

Good Behavior Game as a Strategy to Reduce Disruptive Behavior in Mexican Students

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Abstract

One of the main obstacles of the teaching-learning process is the disruptive behaviors of the students, a situation that requires interdisciplinary work with behavioral specialists to solve these problems through effective strategies. Objective: to analyze the effect before and after the implementation of the Good Behavior Game on disruptive behaviors and permanence in the task of a group of Mexican students. Method: AB single case design with a sample of 17 8- and 9-years old students, from a Primary School in Poza Rica, Veracruz, evaluated through observation records during 20 sessions. Result: through data analysis, an increase in the behavior of permanence in the task was registered in both boys and girls and a decrease in mild, moderate and severe disruptive behaviors. Conclusion: the Good Behavior Game turned out to be an effective strategy in reducing disruptive behavior in Mexican students.

Key Words: Good Behavior Game, Disruptive Behavior, Professor Role.

El Juego de la Buena Conducta como estrategia para disminuir el comportamiento disruptivo en estudiantes mexicanos

Resumen

Uno de los principales obstáculos del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje es la conducta disruptiva de los alumnos, situación que hace necesario el trabajo interdisciplinario con especialistas del comportamiento para dar solución a estas problemáticas a través de estrategias efectivas. Objetivo: analizar el efecto antes y después de la implementación del Juego de la Buena Conducta en las conductas disruptivas y de permanencia en la tarea de un grupo de estudiantes mexicanos. Método: diseño de caso único AB con una muestra de 17 alumnos de 8 y 9 años, de una escuela primaria de Poza Rica, Veracruz, evaluados por medio de registros de observación durante 20 sesiones. Resultado: a través del análisis de los datos se registró un incremento en la conducta de permanencia en la tarea tanto en niños como en niñas y disminución en conductas disruptivas leves, moderadas y severas. Conclusión: el Juego de la Buena Conducta resultó ser una estrategia efectiva en la disminución del comportamiento disruptivo en estudiantes mexicanos.

Palabras clave: Juego de la Buena Conducta, Conducta disruptiva, Rol docente.

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Introduction

In the educational field, the teaching-learning process involves two main actors, the teacher and the students, who interact in a classroom context in order to develop knowledge and skills in different formal and factual sciences; however, in this interaction, individual, contextual, social and political problems may arise, which present themselves as obstacles in this process (Bolaños *et al.*, 2015; Carrasco, 2019; Díaz, 2006; Guerra, 2019; Jornet *et al.*, 2014; León, 2012; Miranda, 2018; Omaña *et al.*, 2018; Rojas, 2010 and Weiss *et al.*, 2019).

One of the main obstacles in the teaching-learning process, inherent to students, is the presence of disruptive behaviors such as playing, social interaction during academic activity (Santoyo *et al.*, 2017) and school violence (González *et al.*, 2018). Problems such as oppositional defiant disorder, disobedience, aggressive behavior and hyperactivity have been identified as among the most frequent in the classroom (Medina-Mora *et al.*, 2003), the prevalence of these problems is between 1% to 16% for oppositional defiant disorder and 5% for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (American Psychiatric Association, APA, 2013; Morales *et al.*, 2014 and Vásquez *et al.*, 2010).

Children with behavioral problems usually have difficulties in social interactions. Relationships with their parents are commonly hostile, lacking affection and communication, while among their peers they are often rejected due to their behavior characterized by aggressive, impulsive behavior, and breaking social standards. Sometimes, this is an indicator of disorders related to behavioral and emotion regulation problems; however, they are overlooked (Gamero *et al.*, 2014; Herrera *et al.*, 2015 and Morrison, 2015).

Some researches have shown that there is a relationship between the presence of behavior problems in childhood and antisocial and delinquent behavior in adolescence (Frick *et al.*, 2008 and Hovee *et al.*, 2008), even progressing to later stages such as adulthood, if not detected in a timely manner (Farrington *et al.*, 2009).

