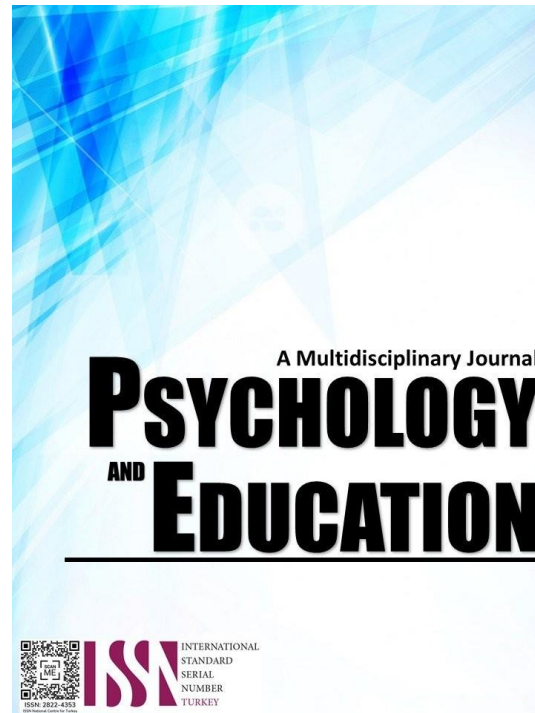


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A Phenomenological Investigation of Rewards in Kindergarten Education: Insights from Parents and Teachers

Analyn G. Sombero*

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

This study explores parents' and teachers' perspectives and insights as to the role of rewards in developing kindergarten education. The study also investigates the influence of a reward system in developing children's behavior in school and home setups. The study participants were eight (8) parents and seven (7) teachers. A total of 15 participants participated in this study. This study used a purposive sampling technique and semi-structured interview guide questions as the instrument. The findings revealed that tangible rewards (e.g., toys, snacks, certificates) or intangible (e.g., verbal praise, claps, smiles) significantly enhance classroom participation and foster positive behaviors. Teachers observed that rewards motivate learners to actively engage in classroom activities, promote good behavior, and boost academic performance. Parents similarly noted that reward systems encourage children's compliance with tasks at home, improve family relationships, and elevate children's self-esteem. Despite the positive outcomes, the study also identifies limitations, such as the potential short-term nature of behavioral changes and reliance on external validation. These findings underscore the need for a balanced approach to using rewards, integrating intrinsic motivators like curiosity and self-discipline. The study concludes that effective collaboration between parents and teachers is essential for consistent behavioral reinforcement, ensuring that reward systems contribute to holistic growth in children. While rewards are powerful tools for shaping behavior and enhancing engagement, their thoughtful application is critical to support long-term development and intrinsic motivation in early childhood education.

Keywords: *rewards, kindergarten, education, parents, teachers, development, behavior*

Introduction

Reward in school is the one instrument used by every parent and teacher to encourage their learners or pupils to go to school every day, participate in class discussions, and gain influence to achieve the emotional stability of every learner's learning process.

Motivating your pupils to learn and participate can take some work. Some teachers are so busy with class management that they don't even get to teach. Many teachers utilize student rewards to encourage learning and good behavior.

Kindergarten students' development has been one of the most pressing challenges in countries worldwide. Some research suggests that reward systems in schools significantly impact children's growth, although the mechanisms underlying the systems and their level of influence are still unclear. Understanding how the entire system works and its impacts can assist teachers in developing more effective educational plans for their students.

While some educators contend that reward systems are only band-aid solutions that promote entitlement, others think they foster a supportive learning atmosphere in the classroom and can benefit all students. The formal reward and acknowledgment systems that use material goods or social recognition to reward positive behaviors are the source of contention for many educators. In contrast, informal acknowledgment of positive behaviors, such as giving children verbal praise, a smile, or a high five, is generally considered good practice.

How you respond right after your child's behaviors makes the behavior more or less likely to happen again. Rewards can help your child do more of what you want her to do. Rewards that occur right after a behavior are best.

Toddlers and preschoolers hear the words "no," "stop," and "quit" many times during the day. This is normal and one way they learn right from wrong. But when children repeatedly hear these things, their self-esteem can begin to suffer. They may begin to believe they cannot do anything correctly. When a child earns a reward, he knows he has done something good and something you like (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017).

Every student's success story boosts their confidence. In addition to feeling proud, they are motivated to accomplish yet another triumphant outcome. When students receive intrinsic or extrinsic rewards, they conform to appropriate behaviors. (Renard, 2020).

