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Proponents and opponents for rewarding children

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Proponents and opponents for rewarding children

Abstract
This paper is a review of the literature concerning the types and uses of rewards. The primary focus of this paper was to look at opposing sides of whether rewarding children has benefits or whether there are problems with using rewards. Also, I looked at how children can be given credit for their efforts to accomplish their goals with using encouragement and natural and logical consequences.

As stated by Alfie Kohn, "A reward .. is a desired object or event made conditional on having fulfilled some criterion" (Kohn, 1993, p. 53). There is a controversy today concerning the use of rewards. Those professionals who are Behaviorists support the use of rewards, while Adlerians and other educators do not support the use of rewards.

The conclusion of this study dealt with the following recommendations: additional research needs to be done on the influences that rewards are having on children; research that shows why teachers are continuing to use rewards even after reviewing the negative effects; research that would compare the role of encouragement to rewards in classrooms settings; and finding a way that teachers can move from using rewards and punishments to using alternatives.
Proponents and Opponents for Rewarding Children

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By

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a review of the literature concerning the types and uses of rewards. The primary focus of this paper was to look at opposing sides of whether rewarding children has benefits or whether there are problems with using rewards. Also, I looked at how children can be given credit for their efforts to accomplish their goals with using encouragement and natural and logical consequences.

As stated by Alfie Kohn, "A reward...is a desired object or event made conditional on having fulfilled some criterion" (Kohn, 1993, p. 53). There is a controversy today concerning the use of rewards. Those professionals who are Behaviorists support the use of rewards, while Adlerians and other educators do not support the use of rewards.

The Behaviorists stated that using rewards with children is a way to strengthen their behaviors. The two types of rewards that I discuss are token economy and praise. A token economy, which closely resembles the monetary reward system, is used in Behaviorist classrooms in which the children are paid for exhibiting deemed behavior. Also, praise is used in these classrooms to reward appropriate behavior.

The Adlerians and other professionals such as Alfie Kohn and Susan Fuhrman, stated that rewards should not be used with children. They have observed that using rewards over time might be damaging to children. Adlerians have presented alternatives instead of using rewards that include using encouragement, and natural and logical consequences.
The conclusion of this study dealt with the following recommendations: additional research needs to be done on the influences that rewards are having on children, research that shows why teachers are continuing to use rewards even after reviewing the negative effects, research that would compare the role of encouragement to rewards in classrooms settings, and finding a way that teachers can move from using rewards and punishments to using the alternatives to rewards and punishments.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, children have been rewarded by adults, for rewards were used to encourage children to achieve desired behaviors. While this practice has been accepted by many authorities, other learned persons have expressed a concern about it; thus, different opinions have developed about the effect of using rewards with children.

Behaviorists View on Rewards

In the late nineteenth century, Edward Thorndike researched the effects of rewards. "...Do this and you'll get that- the so-called Law of Effect, which states that behavior leading to a positive consequence will be repeated- was set out by psychologist Edward Thorndike back in 1898" (Kohn, 1993, p. 4). Thorndike believed that "... as a result of the reward for a specific act, the conduct was gladly repeated by the child...” (Thorndike, 1935 p. 141). Also, he believed that behaviors that were rewarded would grow stronger. Thorndike (1933) stated that a reward can act directly and immediately to strengthen a connection; also, he concluded that we learn new forms of behavior as a result of the consequences of previous behavior; that is, if a particular way of behaving is followed by our obtaining something we want, we repeat that way of behaving in the future.

In the early 1920's, a more distinctively American point of view was growing under the intellectual leadership of John B. Watson (Lomax, Kagan, & Rosenkrantz,
1978). Watson, who was influenced by Thorndike, is known to be the father of Behaviorism. He believed that the only subject matter for psychology was behavior, since behavior could be observed (Cosgrove, 1982 p.25). This movement came to be known as Behaviorism. Watson’s message could be summarized to an American parent in a single hour lecture that stated that you need to, “...reward the behavior that you want your child to maintain and punish him for the behavior that you do not want him to maintain; apply that principle consistently for 10 years and you will have produced your dream child” (Lomax, Kagan, & Rosenkrantz 1978, p.109).

