



LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ENVIRONMENT FOR A SCHOOL REFUSING CHILD: AN ACTION RESEARCH

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Abstract

The present study examined the causes of unusual behaviors and the behaviors that led to the termination of such behaviors in a fifth-grade student. The researcher observed a girl consistently falling behind in her studies and avoiding school activities. She often refused to go to school, was brought back by his parents and punished at home. The classroom teacher was concerned about her withdrawal symptoms, as she often cried at school and sometimes ran away leaving her things behind. To address this, extensive data were collected from her family, peers, and community members. His academic and co-curricular activities and previous academic records were reviewed. Data collected were systematically analyzed to identify root causes. Based on these findings, a comprehensive intervention program was developed to relieve the symptoms of withdrawal. After the intervention, the child showed significant improvement: active participation in school activities, engaging behavior, and positive attention-seeking behavior. Her academic performance improved and her confidence, motivation, and responsibility increased. The use of humor and engaging communication proved highly effective. The research highlights the importance of taking a supportive and communicative approach in dealing with children's behavioral challenges, leading to dramatic positive changes in the child's learning and personal development.

Keywords: Absenteeism, abnormal behaviors, low achiever, action research, primary teachers.

BACKGROUND

The present study investigated causes of abnormal behaviors and practices to terminate such behaviors of a fifth-grade student. School has multi-grade teaching-learning system. At present two teachers are in place to teach five primary classes i.e. first to fifth. Distribution of Classes has been made according to the classes, one teacher teaches First, Second, and Third classes and other teacher teaches fourth and fifth classes. Investigator noticed that one girl child in fifth class was consistently achieving low in academics and not getting involved in other school activities. She was frequently avoiding to attend the school. Sometimes her parents

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brought her back to school. She was being punished at home for the abnormal behaviors. Her parents thought she was not doing good in academics that's why she was avoiding going to school. Class teacher was also trying hard to find out the reason why she was behaving in such a strange manner. Most of the times, she came to school weeping and crying. Sometimes she used to flee away from the school leaving her bag in the school. Usually, her mother used to take her back forcefully to school. Many times, she bunked the school. Her parents used to visit the school to confirm her safe arrival at the school. Though, her home was about 500 meters far from the school. But she managed to hide herself at home, neighborhood or in the crop fields. Class teacher used to visit her home in case of her absence from school. Sometimes it was evident from her attitude at school that she was reluctantly not working to her best and staying at home. Her behavior was normal but after holidays or long absence from school she used to behave abnormally. Class teacher struggled to handle her despite efforts to create a supportive school environment. Observations indicated that her home environment wasn't conducive for studies. Teacher indirectly and informally inquired about the reasons of her behavior but she remained silent. Therefore, teacher decided to enquire the problem empirically and undertaken the present study.

PRECAUTIONS

The name of student has not been mentioned in the present action research. Student has been labeled as 'subject'. So that no such situation arises which cause problem to the child and its parents. But all the facts observed and collected were put to critical analysis and strategies framed to intervene were executed scientifically.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A student of fifth class was withdrawing from the school and avoiding to study for unknown reasons.

OBJECTIVE

To find out causes and interventions for eliminating withdrawing behavior of the child from school and studies.

METHODOLOGY

To accomplish the objectives of the present study, detailed information pertaining to the subject and its problem was collected from grandparents, parents, siblings, peer group, and community. Her scholastic and co-scholastic activities in the school were observed. Her past academic developments were investigated. The data collected was analyzed systematically and interpreted precisely. Based on findings, Interventions were framed and a systematic plan was developed to address her withdrawal from school. It took two months to reach the state of her acceptance towards the school and studies.

COLLECTION OF THE INFORMATION

Pertinent information pertaining to subject was collected from grandparents, parents, siblings, peer group, and nearby community members. Her scholastic and co-scholastic activities in the school were observed. Records of her past academic developments were investigated and information was gathered. Observations of fellow teachers and colleagues were also taken into the consideration: -

1) Grand Father:

He is a farmer and the head of the family. Claims that subject is not ready for study and do not like to go to school. He is of opinion that these days students don't like to study, they only enjoy facilities available to them. Sometimes he brought the subject to school, when it refused to come. One day he asked the class teacher not to burden the subject whether it studies or not, let it sit in the school. He held super natural powers responsible for its odd behaviors.