Giving your child rewards can encourage her to accomplish more things you want her to do. The best rewards occur immediately following a behavior. Material prizes can be toys, candies, or other expensive items. Social rewards are another kind of reward. Social rewards can be even more potent than material ones, sometimes free or inexpensive. Additionally, they can be delivered more frequently and right after your desired actions.

Although the dynamics of a parent's reward system are up to them, some decide to remove points for misconduct. If this occurs, remind your child how to earn points back and carefully explain the cause. (Harris, 2022).

Children's parents and other caregivers are vital resources for coping, behavior management, and emotional arousal management. They fulfill this function by offering encouraging words, expressing affection and respect, and creating a feeling of safety. Parental support reduces the likelihood that children will internalize behaviors, like those linked to anxiety and depression, which can hinder their capacity to adjust and perform well at home, school, and in the community. (Osofsky and Fitzgerald, 2007).

Many parents rely on reward schemes to help children accomplish behavioral milestones. Although it should be highlighted that children's social-emotional development is a taught process that reflects their puberty and progress, rewards charts promote behavioral modification through positive reinforcement. (Harris, 2022).

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the parents' and teachers' insights on rewards in kindergarten education for the school year 2022 – 2023. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How can the rewards shape the kindergarten development in behavior observed in the classroom?
2. In what ways do rewards shape the kindergarten development in their behavior at home?

Literature Review

It can be rather challenging to inspire your children to learn and engage. Some teachers don't even get to teach because they are too busy managing the classroom. Many teachers utilize student prizes to encourage good behavior and promote learning. (Renard, 2020)

According to Otero (2015), prompt rewards for students are linked to better study techniques, essential behavior, and academic output. In this regard, teachers' reinforcement of pupils will also motivate them to maintain their positive behavior. To increase positive conduct in the school setting, Downing and Bennett (2005) found that constructive and positive reinforcement works better than demanding or punishing methods.

According to Hoffmann, Huff, Patterson, and Nietfeld (2009), most of the teachers in our sample employ physical prizes, and all use some reward in their classrooms. Although behavior control was the most common reason for rewards, there was a strong correlation between behavior rewards and academic success rewards. Performance goal orientations for instruction were inversely correlated with teacher self-efficacy and positively correlated with using material rewards and a greater level of classroom control. Just one-third of the teachers asked to rate the appropriateness of employing prizes in the classroom said they should only be used under certain conditions.

Children are encouraged to learn, behave, and accomplish through rewards. For instance, teachers might award a child with a star for a job well done or give them more golden time if their behavior improves. Rewards can also be utilized to encourage your child's behavior at home. Every young person has specific activities they enjoy or can access as a reward. These can be used to learn new skills, hone existing ones, and foster positive behavior. These incentives include games or technology, stickers or praise, toys, or favorite pastimes. Knowing and using these rewards regularly inside a reward system will help you use them (National Council for Special Education, 2020).

According to Pleșoianu (2020), all educators employ some form of reward in the classroom. Most educators think incentives boost motivation, encourage more active engagement, and raise academic achievement. However, some educators do not feel that rewards increase intrinsic motivation. They believe that the students require information about their accomplishments and feedback and that rewards don't meet these demands. Therefore, the system of rewards is employed when teachers want to acquire the kind of conduct they want at the moment, but it does not help to create and sustain motivation that encourages learning or optimal performance in evaluations.

Teachers have a favorable opinion of rewards during the development process. They thought that their success and good behavior would continue by rewarding them. According to the teachers, giving students praise and acknowledgment might be a powerful way to motivate them. It can also improve the relationship between teachers and students. Although they believed that tangible incentives, such as merit certificates, trophies, shields, and stationery items, are given out during the yearly prize distribution event, very few tangible rewards were given. They acknowledged that these awards encourage kids to perform academically and conduct well within and outside the classroom. Suggestions Rewards should constantly be given to recognize accomplishments and to motivate sustained work (Khan and Ahmed, Kanwal 2021).

Perception of Rewards

According to some research, obtaining rewards impacted students' good feelings, happiness, enthusiasm, relaxation, and engagement. Since a teacher employed prizes as external goals, the results also demonstrated that they were really satisfied with them, which improved their self-development. Rewards were applied to positively reinforce learning behavior. More potent classroom exercises were also developed through the use of rewards. (Phunghai & Boonmoh, 2021).

According to McClurg & Morris (2014), rewards mold desirable student behaviors well. Students were given continuous (piece-rate) rewards, a lottery system for earning extra points, and no rewards to increase their performance on course exams and punctuality. The

most popular reward was extra points on exams. The continuous reward schedule was more successful in raising student achievement than the other two reward schemes.