B. F. Skinner used the theories of Thorndike and Watson as a basis for his ideas about using rewards with children. Skinner believed that using rewards, which he called reinforcement, was a way to influence behavior. “Of course Skinner is right in stating that the rewarding or punishing consequences of an act influence behavior; psychologists and philosophers from Plato to Thorndike have subscribed to this view...” (Catenia & Harnad, 1988, p. 425). Skinner observed that there is a difference between the definitions of rewards and reinforcements. Reinforcement strengthens the behavior, while a reward may or may not strengthen the behavior (Nye, 1979). Also, Skinner is remembered for his operant condition theory which emphasized the association between behavior and reinforcing stimuli. Skinner incorporated Thorndike’s Law of Effect into his theory which stated that favorable consequences will recur (Cosgrove, 1982). Pavlov, Watson and Skinner all wrote that reward and punishment, both positive and negative reinforcement, are important mechanisms for strengthening, maintaining, weakening, or extinguishing
behavior. They stated that the role of society is to arrange environmental stimulation to modify the individual’s behavior through conditioning (Cosgrove, 1982).

**Adlerian View on Rewards**

In 1948, Rudolf Dreikurs wrote that many educational procedures are based on the assumption that every action of the child should receive some reward or punishment. He observed that the fallacy behind this theory of reward and punishment is that this view is based on the assumption of a need to assert power and superiority over the child. Dreikurs (1948) noted that if parents expose their children to rewards and punishment, children are taught to behave favorably only under others pressure, but not of their own accord. In the 1960’s, Dreikurs expressed another view of rewarding children. “The system of rewarding children for good behavior is as detrimental to their outlook as the system of punishment” (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964 p. 72). Also, he believed that the same lack of respect was shown in rewarding children as it was in punishing them. “Many children desire to do well only because of the reward that parents or teachers promise. If no reward is foreseen, the child’s incentive toward doing well is also gone” (Dreikurs, 1971, p. 82).

Jane Nelsen (1987) based her philosophy on the theories of Alfred Adler and Rudolph Dreikurs, which is known as the Alderian approach. “When excessive control is used, it’s the adult’s responsibility to constantly be in charge of children’s behavior. Adults must *catch* children being *good* so they can give rewards and *catch* them being bad so they can dole out punishment” (Nelsen, 1987, p. 13). Nelsen advocated using natural and logical consequences instead of rewards and punishments. A natural consequence is
anything that happens naturally. It is the result of a particular behavior that is without adult interference (Nelsen, 1987). On the other hand, a logical consequence is defined as "...situations where the consequence is, in effect, arranged by the parents or another adult rather than being solely the results of the child’s acts" (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968, p. 65).

Other Views on Rewards

In the 1940's, Emily Post shared her ideas about praise and rewards. She observed that a bribe at worst is payment for wrong doing, at best, it is payment that is understood (Post, 1940). She believed that it is important for children to receive praise, "...a little sugar in the form of thanks, approval, or praise, is just as necessary to our mental well-being as a little sugar in our food- perhaps a little more so" (Post, 1940, p. 124). Post also wrote that a child should not receive praise all of the time, but enough to impress in his mind that people are pleased with his efforts to do well. She noted that we all treasure the memory of some appreciation shown us for something we have done well, and we remember to show this appreciation back to our children.

Alfie Kohn is recognized today as an authority who is alarmed that rewarding children is as damaging as punishing children. Kohn (1993) explained that, "Rewards don’t bring about changes we are hoping for, but the point here is that something else is going on: the more rewards are used, the more they seem to be needed" (p. 17). It is a simple way for adults to get the type of behavior that they want from children. Also, Kohn (1997) emphasized that research evidence has suggested that the more we reward people for doing something, the more likely they are to lose interest in that particular activity.
“No wonder researchers have found that children who are frequently rewarded... are less likely than other children to keep doing those things” (Kohn, 1997, p. 430).

There are several reasons why I am researching the topic of rewards. I notice that some teachers use sticker charts, prizes, and various rewards to change children's behavior, while other teachers do not use these same strategies in their classrooms. I have an interest in finding out what effects rewards have on children who are being rewarded. In reading some of Alfie Kohn’s books, I find his ideas are similar to my own philosophy of education. Furthermore, I have come to realize that I want to learn more about what he and others are saying about the use of rewards with children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to review and to analyze the literature concerning types and uses of rewards. In order to accomplish this purpose, the following questions will be addressed:

1. How have rewards been used over time?
2. What are the benefits of using rewards?
3. What are the problems in using rewards?
4. How can children be given credit for their efforts to accomplish goals?

Need for the Study

Since the publication of the book, Punished by Rewards by Alfie Kohn (1993), there has been a renewed interest in the effects of rewards on students in classrooms, and children at home. In order to gain knowledge and unbiased information on the effects of
rewards, it is important to review the literature to determine if rewards are beneficial to children. Also, it is important to examine alternatives to rewards, if rewards are not in the best interest of children.

**Limitations of the Study**

During the investigation of the topic of rewards, some limitations have surfaced. One limitation is the limited access this investigator had to publications on the subject. Another is that some publications that are available are not the most recent literature.

