



Evaluating Behavior Modification for Tantrums in Early Childhood: Approaches for Enhanced Management and Intervention

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Abstract

Negative behaviors in children, such as tantrums, are common during early childhood due to inherent egocentric tendencies. Tantrums, if not addressed by parents, can potentially harm the child. Therefore, parents need to employ early-stage behavioral modification techniques to manage tantrums in children, with continuous evaluation. This study focuses on evaluating the modification of tantrum behavior in early childhood, involving a series of procedures to transform negative behaviors into positive ones. The evaluation, as the final stage of the behavior modification process, assesses whether the treated behavior has undergone significant changes by observing and recording its persistence. The research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing structured interviews for data collection from parents as informants. Data analysis follows the Milles and Huberman model. Purposively selected subjects, children aged 2-6 years, are obtained through interviews and in-depth observations. Results indicate that effective reinforcing actions involve allowing children to express emotions under parental supervision, preventing harm while calming the child through comforting gestures. The final evaluation reveals that children exhibit increased freedom in expressing emotions, yet still under parental supervision.

Keywords: Behavior Modification, Tantrums, Early Childhood.

Abstrak

Perilaku tantrum pada anak usia dini, sebagai dampak dari sifat egosentris yang umum pada tahap tersebut, dapat menimbulkan risiko jika tidak ditangani dengan baik oleh orang tua. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan modifikasi perilaku sejak dini dengan evaluasi sebagai tahap akhir. Penelitian ini mengevaluasi modifikasi perilaku tantrum pada anak usia dini melalui serangkaian prosedur untuk mengubah perilaku negatif menjadi positif. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan wawancara terstruktur kepada orang tua sebagai sumber data. Analisis data mengacu pada model Milles dan Huberman. Subjek penelitian adalah anak usia 2-6 tahun, yang dipilih secara sengaja melalui wawancara dan observasi mendalam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tindakan penguatan yang efektif, melibatkan pengawasan orang tua, pencegahan potensi bahaya, dan penenangan anak dengan pelukan atau tindakan lainnya. Evaluasi akhir menunjukkan bahwa anak lebih bebas dalam mengekspresikan emosi, tetapi tetap diawasi oleh orang tua.

Kata Kunci: Modifikasi Perilaku, Tantrum, Anak Usia Dini

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INTRODUCTION

Behavior modification in early childhood is a series of actions aimed at changing specific behaviors in young children (Nuha & Munawaroh, 2022; Satriyawan, 2020). A more precise definition of behavior modification is an effort to apply the principles of the learning process and psychological principles from other experiments to human behavior (Nurfadilah & Falaah, 2021). Behavior modification is based on the principles of the Behaviorist learning theory (Pujiati & Dahlan, 2017). The Behaviorist learning theory is a theory that understands individual behavior with three approaches: objective, mechanistic, and materialistic. Thus, behavioral change in an individual can be achieved through conditioning efforts (Allison, 2023; Badrudin et al., 2022; Brogan et al., 2021).

According to this theory, important aspects of learning involve input in the form of stimuli and output in the form of responses (Widiasari & Pujiati, 2016). Behavior modification is a technique consisting of a series of procedures aimed at addressing problematic behavior and maintaining the desired behavior (Malika, 2020). Various forms of behavior modification or therapy are focused on learning experiences designed to change maladaptive behavior in individuals. In behavior modification, a series of procedures are often conducted to change the expected behavior. Types of behavioral changes include enhancement, maintenance, reduction, development, or expansion, with the aim of producing specific desired behavioral changes. Behavior modification, as a technique for changing behavior, has both advantages and disadvantages (Hapsari & Hartiani, 2019).

Behavior modification is one of the popular techniques for changing behavior among educators (Farhi & Gabaix, 2020; Ismandela et al., 2023; Wulandani & Putri, 2022). Practitioners of behavior modification must understand its fundamental principles. Fundamentally, the goals of behavior modification are to support and promote adaptive behaviors in children. Adaptive behavior refers to behavior accepted by the environment, including family, school, and society, that is beneficial for the child's development. Secondly, behavior modification aims to suppress or eliminate the emergence of behaviors that tend to be unacceptable to the family, school, and society, and are potentially harmful to the child's development (Fernández-Rodríguez et al., 2021).