In addition to the above, in terms of teacher-related factors, the lack of management strategies and task organization in the classroom (Murillo *et al.*, 2018; Razo, 2016 and Santoyo *et al.*, 2017) have been identified as an important predictor of disciplinary incidents related to behavioral problems in students (Kayıkçı, 2009; Simón *et al.*, 2016 and Valdés *et al.*, 2010). Coercive

methods that are frequently used even today to maintain discipline in the classroom, such as school, verbal and/or corporal punishments, can be the cause of collateral and harmful effects like the development of feelings of fear, frustration, aggression, opposition, low self-esteem, low confidence, lack of motivation to learn, antisocial behavior and mental health problems. For this reason, actions aimed at promoting discipline in school should be based on the use of positive behavioral reinforcement, positive teacher-student relationships, and adequate classroom management strategies, which in turn impact academic performance (Elbla, 2012; Gershoff, 2002; Gordillo *et al.*, 2016, Morales *et al.*, 2017; Robinson *et al.*, 2005 and Valle-Barbosa *et al.*, 2016).

Interventions aimed at teacher training in effective behavior correction strategies based on empirical evidence, as well as the collaboration of specialists in these issues, have shown favorable results (Arriscado, 2015; Catalán, 2009; De Ibarrola, 2012; Díaz, 2005; Farag, 2012; Guerra, 2019; Kayıkçı, 2009; Khodarahmi *et al.*, 2014; Rodríguez, 2017; Ugurlu *et al.*, 2016; Valdés *et al.*, 2010 and Weiss *et al.*, 2019).

An effective strategy for behavior correction in the classroom is the Good Behavior Game (GBG), a procedure that has demonstrated consistent results in reducing the frequency of disruptive behavior in educational contexts through teacher training. This strategy is originally based on the principles of behavioral theory, specifically on individual contingencies for group consequences of disruptive behavior in the classroom. The results of its implementation have demonstrated increases in prosocial behavior for participating students, and reductions in problem behavior longitudinally, across cultures, sociodemographic settings, and grade levels. A meta-analysis by Smith *et al.* (2019) identified significant differences in decreases in classroom behavior problems in males and females, with females benefiting the most from GBG in the short term, and males in the long term (Kellam *et al.*, 1994 and Jalongo *et al.*, 1999); however, research reporting gender differences is scarce, so more research is needed (Barrish *et al.*, 1969; Becker *et al.*, 2013; Bowman-Perrott *et al.*, 2016; Flower *et al.*, 2014; Mitchell, 2014; Nolan *et al.*, 2014 and Ruiz *et al.*, 2006).

For this reason, the objective of this study was to analyze the effect before and after the implementation of the Good Behavior Game on the disruptive and on-task behaviors of boys and girls in a public school in the state of Veracruz.

Design

This investigation is a single-case AB design with an incidental sample.

Participants

We worked with a sample of 17 students, 12 boys and 5 girls in 3rd grade, between 8 and 9 years old, from a Federal Public Elementary School in Poza Rica, Veracruz.

Tool

A direct observation system through a plack check was used to evaluate the behaviors of staying on task, mild, moderate, and severe disruptive behavior. The daily observation time was 10 minutes with intervals of 10, 20 and 10 seconds respectively (De los Santos *et al.*, 2017).

Procedure

After obtaining the required permits, a baseline was established during 10 observation sessions on subsequent days. Afterwards, the intervention was initiated by training the teacher in behavioral management skills.

The training was implemented in accordance with the Teacher's Manual for Behavior Management in the Classroom by Carbajal *et al.* (2017); it was divided into 4 sessions which were carried out in one hour daily where topics such as understanding behavior, its effect and relevance, instructions and rules, avoiding

the use of reprimands, and the game of good behavior are covered with the teacher.

Once the training was over, the teacher implemented the Good Behavior Game with the group, carrying out the skills learned during the training, and an observation record was kept during the session.

Once the session was completed, the findings were analyzed.

Statistical analysis

For the statistical analysis, a database was created in Excel; the ratios of students presenting on-task, mild, moderate, and severe disruptive behaviors during the multiple baseline were calculated and converted to percentages. Additionally, the impact of the intervention was calculated through the Nonoverlap of All Pairs (NAP; Parker & Vannest; 2009) index.

Results

The results obtained from the classroom observation record of the children during the multiple baseline and the corresponding NAP index values are presented below.

Figure 1 shows the results of on-task behavior shown by the children; it can be observed that there was an increase of 16.7% at the end of the intervention, and a NAP index value of 98% which reflects a strong impact size from baseline to intervention.

