 https://doi.org/10.12816/0061456

# The Impact of Kindergarten Teachers' Training on the Principles of Behavior Modification in Reducing Children' Negative Behavior and Increasing Positive One

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Received :24/04/2022 Accepted :18/12/2022

## Abstract

The study aims to build and apply an indicative and educational program to train kindergarten teachers to reduce undesirable behavior and increase desirable behavior among kindergarten children.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, a scale is built to minimize undesirable behaviors and increase desirable ones, and then ensure its validity and constancy.

The sample consisted of 10 teachers and 40 children, and each teacher has four students who are chosen randomly. The students are randomly distributed into two experimental groups, to which the program consisting of 10 sessions is applied "for an hour per session" at a rate of two sessions per week, and did not apply the program on the control group.

The results indicate that the guide program has a clear effectiveness in reducing unwanted behavior and increasing desirable behavior in the experimental group of children who received the program. In addition, the researcher recommends the use of the program in all kindergartens to benefit the kindergarten teachers.

**Keywords:** Training Program, Positive Behavior, Negative Behavior, Kindergarten Teachers, Experimental Group.

## Introduction:

Kindergarten is a smooth, sunny introduction to real school for children since it sets the stage for the rest of their education. It is a formative stage located in the early childhood stage in which children learn how to interact with others, including peers, teachers, and parents, and begin to develop interests that will stay with them throughout their lives. Families are becoming aware of the importance of sending their children to kindergarten as it provides them with an opportunity to learn and practice the essential social, emotional, problem solving, and study skills that they will use throughout their schooling. It aims at the holistic development of a child's cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing.

The importance of the kindergarten stage is achieved only if female teachers are of high scientific and technical educational levels, they will set the tone for children's opinions about school in general and learning in particular. Learning cannot be forced on students and kindergarten teachers inspire children with low motivation to be more willing learners, otherwise they will get lost.

Hence, there is an urgent need to prepare kindergarten teachers and develop their expertise. The current study seeks to explore the impact of kindergarten teachers' training on the principles of behavior modification according to Skinner's behavioral theory, which is the most successful in teaching children in early childhood new desired behaviors and changing their unwanted ones.

Training teachers to use the principles of behavior modification leads to increase their ability to deal with the behavioral problems they face with children and develop their interaction with them. Thus, children are reinforced to practice a positive behavior and directed to refrain from the negative one that tends to die out whereby confounding corporal punishment is avoided (Strand, 2000).

The principles of behavior modification based on Skinner's behavioral theory focus on the role of the environment on behavior. This includes analyzing the behavior in the natural environmental situation in the kindergarten and its relationship with the pre and post environmental variables. The operant conditioning assumes that the post stimuli (the results of the behavior) occupy the primary role

in analyzing the behavior and modifying it. While antecedents of behavior are stimulus events or circumstances that precede an operant response, it is important to analyze the antecedents and consequences to have better information on the circumstances in which the behavior was reinforced and was punished (Khatib, 2001).

Behavior modification is an integrated strategy intended to strengthen the desired behaviors and eliminate or modify unwanted behaviors and switch it for more socially acceptable one. The target behavior is followed by reinforcement or punishment to either weaken or strengthen it, so that it occurs at the appropriate time and place and at an acceptable rate (Abu Humaidan, 2003).

The behavior modification process also needs constant monitoring to verify its effectiveness. Accordingly, kindergarten teacher must take into account the goal of the treatment program, the method of treatment used and its efficiency in modifying the behavior (Al-Khatib, 1990).

## Literature Review:

Yunus (2019) conducted a study aimed at identifying the role of kindergarten teachers in controlling chaotic behavior among children and ways to deepen it from the point of view of female managers, the results showed that kindergarten teachers play their part in reducing chaotic behavior, this was in the medium degree, and the study sample agreed to a large extent with the proposed ways to deepen the role of this message.

Al-Attar's study (2019) aimed at developing the values of citizenship among children in the pre-school stage in Saudi society, this study also concluded that the socialization of children from an early age is the cornerstone for the activation of citizenship and its values, which is considered an integrated system that contributes to the formation of the children's personality.

Mhiadat (1986) conducted a study aimed to modify some unwanted behavioral patterns such as (getting out of the seat and sucking the finger) through using the principles of operant conditioning (punishment, reinforcement, response cost, extinction) at the model school in Yarmouk University. The study sample consisted of six students suffering from behavioral problems (4 males and 2 females). The researcher prepared a three-stage program: problem identification, behavior recording, and treatment. The results of the study indicated the possibility of applying the principles of operant conditioning in a normal classroom environment, which reduced the frequency of the problematic behavior.

