

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS IN REDUCING TANTRUMS IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM DISORDER

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas berbagai intervensi perilaku dalam mengurangi tantrum pada anak dengan gangguan autisme. Metode yang digunakan adalah literature review dengan menganalisis 6 artikel penelitian terpilih yang dipublikasikan antara tahun 2014-2024. Hasil analisis menunjukkan beberapa intervensi perilaku yang efektif, antara lain: Social story, yang membantu anak autis memahami situasi sosial melalui narasi visual; Token economy, yang memberikan penguatan positif terstruktur; Virtual Reality (VR), yang menyediakan lingkungan pembelajaran terkontrol; Teknik time out, yang membantu anak mengatur emosi; dan Terapi musik melalui bernyanyi, yang memiliki efek menenangkan. Meskipun intervensi-intervensi tersebut menunjukkan hasil positif, efektivitasnya bervariasi antar individu. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendekatan individual dan kombinasi metode intervensi yang disesuaikan mungkin diperlukan untuk hasil optimal. Keterlibatan orang tua dan lingkungan juga berperan penting dalam keberhasilan intervensi. Penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas jangka panjang dari intervensi-intervensi ini.

Kata kunci: intervensi perilaku, autisme, literature review

ABSTRACT

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of various behavioral interventions in reducing tantrums in children with autism disorder. The method used was a literature review analyzing 6 selected research articles published between 2014-2024. The results of the analysis showed several effective behavioral interventions, including Social story, which helps autistic children understand social situations through visual narratives; Token economy, which provides structured positive reinforcement; Virtual Reality (VR), which provides a controlled learning environment; Time out technique, which helps children regulate emotions; and Music therapy through singing, which has a calming effect. Although these interventions showed positive results, their effectiveness varied between individuals. The study concludes that an individualized approach and a customized combination of intervention methods may be required for optimal results. Parental involvement and the environment also play an important role in the success of the interventions. Further research is needed to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of these interventions.

Keywords: Behavior intervention, autism, literature review



INTRODUCTION

Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental condition characterized by limitations in social interaction, communication, and repetitive behavior patterns (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Each child with autism has unique conditions, and children with severe autism often experience excessive tantrums, frequently displaying negative behaviors toward those around them, especially therapists. Therefore, training children with autism requires extra patience.

There are several forms of negative behavior, including hitting, kicking, and scratching therapists (Maulana, 2017). People around children with autism are affected during tantrums, which can be quite or very disruptive due to such behaviors. Problematic behaviors may include destructive, aggressive, and hyperactive actions, among others (Miranda, 2015). One of the behavioral issues commonly found in children with autism is tantrums. Autism is a complex developmental disorder categorized as part of the special needs group, with highly diverse characteristics. Children with autism often experience difficulties with anger management, cognition, and motivation.

Behaviorally, children with autism often engage in self-injurious behaviors, lack self-confidence, become aggressive, overreact to external stimuli, and exhibit unusual body movements, all of which can contribute to tantrums. Challenging behavior occurs when a child is prevented from doing something they want to do (Pennington, 2014). A tantrum is an emotional expression commonly experienced by children aged 3 to 6 years, typically characterized by crying, screaming, throwing objects, spinning, hitting, and other destructive actions (Wahyudi, 2020). Tantrums can occur when a child experiences frustration, anxiety, or difficulty expressing their desires effectively (Khullar, 2021). A tantrum is an uncontrolled emotional outburst in children, often triggered by rejection, and may involve behaviors such as rolling on the floor, screaming, throwing objects, or kicking.

Children with autism spectrum disorder experience tantrums at an older age compared to children without autism, typically between 12 and 15 years old, and their tantrums tend to last longer than those of other children. Tantrums in children with autism are caused by brain impairments, making it difficult for them to regulate their emotions and effectively communicate their feelings (Khairi, 2020). This often occurs when they experience stress, fear, or discomfort due to a stimulus affecting their sensory nerves. This is because they have difficulties with sensory input processing (Stevens, 2017).