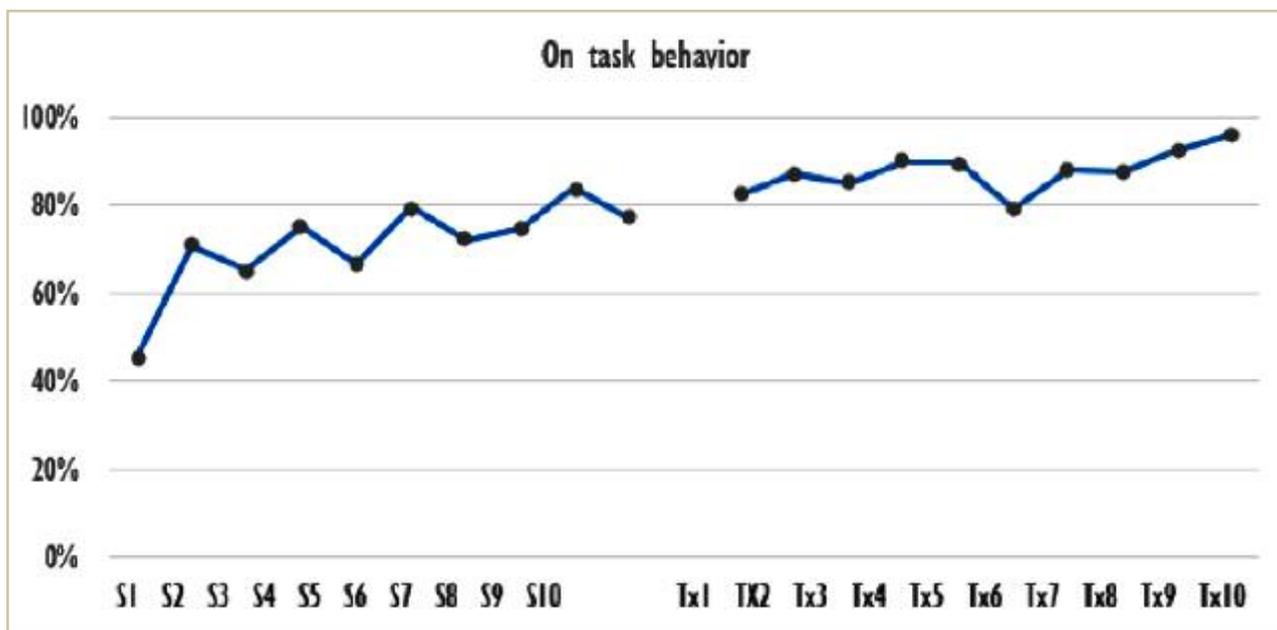


Figure 1. On-task behavior of children during baseline and treatment

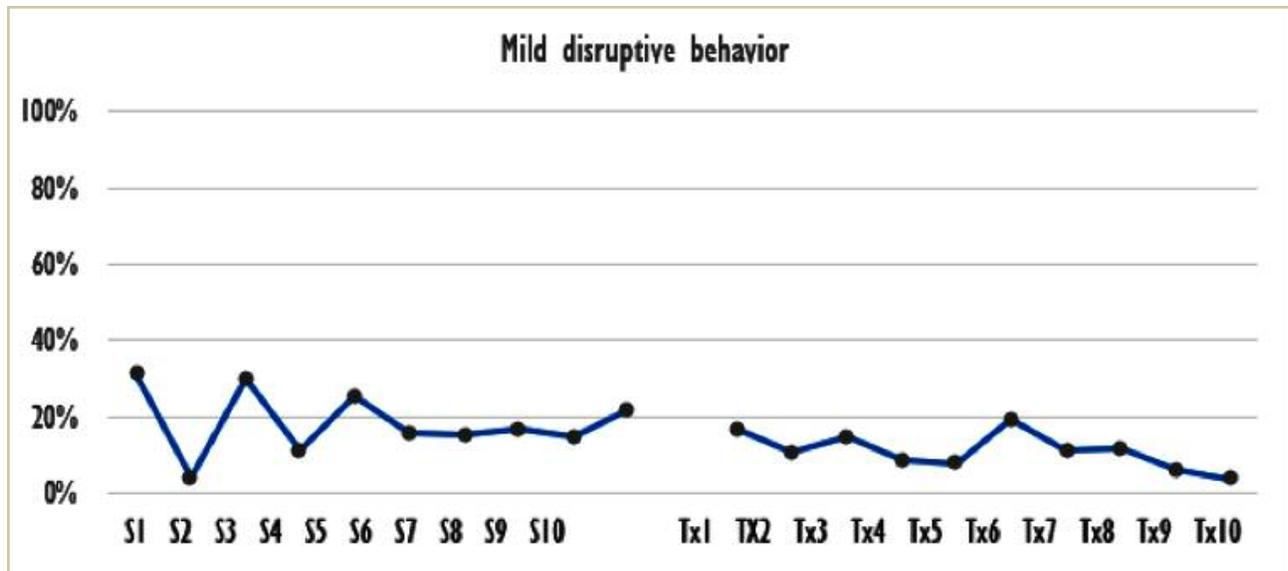


Figure 2. Mild disruptive behaviors of children during baseline and treatment

Figure 2 displays the percentages of mild disruptive behaviors of the children during the multiple baseline and shows that, at the end of treatment, the children demonstrated a decrease in mild disruptive behaviors of 7.5% with a NAP index of 78% showing a moderate change.

Figure 3 shows the percentages of mild disruptive behaviors of the children during the baseline and treatment sessions. It is observed that the children exhi-

bited an 8.89% decrease in mild disruptive behaviors at the end of the treatment, and a strong impact (91%).

Figure 4 displays the percentages of the children's severe disruptive behaviors during the baseline and treatment sessions. The children did not exhibit severe disruptive behaviors during the baseline, however, during the treatment sessions there was an increase of 3% and a NAP index value of 45% which represents a medium impact.