**Definition of Terms**

**encouragement-** "A precise definition is impossible. At best, we can say that it is an action which conveys to the child that the teacher respects, trusts and believes in him and that his present lack of skills in no way diminishes his value as a person" (Dreikurs, 1971, p. 66).

**reward-** "A reward, by definition, is a desired object or event made conditional on having fulfilled some criterion: only if you do this, you will get that" (Kohn, 1993, p. 53).

**praise-** positive feedback

**reinforcement-** "... refers to a procedure for strengthening behavior, *that is making it likely to be repeated*, by providing certain kinds of consequences" (Chance, 1992, p. 201).
**Operant Conditioning** - An experimental science of behavior that refers to the process in which the frequency of occurrence of behaviors are modified by consequences of behavior (Reynolds, 1975).

**Token Economy** - "A token economy in a classroom closely resembles the monetary reward system which operates in our free enterprise system. Students are rewarded, paid, for exhibiting behavior deemed appropriate by whomever is in authority" (et al., 1973, p. 18).

"...A system which allows students, by demonstrating specified types of behavior, to earn tokens that can be redeemed for selected items and activities to the children" (Stainback et al., 1973, p. 17).

**Mistaken Goals** - Dreikurs discovered these four inappropriate goals which consisted of the following: attention, power, revenge, and assumed inadequacy (Nelsen, 1989).

**Natural Consequence** - Anything that happens naturally, with no adult interference. "...the natural results of ill-advised acts" (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968, p. 63).

**Logical Consequences** - "...situations where the consequence is, in effect, arranged by the parents or another adult rather than being solely the results of the child's own acts" (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968, p. 65).

**Social Reinforcers** - "Words and behaviors that strengthen students' behavior" (Charles, Senter, & Barr, 1996, p. 33).

**Tangible Reinforcers** - "Real objects that students can earn as rewards for desired behavior" (Charles, Senter, & Barr, 1996).
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a controversy today concerning the use of rewards. Those professionals who consider themselves Behaviorists tend to promote the use of rewards; whereas, other professionals, such as the Adlerians, disagree with the Behaviorists concerning the use of rewards.

Proponents For Rewards

Behaviorists views

What Are Rewards?

Ayllon & Azrin (1968) stated that there seems to be agreement that rewards are desirable and are an effective method of modifying human behavior. “Most educators will state without reservation that they use rewards for appropriate performance whenever possible” (Ayllon & Azrin, 1968, p. 9). They also observed that it would be rare to find a mother that would not rely on using rewards with her children (Ayllon & Arzin, 1968).

William and Susan Stainback (1989) stated that providing rewards for doing schoolwork is not bribery. “Bribery is payment for something illegal or illicit, and doing schoolwork is neither” (Stainback, Stainback, & Kidd, 1989, p. 41). They mentioned that, “By recognizing, encouraging, and rewarding achievements, both parents and teachers can help children maintain and increase this desire to learn” (Stainback, Stainback, & Kidd, p. 43). As children continue to learn and achieve, their actual knowledge then becomes a
reward in itself. They stated that it is not a good policy to provide a reward before an achievement, but to provide it as soon as possible after the achievement (Stainback, Stainback, & Kidd, 1989). In 1993, Stainback, Stainback, and Kidd stated that some children need concrete rewards for their achievements; also, they noted that in the beginning, rewards must be given for small steps. In order for rewards to be successful, the child must be hooked on success and recognition.

Paul Chance, a psychologist and teacher, wrote in 1992, in The Rewards of Learning that using rewards are beneficial to children. Also, he summarized the following guidelines for rewarding children. Some of his recommendations include: "...use the weakest reward required to strengthen behavior, reward only the behavior that you want repeated, use different rewards for different children, reward success, set standards so that success is within the student's grasp" (Chance, 1992, p. 206).

Different Kinds Of Rewards

Token economy-

In the 1970's, William Stainback, Susan Stainback, James Payne and Ruth Payne, wrote how to implement a token economy into classrooms. "A token economy in a classroom closely resembles the monetary reward system, which operates in our free enterprise system. Students are rewarded, or paid, for exhibiting behavior deemed appropriate by whomever is in authority" (Stainback, Payne, Stainback, & Payne, 1973, p.18). They mentioned that token systems can be used with one child, a specific group of children, or an entire class. They recognized that it is imperative to know what is desirable and attractive to the child in terms of reinforcers; therefore, care must be taken when
deciding which reinforcers to use with each child. “Just as the wheels of a machine must be oiled and checked to keep it running at optimal level, so must the components of a token system. If they are allowed to become stagnant, they will disintegrate” (Stainback et al., 1973, p. 46).

