

Strategies for Handling Difficult and Tantrum-Throwing Early Childhood Children

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to identify the factors that cause young children to be difficult to control and prone to tantrums, as well as to identify effective strategies for teachers and parents in dealing with such behavior. In addition, this study also seeks to assess the benefits of implementing these strategies on children's emotional and behavioral development in school and home environments.

Methodology: The research method used was descriptive qualitative, with data collection techniques through direct observation, interviews with classroom teachers and parents, and documentation. The research subject was one child in group A at BA Aisyiyah Nurul Huda Bercak, Wonosamodro, who exhibited unruly behavior and frequent tantrums. The subject was selected using purposive sampling based on observations of the child's social and emotional behavior at school and at home.

Results: The results of the study show that children with difficult behavior tend to withdraw from group activities, have difficulty concentrating, and often exhibit tantrum-like behavior such as crying, screaming, or throwing objects. The contributing factors include the child's inability to control their emotions, inconsistent parenting, and unmet psychological needs. After a collaborative approach was taken between teachers, parents, and therapists, positive changes were seen in the children's behavior, namely the ability to control emotions, focus on activities, and interact better with peers.

Application/Originality/Value: This study provides practical contributions for teachers and parents in dealing with unruly children and tantrums through positive strategies, consistent communication, and cross-role collaboration. The originality of this study lies in the direct application of behavior management strategies in rural early childhood education settings, which shows that simple interventions such as behavioral therapy and empathetic approaches can improve children's emotional control and social interaction.

Introduction Section

According to UNESCO, early childhood (ECD) is defined as children between the ages of 0 and 8 years. This period is a period of rapid development, including emotional and social aspects. However, during this phase, children often exhibit unruly behavior and tantrums as a form of immature emotional expression. Children who are difficult to direct and frequently throw tantrums are a common problem faced by many parents (Dwiyanti & Mulyana, 2020). This behavior can be a challenge for parents, caregivers, and educators in finding solutions. This study aims to offer effective and practical strategies for dealing with unruly behavior and tantrums in early childhood, as well as creating a more conducive environment for their psychological development.

Research Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, namely collecting and analyzing data taken in writing, or verbally. According to Ramanian, & Wardhani, (2023), this method aims to describe and analyze data collected from observed objects, using interview and documentation techniques. Qualitative descriptive research is based on postpositivism and aims to describe and interpret the data that has been collected. This research was conducted at the BA Aisyiyah Bercak institution, with the number of children studied being one child who experienced difficult to manage and tantrum conditions. The focus of this study was to describe the teacher's strategies in dealing with difficult to manage and tantrum children during the learning process, as well as identifying the obstacles and solutions applied. The research subjects included class teachers, principals, and parents and children who experienced these conditions, who were selected by purposive sampling based on their direct experience and knowledge in daily learning activities. In collecting relevant data, this study used an approach through interviews with parents and teachers, as well as documentation techniques.

The data obtained and collected in this study used several techniques to find accurate and complete information, the techniques used were class teacher interviews, parent interviews, and observations. Classroom Teacher Interviews: Researchers conducted direct interviews with classroom teachers to determine the development of unruly children and tantrums. The purpose of these interviews was to explore teachers' experiences in dealing with child tantrums in the classroom. Children usually experience tantrums in the classroom during transitional periods, such as when moving from play to learning or when it is not their turn to play. According to the teacher, these tantrums may be caused by the child's desires not being met or not being able to share with friends. The impact on the learning process in the classroom is that learning activities are disrupted, other children become unfocused, and the teacher must divide attention. To handle a child who is having a tantrum, the teacher calms the child by inviting him to sit down and talk slowly, and gives the child time to calm down. The teacher also discusses this tantrum behavior with the child's parents to find a joint solution and ensure consistency between home and school.

The next stage was parent interviews. Researchers interviewed the parents of unruly and tantrum-prone children directly to determine their child's development at home. The purpose of this study was to explore parents' perspectives and roles in managing their children's tantrums at home, in collaboration with teachers. The parents understood what a tantrum is, when a child cries and screams when their desires are not met. These children typically experience tantrums at home when told to take a nap or stop using their phone. When a child has a tantrum, parents try to calm them down, sometimes letting the tantrum subside before engaging them in conversation. According to the parents, the reason their child often has tantrums is because the child is stubborn and cannot wait patiently. The parents consulted with the teacher about this and agreed to consistently set limits for the child. Tantrums in children do affect activities at home, creating a tense atmosphere. However, through communication and collaboration between parents and teachers, they strive to find solutions to manage their child's behavior.