2) Mother :

She was a house wife and helping her family in agricultural activities and rearing up cattle. She used to visit school accompanying the subject whenever it refused to come to school. She confessed that she had lost her control on the subject. Even complained that subject used to abuse her badly and does not listen to her. She couldn't make it sit and study for a while. She also blamed family circumstances for the abnormal behaviors of the subject. When she tried to put some restrictions on it, family members provided shelter to the subject. This practice has made it a bad student. Moreover, she was also superstitious.

3) Father:

He is a small farmer, alcoholic and member of local band party. He has seven girl children. He had no regular source of income. He always feels burdened with family liabilities and striving for livelihood. He said that he has less time to devote to subject's study. He was ignorant of child inappropriate behavior or he didn't want to disclose. He was not worried about its low achievement level. He too was a superstitious person.

4) Other family Members:

Family members were not so much worried about the subject. They were of opinion that subject's parents are not providing congenial environment. They held only parents responsible. Even disclosed that they are used to use un-parliamentary and abusive language to snub the subject and their kith and kin.

5) Siblings :

Some of her siblings were also of the same nature, and had left the school, just roaming about seldom help in household works. Girls preferred to graze cattle and helping in agriculture instead of going to school. Her elder sisters once questioned by the investigator that why she had not been to school that day. She replied so rudely that she would not go to school.

6) Academics of the subject

After reviewing subject's previous records it seemed to be a below average child in academics. Its performance showed that it was lacking in all subjects.

Language: Subject used to read at a very slow speed in both the languages i.e. Hindi and English, not as expected from 5th class students. In English hesitation was so high that it hampers its confidence. It sometimes got confused with what It was doing?

EVS: Subject hardly answers questions regarding surroundings. Even being a village resident, it refused to know ordinary information about its home, village, and surrounding environment. But, preferably good in environment studies.

Maths: It was unpredictable in mathematics sometimes it performed efficiently and sometimes showed unwillingness and poor involvement.

Writing Skill: She write legible but not up to the expectations from a student of 5th class.

Retention/ Recall/ expression: Subject could retain information for a short period of time. Not able to retain 2-3 directions at a time. Recalling of information is delayed and sometimes forgot what she had been asked. Repetition of questions and prompting helped her to get correct responses. Expression is below average not age appropriate as subject's mother claimed that she even abuses her.

7. Observations at School

Subject always came with a sad face to the school, lacking energy and preferred to sit alone. It was usually quiet in class avoided seeking help from the teacher and copied classwork from others. It often behaved abnormally and showed little confidence in studies, struggling even with simple classroom instructions. It was also noticed that in the presence of teacher it was obedient otherwise there were so many complaints against it.

Its motivation and confidence level seemed to be very low. It was not emotionally connected to the teacher. It often used to remain quiet and afraid when it was appraised even for her good work. Presence of teacher was unpleasant to her. Otherwise, she was with complaints to the teacher for mischievousness of other students. No efforts to perform better in studies seemed visible in its behavior.

It was observed that its family's superstitious beliefs were contributing to its present behavior. They were blaming its bad fate for its bad behavior.

Subject had no peer group pressure as it was observed during school hours. It was not worrying that what and how its peer group is participating in different activities at school. In the beginning it was visiting school bursting with tears unbothered of peer's reactions.

When subject struggling with concepts, she eventually stopped trying showing a lack of responsibility and tendency to pass off her duties.

Subject was in stressed and tense throughout the day with a displeasing temperament and extreme disinterest in school.

Parents had claimed that they had no time to sit for her at home. Subject was always half involved in the games too.

Peer group learning avenues were destroyed by its temperament. Fellow students were excluding it from activities.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Keeping in view the problem, collected information and facts about the subject was analyzed and interpreted. The family is in low socio-economic status and striving for livelihood. Everyone in the family blaming each-other for low performance in studies of children in the family. Moreover, they didn't had time to sit with the children and make them study. Everyone had excuses. None of them actually understood the meaning and importance of education. They most of the time pretend to be involved and concerned for the subject. They didn't want to be called the reason for its present condition. It can be said that subject's home

environment was not suitable for its academic performance and school is worried about it and focusing on it. Its low performance in school causing pressure on her. It was making her irritated. Moreover, its family had no one well educated and able to guide it. Psychological treatments at school were also absent.

