to minimize lateness and improve students' academic performance. This research supports the growing body of educational study by contributing behavioral, emotional, and environmental standpoints into the investigation of student lateness. By identifying the interaction of these features, it purposes to propose actionable visions for educators, policymakers, and parents looking to foster timekeeping, discipline, and academic quality among young students. Finally, this study contributes to a significant understanding of how punctuality forms student academic success and learning experiences, particularly in Malaysian settings.

Methodology

This research used a quantitative descriptive research design using a cross-sectional survey directed between October and December 2024 to examine the association between student lateness and academic performance among Year 5 students. The quantitative method was designated for its capacity to offer objective, numerical data describing current behavioral designs without operating variables (Bryman, 2016). A total of 40 students, aged 10–11, joined in the study. They were nominated through convenience sampling constructed on availability and readiness to contribute, with the sample size determined using the Raosoft calculator at a 90% confidence level and a 5% margin of error (Calculator.net., 2025).

Data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire transcribed in Malay to safeguard understanding among participants. The instrument contained 25 close-ended questions covering demographics, factors of lateness, emotional answers, and supposed academic influences. To confirm validity, two experts reread the questionnaire for precision and relevance, while a pilot test involving 10 students from another school recognized reliability, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82, representing robust internal consistency (Jahrami et al., 2023). Ethical agreement and parental permission were attained prior to data collection, and all samples were guaranteed privacy and voluntary involvement.

Data analysis was led using descriptive statistical methods, comprising frequencies, percentages, and graphical summaries to recognize patterns, causes, and effects of tardiness. Replies were coded and administered using Microsoft Excel to enable rich visualization and clarification. The descriptive analysis offered understandings into how behavioral and logistical aspects donate to lateness and how these patterns impact students' academic engagement and performance within the Malaysian primary school setting (Cohen, 2007)

Finding

The results of this study expose various key outlines regarding the roots, emotional and academic effects, and stakeholder replies to student lateness among Year 5 students. The study highlights both behavioral and logistical features that donate to lateness, as well as the emotional and academic encounters confronted by students who often reach late to school.

Students' Responses

The most common reason for lateness amongst students was waking up late, conveyed by 30% of them. This specifies problems associated with time management, inadequate sleep, or absence of morning habits. Transport difficulties were acknowledged by 15% of students as a major reason, frequently due to traffic crowding or unreliable transportation plans. In the meantime, 12% of students stated family tasks, such as serving siblings or performing home jobs, as a contributive reason. These outcomes support with earlier study propose that both internal behaviors and external restraints impact timekeeping (Moldero et al., 2024). The data proposes that while operational matters like transportation play a role, lateness is mainly determined by behavioral and lifestyle-linked features. Speaking of such problems, it needs both family and school-based involvement to recover students' time organization and morning habits.

The research also discovered students' emotional answers to lateness. About 30% of respondents described feeling worried when arriving late to class, whereas 25% specified that they felt miserable or ashamed. These emotions propose that lateness not only disturbs academic performance but likewise distresses students' psychological well-being and classroom involvement. Feelings of anxiety or awkwardness may depress students from attractions, leading to a cycle of condensed self-confidence and further academic detachment (Liu et al., 2024). These results highlight the importance of reflecting emotional features in addressing lateness. Teachers' sympathetic and helpful attitudes can help decrease the negative emotional drain related to arriving late, thus enlightening students' motivation and involvement.

The data indicates that unpunctuality has a strong negative influence on academic performance. Approximately 45% of students confessed that presence late made it problematic for them to focus in class, while 32% thought that it straightly affected their academic grades. This displays that even irregular lateness can have collective effects on learning consequences by triggering students to miss significant preliminary clarifications or orders. The damage of instructional time and condensed engagement eventually delay overall academic accomplishment (Vukovic, 2025). The data confirms earlier results that punctuality is strongly linked with improved academic results and constant classroom involvement (Moldero, 2024). Students who reach late not only fall behind in understanding important teachings but may also struggle with self-assurance and classroom participation.

Teacher and Parental Responses

Teachers and parental replies show a serious role in influencing students' punctuality behaviors. The study found that 52% of students were scolded by teachers for being late, indicating that many schools rely on punitive measures rather than preventive strategies. Meanwhile, 55% of students reported that their parents were aware of their lateness. This suggests that parents generally monitor their children's attendance, but greater collaboration between home and school could help address recurring lateness more effectively (Utami, 2022). While disciplinary action can deter tardiness, excessive reprimand may worsen students' emotional stress (Darling-Hammond, 2021). A more constructive approach that combines communication, parental support, and positive reinforcement could yield more sustainable results.

Student Recommendations

When inquired for recommendations to expand promptness, 55% of students highlighted the necessity for family provision, mainly in starting constant morning procedures and delivering consistent transport. In the meantime, 22% of students suggested the use of alarms to help them wake up earlier and make for school on time. These ideas designate that students identify both family participation and self-control as key in improving punctuality. In general, the results prove that lateness is a complicated issue predisposed by behavioral behaviors, emotional well-being, and external conditions. Speaking of this problem efficiently needs collaboration among students, parents, and teachers to encourage time organization, self-discipline, and helpful learning environments.