During the observation phase (direct observation), researchers recorded what occurred during the learning process. The purpose of this activity was to directly observe the behavior of children who were having tantrums and how the teacher handled the situation. The children experienced tantrums in various forms, such as crying loudly, screaming, throwing objects, and rolling around. The frequency of children's tantrums varied, but generally occurred during activity transitions, when their wishes were denied, or in conflict situations with friends. Teachers responded to children's tantrums by approaching them, calming them down, and providing a distraction by offering them another toy. Once handled, children usually calmed down within a few minutes after being given praise or a preferred toy. However, sometimes children also responded with anger or avoidance. When children throw tantrums, they can have a negative impact on class learning, such as disrupting their peers, making the class noisy, and even temporarily halting learning activities.

Teachers strive to handle these situations patiently and effectively to create a conducive learning environment. According to Sugiyono (2023), interviews are used as a method of data collection, both for initial studies and to gain in-depth understanding from respondents. Meanwhile, according to Ahyar (2020), documentation is considered a method of data collection by recording existing information. The documents used can be written or images that serve as supporting data in the research. The purpose of this study is to determine the causes of children's unruly behavior and tantrums, so that they can know how to handle them and the benefits that can be obtained from this research. This research was conducted at an early childhood education institution in Wonosomodro sub-district, namely at BA Aisiyish Nurul Huda Bercak, academic year 2024-2025.

The subject in this study was one of the students from group A at BA Aisiyiah Nurul Huda Bercak. The subject in this study was selected by purposive sampling, because the sample contained several characteristics that were relevant to the study, but with several considerations, namely looking at the child's social interaction abilities when they first entered school, the child's emotional development, the child's behavior at home. Viewed as a whole from the category there are children who are difficult to manage and tantrum, so the researcher got one child in group A who met the criteria including, Having weaknesses in emotional control, children's behavioral habits at home and at school. After the researcher observed the child's condition, the researcher found several problems with the child, namely that he was difficult to control, liked to have tantrums, often isolated, and often disturbed his friends while they were studying.

Research Result and Discussion

Research Results

Research conducted on a student at BA Aisiyiah Nurul Huda Bercak shows that unruly behavior and tantrums have a significant impact on various parties. For the child himself, tantrum behavior can cause loneliness and difficulty interacting with his peers, leading to concerns that he will become antisocial. The child's parents felt overwhelmed and almost desperate in dealing with their child's behavior. The researcher suggested that parents be patient, remain calm, and not always give in to the child's wishes during tantrums, and give praise for simple tasks the

child does. The researcher also advised the parents to take the child to a therapist to reduce his tantrums. Although the child's parents only took the child to a therapist twice, due to limited knowledge and economic resources, as they live in a remote village, the effort had a positive impact on the child. The child has begun to show behavioral changes for the better, although not yet optimal. For teachers, the child's tantrum behavior can disrupt concentration and make it difficult for them to focus while teaching. Researchers recommend that teachers take the child to a quiet and undisturbed place to calm down before returning to class. Meanwhile, other students find the child's crying, particularly loud, distracting, so researchers recommend separating the child from a separate room and encouraging other students not to ostracize him while playing.

Discussion

Early childhood is the first stage of human life, full of surprises and wonders. This stage is the process of forming a child's character early in life and can determine the child's future as an adult. According to Ratnasari & Rakhmawati (2020), early childhood is very important because it provides the basic foundation for a child's subsequent development. Therefore, it is crucial to provide appropriate and quality care, education, and upbringing to early childhood so that they can grow optimally, become balanced individuals with character, and have a strong foundation for future success. At this stage, young children exhibit a variety of behaviors that adults and parents may not fully understand, including difficult behavior and tantrums. Unruly (or naughty) early childhood behavior is characterized by disobedience or a refusal to follow rules, both at home and at school. This behavior can be seen in children frequently breaking rules, being unresponsive to instructions, and being difficult to manage in daily activities. The causes of this behavior can vary, ranging from psychological factors, inappropriate parenting styles, to certain medical conditions.

