

A Comparative Study of Off-Task Behavior in the Classroom Among Senior and Vocational High School Students in Salatiga: Analysis of Aspect and Causal Factor

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Abstract

Not all students remain focused during classroom learning. Some engage in other activities that divert their attention from the learning process. This behavior is known as off-task behavior. This study examines six aspects of off-task behavior in classrooms: inattention, out of seat, noncompletion of task, talking without permission, unmotivated to learn, and unprepared for class, among high school and vocational school students in Salatiga. This research employs a quantitative comparative method with an Independent Sample t-test for statistical analysis. The participants are 500 students, including 250 high school students and 250 vocational school students, selected through purposive sampling. Results indicate no significant difference in off-task behavior between high school and vocational school students ($p = 0.451$). Both high school and vocational school students predominantly fall into the moderate category. This study provides insights into differences in behavioral tendencies and aspects of off-task behavior in the classroom.

Keywords: off-task behavior, classroom, student, senior high school, vocational high school, secondary education

Abstrak

Tidak semua siswa tetap fokus selama pembelajaran di kelas. Beberapa terlibat dalam aktivitas lain yang mengalihkan perhatian dari proses belajar. Perilaku ini dikenal sebagai off-task behavior. Penelitian ini menganalisis enam aspek off-task behavior di dalam kelas, yaitu inattention, out of seat, noncompletion of task, talking without permission, unmotivated to learn, dan unprepared for class, pada siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan di Kota Salatiga. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif komparatif dengan analisis statistik menggunakan uji Independent Sample t-test. Partisipan terdiri dari 500 siswa, yaitu 250 siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas dan 250 siswa Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan, yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Hasil menunjukkan tidak terdapat perbedaan signifikan dalam off-task behavior antara Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan di Kota Salatiga, dengan nilai signifikansi sebesar 0,451 ($p > 0,05$). Kedua kelompok siswa mayoritas berada dalam kategori sedang. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan mengenai kecenderungan perilaku dan aspek-aspek off-task behavior di kelas.

Keywords: off-task behavior, kelas, siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas, Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan, pendidikan menengah

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INTRODUCTION

Students are individuals enrolled and actively participating in the learning process within an educational institution. In Indonesia, the population of interest includes students enrolled in academic institutions at different levels, from early childhood education to basic and secondary education. At the secondary level, there are two main tracks: Senior High School and Vocational High School. The students in this study are in senior high school, the next level of education after junior high school, and are undergoing significant physical and biological changes (Hadi et al., 2013). Meanwhile, students enrolled in vocational high schools are referred to as vocational high school students. Vocational High School is a type of secondary education that prepares students for the workforce by equipping them with specific skills and knowledge tailored to areas of expertise (Peraturan Pemerintah RI, 2010). The main characteristic of vocational high school students involves their professional training to develop expertise in specific vocational regions (Alimudin et al., 2019).

Students in senior high schools and vocational high schools are generally aged 15 to 18 years, a developmental stage characterized by cognitive, emotional, and social changes (Santrock, 2018; Wigfield et al., 2015). At this age, students are expected to fulfill their academic responsibilities effectively in the classroom. However, adolescence is also a complex period of psychosocial transition, during which individuals face essential developmental tasks, including the reinforcement of self-control, the ability to regulate behavior based on internalized values, principles, and life perspectives (Izzani et al., 2024). When this developmental task is not optimally achieved, adolescents are at risk of experiencing emotional instability and internal conflict. These internal struggles may lead to anxiety, excessive stress, and a loss of emotional regulation, which ultimately affect their academic performance and social relationships (Pratama et al., 2024). In the context of classroom learning, such conditions may trigger off-task behavior defined as a lack of focus that hinders the learning process, including actions such as daydreaming, talking with peers, or using mobile phones (Maulana, 2019). Off-task behavior often emerges in classrooms that rely on monotonous instructional strategies and fail to engage students' interest in learning (Shofuhah, 2016). These behaviors are contrary to students' primary responsibility to learn in class and may impede their academic achievement.

The Indonesian education system organizes secondary education into two distinct paths: general senior high schools and vocational high schools. Senior high school students receive academic instruction, while vocational high school students learn vocational skills to prepare them for employment. The educational settings in Senior High School and Vocational High School differ, creating distinct learning conditions that affect student participation in off-task activities. The Senior High School curriculum follows a theoretical approach to prepare students for university, while the vocational high school curriculum delivers practical training for workforce readiness (Azizah et al., 2021). The use of dull teaching approaches leads students to engage in off-task behavior, according to Halimah et al. (2020).