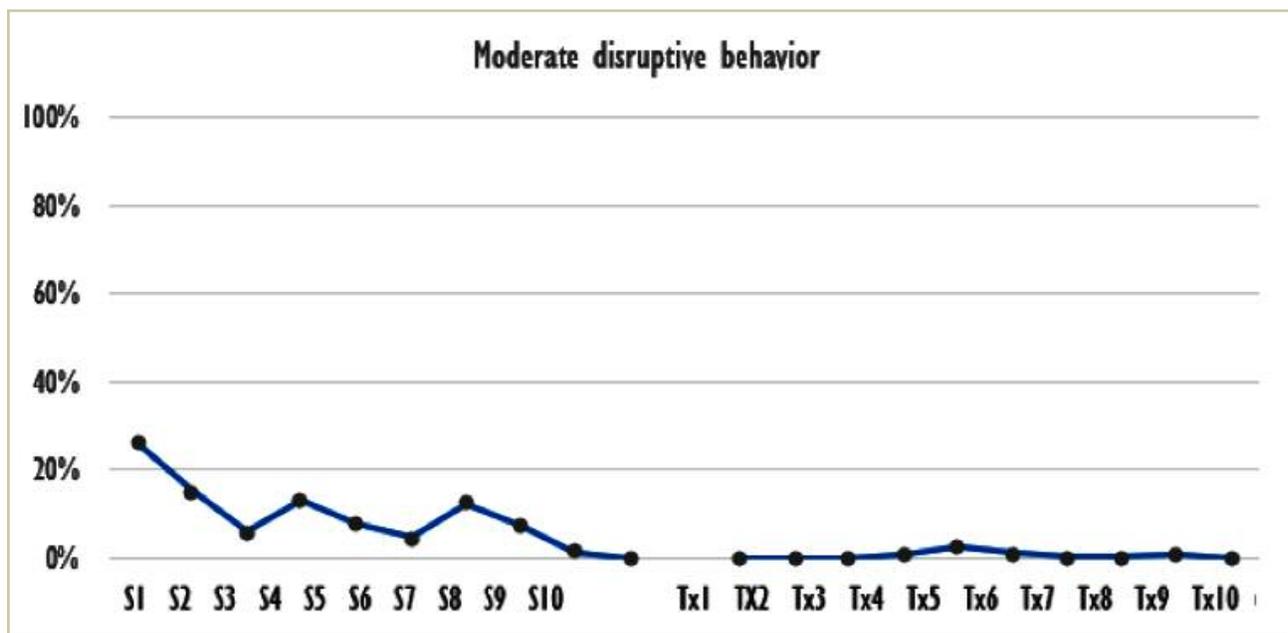


Figure 3. Mild disruptive behaviors of children during baseline and treatment

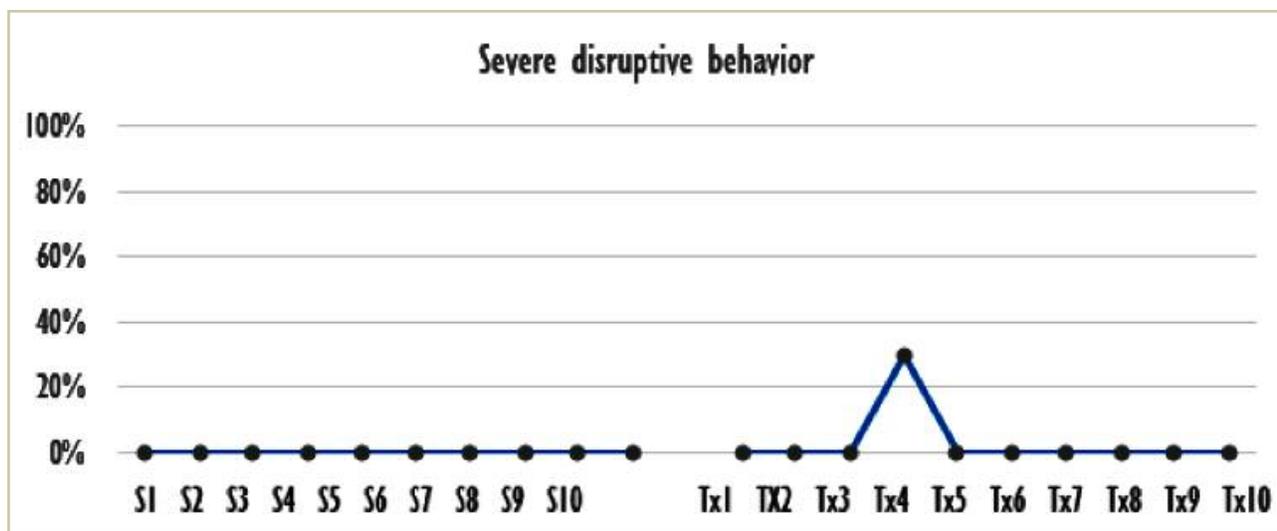


Figure 4. Severe disruptive behaviors of children during baseline and treatment

Figure 5 shows the results of the girls in the on-task behavior, showing an increase of 5.06% at the end of the treatment, and an NAP index value of 69%, indicating a medium impact.

Figure 6 shows the percentages of mild disruptive behaviors of the girls who at the end of the treatment showed a 0.23% decrease, with an NAP index of 40.5%, which represents a medium impact.

Figure 7 shows the percentages of girls' moderate disruptive behaviors during the multiple baseline. It can be noted that at the end of the treatment there

was a decrease of 4.83% and a medium impact (77.5%).

Figure 8 shows that the girls did not exhibit severe disruptive behaviors during the baseline and treatment sessions; therefore, the impact size of the NAP index has a value of 50%.

Analysis

A teacher who is in charge of a group is responsible for providing his students with the necessary