This study includes a literature review on the effectiveness of behavioral interventions for children with autism, as well as intervention strategies that can be applied to reduce tantrums. Due to the frequent occurrence of tantrums in children with autism spectrum disorder, the author conducted a literature study to explore interventions that can help reduce tantrum behavior in children with autism. This literature review is based on various studies that have examined interventions aimed at reducing tantrum behaviors in children with autism. Thus, this study not only aims to identify effective interventions but also provides a practical framework that can be implemented within the cultural and healthcare system context in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a literature review method. A literature review consists of a series of activities related to reviewing bibliographic data and collecting information from various sources, such as books, literary works, lecture notes, and other materials relevant to the research subject (Lestari, 2020). This research is descriptive and uses a literature review approach to gather and identify the effectiveness of behavioral interventions in reducing irritability in children with autism. The data used in this study is secondary, meaning it is derived from previous research and does not require direct observation (Lestari, 2020).

The data sources were articles obtained from Google Scholar across multiple countries, focusing on research findings related to "intervention," "tantrum," and "autism." This review includes literature published between 2014 and 2024, accessible in full-text PDF format. Based on these keyword criteria and time frame, 875 articles were initially found on Google Scholar. After reviewing the titles and abstracts, 27 articles were deemed relevant. Following further screening, only 6 articles met the inclusion criteria, while 21 articles were excluded for not meeting the requirements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the selection of articles that met the author's predetermined criteria, six articles were found to be eligible. These six articles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Research Articles

No.	Author	Subjects and Research Location	Method and Research Results
1.	Fauziah, Helis & Mulia, 2022	A fourth-grade autistic student at SKH Griya Mandiri.	Helps reduce inappropriate behaviors in children with autism, such as screaming, throwing objects, and taking others' belongings.
2.	Alitani & Berliyana, 2018	A third-grade autistic student at SDLB Negeri Semarang.	Contributes to a decrease in the frequency of temper tantrums in children with autism, although it has not shown a significant effect.
3.	Rohmah, 2014	An autistic student, grade level not specified, at Sekolah Khusus Putra Harapan Sidoarjo.	Proven to be effective in reducing hyperactive behavior in children with autism, especially in the aspect of leaving their seat.
4.	Martono, Kurniawan, Eridani & Soraya, 2020	Autistic students aged 6 and above at SLB Negeri Semarang.	The results of this study indicate that the application of Virtual Reality (VR) can provide a new learning experience for children with autism, as they find it easier to receive information through visuals rather than words. Additionally, the inclusion of instrumental music features helps prevent tantrums.

5.	Astari, Ranny & Marlina, 2022	A second-grade autistic student at SLB Negeri Batu Bara Medan.	The time-out technique has been proven effective in reducing tantrum behavior in children with autism.
6.	Nababan, 2016	A 16-year-old autistic teenager at Arogya Mitra Klaten Autism and Hyperactivity Acupuncture Treatment.	Meltdown/temper tantrum behavior in autistic teenagers decreased after receiving singing treatment for 10 sessions.

1. **Media Social Story**, (Fauziah, *et al* 2022)

Social stories in research are one of the most commonly used interventions to improve social skills in children with autism. The social story method can take the form of narratives that teach autistic children appropriate behavior in social situations, presented as text or images depicting various social interactions, situations, skills, or general behavioral concepts. However, this study does not specify the form or definition of the social narratives used. The context of the social stories in this study was adapted to the intervention goal: reducing target behaviors by decreasing maladaptive behaviors in autistic students, such as screaming, throwing objects, and taking others' belongings. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the social speaking approach helps reduce maladaptive behaviors in children with autism, such as screaming, throwing objects, and grabbing others. This is evident from the decrease in average percentages observed across different phases: the initial phase (Baseline 1), the intervention phase, and the final phase (Baseline 2).

Additionally, previous research by Ridha (2017) explained that using the social story method reduces repetitive behaviors and enhances understanding of desired positive behaviors. This proves that this technique is an effective and efficient behavioral intervention for children with autism. One of the advantages of social stories is that, besides improving the adaptability of children with autism, the stories can be tailored to the intervention's goals by incorporating images that help them understand which behaviors should and should not be performed. However, a limitation of the social story method is that it restricts the number of sentences in a social story to only three.