Off-task behavior occurs frequently when students engage in activities irrelevant to learning and academic tasks (Maulana, 2019). It is often observed in classrooms lacking engaging instructional strategies and supportive environments that stimulate student interest (Shofuhah, 2016). Such conditions conflict with students' academic responsibilities and may affect their academic performance. Off-task behavior can occur at any moment during class, and it is particularly common in classrooms with disruptive or poorly controlled environments. A common cause of off-task behavior is a lack of



student interest in the learning strategy used by the teacher, which contributes to undesirable behaviors in the classroom, such as daydreaming, ignoring the teacher, distracting peers, and other actions that detract from the learning process (Halimah, Bakar, & Nurbaiti, 2020).

The initial study of 30 senior high school students and 30 Vocational High School students in Salatiga showed that 13.33% of high school students and 30% of vocational high school students showed tendencies toward off-task behavior. The observed off-task behaviors consisted of daydreaming, seatmates' conversations, and non-assigned activities. Further analysis of questionnaires revealed that students expressed dissatisfaction with the teaching methods, citing issues such as monotonous content delivery and difficult-to-complete tasks.

Off-task behavior potentially threatens students' academic achievement and skill development. Therefore, this study aims to compare the tendency toward off-task behavior between senior high school and Vocational High School students to understand behavioral patterns and their underlying factors.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative method with a comparative research design. The population in this research consisted of 12,840 Senior High School and Vocational High School students enrolled in schools in Salatiga. The researcher selected a sample of 500 students, comprising 250 high school students and 250 vocational high school students. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. The study sample selection occurred according to the following criteria: (1) students enrolled in grades 10 to 12, (2) aged between 15 and 18 years, and (3) not identified as having any learning disabilities. To support the development of this study, the researcher adapted an off-task behavior scale from a previous survey by Putri (2023). The measurement instrument was developed according to aspects of off-task behavior described by Sparzo and Poteet. The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing by the researcher through a pilot study with 15 students from senior and vocational high schools.

The Pearson Product-Moment correlation technique was used for validity testing, which indicated that 40 of 44 items on the off-task behavior scale were valid ($r > 0.30$). Still, four items failed to meet the validity criteria. Subsequently, reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, yielding $\alpha = 0.85$, indicating good internal consistency. The scale used a Likert format with four response categories for each item: Never (1), Infrequently (2), Sometimes (3), and Always (4). All data analyses were conducted using Jamovi version 2.5.6 for Windows, including validity and reliability tests, descriptive analyses, statistical assumption tests, homogeneity tests, and an independent t-test. This study was conducted in nine high schools in Salatiga, Central Java. The sample consisted of students from four Senior High Schools: Senior High School S Muhammadiyah (Plus) Salatiga (Private Senior High School), Senior High School N 1 Salatiga (Public Senior High School), Senior High School N 2 Salatiga (public senior high school), and Senior High School N 3 Salatiga (public senior high school); and five Vocational High Schools: Vocational High School S Diponegoro Salatiga (private vocational high school), Vocational High School S Pelita Salatiga (Private Vocational High School), Vocational High School N 1 Salatiga (Public Vocational High School), Vocational High School N 2 Salatiga (Public Vocational High School), and Vocational High School N 3 Salatiga (Public Vocational High School).



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the questionnaire distributed by the researcher show the categorization of off-task behavior in classroom learning among senior high school and senior Vocational High School students.

Descriptive Statistic Analysis

Based on the descriptive statistical analysis, the off-task behavior scores of senior high school students range from 49 to 100, with a mean of 73.5 and a standard deviation of 9.91. Meanwhile, vocational students achieved a maximum score of 114, a minimum of 50, a mean of 74.6, and a standard deviation of 11.0.