Stratton (1984) conducted a study on clinic mothers of 35 conduct-disordered children (4-8years) using individual and group training. Mothers and their children were assessed at baseline. Immediately after treatment, treated mothers showed significant attitudinal and behavioral improvements, additionally, the children showed reductions in child noncompliance. The results also revealed that the group training method was less expensive than individual training in time and effort.

Umniah Abu Sale (2013) conducted a study aimed at identifying the ability of kindergarten teachers to discover and confront some of the most common behavioral problems among kindergarten children (lying, stealing, aggressive behavior, stubbornness, hyperactivity). The descriptive approach was used in addition to a measure applied to the study sample that consisted of (145) kindergarten teachers. The results revealed the low ability of kindergarten teachers to discover and confront the behavioral problems of kindergarten children which indicate the importance of preparing programs and training courses for pre and in-service kindergarten teachers to develop their basic abilities in discovering and confronting the most common behavioral problems among kindergarten children.

Brakat (2008) conducted a study aimed to identify the negative behaviors of primary school students from teachers' perspectives and the methods used to address these behavioral aspects. For this purpose, the study instruments were applied to a sample of 832 teachers (413 male 419 female). The study revealed that the level of teachers' assessment of the negative class behaviors was medium, while their level of confrontation was generally high. Moreover, the most frequent five negative behaviors according to teachers' evaluation were in the following order: scribbling on the walls, speaking without permission, cursing, kicking others, and chaos, while the least five frequent negative behaviors were: roaming in class, clapping, calling each other, making noise, and profanity. The arrangement of behavioral manifestations according to the level of appearance was as follow: aggressive behaviors, verbal behaviors, and motor behaviors. In addition, the results indicated that the most five frequently methods used by teachers to deal with negative behavior were in the following order: ignoring, isolating, get students busy, using attractive methods, and building human relationships with students, while the least five methods used were: using humor, knowing the causes of behavior, punishment, guidance and counseling, and cooperative group learning. On the contrary, the arrangement of methods was as follow: social methods, psychological methods, and educational methods.

Upon reviewing theoretical literature, the researcher could not locate any research that has been conducted to train kindergarten teachers on using the principles of behavior modification for kindergarten children to reinforce positive behaviors and reduce negative ones, and this is what the current study seeks to do.

## Problem of the Study

Kindergarten teachers play a significant role in influencing children's behavior. Through her work as a kindergarten teacher, the researcher noticed that the pre-service kindergarten teachers do not apply the principles of reinforcement in modifying children's behavior properly, which leads to the failure of behavior modification. Therefore, training female teachers on the principles of behavior modification increases their awareness of dealing with children's behavior in scientific ways and lead to achieving the desired educational benefits.

## Significance of the Study

The findings of the current study are expected to contribute to educational literature that uses behavioral theory by providing potentially significant information and new insights on the effectiveness of training kindergarten teachers on the principles of behavior modification and its impact on reducing negative behaviors and increasing positive ones.

## Study Objectives

The current study aims to examine the effectiveness of training kindergarten teachers on the principles of behavior modification to reduce children's negative behaviors and increase positive ones and to investigate the impact of operant conditioning theory in modifying children's behavior in kindergarten.

## Study Hypotheses

1- There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$), between the mean scores of the experimental group in the study scale of (negative and positive behaviors) before and after applying the counseling program**.**

2- There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the pre- and post- test scores of the control group in the scale of (negative and positive behaviors) and the post-test.

3- There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$), between the scores of the experimental and control groups in the scale of (negative and positive behaviors) after applying the counseling program.

## Terms of Definitions

**Training Program:** It is a collective counseling program based on Skinner's operant conditioning theory and applied to the experimental group of kindergarten teachers. The program consists of ten sessions lasting 60 minutes each, spread over five weeks two sessions per week. The tenth session was carried out two weeks after the end of the program and devoted to follow-up measures.

The sessions of the program include a number of guiding methods and techniques used in the operant conditioning theory such as identifying undesirable behavior, observing and measuring it, increasing the desired behavior and reducing undesirable behavior. Also, using group-counseling methods such as active listening, giving instructions, feedback, modeling, confrontation, self-disclosure, role-playing, social reinforcement, and encouraging female teachers to use self-exploration, empathy, and support skills.

**Negative Behavior**: It is educational and behavioral problems face mothers or educators during the upbringing of children. In this study, it is the marks recorded by the teacher on the questionnaire of negative and positive behaviors to assess children's behavior in kindergarten.