2. **Social Story**, (Alitani & Berliyana, 2018)

This study is a follow-up to previous research on social stories by Lorimer et al. (2002) aimed at reducing tantrums in children with autism. The difference in this study lies in the different subjects and types of tantrums, although the same method—social stories—was used. As children with autism grow, temper tantrums become a behavioral issue that needs to be properly and effectively addressed. Social stories provide an opportunity for children with autism to better understand

situations and exhibit more appropriate behaviors. However, the application of the social narrative technique in this study does not provide detailed explanations regarding how the media was presented or implemented for children with autism. Heffner (2002) argued that social stories are well-suited for children with autism because they are designed with an awareness of their inability to perceive different perspectives (theory of mind) and their limited ability to understand social cues (tunnel vision, stimulus selectivity, and social communication deficits). The results of this study show a decline during the intervention phase, though not consistently—it fluctuates. This is because the subject's anger had been long-standing, making it a habitual behavior. However, there was no significant difference in the follow-up phase. During the treatment phase using the social story technique, the anger scores showed a lower result compared to the baseline value. Thus, the study tested two hypotheses: the first hypothesis was accepted but the second hypothesis was rejected. These findings indicate that social story interventions have an impact on reducing tantrums in children with autism. However, the reduction was not permanent in this study.

3. **Token Economic**, (Rohmah 2014)

Tokens in the token economy method can take the form of stickers, coins, play money, points, or cards that are easily recognizable and appealing to children. These tokens can then be collected and exchanged for rewards or incentives that have been predetermined. This study explains that changes in hyperactive behavior in children with autism are related to their lack of engagement during learning activities. In the token economy method, when a child successfully controls their hyperactive behavior, they are rewarded with a star-shaped sticker. These stickers are collected and later exchanged for pre-determined rewards, either in the form of recognition or gifts, depending on the child's performance.

The results of this study indicate a stable pattern change from the initial phase (baseline/A) to the intervention phase (B), transitioning from one stable condition to another. This change can be observed through multiple data points (+) that show improvement. The percentage of data overlap recorded for the first subject was 7.143%, while for the second subject, it was 12.5%. These findings suggest that the intervention was effective in reducing hyperactive behavior, which is one of the aspects of disengagement in children with autism. The token economy method is a behavior modification technique based on a symbolic economy. The results of this study align with previous findings, which state that the token economy method is effective in increasing children's compliance and helping them choose more beneficial behaviors (Soares, 2016).

4. **Virtual Reality (VR)** (Martono, *et al* 2020)

This study explains that Virtual Reality (VR) is a technology that can be utilized as a learning medium for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In addition to serving as an educational tool, VR can also act as an alternative therapy to enhance children's visual abilities. VR technology functions by displaying learning visuals in a three-dimensional (3D) format, created using computer software and supported by various essential devices. This technology allows learners to experience an immersive environment that simulates real-world settings specifically designed for

educational purposes. In this study, a VR application was used as a learning tool to teach self-care skills such as handwashing, eating, and brushing teeth, tailored to the needs of children with autism. The application was designed to present 3D simulations of these activities and create a 360° virtual environment, providing an engaging and meaningful learning experience for children. Additionally, the application includes instrumental music, which has a calming effect, helping to reduce the risk of tantrums during the learning process. In this study, VR users, including children with autism, had the opportunity to experience the application firsthand under the guidance of teachers. Teachers also played a crucial role as key stakeholders in the research, making their feedback a valuable reference for designing an optimal VR user experience for children with autism.

5. **Time out** (Astari, *et al* 2022)

This study explains that time-out is one of the techniques used to manage tantrums in children with autism, involving teachers who remove the child from the situation at a specific moment during a tantrum. By applying this technique, tantrums can be minimized, creating a more conducive learning environment. However, it is important to note that this technique may have limitations, as some children might perceive it as being ignored when this approach is implemented. In this study, the time-out technique was applied during learning hours, but the research does not specifically explain the exact form and stages of its implementation. The target behaviors addressed in this study were tantrum-related actions, specifically biting and hitting, whether directed at themselves or others, such as peers and teachers.