One reason a token economy is successful is because some students are not rewarded by intrinsic learning, and they must be offered more tangible rewards (Luridsen, 1978). “The token economy approach recognizes the blunt reality that some students simply do not obtain any personal satisfaction from their school work and are unimpressed by traditional school rewards...” (Luridsen, 1978, p. 6). He mentioned that the token economy is an alternative arrangement for students that do not find school rewarding.

Charles, Senet, and Barr (1996) stated that in classrooms with token economies, rules need to be clearly established. “As students comply with the rules—that is, stay in their seats, raise their hands, complete their work, and so on— they are rewarded systematically with tally marks, stamps on a card, or exchanged for other activities or tangible rewards...” (Charles, Senet, & Barr, 1996, p. 36). In addition, these authors stressed that teachers who use token economies must be sure to award tokens fairly and consistently.

Praise- “Praise, the most common form of reward, genuinely and specifically targeted can be a powerful influence on students’ desire to cooperate and behave properly” (McQueen, 1992, p.13). Also, McQueen stated that praise is much better received if it is from a
teacher that is liked and respected by the students rather than from a teacher that is not respected.

In 1982, Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson wrote the *One Minute Manager*, and in that book, they stated that praising is an effective way to encourage workers. First, they said you must tell people up front that you are going to be praising them by letting them know how they are doing. They also mentioned that you need to praise people immediately, and tell people what they did right, and to be specific. Blanchard and Johnson also said to tell people how good you feel about what they did right, and stop for a moment of silence to let them feel how good you feel. They also recommended to shake hands or do something that makes it clear that you support their success. Blanchard and Johnson stated that you need to help people reach their full potential and an effective way to do that is to praise them when you are catching them doing something right (Blanchard & Johnson, 1982).

Paul Chance wrote that, “Probably the most ubiquitous extrinsic reward *and the most effective* is praise” (Chance, 1992, p.202). He said that reinforcing behaviors by saying *good, excellent, or right* is a way to let the student know that you approve. Another type of extrinsic reward can be that of nonverbal praise. Examples of nonverbal praise would be smiles, thumbs up, applause, or hugs (Chance, 1992).

Charles, Senter, and Barr (1996) described their interpretation of the Neo-Skinnerian Model in a recent book. They explained different types of reinforcers that individuals experience or receive following a certain behavior that serves to strengthen that behavior (Charles, Senter, & Barr, 1996). They first described social reinforcers that
were defined as, "...words and behaviors that strengthen student's behavior" (Charles, Senter, & Barr, 1996, p.33). Social reinforcement was provided by verbal and nonverbal praise, which would include a word such as excellent for verbal praise, while a smile might be used for nonverbal praise. Graphic reinforcers are also used in classrooms that include check marks, stars, happy faces and stickers. Another type of reinforcer mentioned was tangible reinforcers which are real objects that students can earn as rewards for desired behavior (Charles, Senter, & Barr, 1996). These authorities also said that many teachers make regular use of tangible reinforcers to reward their students. These reinforcers include things such as certificates, notes, and food.

Pintrich and Schunk (1996) stated that teachers dispense a variety of rewards to students for good behavior and high academic performance. These rewards include privileges, free time, tokens that can be exchanged for prizes and stickers. They said that rewards hold a prominent place in motivation. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) noted that rewards are motivational because people expect that behaving in an acceptable fashion will be rewarded. They also said that if the child perceives the importance of the reward, this then leads the child to act in ways he believes, will result in reward attainment. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) stated that children will become motivated when they see others being rewarded. Students will also gain a sense of self-efficacy when they earn rewards based on what they have accomplished.

**Opponents Against Rewards**

**Why Rewards Should Not Be Used With Children**
Ruldoph Dreikurs did not believe that children should be given rewards. He said that satisfaction came from a sense of contribution and participation, and that this sense was being denied to our children in our present system of rewarding them with material things (Dreikurs, 1964). “In our mistaken efforts to win co-operation through rewards, we are actually denying our children the basic satisfactions of living” (Dreikurs, 1964, p.75). He stated that a reward does not give a child a sense of belonging (Dreikurs, 1964). “It may be a sign of parental approval of the moment, but what about the next moment. Considering the number of moments, one soon runs out of rewards!” (Dreikurs, 1964, p.74). Dreikurs stated, “Rewards as well as punishment induce false values in the child” (Dreikurs, 1971, p. 82). He explains that many children only desire to do well because of the reward that parents or teachers promise. If no reward is foreseen, the child’s incentive toward doing well is also gone (Dreikurs, 1971).

Dreikurs believed that no reward is totally satisfying, for he wrote that children do not need bribes to behave, and that they want to be good. “Good behavior on the part of the child springs from his desire to belong, to contribute usefully, and to cooperate” (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, p. 74). He explained that when we bribe a child with rewards for good behavior, we are in effect showing him that we do not trust him, which is actually a form of discouragement.