**Positive Behavior:** It is opposite the behavioral problems that face kindergarten teacher during her work. In this study, it is the marks recorded by the teacher on the questionnaire of negative and positive behaviors to assess children's behavior in kindergarten.

## Study Procedures

The following procedures were carried out in the course of the study:

1- The researcher reviewed the related literature to narrow the topic and aggregate the theoretical and empirical research related to the topic.

2- The instrument of the study was designed.

3- The validity of the instruments was established by a jury of experts.

4- The population and sample of the study were identified.

5- Meeting specialists in educational guidance and kindergartens in Jordanian universities and Ministry of Education to explore their views reducing negative behavior and increasing positive one among students of kindergarten.

6- Preparing the main areas, sub-goals, session axes, methods, and program implementation methods

7- Data was collected.

8- The results of the study were obtained through appropriate statistical analyses.

9- The findings of the study were analyzed and discussed according to the questions of the study.
10- The recommendations were set based of the results of the study.

## Study Sample and Population

The study population consisted of all female teachers in 14 kindergartens in Zarqa city (N = 530) distributed as shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: the distribution of the study population on the 14 kindergartens**

| # | Kindergarten Name | Students No |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Zarqa University kindergarten | 85 |
| 2 | Al-Bayader | 65 |
| 3 | Al Shatha | 70 |
| 4 | Umm Kulthum Kindergarten | 27 |
| 5 | Zainab Al-Hilaliya | 22 |
| 6 | New Zarqa | 18 |
| 7 | Children's World | 35 |
| 8 | Ibria Rahman | 35 |
| 9 | Al Marwa Model Kindergarten | 70 |
| 10 | Al Ansar Model Kindergarten | 30 |
| 11 | Islamic Azkar Kindergarten | 28 |
| 12 | Educational goal | 22 |
| 13 | Khalid Bin Al Waleed | 12 |
| 14 | Firdaws Model Kindergarten | 11 |
| Total | | 530 |

The sample of the study was chosen by the availability sampling method and consisted of 40 students randomly distributed among 10 female kindergarten teachers. The students were distributed into an experimental group (20 students) that received training on applying the principles of behavior modification and control group (20 students) that did not receive any sort of treatment.

The scale of negative and positive behaviors was applied to the kindergarten children who were randomly divided into an experimental group (20 students) and a control group (20 students) as shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 2: distribution of the study sample according to their group and kindergarten**

| **Group** | **kindergarten** | **No** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | University kindergarten | 12 | 20 |
| | Al Shatha kindergarten | 8 | |
| Control | Al-Bayader kindergarten | 9 | 20 |
| | Children's World kindergarten | 11 | |
| | **Total** | | **40** |

## Study Instruments

1- A30-paragraph questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to measure the type of reinforcement. 15 paragraphs measure the type of reinforcement that the teacher will use with children who perform desirable behaviors, and 15 paragraphs measure the type of reinforcement that the teacher will use with children who perform undesirable behaviors.
2- A collective counseling training program based on Skinner's operant conditioning theory consisting of ten sessions lasting 60 minutes each. The teachers were trained on behavior modification techniques and skills (identifying and defining undesirable behavior, observing and measuring behavior, increasing desirable behavior through training on applying the skills of reinforcement and symbolic reinforcement, and decreasing undesirable behavior through training on applying the skills of response cost and extinction.

| **Session No** | **Session title** |
|---|---|
| (1) | Acquaintance |
| (2) | Defining undesirable behavior |
| (3) | Observing and measuring behavior |
| (4) | Reinforcement + How to identify reinforcers |
| (5) | Reinforcement schedules |
| (6) | Symbolic reinforcement |
| (7) | Response cost |
| (8) | Extinction |
| (9) | Post measure |
| (10) | Follow-up measure |

## Validity and reliability of the study instrument

In order to examine the validity of the instruments, a panel of educational experts reviewed the instrument. The team was asked to validate the content of the instruments concerning its items, appropriateness to the purposes of the current study, the language clarity, the proposed period for each activity and how well they represent the training of kindergarten female teachers on the principles of behavior modification. The teams' comments and recommendations were studied carefully and taken into account in amending the final version of the instrument. The percent of agreement between the researcher’s evaluations reached

(95%), which is considered one of the high reliability coefficients.

## Statistical Treatment

To verify the validity of the study hypotheses, the data was analyzed using the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), the adjusted means, the correlation coefficient, (T) test, and then processing and analyzing it using (SPSS) statistics.