Table 1.
Table of Descriptive Statistical Analysis

| | N | Maximum | Minimum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| High School Students | 250 | 100 | 49 | 73.5 | 9.91 |
| Vocational High School Students | 250 | 114 | 50 | 74.6 | 11.0 |

Normality Test

The normality test used the Two-Sample Shapiro-Wilk Test to determine whether the off-task behavior data for senior high school and vocational students were normally distributed. The results indicated that the off-task behavior data of senior high school students had a W value of 0.989 and a p-value of 0.066, indicating that the data met the assumption of normality ($p > 0.05$). On the other hand, the off-task behavior data for vocational students had a W value of 0.966 and a p-value of < 0.001 , indicating that the data were not normally distributed ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the off-task behavior data of senior high school students were normally distributed, whereas the data of vocational students were not.

Table 3.
Table of Normality Test

| | N | Mean | SD | Min | Std. Deviation | W | p |
|---------------------------------|-----|------|------|-----|----------------|-------|---|
| High School Students | 250 | 73.5 | 9.91 | 49 | 100 | 0.989 | |
| Vocational High School Students | 250 | 74.6 | 11.0 | 50 | 114 | 0.966 | |

Homogeneity Test

Homogeneity testing results indicated that the data met the homogeneity assumption. This is indicated by the Levene's Test significance value being greater than 0.05 ($p = 0.249$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the data variance between the two groups is homogeneous.

Table 4.
Table of Homogeneity Test

| | F | df | df2 | p |
|-------|------|----|-----|-------|
| Score | 1.31 | 1 | 498 | 0.249 |



Hypothetical Test

The results of the group statistics show that the mean of off-task behavior in class for senior high school students is 73.5, while for vocational high school students it is 74.6. These results indicate that the average off-task behavior among vocational students is slightly higher than that of senior high school students. Moreover, the higher standard deviation observed among vocational students (11.0) compared to senior high school students (9.91) suggests that the variability of off-task behavior is greater among vocational students. The following data analysis involves an Independent T-test using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. If the significance value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in classroom off-task behavior between the two groups. Conversely, if the significance value is greater than 0.05, it can be stated that there is no significant difference in off-task behavior between the two student groups.

Table 5.

Table of Results Group Statistics

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Mean | Error | Std. Deviation | Variable |
|---------------------------------|-----|------|-----------|-------|----------------|----------|
| High School Students | 250 | 73.5 | 0.626 | | 9.91 | 250 |
| Vocational High School Students | 250 | 74.6 | 0.696 | | 11.0 | 250 |

Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test, the significance value was greater than 0.05 (0.450). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in off-task behavior between senior high school and vocational high school students in Salatiga.

Table 6.

Table of Descriptive Statistical Test Results

| | | Statistics | p |
|-------|---------------------|------------|-------|
| Score | Mann-Whitney U Test | 30934 | 0.450 |

Categorization of Off-task Behavior in Learning

In the very high category, there were 17 senior high school students and 12 senior Vocational High School students. In the high category, there were 61 senior high school students and 63 senior Vocational High School students. In the moderate category, the number of students was 107 from senior high schools and 105 from senior Vocational High Schools. Meanwhile, in the low category, there were 47 senior high school students and 50 senior Vocational High School students. Finally, in the very low category, there were 18 senior high school students and 20 senior Vocational High School students.



Table 7.
Table of Off-Task Behavior Categorization in Learning

| Interval | Categories | Learning Group | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | | High School Students | | Vocational High School Students | |
| | | Frequencies | Percentage | Frequencies | Percentage |
| $89.8 \leq X$ | Very High | 17 | 6.8% | 12 | 4.8% |
| $89.8 \leq X \leq 79.3$ | High | 61 | 24.4% | 63 | 25.2% |
| $79.3 \leq X \leq 68.8$ | Moderate | 107 | 42.8% | 105 | 42% |
| $68.8 \leq X \leq 58.4$ | Low | 47 | 18.8% | 50 | 20% |
| $X \leq 58.4$ | Very Low | 18 | 7.2% | 20 | 8% |
| Total | | 250 | 100% | 250 | 100% |

Based on the findings, the off-task behavior category among senior high school and senior Vocational High School students in Salatiga falls into the moderate category, indicating that these students occasionally exhibit inattentive behavior during classroom learning.

In this study, off-task behavior can be categorized into several core aspects. The first aspect is inattention; students who demonstrate inattention fail to sustain their attention throughout lessons from the initial aspect. Students who experience inattention tend to be easily distracted by their surroundings, whether by peers or by internal factors such as boredom or a lack of interest in the material they are learning. High school students demonstrate higher inattention levels than vocational students because high school education emphasizes theory-based learning, which leads to student disengagement. The hands-on nature of vocational education keeps students attentive by keeping them actively involved in their work. This aligns with a study by Kitani (2025), which showed that students who participated in practical activities were more focused and engaged in learning. Similarly, Olivier and Archambault (2017) found that students with high inattention levels are less likely to engage with theory-based learning, supporting the idea that interactive learning environments enhance engagement.