Discussion

The outcomes of this study exposed that student lateness among Year 5 pupils is a multifactorial issue inclined by both behavioural and environmental factors. The analysis displayed that the mean score for causes of lateness ($M = 25.0$, $SD = 13.5$) shows extensive distinction in students' answers, suggesting that punctuality problems stem from varied causes. The most shared feature waking up late, proposes failings in students' self-management and sleep habits, consistent with earlier study by Maile and Olowoyo (2017), who initiate that insufficient home procedures and poor time management were key donors to tardiness among secondary school students. Likewise, Warne et al. (2020) described that tardiness is often connected to individual discipline issues, further supporting the present study's discoveries.

Logistical barriers such as transportation problems and family duties also played a distinguished role in student lateness. Results aligned with Bammou et al. (2024) who noted that external influences such as distance from school, traffic crowding, and family commitments frequently cause delays among students in urban locations. The mixture of behavioural and external influences proposes that lateness cannot be addressed through disciplinary dealings only. Instead, active interventions must reflect both individual time management and structural support systems, counting dependable transport and parental participation.

The emotional measurement of lateness was obvious, with a mean emotional answer score of $M = 33.3$ ($SD = 8.5$), weight that a significant number of students experience humiliation when coming late. This result brings into line with the study Bammou et al. (2021) who underscored that emotional well-being and social comfort are important for active learning. Students who feel embarrassed or worried after coming late are more probable to retract from involvement, dropping classroom engagement. Therefore, the emotional consequences of unpunctuality should not be disregarded. Teachers need to accept sympathetic methods, harmonizing self-control with emotional care, to help students reintegrate efficiently into lessons without shame or disgrace.

From an academic position, lateness originated to damage attention, reproduced in the academic influence mean score ($M = 33.3$, $SD = 9.0$). Students who fail in the beginning of lessons frequently struggle to grip key concepts, which consequences in lower academic accomplishment. This result strengthens the inferences of [5], who established that lateness has a direct negative result on academic performance due to loss of instructional time. Furthermore, Adegunju et al. (2019) initiated that recurrent lateness is associated with poor scores and condensed classroom involvement, which supports with the current study's results

that 45% of respondents found it hard to focus after incoming late.

Fascinatingly, the study exposed a high teacher and parental responsiveness mean ($M = 53.5$, $SD = 1.5$), representing constant acknowledgement of the problem by adults. Though, the leading answer from teachers was scolding, signifying that remedial measures continue punitive rather than preventive. Parental meetings and positive support are more effective in adjusting student behaviour than penalty (Shebani et al., 2025). Consequently, instead of reproaching students, schools should reassure parents to cooperate with teachers in emerging organized morning practices, transportation solutions, and time-management habits.

In terms of projected solutions, students themselves stressed the significance of family care ($M = 33.3$, $SD = 14.7$) and the practice of practical aids such as alarms. These results propose that students are conscious of their accountability but need external supervision and inspiration to implement punctual behaviours. This supports by Warne et al. (2020) who described that interferences concerning family collaboration and student self-monitoring meaningfully reduced lateness rates in Swedish primary schools.

In general, the outcomes of this study are consistent with international works representing that lateness is a behavioural, emotional, and social problem rather than a merely disciplinary one. The results underscore the importance of all-inclusive approaches that combine behavioural guidance, family engagement, and sympathetic classroom organization. By mixing these methods, schools can not only decrease lateness but also substitute larger principles such as accountability, respect, and determination personalities that are initial to lifelong learning accomplishment.

Conclusion

The results confirm that unpunctuality rises not only from poor time management but likewise from outside structural barriers such as traveling distance and family obligations, consistent with earlier revisions by Maile & Olowoyo (2017). The study also exposed that lateness leads to emotional and academic consequences, as many students described pressure, humiliation, and condensed enthusiasm, besides concentrating and keeping up with lessons. This provisions the results of Liu et al. (2024) and Rosenblum et al. (2021) who underlined the negative association between tardiness, emotional well-being, and academic accomplishment.

This research deliberates a new vision by highlighting how lateness among Malaysian primary school students is formed by the interaction of behavioral, emotional, and logistical factors. These dimensions are not often scrutinized in current literature. By locating tardiness within the cultural and social realities of Malaysia, the study extends understanding of student behavior beyond Western educational settings and offers a confined basis pertinent to social science and educational policy.

Teachers and parents were initiated to be conscious of the problem yet answers often absorbed on penalty rather than positive supervision. As recommended by Caldarella et al. (2011) cooperative approaches between schools and families are vital for dropping tardiness. Parents can support themselves by preserving organized morning routines and offering emotional support, while teachers should implement sympathetic classroom organization methods to reintegrate late students certainly. Overall, this study concludes that student tardiness is more

than a disciplinary matter. It is an educational and behavioral concern that needs sympathy, structure, and collaboration. When schools, families, and societies work together to encourage punctuality, they not only recover attendance but also substitute lifelong principles such as accountability, self-control, and admiration for time.

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