How teachers and students view rewards is one of the most important considerations regarding their utilization. Most educators who employ rewards think that primary school teachers should use them. Numerous educators in this study clarified that incentives encourage pupils to behave well, and some said that incentives encourage children to perform at their highest level. Hoffmann also noted that teachers who employed rewards for behavior control used them for academic success, with verbal or written praise and prizes being the most common forms of reward (Hoffmann et al., 2009).

According to Damayanti, AM, and Rum (2021), intangible rewards had the following beneficial effects on students: they made the class more engaging, increased the positive or expected behavior of the students in the classroom, made the students feel happy and more engaged in class, increased the sense of competition among the students in the school, and encouraged the students to finish their assignments and homework.

According to Bala's (2020) research, the digital library system's incentive and reward features provide pupils with more motivation. In addition to the intrinsic drive that children already possess, the additional features of the digital library offer extrinsic motivation techniques that encourage learners to spend more time in the system.

According to Zung (2023), the majority of parents were in favor of the use of material reward schemes in schools. They agree, in part or in full, with those benefits, which include enhancing children's sense of self-worth, group honor, and capacity for autonomous learning. The majority of them did not believe that such a system could have a seriously detrimental effect on children, including eroding students' natural drive. Many parents concurred that material incentives can encourage pupils to strive for outside rewards. In summary, most participants continue to support the advantages of material incentive systems and will be pleased when their kids receive them from school.

According to Lowe (2015), most classroom reward systems rely on tangible awards, while verbal praise is used daily. The majority of participants also state that they think prizes are a good way to encourage kids, curb bad conduct, and boost academic achievement. The findings showed that many educators disagreed or were neutral with the claim that material rewards lower pupils' inner drive. Lastly, participants disagreed with the claims that reward systems take too much time and that pupils are more motivated by material rewards than verbal praise. With this knowledge, school social workers will be more equipped to work with teachers on elementary school student interventions.

Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature and employs a phenomenological research design. The phenomenological research design explores the experiences, insights, or perceptions of the participants in the study, particularly on the use of rewards in kindergarten education. This design also aims to highlight the participants' experiences in giving rewards and how these individuals perceive the impact of rewards on children's behavioral development in a classroom setup and at home. In addition, phenomenology focuses on the participants' unique perspectives that aim to capture the effect of the reward system as perceived by the parents and teachers.

The study used a purposive sampling technique that involves selecting participants based on their characteristics, such as knowledge and experience. The purposive sampling technique is deemed appropriate in this study since participants are chosen based on their direct involvement with the kindergarten pupils and their active role in implementing or observing the effects of reward systems. By selecting the participants who meet the criteria, the researcher ensures that the data gathered is relevant and meaningful, avoiding unnecessary generalization. The sample size of 8 parents and 7 teachers, totaling 15 participants, is small because the goal is to reach data saturation. In data saturation, no new themes or insights emerge from additional data.

The instrument employed in this study is the semi-structured interview guide questions. This instrument uses open-ended questions with probing techniques to deeply explore the participants' experiences and perceptions. It allows the researcher to adapt questions based on the flow of conversations. It also allows the participants to share their detailed insights to formulate emerging themes

Before participating in the study, the participants were provided with informed consent, which contained the purpose of the study, procedures, risks, and benefits in clear and understandable terms. The researcher also ensured that participants were kept confidential and anonymous so that their responses would not reveal individual identities.

Moreover, the researcher also explained to the participants that participating in this study is voluntary, meaning that participants have the right to withdraw without any repercussions. The researcher also obtained the school administrators' approval before conducting interviews with the participants. Finally, the researcher explained to the participants that the data collected would only be used for the study and would only be used for other studies with additional consent.

Results and Discussion

There are various ways in which rewards help shape kindergarten development in behavior.

Two (2) essential themes were drawn out about research question 1 after the interview with the participants. Participants were asked

about the various ways the rewards help shape kindergarten development in their behavior.

Rewards observed in the classroom

Positive responses include telling the child what they did well. Positive responses can consist of presenting favorite toys or other items. Nonverbal responses include smiles, thumbs-ups, praises, claps, and pats on the back. Those rewards can make our learners more responsive and behave because they feel they belong to the group as you love and care too.

Participant Teacher #1

Sa akon ma'am as I observe kung naga hatag aq reward sa ila,ma motivate cla to learn more,eager to learn cla ma'am pag may reward q gna hatag bsan star lng,,Makita q nga proud cla kag Ang iban naga strive gd nga nakakuha rewards...with regards to their attitude namn makahelp man but not in long term gd ..Makita q pud Ang bad side sang reward Kay daw talagsa gapahala nalng Basta kakuha nlng ka reward...