Every parent wants their child to grow up to be obedient and well-behaved. Therefore, when a child misbehaves and is difficult to manage, many parents feel frustrated. In this situation, many parents respond by scolding the child. In fact, they label them as naughty children. Scolding a child doesn't simply resolve the problem; it can actually lead to a strained parent-child relationship. Child development is not only physical but also psychological, so children can be difficult to manage and control. Therefore, it is important for parents to understand the stages of child psychology. These stages include infants (0-2 years) who need to adjust their needs and habits, toddlers (18 months-3 years) who learn to say "no" and regulate their emotions, preschoolers (3-6 years) who learn to socialize and compete with their peers, and school-age children (6-12 years) who face academic challenges and need support and empathy from parents to channel frustration effectively. Literacy stimulation must be tailored to the child's characteristics and needs, Wardhani et al. (2023). By understanding these stages, parents can provide appropriate support for their child's psychological development, such as appreciating and motivating children, and listening to their stories and feelings.

Naughty children can be caused by several factors, such as children trying to steal their parents' attention due to a lack of interaction and parental presence. Inappropriate parenting styles, such as authoritarian or overprotective, can also lead to naughty behavior. Furthermore, a child's intense curiosity can have negative consequences if not properly guided. Children can also imitate the behavior of those closest to them, such as their parents or what they see on television. Therefore, it is important for parents to be good role models and proactive in guiding their children to distinguish between right and wrong behavior. Difficulty in children can be caused by several factors, both internal and external. Psychological factors such as frustration, attention seeking, behavioral disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and the "threenager" phase in children aged 3 years can influence a child's behavior. Inappropriate parenting styles, such as being too lenient, too firm, or inconsistent, can also cause a child to be difficult to manage. Environmental factors, such as imitating parental behavior or being in an unsafe environment, also play a role in shaping a child's behavior. Certain medical conditions can also affect a child's behavior.

To handle difficult children, parents need to understand the causes, apply appropriate parenting styles, set a good example, and communicate clearly. Consulting with a specialist can also be helpful if the child's behavior is severe. A positive approach with rewards and praise for good behavior can also be an effective strategy in managing a child's behavior. Another child behavior besides being difficult to manage is tantrums. Parents must understand some of the characteristics of children so that they can later take a good attitude when dealing with them. Tantrums are one of the most common problems experienced by children. Parents need to understand the causes of tantrums and how to handle them positively, Ummah, (2024). Parents should not immediately get carried away by emotions when their child has a tantrum, first understand what a tantrum is, its causes, symptoms, and how to handle it, because symptoms can appear at any time, even in crowded places. Although tantrums are a normal reaction in children, parents still need to know how to handle them so as not to get carried away by emotions, it is also not recommended to use violence or isolate children (for example, locking them in the bathroom) when they are having a tantrum.

Although both look the same by showing a crying reaction, tantrums and normal crying are different, parents should be aware of symptoms of excessive tantrums or have exceeded normal limits. F. Firdaus & Santy, (2020), *Analysis of Factors Causing Tantrum Behavior in Children*. The following are symptoms of tantrums which include crying, screaming, shouting, whining, holding their breath, kicking or hitting, pushing, jumping, tensing the body, struggling, and throwing things. In more severe stages, tantrums in children become very aggressive. Symptoms include, tantrums with long and frequent duration, making physical contact with others, and hurting themselves for example, slapping, pulling hair, or rolling on the floor. Tantrums occur because toddlers are not yet able to identify their emotions, so they vent their feelings by expressing anger and sadness, through crying or throwing tantrums because their desires are not fulfilled.

Tantrums are common in children, but their expression varies. Problematic tantrums are reported to occur in about half of children and have a significant impact on the emotions of their caregivers. Therefore, children who have problems with frequent tantrums should receive appropriate treatment from their families and those closest to them. Prutipaisan, (2024). It is important to remember that tantrums are a normal part of early childhood development. However, if the frequency, intensity, or duration of tantrums is excessive, or if the child exhibits behavior that is dangerous to themselves or others, it is best to consult a pediatrician or psychologist for appropriate treatment and guidance. Tantrums in children are often caused by a variety of factors unique to each individual. One of the most common causes is when a child's desires are not met, such as excessive requests for toys or food. Furthermore, a child's temperament plays a significant role in determining their reactions to frustrating situations or environmental changes. Some children may be more prone to anger, while others may be more relaxed in dealing with problems.