Some advantages of behavior modification include: 1) The steps in behavior modification can be planned in advance. The plan can be discussed with the individual whose behavior is to be changed, making them more cooperative. 2) Implementation details can be adjusted during treatment. Changes made are tailored to the client's needs. 3) If a technique proves unsuccessful or less effective in bringing about change, it can be detected early, and alternative techniques can be attempted. 4) The techniques used in behavior modification can be explained and regulated rationally, allowing for

objective prediction and evaluation of treatment outcomes. 5) The time required to implement these procedures is important (Kinney, 2022).

After implementing a series of procedures, it is crucial to evaluate behavior modification to assess success or as a benchmark for the expected success of the modification (Kishel & Vollmer, 2023). The first step in this evaluation is to determine the goals, aiming to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the modification program. The success of implementing a behavior modification program depends on how accurately behaviors to be changed are defined and the baseline is determined. Evaluating children's behavior modification serves as a benchmark for the success of the expected behavior modification, whether the modified behavior has changed to the desired behavior or vice versa (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019).

If the behavior aligns with expectations, reinforcement is needed. If it is less successful, the shortcomings are identified and analyzed to redesign the modification program accordingly, ensuring that the desired behavior becomes a good habit. Through this evaluation, modifiers can determine whether the program is running as expected, i.e., whether the desired attitude is ingrained in the targeted behavior (Mulyanti & Bayan, 2022; Utami et al., 2023). Additionally, if the behavior modification program is not successful, the shortcomings can be identified to facilitate the development of a new program to modify undesirable behavior into more positive behavior (Oktaviana et al., 2014, 2021; Oktavianingsih & Fitroh, 2021).

The assessment and modification of behavior in early childhood, particularly regarding tantrums, have become focal points of research and intervention efforts (Perry et al., 2019). Tantrums, common among young children, pose challenges for both parents and educators. Researchers have explored various behavior modification approaches to enhance tantrum management and intervention strategies. Positive reinforcement, teaching alternative coping mechanisms, and addressing long-term sustainability are among the key areas investigated. While positive outcomes have been reported, challenges such as individual variability, consistency across environments, and the enduring impact of interventions remain critical considerations. This introduction sets the stage for evaluating the effectiveness of behavior modification strategies, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of both successful interventions and their inherent limitations (Verboon & Peters, 2020).

This introduction sets the stage for evaluating the effectiveness of behavior modification strategies, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of both successful interventions and their inherent limitations. The overarching goal is to contribute to the development of comprehensive and effective behavior modification programs for managing tantrums in early childhood, thus improving the overall well-being and developmental outcomes for young children.

METHODS

This research is a qualitative study that employs a case study interview approach to evaluate behavior modification of tantrums in children aged 1-6 years. In this behavior evaluation, a series of procedures are employed to shift negative behavior in children to positive behavior. The evaluation of behavior modification is the final stage of the behavior modification procedure, conducted by completely eliminating the treatment to observe whether the modified behavior remains ingrained.

Subjects for the study were obtained through in-depth interviews and observations, with participants purposively selected from children aged 1-6 years. Subjects were acquired through interviews with parents, utilizing the interactive model proposed by Oktavia and Rita. The data analysis process will continue until data saturation is achieved. Data saturation is marked by the absence of new data or information being obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collection through interviews with parents of 6 children resulted in the following:

First, AF is a 3-year-old child with tantrum behavior, such as throwing things and screaming when he doesn't get what he wants. The parent's approach to dealing with this is to let the child cry and release emotions, then ask what he wants when he stops crying. The evaluation of this approach is considered effective in handling tantrums, as it helps the child develop emotional and social skills.

Second, AG is a 2-year-old who cries when uncomfortable or when his wishes are not fulfilled. The parent's approach is to let the child cry, hold him or hug him if needed, and ask what he means when the crying subsides. The evaluation indicates that the child's frustration and emotions are expressed, and the parent's words and actions are more acknowledged.

Third, HA is a 5-year-old with tantrum behavior of continuous crying when desires are not met. The parent's approach is to let the child cry and divert attention to something else. The evaluation suggests that the child stops crying because attention is shifted to a new activity.

Fourth, DN is a 6-year-old with tantrum behavior of crying loudly and not stopping when desires are not met or when upset due to teasing. The parent's approach is to let the child express emotions through crying, but with supervision. The evaluation indicates that the child is more responsive to parental guidance.