In 1980, Constance Kamii, a well-known author on Constructivist education, wrote that rewards can be damaging to children. “Awards, prizes and grades are often used in schools to motivate children to learn, and many pupils end up pursuing these
extrinsic rewards rather than the intrinsic pleasure and fascination of learning” (Kamii, 1980, p. 150).

In 1976, Don Dinkmeyer and Gary McKay developed Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP). This program follows the Alderian approach and the work of Rudolf Dreikurs. In *The Parents Handbook*, Dinkmeyer and McKay gave reasons why rewards are not a respectful way to treat children. Dinkmeyer and McKay, (1989) stated that the effects of rewarding children have several disadvantages. Some of the disadvantages include the following: it makes parents responsible for their children’s behavior; it prevents children from making their own decisions; it suggests that acceptable behavior is expected only in the presence of authority figures; and it invites resistance by demanding that children conform to some standard (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1989).

“Reward and punishment deny children the opportunity to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own behavior” (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1989).

Susan Fuhrman, the Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, and Jennifer O’Day, the Associate Director of the Pew Forum on Education Reform, stated that rewards do not motivate children to learn. “It asserts that only intrinsic motivation-satisfaction or pleasure derived from the task itself rather than from what external rewards success in it may bring-creates lasting learning, engagement, or interest” (Fuhrman & O’Day, 1996, p. 34). They noted that psychologists and researchers who take this position argue that rewards actually punish. Fuhrman & O’Day said that fortunately, only a few educators condone the use of extrinsic motivators. Fuhrman and O’Day (1996) noted that if all school activity is engaged only to gain a
reward that is outside of the activity, it would be hard to imagine that the activity would subsequently be pursued in the absence of the extrinsic reward. They also discussed that using these rewards would have little positive effect on motivation to learn, but actually it can have a profoundly negative effect (Fuhrman & O'Day, 1996).

Kohn (1993) said that there are five reasons that rewards fail, for they punish, rupture relationships, ignore reasons, discourage risk-taking, and they reduce interest in the task (Kohn, 1993). First, Kohn stated that rewards punish. “The troubling truth is that rewards and punishments are not opposites at all; they are two sides of a coin. And it is a coin that doesn’t buy very much” (Kohn, 1993, p. 50). When children do not receive the reward that they had planned on, they feel punished. Also, Kohn (1993) observed that rewards are like goodies that are dangled in front of children and then snatched away when rewards are phased out; he also noted that this is what many behaviorists recommend doing. Second, Kohn observed that rewards rupture relationships. “As a rule, rewards are not conducive to developing and maintaining the positive relationships that promote optimal learning or performance” (Kohn, 1993, p. 55). Next, he wrote that rewards ignore reasons. “…Rewards do not require any attention to the reasons that the trouble developed in the first place” (Kohn, 1993, p. 59). He mentioned that looking at why the behavior happens is a more appropriate way of dealing with the situation. Fourth, he described that rewards discourage risk-taking. Also, Kohn (1993) said that rewards can increase the possibility that a child will act the way someone wants him to act. “…When we are driven by rewards, our focus is typically more narrow than when no rewards are involved; we are less likely to notice or remember things that aren’t
immediately relevant to what we are doing” (Kohn, 1993, p. 62). Cutting the interest rate is the fifth reason rewards fail. Kohn (1993) stressed that this is the most damaging because it changes the way people think about what they do. He said, “...rewards, like punishments, actually undermine the intrinsic motivation that promotes optimal performance” (Kohn, 1993, p. 69).

Kohn (1997) stated that there are a series of studies that show that individuals who have been rewarded for doing something nice to people become less likely to think of themselves as caring or helpful people. Those children also attribute their behavior to the reward that they are given. “No wonder researchers have found that children who are frequently rewarded...are less likely than other children to keep doing those things” (Kohn, 1997, p. 430).

**Alternatives For Rewards**

**Natural & Logical Consequences**

Dreikurs stated that, “Logical consequences expresses the reality of the social order, not the person, is intrinsically related to the misbehavior, involves no element of moral judgment, and is concerned only with what will happen in reality” (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968, p.82). They went to say that, “Logical consequences should offer the child a clear and logical choice of behavior and results. The child must perceive that he has a choice and accept the relationship of his choice to what follows (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968, p. 82). Dreikurs gave an example of how logical consequences are used. He illustrated this alternative to rewards by using the following example:

A young boy constantly does not pick up his toys and put them in his toy box after he is finished playing with them. His sister has been picking his toys up for him instead. The next time the boy went to his toy box to play, his mother said,
The last time you played with your toys, you left them lying on the floor, and your sister had to pick them up. She is too busy to pick up after you, and I cannot be expected to always clean up for you either. So, if you will not put your toys away in your toy box when you are done with them, I cannot let you have them. The consequence has been arranged by the mother; so this would be considered a logical consequence. However, in order for it to be effective, it must be experienced by the child as logical in nature, or the corrective effect may be lost (Dreikurs, 1968, p. 66).