## Methodology and Procedures

The researcher used an experimental design for the pre and posttest as follows:

| Group | Equivalence | Pre test | Independent variable | Posttest |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | | | Counseling program exposure | |
| Control | | | | |

## Study Variables

To determine the potential effect of teachers' training on the principles of behavior modification the current study included the following variables: independent variable, which is the counseling program that the experimental group was exposed to and the dependent variable which is reducing negative behavior among children.

**The second test of two independent samples for the differences between the average ages of the two groups:**

| Group | No | Average mean/ month | SD | T-test | | df | siq |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimenta | 20 | 194.4 | 3.49 | Calculate | Tabulate | | not statistically significant |
| Control | 20 | 193.6 | 3.46 | 0.118 | 2.32 | 38 | |

## First Hypothesis

There are no statistically significant differences at (α=0.05), between the mean scores of the experimental group in the study scale of (negative and positive behaviors) before and after applying the counseling program.

The results showed that the average score of the experimental grouping in the level of reinforcement of negative and positive behaviors reached (378.4) in the pre-test and (304.4) in the post-test. When applying the (WiLCOXON) test for correlated pairs, it was found that the difference was statistically significant at α = (0.05).

The calculated T value (58.5) exceeds the tabulated T value of the posttest (52). This means that null hypothesis is rejected, there are statistically significant differences at (α = 0.05), which indicates a decrease in the negative behaviors of students in the experimental group that was exposed to the counseling program in comparison to the control group that did not receive any sort of treatment

## Second Hypothesis

There are no statistically significant differences at (α = 0.05) between the pre- and post-test scores of the control group in the scale of (negative and positive behaviors) and the post-test.

The results show that the mean scores of the control group in the pre-test reached (377.2) and (364.1) in the post-test in the level of negative and positive behaviors of the study sample. Upon applying the post test, it reached (364.1) in the level of negative and positive behavior in the study sample. The Wilcoxon test for correlated pairs showed that there were no statistically significant differences at (α= 0.05).

The tabulated T value (127) exceeds the calculated T value (47). This means that null hypothesis is accepted, there are no statistically significant differences at (α = 0.05) as shown in Table 3 below:

## Third Hypothesis

There are no statistically significant differences at (α = 0.05), between the scores of the experimental and control groups in the scale of (negative and positive behaviors) after applying the program.

The results show that there are differences between the average scores of the experimental group (304.41) and the control group (364.1) in the level of negative and positive behaviors of the study sample in favor of the experimental group. When applying the (MANN-WHITEY U TEST) test to compare two independent samples of medium size, the results showed that the differences were statistically significant and in favor of the counseling program in the post test**.**

The tabulated T value of the post-test (127) exceeds the calculated T value (47).This means that null hypothesis is rejected, there are statistically significant differences at (α = 0.05) as shown in Table 3 above, which indicates a decrease in the negative behaviors of students in the experimental group that was exposed to the counseling program in comparison to the control group that did not receive any sort of treatment.

## Discussion

**"First**: the results reveal that kindergarten children suffer from the problem of negative

behaviors and the teachers' lack of in-depth knowledge in dealing with it, which negatively affected their relation with each other. The problem was evident through children's hesitation and confusion, signs of anxiety, shyness, low self-confidence, adopting negative attitudes towards others, and the lack of communication skills.

The result may be attributed to the fact that these students (to the best of the researcher's knowledge of their social and cultural backgrounds) suffer from social problems. They received volatile upbringing from authoritarian parenting style that issue orders and prohibitions away from the democratic atmosphere, which led to the development of negative feelings about their social abilities, lack of motivation to engage in social interaction, fear of social situations, which caused them to have multiple adaptive difficulties.

This result is consistent with previous research (e.g., Bergman, 1998; Bemak & Greenberg, 1994; Palinka & Brouner, 1995) noting that the severity of these effects vary from one study to another.

**"Second**: Recognizing the impact of the counseling program in confronting and reducing the negative behavior of kindergarten students. The results show that the level of negative behavior among students of female teachers who received the counseling program has decreased significantly in comparison with the students of female teachers who did not receive any sort of treatment through the counseling program. The researcher believes that the appropriate selection of the counseling program topics, their consistency with students' problems, the clearly and crisply formulated objectives, the connection of needs with these topics, and the appropriateness of the counseling strategies left a clear impact on this result. (Sullivan, 2001; Reeve, 2001; Margolin, 2001; Lillenstin, 2001; King, 2001)

"These results can be explained by the characteristics of the sample used, the method of implementing group meetings, and the use of various methods in the counseling program, including: lecture, discussion, modeling, feedback, social reinforcement, and positive and negative reinforcement.