Participant teacher #2

As a kindergarten teacher, giving them rewards is the best strategy to keep their attention and motivate them since we are dealing with kindergarten learners aged 5 to 6. It is very important to appreciate their efforts in doing their tasks well through giving rewards. We cannot elude a child's naughtiness, especially at their age; however, giving rewards helps me lessen their naughtiness and behave for at least 1 to 3 minutes.

Participant Teacher #3

Happy sila kay Huo eh,,may premyo mo bisan mal-am man lipay man Gani,, Gaeskwela eh,,Ang absenot ya absenot gid na,,kag kung may sakit sila ti absent na,, Ti bal-an mo waay na Gani ko papremyo subong gaschool gihapon sila,,Kay idol nila ko ginapatik ko kamot nila,,mo kapin pa kon tamad mag-answer!!!!

Yes, they are happy because you have a prize, even in the morning or evening, even if it's fun. So, they go to school every day. Absentees are absent, and if they are sick, they are lacking. You know it's okay. That's why I'm going to reward them like they're still in school. Because I'm their idol, I slapped their hands. You can, even if they're too lazy to answer.

Participants' # Teacher 4

Good morning, ma'am. It is very effective to give rewards, especially to our small learners. It helps you/them motivate and participate well, especially in your/their daily activities inside the classroom. It can also help increase their GOOD BEHAVIOR.

Participants' # Teacher 5

The reward reinforces the kids' motivation to participate in class. There are two options to choose from according to principles and methods of teaching when it comes to making the learners attentive to the lessons' punishment or reward, also known as positive or negative sanctions. However, traditional schools practice negative sanctions, and positive ones apply in progressive schools. An experiment has to be carried out in your class to prove whether giving a reward is effective. On my end, I provide a reward as part of the motivation. I've been doing this in all the years of my job teaching kindergarten. We are even given more benefits to do our jobs better. 😊 Of course, offering a reward is just part of the whole process. However, it is very essential, according to studies, as far as class participation of the learners is concerned. Rewarding is a way of valuing or appreciating a job well done.

Participant #6 Teacher

But remember, ma'am and sir, that the reward system has advantages and disadvantages.

Participant #7 Teacher

"As a kindergarten teacher, I have experienced giving them awards like clapping, stars, and praise. They are all happy to go home to have that kind of reward coming from me after our class. If I tell them they listen and behave as learners, I will give them rewards so they all concentrate on our lesson attentively, and it can help develop their behavior into a positive response.

Giving rewards to our kindergarten learners can help them enhance and develop their participation in class discussions. More of the participants agreed that rewards help their learners behave, listen, or concentrate on their lesson attentively. "

This study supported by Damayanti, AM, Rum (2021) found that intangible rewards had positive effects on the students that were: Rewards created the class more interesting, increased the positive behavior or expected behavior of students in the classroom, made students feel happy and more active participate in class, it can increase the feeling of competition among students in the school, and it can encourage the students in completing their task and homework.

Rewards Help Shape Kindergarten Development in their Behavior at Home

Reward systems rely on positive reinforcement to encourage the development of good behavior. They work for toddlers, preschoolers,

and school-aged kids. Many parents swear by reward systems to help their children reach behavioral milestones (and tame a few tantrums along the way).

All parents and participants of my study believe that using rewards is tangible, and intangible rewards effectively help their children's development in behavior.

Participant #1 Parents

Patpaturugen ti aldaw kasukat na ti pangted ti premyo, gumatang ti meryenda na o gumatang ti baro nga bado

When I make him sleep at noon in exchange for rewarding him, such as giving him a snack or buying him new clothes.

Participants #2 Parents

No bagbagaan ko isuna nga agpasyar kami jay park naragsat suna no jay balay met ti trabaho na ket nagagetmet esuna ag walis agibeling te basura jay nasya-at nga lalagyan at iba pa.

When I tell him that we are going to the park, he is happy. When we come home from the park, he will help, work hard to clean, throw trash in the right container, and so on.

Participants #3 Parents

Nu pagbagbagaan mamatmati met kennni mamang ken papang na ket ipasyar isuna ijay Jollibee.

When we tell him to listen to us as his father and mother, and we tell him we will take him to Jollibee, he obeys.