"The child must see clearly the relationship between his act and the result of his own behavior rather than that of others" (Dreikurs, 1968, p. 73).

Logical consequences involve adult intervention, and should be used in place of natural consequences when the following situations occur: a child is in danger, when natural consequences interfere with the rights of others, and when the results of children’s behavior does not seem like a problem to them (Nelsen, 1987). According to Nelsen (1987) to follow the three R’s of logical consequences, it is important the consequences should be related, respectful, and reasonable.

Dinkmeyer & McKay (1976), who are both Alderians, stated that logical consequences should be used instead of using rewards with children. They noted that the purpose of using natural and logical consequences was to motivate children to make responsible decisions and not to force submission (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976). “Natural consequences are those which permit children to learn from the natural order of the physical world—for example, that not eating is followed by hunger” (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976, p. 89). “Logical consequences are those which permit children to learn from the reality of the social world, for example, children who do not get up on time may be late to school and have to make up work” (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976, p. 89). Dinkmeyer and
McKay further observed that you will need to be patient; it will take time for natural and logical consequences to be effective.

Jane Nelsen, an Adlerian, stressed that instead of using rewards and punishments, parents should use natural and logical consequences. “A natural consequence is anything that happens naturally, with no adult interference” (Nelsen, 1987, p. 68). Examples of a natural consequences are the following: if you stand in the rain, you will get wet and when you do not eat, you will get hungry. “Logical consequences on the other hand require the intervention of an adult, or other children...” (Nelsen, 1987, p. 69). By using natural and logical consequences, children can learn to develop responsibility. “Natural consequences are often the best way to help a child learn the results of a behavior, but there are times when they are not practical: when a child is in danger, when natural consequences interfere with the rights of others, and when the results of children’s behavior do not seem like a problem to them” (Nelsen, 1987, p.70). Examples of logical consequences are when a child spilled his milk, he will clean the spilt milk up, or when a mother states that breakfast in their home will only take place between 7:00 and 8:00, and if the child does not wake up in time, he or she will have to wait until lunch. Nelsen said, “The three R’s for logical consequences is a formula that identifies the criteria to ensure that solutions are logical consequences rather than punishment” (Nelsen, 1987, p. 73). The three R’s include related, respectful, and reasonable. In order for a parent to use logical consequences, she must understand that all of these three R’s must be included. “Punishment may get quicker results, but logical consequences help children develop the characteristics necessary for long-range results” (Nelsen, 1987, p.81).
Nelsen discussed the four mistaken goals which are attention getting, power, revenge, and assumed inadequacy. Nelsen (1987), further observed that logical consequences are not the best solution for every problem; and it can not be used for every misbehavior. She also noted that logical consequences are only effective at the time of the conflict. Nelsen also said that when the mistaken goal of the child’s behavior is power or revenge, logical consequences can be effective during a problem-solving session or after a cooling period (Nelsen, 1987). Some Alderian’s recommend using natural and logical consequences, while other educators suggest using encouragement instead of using rewards.

**Encouragement**

Encouragement is another alternative instead of using rewards with children. “Essentially, encouragement involves the ability to accept the child as worthwhile, regardless of any deficiency, and to assist him in developing his capacity and potentialities” (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968, p.56). The person who encourages has many qualities, some of which include placing value on the child, believing in the child’s ability, giving recognition for effort, recognizing and focusing on strength of the child and utilizing the interest of the child (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968).

Dinkmeyer and McKay (1976) summarized encouragement as valuing and accepting children as they are, pointing to the positive side of behavior, showing faith in children so they can believe in themselves, recognizing effort and improvement as well as accomplishments and showing appreciation for contributions. They also stated that
encouragement is given for effort or improvement, and that it implies a spirit of cooperation.

**Praise Verses Encouragement**

In 1988, Randy Hitz and Amy Driscoll wrote the article, *Praise or Encouragement? New Insights Into Applications for Early Childhood Teachers*, that caused many educators to think about how they were currently praising their students. Hitz and Driscoll stated that current research may be working in a reverse direction for our professional goals that we have for our students. Several results of studies in this article concluded that forms of praise had a negative effect on children’s perceptions of themselves, their work, and their accomplishments. Examples of praise are statements such as: *Good work,* or *What a pretty picture.* These statements involve a value judgment by the person saying them. “Also, statements of praise place a judgment on the child and gives an indication of the child’s status in that group...” (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988, p. 10).