Other factors that can trigger tantrums include stress, hunger, fatigue, and overstimulation. For example, a child who has traveled a long distance may become tired and unable to adjust to the new environment, causing them to cry loudly. Furthermore, situations that seem normal to adults can be difficult for children. For example, when a favorite toy breaks or a part comes off, a child may feel scared and angry, believing it is beyond repair. In situations like these, children may exhibit intense tantrum reactions. Dealing with a child's tantrum requires patience and the right strategy. The key is to remain calm and not get provoked, as a child experiencing a tantrum is overwhelmed by their emotions and unable to think rationally. Parents should avoid using media as a primary means of regulating their child's emotions (Coyne & Stockdale, 2021). Ensure that the child remains safe and does not harm themselves or others, and do not give in to their demands if they are unreasonable. If the tantrum is simply seeking attention, try to ignore it without verbal response or eye contact, and approach them after the tantrum has subsided.

Once your child has calmed down, offer hugs and comfort, and help them verbalize their emotions. For example, you could say, "I know you're upset because your friend took your toy." Then, when your child has completely calmed down, talk with them about what caused the tantrum and work together to find a solution for dealing with the problem next time. Consistency in dealing with tantrums is crucial, so make sure you and other caregivers have the same approach to help your child better manage their emotions and behavior. When a child is having a tantrum, it often causes parents to panic, which can actually make the child more emotional. According to Nurhayati & Handayani (2023), the key to managing tantrums in early childhood is a calm attitude among parents when dealing with a tantrum. It is crucial for teachers, parents, and caregivers to help manage the emotions and behavior of children who are difficult to manage and who are throwing tantrums.

Punishing children when they throw a temper tantrum to deter them should be avoided. Instead, to correct this temper tantrum behavior, parents must be able to express love and affection for their children. Give children the opportunity to realize how much their parents care for them. Developing creativity from an early age is crucial for developing innovative and creative characters in children. With a loving and caring environment, if temper tantrums are indeed caused by child behavior that needs to be corrected, teaching values and norms will be easier to instill in children. Therefore, the emergence of temper tantrum behavior becomes a means of self-evasion for parents. Developing creativity from an early age is crucial for developing innovative and creative characters in children. Azizah & Wardhani (2022) Therefore, teachers, caregivers, and parents can help children manage their emotions and control tantrums with these strategies, thereby enhancing their creativity.



Figure 1. Children have finished cutting and pasting patterns.

Every time he goes to school, the child refuses to wear a uniform. He only wants to wear the clothes he likes, and he wears the same clothes at home and at school, until they look worn and shabby. Every time his parents dress him in a button-down shirt or school uniform, he becomes moody and refuses to talk, even refusing to go to class. And that's when his tantrums emerge.



Figure 2. Children learn to recognize letters and numbers

In school activities, the child has difficulty focusing on every lesson in class. He often runs around alone, plays in the corner by himself, and is often seen daydreaming and looking blank. When called, he always doesn't respond. He will respond if the teacher approaches and touches him. When asked a question, he will only respond with a smile without uttering a word.

Conclusion

The problem within the BA Aisyiyah Nuruk Huda Bercak institution is that some children have unique characteristics, such as being very difficult to manage and throwing tantrums, requiring special measures to deal with them. Parents and caregivers must strive to remain calm and not become provoked when a child is having a tantrum or is difficult to manage. They should also seek to understand the reasons behind the child's behavior. Whether he is tired, hungry, frustrated, or has unmet needs, teach your child to identify and express his emotions with words, give your child choices in certain situations to give them a sense of control and reduce the potential for frustration that can trigger tantrums, when your child starts to have a tantrum, try to distract him with other activities, toys, or topics of conversation that interest him, if your child is having a tantrum and is not endangering himself or others, give him space to express his emotions, apply clear and consistent rules. Give praise and attention when your child shows good behavior, predictable daily routines can help your child feel more secure and reduce the likelihood of tantrums due to uncertainty, be a good example because children learn from the adults around them, physical punishment is ineffective and can make the situation worse, if tantrums occur frequently, are very intense, or are accompanied by worrying behavior, do not hesitate to seek help from a child psychologist or child development professional. By applying these strategies consistently and lovingly, parents, caregivers, and teachers can help young children learn to manage their emotions, develop self-regulation skills, and reduce difficult behavior and tantrums.

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