Participants #4 Parents

Ang akon bata kung ginasugo ko magpanilhig kag mag sulat at magbasa kag magbulig sa obra sang amon sulod balay naga pati man siya kag nagabulig kay kiss namon siya kag I hug tapos luto an ko siya sang gusto niya nga pagkaon. Kag malambing sia sa amon.

My child is gentle with us. If I send him to sweep, write, read, and help with the work in our house, he also helps when we kiss and hug him and then cook for him when he wants to eat.

Participants #5 Parents

Kapag ginasugo ko siya nga magwalis, magsulat, magbasa pagkatpos tagaan ko siya kwarta,kag baklan ko pagid siya hampangan kag magkadto sa mall. Naga pati man siya kag ga sunod sa ginahambal ko.

When I send him to sweep, write, and read after I finish, I give him money and ask him to get dressed and go to the mall. I will buy him the toy he wants and go to the mall. He follows what I say happily.

Participants # 6 Parents

Ang akon bata sa amon balay nagabulig siya nga wala sang reward parehas sang galimpyo siya sa balay kung kis a kag naga tuon siya kag gusto niya buligan ko siya sa iya pagbasa. kis a naga pangayo man siya kwarta para sa recess sa school nila.

My child in our house helps without reward, like cleaning the house when he is studying. He wants me to help him with his reading. He is also asking for money for school recess.

Participants #7 Parents

`Sa pamamagitan ng pagsulat,pagwawalis, pagpapatulog, at pagpabasa,npagkatapos ng mga ito ay bibigyan ko sila ng per, bilhan ng laruan, magkadto sa Jollibee, mag punta sa mall sa pamamagitan ng mga ito ay makakatulong ito sa mabilis na pag unlad at paghubog ng kanilangnugali sa aming bahay.

Writing, sweeping, putting them to sleep, and reading—after these, I will give them money, buy toys, go to Jollibee, and go to the mall through them—will help in their rapid development and shape their behavior in our house.

Participants #8 Parents

Ina Bangagi sa tedtu kandu pagkatagal sekanin sa kabangagi.sa award

Mother, am work hard to study and learn and get an award.

This is supported by Zung (2023), who stated that most parents supported using tangible reward systems at school. They somewhat or strongly agree with those advantages, such as improving children's self-esteem, collective sense of honor, and independent learning ability. Most of them did not think this kind of system could negatively impact children, such as undermining students' intrinsic motivation.

Parents overwhelm their children by telling them how participative they are and encouraging them to perform tasks as actively as

possible. As one simple reward, the child receives praise, hugs, kisses, and toys.

It was amazing to hear different statements from the parents when their children arrived from school, telling their mother I got a star, and the teacher told me I am very good, and the whole class gave me an ang galling clap. According to them, their child wants to attend school every day and not be absent.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that rewards, whether tangible (e.g., toys, snacks, certificates) or intangible (e.g., verbal praise, smiles, claps), significantly produced positive behaviors among kindergarten learners, enhanced classroom participation, and motivated learners to participate in the classroom actively.

Moreover, teacher-participants noted that a rewards system can enhance learners' motivation, leading them to participate actively in various classroom activities. Rewards such as stars, verbal praise, and claps positively impact students' learning, especially when children feel valued and motivated to perform well. Teachers also noted that rewards could motivate and encourage children to perform better in the classroom, significantly related to better academic performance. It is also important to note that some participants observed that the reward system has limitations. Such limitations include the short-term impact on behavior and the possibility of fostering dependence on external validation.

Furthermore, at home setup, parents shared similar insights that reward significantly influences pupils' willingness to complete school activities. Tangible rewards, like trips to the mall or new toys, and intangible ones, such as hugs and verbal praise, reinforced positive behaviors and improved parent-child relationships. Parents stressed the joy and pride their children expressed when they achieved rewards, which boosted their self-esteem and eagerness to perform well at home and school.

The study also highlighted the broader implications of rewards in early childhood development. It reinforced existing research that rewards can shape behavior through positive reinforcement, foster emotional stability, and help children develop a sense of accomplishment. However, it also underscored the importance of using rewards judiciously to avoid undermining intrinsic motivation. Teachers and parents should ensure a balanced approach, integrating inherent motivators such as fostering curiosity and self-discipline alongside external rewards.

Lastly, rewards are powerful tools for shaping behavior and enhancing engagement among kindergarten learners. While they effectively drive short-term behavior improvements, their optimal use requires thoughtful implementation to support long-term personal development and intrinsic motivation. Collaboration between parents and teachers is vital to align strategies and reinforce consistent behavioral expectations, ultimately promoting holistic growth in children.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Analyn G. Sombero

Kapaya Elementary School

Department of Education – Philippines