The subject was refusing to visit school. It was ready to be beaten and snubbed at home. It was afraid of school. It was due to its feeling of insecurity. The environment it wanted was not provided in the school. It was not finding itself safe in the school. It was in a state which could lead it to drop out.

They were living in an area where studies are not the prime concern of the parents. Student's involvement in agricultural activities at the cost of studies is prominent. They never supported the subject in its studies but took due care of its visit to school. Moreover, after 2 months of treatment at school the subject stop bunking the school itself. It was the sign of effectiveness of the treatment being provided at school.

Subject had no social smile on the face while sitting in the class. It was not even ready to talk to the teacher and keep on showing its negative attitude towards teacher and study. It was due to its low achievement level in academics continuously and not being acknowledged for the last four years. Subject was in the state of confusion. Not able to decide what to do with the situations where it wasn't appreciated.

Subject's mere involvement in co-scholastic activities showed that it had lost its confidence badly. Even if it had been involved forcefully it kept on showing disinterest. It might be due to lack of its recognition in any activity in the school. It found it better to remain dormant instead of being active.

No response to the classroom instructions while studying in class. It was due to its low performance. Most of the times was pre-assumed that it would do it wrongly. At the completion of any assignment in the class it was hesitant to come and get it checked. It is a low performer since its enrolment in academics.

So, it had lost its confidence and had accumulated experience of not being appreciated and recognized. Due to this it had stopped attempting anything if it is asked for. Even if it attempts, it was halfheartedly. Its constant low academic performance had resulted in its low esteem and had made it believe that it couldn't do anything about its performance.

It seemed fearful most of the times. Because, it had developed a strong belief that it had to be failed. Sometimes it reacted to teacher in a manner that cannot be tolerated, means frustration level was so high. It was in need of love and protection at school while there was lack of such things at home. It was to be handled taking its psychological state in consideration. It had not been done by the teachers and parents.

It could not retain concepts for a longer period of time. It was forgetting simple instructions to be followed during classroom teaching.

Subject was in tension which was visible and need immediate attention. It had strong fear of rejection at the school. It had a negative attitude and full of tensions and worries.

INTERVENTIONS

After analyzing data collected interventions were formulated and executed in various permutations and combinations. Details of the some practices adopted and executed is as follows:

School readiness: Analysis of the information available and observation showed that the subject was not interested in school. Investigator made its visit to school an easy and comfortable . It was left to it what it wants to do in a school day after its constant attendance in school it was slowly exposed to classroom teaching. No homework was assigned to the subject for 2 months.

Acceptance: First of all subject was accepted by the investigator in its present condition. No expectations were laid down from it. Every activity of the subject was accepted and appreciated in the school. It slowly made the subject normal and confident with the investigator. It started to seek attention of the investigator. Affection from investigator was the most appealing intervention during subject's transitory period to a good student.

Emotional support: It had been observed that the subject was not emotionally connected to the school and its teacher. Therefore, opportunities for subject's non-formal interactions with the investigator were created and sometimes it was made to participate in school/class management as fellow teacher. This practice provided new experiences to the subject and it gradually started to remain around the investigator. Subject was also taught to handle its emotions.

Socialization: Subject had minimal social engagements with the fellow students in the school. To increase the opportunities subject was involved in every scholastic and co-scholastic activities in the school. It was not effective in the beginning but later it effected the social skills of the subject positively.

Joyful attitude: To remove tension from its behavior funny language was used to amuse it on its failure. It was tried to teach it that failure didn't have much impact on future progress everybody had to go through this.

Peer Group Pressure: To raise peer group pressure subject was exposed to such an environment that it had to work in groups dynamics. It boosted its confidence level also. After sometime it even started to lead the group.

School management: Subject was involved in school and class activities as manager. It was assigned with duties and responsibilities. It could be seen that the subject was enjoying its new role, which was missing in its last school experience.

Continuous talks: Subject was not left in isolation. It was kept under supervision and constant conversations were made. Every possible effort was done to make it laugh and enjoy the school activities. It made the subject engaged and involved with the investigator as well as in school activities.