Dreikurs (1971) said that encouragement refers to a positive acknowledgment response that focuses on student efforts of the work completed. An example of encouragement would be to say, *You worked a long time on the blocks,* instead of saying, *What a nice tower you built.* “Encouragement focuses on improvement of process rather than evaluation of a finished product” (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988, p. 11).

While Kohn (1993) wrote that praise can be harmful, he said that by following four practical suggestions, we can blunt the damaging impact of praise. These four suggestions include the following: do not praise people, only praise what people do, make praise as
specific as possible, avoid phony praise, and avoid praise that sets up a competitive situation. Other authors would say that those restrictions on praise are considered encouragement, for they gave the following suggestions on how to use encouragement. Hitz and Driscoll (1988) stated that encouragement is specific, and that in order to encourage children, teachers need to give specific feedback to their students. Also, they mentioned when using encouragement with children, sincere comments should be used that suit the particular circumstances. Also, Hitz and Driscoll noted that encouragement avoids comparisons or competition, and they went on to say that "encouragement...fosters autonomy, positive self-esteem, a willingness to explore, and an acceptance of self and others" (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988, p. 13).

Alternatives for rewards that can be used with children included natural and logical consequences, and encouragement. Natural and logical consequences are alternatives to using rewards in which the child can learn from the results of his own behavior. Also, encouragement is an alternative that can be a used instead of using rewards with children.
Throughout history and in our schools today, there seems to be a difference of opinion on rewarding children, and in regarding the effects that rewards have on children. Behaviorists tend to accept the use of rewards; whereas, other professionals, such as the Adlerians along with other educational professionals, do not support the use of rewards. I believe that the strongest arguments against using rewards with children are found in Alderian theory and in the ideas of Alfie Kohn. I will explain my reasoning and support my ideas with research and information found in my review of literature.

The Alderian approach, which is based on the theories of Alfred Alder and Rudolph Dreikurs, does not believe that children should be given rewards. Dreikurs (1964) said that satisfaction should come from a sense of contribution and participation, not from receiving a reward. He explains that many children only want to do well because of the reward that the parent or teachers promise. I do not want my students to do well only for a reward. I want my students to be intrinsically motivated with their learning. I want them to do well because they are interested and excited about what they are doing. Fabes (1987), a researcher specializing on the effects of rewards, concluded that intrinsic interest was detrimentally affected for children who were rewarded when compared with intrinsic interest of the group of children who were not rewarded.
Dinkmeyer and McKay (1989) recognized that rewarding children made parents and teachers responsible for children's behavior. I believe that when you use rewards, you are causing students to become dependent on you. Thus, the rewarded students will overly depend on what you say and do. "Reward and punishment deny children the opportunity to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own behavior" (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1989).

Dinkmeyer and McKay (1989) stated that another disadvantage of the effects of rewarding children is that it suggests that acceptable behavior is expected only in the presence of authority figures. Dreikurs (1948) noted that if parents expose their children to rewards, their children learn to behave favorably only under pressure from outside influence, and not of their own accord. I want my students to behave just as responsibly when they are alone, or with their friends out of the classroom, as they would in the classroom.

Alfie Kohn is recognized today as an authority who does not believe in rewarding children. As I have mentioned in my review of literature, Kohn (1993) stated that there are five reasons that rewards fail. These five reasons included the following: rewards punish, rupture relationships, ignore reasons, discourage risk-taking, and rewards reduce interest in the task. I believe that all educators need to look for reasons why rewards fail.

A series of studies reveal that individuals who have been rewarded for doing something nice for people become less likely to think of themselves as caring or helpful. Also, they attribute their behavior to the reward rather than a concern for others (Kohn, 1997). "No wonder researchers have found that children who are frequently
rewarded...are less likely than other children to keep doing these things” (Kohn, 1997, p. 430).

Do Rewards Work?

“The question, then is do rewards work? And the answer should sound familiar: Sure! Rewards work very well to get one thing, and that thing is temporary compliance.” (Kohn, 1996, p. 32). Dangling rewards in front of students for doing what we demand is a way that we get temporary compliance. “...Do this and you’ll get that- the so-called Law of Effect, which states that behavior leading to a positive consequence will be repeated—was set out by psychologist Edward Thorndike back in 1898” (Kohn, 1993, p. 4). I believe that the do this and you’ll get that is perceived by the student as what do they want me to do, and what will I get for doing it. This is not the kind of message that I want to promote in my classroom.