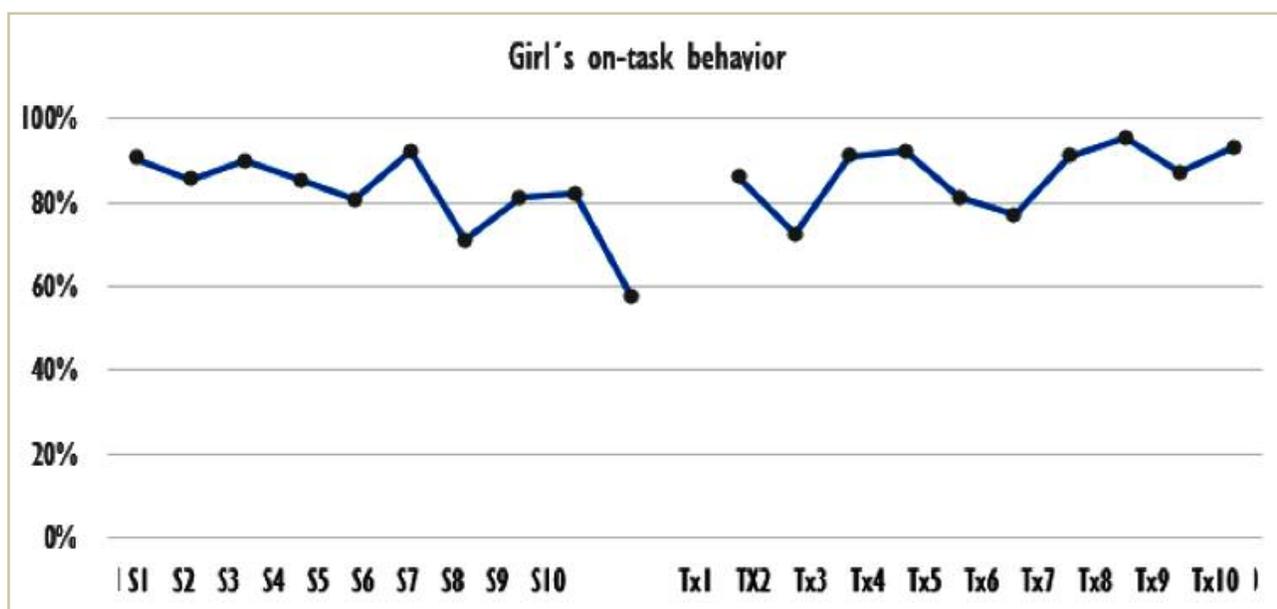


Figure 5. Girls' on-task behavior during baseline and treatment

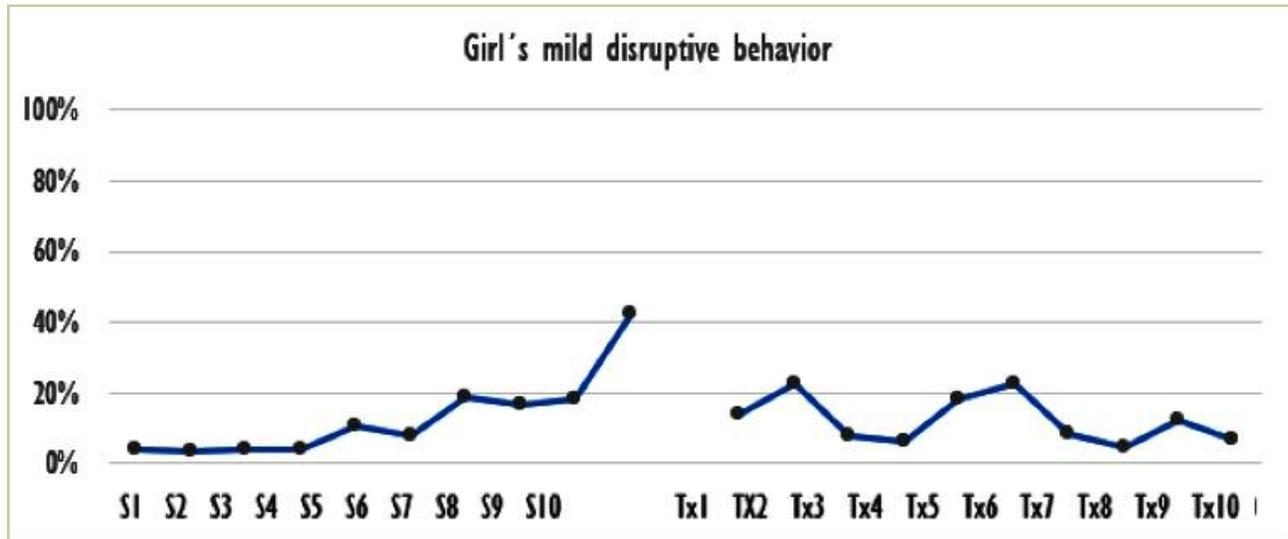


Figure 6. Girls' mild disruptive behaviors during baseline and treatment

knowledge according to the educational level they are studying and the stage of development they are in, supported by his pedagogical strategies; however, this task can be interrupted by disruptive behaviors exhibited by the children themselves and the conditions of the context. In these situations, psychology provides useful strategies that teachers can implement as disciplinary measures to correct inappropriate behaviors in the classroom. The implementation of programs such as the one used in this research is a valuable strategy, with beneficial results that help teachers to correctly manage disruptive behaviors, facilitating the

implementation of a favorable work environment and improving the conditions that generate conflicts.