Fifth, AT is a 5-year-old with tantrum behavior of suppressing emotions and remaining silent while groaning when teased by peers. The parent's approach is to let

the child express emotions, observe, and then engage in conversation when emotions subside. The evaluation shows that the child is more responsive to guidance.

Sixth, AZ is a 5-year-old with tantrum behavior of crying and groaning while isolating when desires are not fulfilled. The parent's approach is to let the child cry while ensuring supervision to prevent harm. The evaluation suggests that the child can express emotions with supervision and responds better to guidance.

The reinforcement action involves letting the child express emotions while ensuring supervision, calming the child with a hug or other means. The evaluation shows that the child can express emotions more freely but still under parental supervision, and the child is more responsive to parental guidance, teaching patience and polite communication.

The behavior modification stages, according to, include: Identification of Tantrum Behavior: Confirm that the child exhibiting tantrum behavior is the target for intervention. Selecting Target Behavior: After identifying the child with tantrum behavior, choose specific behaviors for intervention based on type, frequency, duration, and intensity. Collecting Baseline Data: Record baseline data by observing the child's behavior over a week before intervention. Identification of Reinforcers: Identify factors that reinforce or support the occurrence or cessation of a behavior through interviews with the child, parents, and direct classroom observation. Program Evaluation: After the intervention, evaluate the program by eliminating treatment, observing and recording whether the target behavior persists or returns to baseline .

In the discussion, periodic evaluation of the program is emphasized, and the first step in behavior modification is determining the baseline. Baseline data collection methods include single-model (AB), reversal-model (ABAB), and multiple-baseline models. The next steps involve setting specific behavior modification goals based on observed behavior, duration, and type. The importance of periodic evaluation is highlighted to assess the success of the program.

A good program should undergo periodic evaluation through a series of program stages to assess its achievements. In behavior modification activities, the first step is establishing a Baseline, which refers to the initial measurement stage before commencing the program. Baseline data collection is essential to assess the mastery of the designed behavioral stages.

Different types of baselines include:

Firstly, the AB Model (single-mode) is a simple model commonly used to evaluate changes. Here, 'A' signifies the established baseline by the modifier, while 'B' represents the changes observed during the period. Secondly, the ABAB model, or reversal model, determines the baseline by using the average occurrence of the initial (A) behavior, followed by the intervention (B). Subsequently, the behavior is observed

returning to the initial state (reversal) (A). In this case, 'A' represents the second baseline, and the following period is the intervention (B). Thirdly, the multiple baseline model isn't reliant on a reversal condition. Instead, it focuses on the appearance of similar behavior or indicates relative proximity to the expected behavior in the implemented modification program.

Regarding the subsequent steps after determining the baseline, the establishment of specific behavioral modification goals is crucial. These goals directly relate to the type of behavior to be altered. Specifying the behavior to be modified depends on the ability to define the observed behavior (Farihah & Aflahani, 2021; Sa'adah et al., 2022). Determining the type of behavior and its duration depends on the modifier in the initial observation (Satriyawan & Ichsan, 2020). Deviant behavior in the classroom learning context falls into three categories: deviant behavior, active learning engagement, and teacher-student interaction (Rohmah, 2021). Specific goals in behavior modification should meet three criteria: they should be specific, measurable (observable in terms of frequency, intensity, and duration), and repeatable (to understand the direction of behavioral change) (Aprilia & Wardhani, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The evaluation of child behavior modification is a crucial measure of the success of the intended behavioral changes. It determines whether the modified behavior has transformed into the desired one or not. If the behavior aligns with expectations, reinforcement is applied; if not, the deficiencies are analyzed to redesign the modification program accordingly. This evaluation helps in understanding the effectiveness of the conducted program, ensuring that the desired attitudes are instilled in the targeted behavior. Furthermore, it facilitates the identification of shortcomings, aiding in the reconstruction of a new program to modify undesirable behavior into more positive patterns. In the case of modifying tantrum behavior in early childhood, the evaluation reveals effective reinforcement actions, such as allowing the child to express emotions under parental supervision, preventing potential harm, and calming the child with hugs or other means. The final evaluation indicates that the child can express emotions more freely while still being supervised, learning to respond to parental guidance and developing patience, along with using polite communication.

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