According to the study, during the baseline phase (A1), the child was only observed without any intervention, and the frequency of tantrums remained very high, reaching more than a dozen tantrum episodes. During the intervention phase (B), the child received Time-Out intervention to reduce tantrum behavior. The findings showed that in the post-intervention baseline phase (A2), there was a decrease in the child's tantrum frequency. These results indicate that after receiving the Time-Out intervention, tantrum behavior in children with autism decreased. A child who initially had a very high frequency of tantrums during learning sessions showed improvement and a reduction in tantrums after the intervention was implemented.

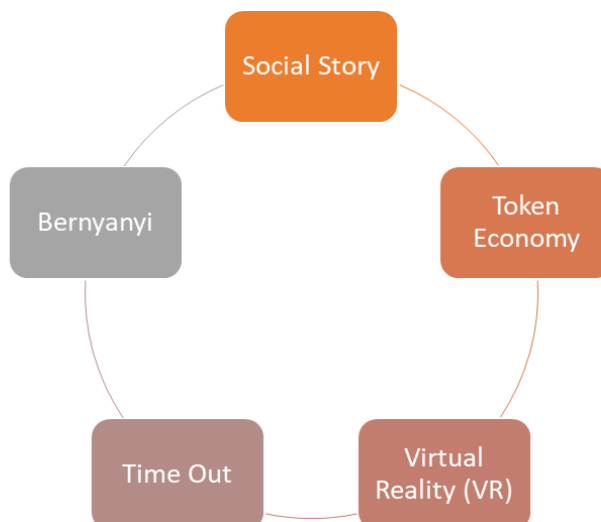
6. **Singing** (Nababan, 2016)

One effective way to reduce emotional outbursts or anger in therapy is through musical activities. These activities include singing, playing musical instruments, and listening to music. The effectiveness of these methods has been proven by several previous studies. Research conducted by Kim, Wigram, and Gold (2009) also revealed that participation in musical activities, especially singing, can have a positive impact on the emotions of individuals diagnosed with autism. Engaging in musical activities such as singing, playing instruments, and listening to music has immediate therapeutic effects. In addition to short-term and long-term benefits, the study by Kim, Wigram, and Gold (2009) also showed that engaging in musical activities, particularly singing, can enhance positive emotions in individuals with autism. Based on these findings, it can be assumed that research on song therapy is effective in reducing emotional distress or anger in autistic teenagers. However, this study does not specify which media were used and how they were applied. The

singing techniques that can be used for individuals with autism depend on the operational context: a) Interactive singing – a form of musical activity in which singing facilitates social interaction and communication between the therapist and the individual with autism. b) Song selection – chosen by the therapist while also prioritizing the autistic individual's preference for the music or songs they want to listen to. The target behaviors of this study included throwing objects, hitting objects, pacing, screaming, crying without screaming, and crying while screaming. Based on the research findings, the baseline, treatment, and follow-up phases showed an overall reduction in each behavioral aspect. After 10 therapy sessions, there was a noticeable reduction in emotional distress compared to the initial treatment phase. This reduction is evident in the recorded behavioral instances: at the beginning of the study, there were 288 occurrences, whereas during therapy, this number dropped to 68. This decline occurred because the subject enjoyed the song arrangements and focused on singing. The music also helped trigger the subject's memory of the lyrics and dance movements.

DISCUSSION

Based on a literature review, behavioral interventions show promising efficacy in reducing tantrums in children with autism. Various intervention methods have been studied and have yielded positive results, although with varying degrees of success. One of the most prominent methods is the use of social stories. Fauziah and Mulia (2022) and Alitani (2018) demonstrated that social stories can reduce adjustment difficulties and tantrums in children with autism. Social stories are effective because they provide a visual narrative that helps autistic children understand social situations and expected behaviors. Social stories assist autistic children in understanding and interpreting complex social situations through short stories and visual images (Karkhaneh, 2010). Additionally, according to Adriana Soekandar Ginanjar, a Clinical Psychologist and Autism Specialist, social stories are short narratives that describe specific situations, concepts, or social skills, written in a structured format to help individuals with autism better understand social situations. The goal is to provide accurate information about various social situations that may be confusing or challenging for them. This method is particularly well-suited to the learning characteristics of visually-oriented autistic children. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of social stories is not always consistent. A study by Alitani (2018) found that while anger scores decreased during the intervention phase, there was no significant difference between the baseline and follow-up phases. This suggests that behavioral interventions for autistic children may require long-term and consistent implementation to achieve lasting results (Weitlauf et al., 2014).