The objective of this project was to analyze the effect before and after the implementation of the Good Behavior Game on the disruptive and on-task behaviors of boys and girls in a public school in the state of Veracruz. In general, the data analysis yielded positive changes of improvement in on-task behaviors and a reduction in disruptive behaviors. These results are consistent with those reported by Barrish *et al.* (1969), Becker *et al.* (2013), Bowman-Perrot *et al.* (2016), Donaldson *et al.* (2017), Flower *et al.* (2014), Joslyn *et al.*

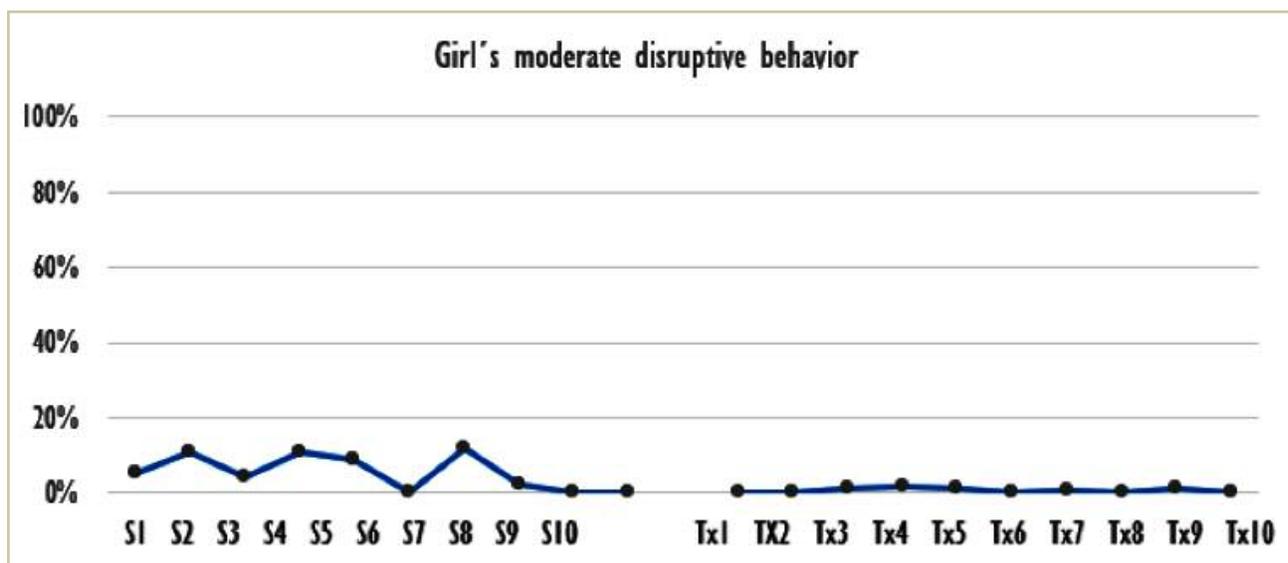


Figure 7. Girls' moderate disruptive behaviors during baseline and treatment

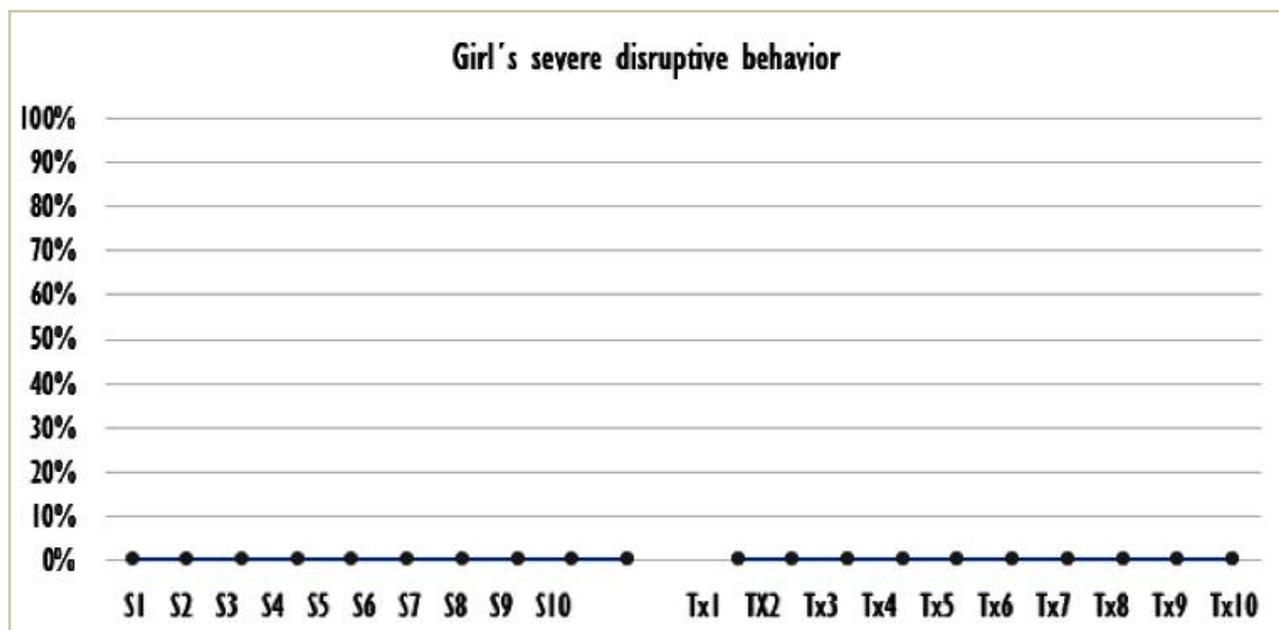


Figure 8. Girls' severe disruptive behaviors during baseline and treatment

(2019), Medland and Stachnik (1972), Mitchell (2014), Nolan *et al.* (2014), Pennington and McComas (2017), Rubow *et al.* (2018) and Ruiz *et al.* (2006). However, the impact size of the intervention was larger for behaviors exhibited by boys compared to girls, displaying medium to strong changes; this differs with what was found by Smith *et al.* (2019).

Incorporating strategies that integrate the principles of behavioral theory, particularly individual contingencies for group consequences, is useful to reduce disruptive behavior in the classroom and increase on-task behaviors, especially in students with major behavioral problems, who benefit from its implementation both academically and in their interpersonal relationships.

More disruptive behaviors were observed in the boys compared to the girls in the group; in general, it was the girls who stayed longer on task. This situation could explain the tendency of the impact size of the intervention (medium to strong) on children's behaviors.

The disruptive behaviors that were recorded in greater proportion were mild and included actions such as looking out the window and diverting their attention from assigned tasks, while the moderate behaviors that were observed included verbal communication actions, exchanging ideas, planning play activities, and telling anecdotes experienced in out-of-school settings. The severe behaviors that were recor-

ded were related to the maintenance of classroom space and personal items, as well as self-inflicted aggression manifesting behaviors such as littering, scratching benches, and hurting or stabbing themselves with their school items. These behaviors decreased after implementing the Good Behavior Game; it is worth mentioning that there was no record of physical aggression towards other classmates.