Motivation: Subject's low motivation level was observable. It was not interested even in playing games. It had a strong belief that it could not make any difference. Investigator employed a refined language skill to make subject feel accepted and appreciated. On its low achievements positive reinforcements were used. Earlier it proved ineffective but later it improved the performance of the subject.

Investigator's language: It was the only tool in the hands of the investigator which made it possible to a great extent that now the subject had better attitude for school and ready to be taught.

Investigator's support: Subject was restricting its efforts to solve classroom problems after a few attempts. It was to be addressed, investigator started to stand with the subject in its odds. It not only built the confidence of the subject but also feeling of security in the subject. It took the subject near to the investigator.

Opportunities for expression: In the morning assembly subject was used to behave abnormally due to lack of confidence. To remove the abnormality every day subject was made to express its views whether required or not? During teaching-learning process everything was dependent on its response. In the earlier stage it was difficult and demotivating to get few words from the subject but later it proved significant. Subject gradually started to initiate talks and visit teacher with its ideas.

Parents counseling: Parents were counseled at school and made aware of the facts investigator had analyzed pertaining to the subject's behavior. They co-operated to some extent and not let the subject remain alone at home. They were directed not to use bad language and discourage the subject at home. It was told to them that never allow anyone to dominate the subject. Subject should have confidence in them. They were also suggested to sit with her when it studies at home and appraise its small achievements. They were convinced not to blame anyone else and supernatural powers but focus on subject and its behavior for corrective measures.

Innovative teaching-learning process: Investigator used subject centered activity based teaching-learning. Small targets were fixed and achieved in an extended time period. Subject was left with its speed and on every accomplishment there was tangible and intangible reinforcement. Subject was kept with 4th class for one month to let her gain confidence.

Sense of completion: Sense of completion was absent in the behavior of the subject. Because, it had never completed any task or if it had completed, never been acknowledged. Therefore, after accomplishment of every objective, subject was made to enjoy the moment. It brought great improvement in the performance and behavior.

Concerns: It was also disclosed to the subject that what others think about it. How and why they reacting in strange manner to it? It was discussed with the subject that how to cop up with the situations. Investigator's concerns were too disclosed to her and subject's acceptance delayed but gained. It took more than 2 months to make the subject convinced.

Vision: It was difficult for the subject to understand the consequences of its behavior at the age of ten years. It was therefore, the results of subject's behavior were continually discussed with it. This strategy proved ineffective in the beginning but after 3 months it was visible on its face that it had started to visualize the future.

Human personality is a dynamic phenomenon and to what extent it can be influenced in developing phases, is uncertain. But certain empirically tested socio-psychological techniques can help the personality to grow harmoniously. Investigator used some of these techniques to handle the subject in its real process. Some of them came out with significant effect and some were with moderate impact.

RESULTS

Subject's usual and regular arrivals at school were the result of the present action research. Its involvement and volunteer participation in scholastic and co-scholastic activities, smiling face, seeking attention, attitudinal changes and confidence in the investigator was the indicator of significant effect of the interventions employed to terminate the unusual and abnormal behavior of the subject. Final academic achievement of the subject was good. Self-confidence, motivation and sense of responsibility are the major areas where the subject showed the significant progress.

The effectiveness of the funny language and daily conversations proved the best part of this scientific study. It brought back the subject to the school. Now, Subject has been actively participating in school curricular and co-curricular activities.

DISCUSSION

The interventions employed to correct the problematic behavior made the subject joyful, energetic, responsible, socialized, free of tension, full of enthusiasm and ready for the studies. In the light of the impact of strategies and interventions applied and results, it can be said that it is possible to affect the behavior of a child if a systematic enquiry and scientific strategies are applied.

Generally, every teacher encounters numerous students in problematic situations. They need to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills to enquiry, choose strategies and implement them to help their students.

The result of the present action research concludes that teachers positive attitude contributes significantly dealing with diversity of student's behaviors. Teacher's habit not to curse students on failures and recheck their employed methods as they can provide solutions to the immediate problems. Teacher must observe the behavior of children and stay with them in their all evens and odds. Students are most helpless when not able understand, what is being taught at the moment. Understanding the situation teacher should help and stand with them.

Showed that if students are dealt with positive attitude and early intervention are employed; improvement in academics as well as in overall personality can be achieved. Teacher's language and attitude in failure and success of the child makes a great impact on the motivation level of the Children.

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