It can also be referred to the suitability of the counseling program duration, session's periods and group meetings, moreover, the experimental group very well understands the reality of what they lack and need to increase or modify which helped students to overcome many difficulties and situations that raised their fears and the confusion that clearly goes in line with the positive result of the counseling program. (AL-Rawajefi & AL-Rofo'a, 2007)

## Conclusion

Based on the results, it can be concluded that kindergarten teachers need psychological and educational counseling programs according to their needs and problems. The counseling program can be an appropriate tool to reduce undesirable behavior among kindergarten students and increase the desired one. Furthermore, the collective counseling method helps kindergarten teachers to use reinforcement to teach new skills or to increase appropriate or desired behaviors and acquire acceptable social skills that they lack within a group setting.

## Recommendations and Pedagogical Implications:

The study recommends using the program in training kindergarten teachers and emphasizes the importance of satisfying the psychological needs of kindergarten students and encouraging them to increase positive behavior and exclude the negative one.

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| # | The rate of erimental group | | The rate of control group | | U | | α | Differences |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Degree | Rank | Degree | Rank | Calculated | Tabulated | | |
| 1 | 259 | 13 | 346 | 21 | | | | Statistically Significant |
| 2 | 393 | 37 | 341 | 20 | | | | |
| 3 | 298 | 15 | 353 | 24 | | | | |
| 4 | 298 | 15 | 326 | 18 | | | | |
| 5 | 286 | 10 | 335 | 19 | | | | |
| 6 | 286 | 8.5 | 377 | 32.5 | | | | |
| 7 | 289 | 11 | 363 | 29 | | | | |
| 8 | 273 | 5.4 | 402 | 39 | | | | |
| 9 | 298 | 15 | 391 | 36 | | | | |
| 10 | 370 | 3 | 349 | 23 | | | | |
| 11 | 283 | 5.5 | 390 | 35 | | | | |
| 12 | 309 | 17 | 384 | 34 | 47 | 127 | 0.05 | |
| 13 | 357 | 27 | 377 | 32.5 | | | | |
| 14 | 283 | 7.5 | 368 | 30 | | | | |
| 15 | 290 | 12 | 354 | 25.5 | | | | |
| 16 | 276 | 6 | 354 | 25.5 | | | | |
| 17 | 273 | 4.5 | 358 | 28 | | | | |
| 18 | 269 | 2 | 371 | 31 | | | | |
| 19 | 410 | 40 | 395 | 38 | | | | |
| 20 | 255 | 1 | 348 | 22 | | | | |

https://doi.org/10.12816/0061456

# أثر تدريب معلمات رياض الأطفال على مبادئ تعديل السلوك في خفض السلوك السلبي وزيادة السلوك الإيجابي لدى الاطفال

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الاستلام: 2022/04/24 القبول: 2022/12/18

**الملخص:**

هدفت الدراسة إلى بناء برنامج إرشادي وتعليمي وتطبيقه لتدريب معلمات رياض الأطفال؛ للحدّ من السلوك غير المرغوب فيه، وزيادة السلوك المرغوب لدى أطفال رياض الأطفال. ومن أجل تحقيق أهداف الدراسة؛ أُعدَّ مقياس لتقليل السلوكات غير المرغوب فيها، وزيادة السلوكات المرغوبة، ومن ثم التأكد من صحتها وثباتها. وقد تكونت العينة من (10) معلمين، و(40) طالبًا، وكان لكل معلم أربعة طلاب اختيروا عشوائيًا. ووزّع الطلاب عشوائيًّا على مجموعتين تجريبية وضابطة، حيث طُبّق البرنامج المكون من (10) جلسات (لمدة ساعة لكل جلسة) بمعدل جلستين في الأسبوع، ولم يطبق البرنامج على المجموعة الضابطة. وأشارت النتائج إلى أنّ البرنامج الإرشادي كان له فاعلية واضحة في الحد من السلوك غير المرغوب فيه، وزيادة السلوك المرغوب في المجموعة التجريبية من الأطفال الذين تلقوا البرنامج. كما أوصت الباحثة باستخدام البرنامج في جميع صفوف رياض الأطفال؛ لإفادة معلمات هذه الصفوف من هذا البرنامج الإرشادي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** البرنامج التدريبي، السلوك الإيجابي، السلوك السلبي، معلمات رياض الأطفال، المجموعة التجريبية.