During the investigation, changes not included in the observation records occurred that constitute an important finding for future research. According to what was observed, there seems to be a relationship between disruptive behaviors and social acceptance. Children with more disruptive behavior did not engage in classwork, or did so for short periods of time, and were involved in violent play relationships at recess; this situation fostered rejection by their peers in both academic and play activities.

Throughout the treatment sessions and implementation of the Good Behavior Game, the children with the most disruptive behavior began to participate in class activities, to cooperate in teamwork, and demonstrated pro-social behaviors, a situation that favored acceptance and inclusion by their peers, in addition to being involved in game activities that the teacher promoted as a reward.

The teacher's collaboration and acceptance of the proposed strategy contributed to the creation of a motivating, collaborative, respectful and teamwork

environment. The incorporation of an attractive strategy, mediated by the game, proved to be a valuable strategy to lower disruptive behaviors and increase staying-on-task behaviors.

Future research could consider making changes to the methodology used, such as carrying out observation sessions for longer periods of time, working with teachers who have greater problems of disruption, as well as applying the game with consideration for children with disabilities who are in the classroom.

It is necessary to continue with projects such as the one presented here in order to raise the awareness of educational authorities and teachers about the importance of constant training and the implementation of measures that favor the learning conditions to take place. The increasing participation of teachers and managers in this type of projects opens the door to a very promising scenario. A lengthy follow-up assessment would make it possible to evaluate the temporary or permanent scope that strengthens the results found in both the teacher and the children.

Limitations

One of the major limitations was time availability and the lack of observation sessions due to the children's extracurricular activities, festivities, sporting events, artistic activities and holidays that postponed such sessions. Another difficulty is related to the teachers' lack of openness to being observed and coached while performing their academic activities, particularly those who have greater problems in their classrooms, mainly those who are considered to have more problems in their classrooms.

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