Picture 1. Intervention Methods

The Token Economy method also offers promising results. Research by Rohmah (2014) showed that this method is effective in reducing hyperactive behavior in children with autism, especially when learning is not structured appropriately. The Token Economy works by providing structured positive reinforcement, which aligns perfectly with the need for routine and structure in children with autism. This method has been proven effective in increasing desired behaviors and reducing undesired behaviors in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Soares, 2016).

Innovation in behavioral interventions is also evident in the use of virtual reality (VR) technology. Previous research conducted by Ramachandiran et al. (2015) explained that VR-based learning is used to design effective online learning methods, facilitate communication processes, and provide essential information for children with autism. Findings from Marton et al. (2020) show that VR can be an effective learning tool for children with autism, particularly in teaching self-care skills. VR provides a controlled and repetitive learning environment, which is highly suitable for autistic children who often struggle with generalization skills. The use of virtual reality (VR) technology in interventions for autistic children has shown promising results in improving social skills and reducing problematic behaviors (Mesa-Gresa, 2018).

The time-out technique, studied by Astar and Marlina (2022), has also demonstrated effectiveness in reducing tantrums in children with autism. This technique helps autistic children regulate their emotions by providing them with time and space to calm down. However, it is important to introduce time-out carefully and consistently to maximize its effectiveness in reducing tantrums in children on the autism spectrum. Additionally, incorporating music, especially singing, has also shown positive results.

Furthermore, using singing as an intervention within the transformative power of music can provide healing effects without the need for medication (Good, 2015). Nababan's (2016) research indicates that singing can help reduce anxiety-related behaviors in autistic adolescents. Music has a calming effect and can aid in emotional regulation. Musical interventions, including singing and music therapy, have shown

positive effects in reducing problematic behaviors and improving emotional regulation in individuals with ASD (Geretsegger et al., 2014).

It is important to note that the effectiveness of behavioral interventions for autistic children varies significantly from person to person. Autism is a broad spectrum disorder where each individual has unique characteristics and needs (Campisi, 2018). Therefore, an individualized approach and a combination of different intervention methods may be necessary to achieve the best outcomes. Additionally, the role of parents and the child's surrounding environment is crucial in the intervention process. Activities that are integrated into the child's daily life and involve parents tend to be more effective and sustainable (Schreibman, 2015). Collaboration between therapists, educators, and parents can enhance intervention consistency and the generalization of learned skills. Longitudinal studies are required to assess the long-term effectiveness of behavioral interventions in reducing tantrums in autistic children. Such studies are essential for understanding the lasting effects of behavioral interventions on children with ASD (McConachie, 2018). Furthermore, comparative research that directly evaluates the effectiveness of different intervention methods would be valuable in providing clearer guidance for clinicians and parents in selecting the most appropriate intervention.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings presented in this journal, it can be concluded that various behavioral interventions have been proven effective in reducing tantrums in children with autism. Methods such as social stories, token economy, virtual reality (VR), time-out, and singing have shown positive results in decreasing the frequency and intensity of tantrums. Social stories help autistic children understand social situations and reduce maladaptive behaviors. The token economy effectively increases compliance and reduces hyperactive behavior. The use of VR provides an engaging and calming new learning experience for autistic children. The time-out technique has successfully helped reduce tantrums such as biting and hitting. Meanwhile, singing has been shown to alleviate various aspects of emotional distress and anxiety-related behaviors in autistic adolescents. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of interventions may vary depending on the individual characteristics of the child and the consistency of implementation. Some studies indicate that positive outcomes are not always permanent and may require repetition or continuous reinforcement. Therefore, practitioners and parents are advised to implement behavioral interventions consistently and over the long term, as well as to combine different methods based on the child's specific needs. It is also crucial to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and make adjustments if necessary.

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