The second aspect is out-of-seat, referring to students leaving their seats without the teacher's permission. This behavior is more common among vocational school students than among senior high school students. One possible reason is that vocational learning environments are generally more active and practice-oriented, which may influence students' behavior even during theoretical lessons. Vocational students are accustomed to moving around during practical lessons, a behavior that can carry over into theory-based classes. In contrast, high school students are more accustomed to sitting for extended periods, though some still experience out-of-seat behavior due to fatigue or lack of concentration. These findings are supported by Haghighi and Jusan (2012), who found that classroom seating arrangements and learning styles influence students' movement behavior. Students in active learning settings tend to move more than those in traditional classroom setups. Out-of-seat behavior observed among students reflects adolescents' need for social interaction and physical activity. In the absence of clear classroom rules and agreed-upon responsibilities in the learning process, these impulses are likely to manifest as inappropriate behaviors within the learning context (Rifma et al., 2018).

Another aspect is non-completion of tasks, where students fail to complete tasks assigned by teachers. Both high school and vocational students demonstrated this



behavior, although for different reasons. Among high school students, task noncompletion is often due to high academic demands or low intrinsic motivation. Meanwhile, vocational students tend to struggle with theoretical subjects or lack understanding of the material. Academic procrastination also contributes to this behavior (Loren, 2024).

Students who talk without permission often exhibit this as one of their most common off-task behaviors. Students who display this behavior tend to seek peer interaction or show no interest in classroom discussions. The learning environment in vocational schools promotes discussion and collaboration, leading students to display this behavior more frequently than high school students. High school students also experience boredom in class, which leads them to be off-task despite their lack of immunity.

The next aspect is unmotivated learning, characterized by a lack of willingness to participate in the learning process actively. Students develop low learning motivation when they face obstacles such as complicated material, uninteresting subject matter, or outside pressures from personal and social challenges. The theoretical content of high school lessons leads to more frequent motivational issues because students do not see direct connections to practical applications. In contrast, vocational school students often show higher motivation levels, possibly due to the practical orientation of their studies and their direct link to future employment opportunities. Students who struggle with abstract concepts are more likely to engage in off-task behavior (Halimah et al., 2020).

The aspect of being unprepared for class also emerged in this study. Unprepared students often forget to bring school supplies, neglect to complete assignments, or fail to review learning materials beforehand. Students from both senior high school and vocational school exhibited this behavior because they lacked proper time management and academic preparation skills. Students who enter classes without preparation materials have difficulty understanding lessons fully, resulting in poor academic achievement (Gunawan, 2021).

The final aspect is disruptive behaviour: students exhibit it through excessive joking, making distracting sounds, and deliberately diverting attention from the lesson. Students display disruptive behaviour for one of two reasons: either they find classroom activities uninteresting, or they do not actively participate in lessons. The educational community views this behaviour as a classroom management issue because students exhibit it in response to emotional reactions when they do not understand their assignments (Abdullah et al., 2016).

Findings from this research study have important implications that affect educational practice. Teachers and educators need to understand that students' off-task behaviour results from school type and instructional methods, as well as from students' levels of participation during instruction. One effective strategy to reduce off-task behavior is to diversify teaching methods. Moreover, fostering students' self-regulation skills is crucial for addressing off-task behavior (Ananda et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is no statistically significant difference in classroom off-task behavior between Senior High School and Vocational High School students in Salatiga, thereby rejecting the research hypothesis. The overall level of such behavior was found to be moderate to high among the student population. Despite these quantitative findings, the study acknowledges limitations, including its lack of in-depth exploration of external influencing factors such as pedagogical style, classroom



environment, and student emotional states. To address these gaps, future research employing qualitative methodologies, including interviews and observations, is recommended to gain a more nuanced understanding of the underlying causes. In practice, educators are advised to enhance student engagement by implementing varied instructional strategies, such as project-based learning and technology integration, while also fostering students' self-regulation skills and employing adaptive classroom management techniques to cultivate a more conducive learning environment.

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