Kohn (1997) stated that the only lesson a child learns from Skinnerian tactics is that the point of being good is to get rewards. Behaviorists believe that rewards can be removed after they serve their purpose in helping children to accomplish some task or skill. I disagree because, first, you make children totally dependent on you, then you require them to be independent. This requirement can be too demanding for some children. My purpose as an educator is to make my students independent, not dependent.

“Kids usually love the stickers and stars, the A’s and praise, the parties and pizza and payments. But what no one likes is to have the very things he needs or desires used to manipulate his behavior” (Kohn, 1996, p. 32). From research in my review of literature, I
believe that the Behaviorist approach is based on manipulation of children’s behavior. I
do not believe that we should be treating children in this manner. Rewards can only
manipulate a child’s actions. Kohn (1996) stated that in the long run, control of any
variety is aversive, and he went onto say that, “At least two dozen studies have shown that
when people are promised a reward for doing a reasonably challenging task...they tend to
do inferior work compared with people who are given the same task without being
promised a reward at all” (Kohn, 1996, p.32).

Kohn (1996) observed that punishments, like rewards, warp the relationship
between the adult and the child. When a teacher uses rewards in her classroom, Kohn
described this teacher to be perceived by the students as a goody dispenser on legs. Also,
Kohn (1996) stated that punishments, like rewards, are designed to make bad behaviors
disappear through manipulation. “They are ways of doing things to students instead of
working with them” (Kohn, 1996, p. 36).

I believe that rewards are not appropriate in classrooms because they become the
dominant issue in the learning experience. I want my children to take the initiative in their
own learning based on intrinsic needs, for manipulating children to do things instead of
working with them is not the type of educator that I want to be.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this review of literature was to review and to analyze types and uses of rewards. The review of literature addresses four questions to accomplish this purpose:

1. How have rewards been used over time?

The major Behaviorists - Thorndike, Watson, and Skinner - support that there are benefits in using rewards to encourage children to achieve desired behaviors. Behaviorists brought in rewards to motivate children, but manipulation often occurred with these practices. Adlerian’s such as Dreikurs and Nelsen observed that there are problems in using rewards, and that they should not be used with children. Rewards have been overused, and negative effects have been found in some research studies in the last few years. Kohn has gathered research that supports his view that children should not be given rewards.

2. What are the benefits of using rewards?

I presented the Behaviorist view supporting rewards and the opponents against rewards which included the Adlerians, as well as other educational professionals. Behaviorists believe that children receive benefits from rewards which I have addressed in
my review of literature. Behaviorists have observed that some children need concrete rewards for their learning. By rewarding these achievements, teachers can help and increase students desire to learn. Another benefit of using rewards is that observers see how others are rewarded and become motivated to act accordingly (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

3. What are the problems in using rewards?

Addressed in the review of literature are the opponents against rewards. Alderians and other educational professionals believe that rewards should not be used with children. Many problems with using rewards were included. Kohn (1993) stated that the five reasons that rewards fail are that they punish, rupture relationships, ignore reasons, discourage risk-taking, and they reduce interest in the task. Dinkmeyer and McKay (1989) stated that the effects of rewarding children have several disadvantages that include the following: Rewards make the parent responsible for their children's behavior; they suggest that acceptable behavior is expected only in the presence of authority figures, and they invite resistance by attempting to get children to conform.

4. How can children be given credit for their efforts to accomplish goals?

Alternatives to using rewards included natural and logical consequences, and encouragement. These are ways that children can be given credit for their efforts to accomplish goals. By using natural and logical consequences, the child must feel like he is given a choice of behavior and results, for Dreikurs said that, "...encouragement involves the ability to accept the child as worthwhile regardless of any deficiency, and to assist him in developing his capacity and potentialities" (Dreikurs and Grey, 1968, p. 56).
Conclusions

In reviewing the findings from this study, the following conclusions were revealed:

1. It is not an easy task to change behavior, for it takes time and patience to bring about effective, positive change.
2. Different professional groups disagree concerning rewards. There does not seem to be a resolution in the near future.
3. More attention is now being given in the literature concerning the uses and misuses of rewards than in the past.
4. Rewards are often used as a quick fix for motivating students.
5. Rewards do not bring about desired behaviors over an extended time period.

Recommendations

The topic of rewards is continuing to gain more attention in the field of education. Additional research needs to be done on the problems and negative effects that rewards are having on children. As educators, we need steps and procedures that will aid us in transforming how to move from a classroom that uses rewards to one that does not use this type of system. Based on this review of literature, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Research should be conducted concerning why teachers continue to use rewards, even though the negative effects are known.
2. Additional research needs to be done comparing the role of encouragement to rewards in classrooms settings.

3. An effort should be made to help teachers to move from the use of rewards and punishment to the use of encouragement and natural and logical consequences in their classrooms.
REFERENCES


