THE OUTCOME OF FACILITATING CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Behavioral problems among school-aged children and adolescents in the school setting have been on the rise since the 1980’s. An estimated 11% to 20% of children who present in primary care settings have significant behavioral and psychosocial problems. Research has shown that pediatricians identify behavior based problems as the most commonly reported issues in their practice. The scientific rationale of this study is to teach children aged seven to thirteen about various emotions and how to handle the different emotions. In particular, they will learn how to deal with angry feelings and ways to cope when they are feeling angry or upset. The end result would be to provide long-term benefits to these children so they can learn to make better choices when they are faced with conflict. Specifically, the children will be able to learn that it is okay to feel angry; however, it is how one reacts and manages that emotion which makes it positive or negative.

Methods: The particular program that our research team utilized was an eight week interventional program designed by the researchers on learning about emotions. These sessions will be done in a group of no more than twelve children with eight; forty-five minute sessions. All children seven to thirteen years of age that were currently residing in the foster program were included in the research study. Children not residing at the foster program, or who do not wish to participate were excluded. During the first session, a pre-test was given that will identify how often children currently thought about their actions and dealt with their anger and emotions in a positive way. After the eight week program, a post-test was administered to see if these behaviors had changed. The statistical analysis was performed by the paired t-test to compare the pre and post-test score.

Results: This was an eight week interventional study which included (n=12) children; (n=7) completed. These children resided at Auberle Friends and Families Foster Care Program. Of the (n=7) children that completed the study, females (n=3) and males (n=4). The ethnicity of the children completing this program included African American (n=4), Caucasian (n=2), and Puerto Rican (n=1). The ages of the seven participants, included three aged thirteen, two eleven years old, one twelve year old, and one nine year old. A total of (n=7) participants completed the survey which included a pre-test and a post-test. Based on the subject’s response they received a score for each question and this was added sequentially to the rest of the questions creating a total score. A t-test was used to analyze the sum of the scores of the pretest and post-test. A significant difference was noted between the overall pre and post test scores (n=7) in this study when comparing the means.

Analysis of the sums of the pretest with the posttest revealed $p= 0.016$ ($p < 0.05$) indicating a significant difference between the scores. The average sum of the pretests
was 9.28 [SD=1.98]. The average sum of the posttest was 12.14 [SD=2.41] yielding a mean three point increase.

**Discussion:** Behavioral problems have been on the rise in children as reported by pediatricians as one of the most frequently reported problems. Since behavior problems are being brought-up at the pediatrician’s office, and it is shown that these problems can lead to lifelong psychological and social discord, it is imperative that an interventional program be introduced to children with these circumstances. Therefore, this eight week intervention program is effective in this study population in helping the children learn about emotions.