

Managing Frustration in Students Aged 4 to 6 Years Old

Manejo de la Frustración en Estudiantes de 4 a 6 años de edad



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Abstract

Managing frustration in children allows the development of skills such as: recognizing, expressing and regulating emotions. This research aims to strengthen frustration management in 13 preschool students of the Gimnasio Campestre Nueva Alejandría in Cajicá, through the implementation of strategies based on theories of emotional control and frustration tolerance. In addition, it seeks to train teachers in the use of these tools to favor emotional management and improve the learning environment. This study adopted a qualitative approach with descriptive scope, using an action research design to generate socio-educational change. Information was collected through observations, checklists, interviews, analyzing the effectiveness of the strategies implemented. The results show the effectiveness of the strategies, and how the students incorporated them into their routine, seeking to reduce frustration inside and outside the classroom. In conclusion, this research project shows how emotional self-control is strengthened in children, facilitating the management of

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frustration through tools adjusted to their needs and promoting a better socioemotional adaptation.

Key words: Early childhood education, tolerance, intelligence, socioemotional learning.

Resumen

El manejo de la frustración en menores de edad permite desarrollar habilidades como: reconocer, expresar y regular las emociones. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo fortalecer el manejo de la frustración en 13 estudiantes de preescolar del Gimnasio Campestre Nueva Alejandría en Cajicá, mediante la implementación de estrategias basadas en teorías de control emocional y tolerancia a la frustración. Además, busca capacitar a los docentes en el uso de estas herramientas para favorecer la gestión emocional y mejorar el ambiente de aprendizaje. Este estudio adoptó un enfoque cualitativo con alcance descriptivo, utilizando un diseño de investigación-acción para generar un cambio socioeducativo. Se recolecta la información mediante observaciones, listas de chequeo, entrevistas, analizando la efectividad de las estrategias implementadas. Los resultados muestran la efectividad que tienen las estrategias, y como los estudiantes las incorporaron en su rutina, buscando reducir la frustración dentro y fuera del aula. En conclusión, este proyecto de investigación muestra cómo se fortalece el autocontrol emocional en los niños, facilitando el manejo de la frustración mediante herramientas ajustadas a sus necesidades y promoviendo una mejor adaptación socioemocional.

Palabras Clave: Educación de la primera infancia, tolerancia, inteligencia, aprendizaje socioemocional.

Introduction

This research project aims to strengthen frustration management in preschool students, specifically in kindergarten and transition grades, with a total population of 13 students of the Gimnasio Campestre Nueva Alejandría in Cajicá, Cundinamarca - Colombia. Due to the fact that it was evidenced how students from 4 to 6 years old present difficulties in managing frustration, especially in stressful situations, when developing some activities or when comparing themselves with their peers.

Accordingly, and as Alonso and Vergara (2025) state, the development of emotional skills evolves along with the interaction with the environment that children have during their first years of life and schooling. Therefore, it is relevant to teach emotional competencies to children from an early age that allow them to recognize, value and regulate their emotions, improving their social relationships, contributing to school and personal success and building general wellbeing (Olhaberry & Sieverson, 2022).

Therefore, the objectives guiding the present research were: to identify through direct observation the main causes of frustration of preschool children at the Gimnasio Campestre Nueva Alejandría; to adapt the strategies provided by various researchers according to the causes of frustration observed; to apply the adapted strategies in the students of the preschool level that contribute to the management of frustration in the classroom and to evaluate the effectiveness of the socioemotional educational elements implemented in the children of the preschool level of the Gimnasio Campestre Nueva Alejandría, based on direct observation by the teachers.

The research was conducted because the current educational need for the development of socioemotional skills in early childhood was considered, since it allows establishing solid foundations for academic and personal success, as stated by Bisquerra and Mateo (2019), emotional education has as its main objective to foster the development of emotional skills, among which emotional awareness and regulation stand out.

In the same way, it was developed to provide tools to teachers, managers and educational communities, in order to improve the emotional skills of students, regulating frustration in daily classroom activities. The results can serve as a guide for other institutions, either by applying the strategies proposed or adapting them to design new activities that favor the management of frustration in children from 4 to 6 years of age. This research complements the existing information on specific strategies for the control of frustration in children, contributing to the integral formation of the students.

The research considers several investigations based on the background of different international and national works that support and address the concept of frustration and theorists who address emotional control and emotional intelligence,

Among the antecedents that support this research are works such as Caballero's (2014), which highlights the importance of school and family working together to teach children to control their emotions through clear limits. Torres (2021) emphasizes how the relationships that children establish with their environment influence the regulation of frustration, offering tools applicable in the classroom and at home. Reyes (2022) stresses the importance of children recognizing and expressing both positive and negative emotions, without repressing the latter, which requires joint work between school and family.

Pueyo and Bustamante (2021) point out that the family and the school are the spaces where frustration arises most frequently in the early years, when immediacy predominates. Finally, González (2011) highlights that frustration is a common emotion in early childhood and that many institutions lack strategies for its management, so her study provides useful strategies to address these situations in the classroom.

In addition, key theoretical contributions have been considered, such as psychologists Salovey and Mayer (1990), creators of the concept of emotional intelligence, who emphasize the ability to perceive, recognize, understand and adequately regulate emotions, to improve relationships in various contexts (Goleman, 1996, as cited in the translation of IUYMCA, 2022), from their theory highlights the influence of emotions on learning, relationships, adaptation and personal success.

On the other hand, Gardner (1993) gives a new meaning to intelligence, understanding it as the ability to solve problems or create products in different cultural environments, rejecting the idea of a single intelligence. In addition, Bisquerra (2016) promotes emotional education from early ages, this being part of educational innovation, highlighting the need to manage emotions in the classroom. He proposes strategies such as the "turtle technique", which helps children to become aware of their emotions.

In this research, the methodology used was qualitative in nature, with a descriptive scope because the objective was to analyze and collect information on the socioemotional educational elements implemented in the classroom. With a verifiable action-research design, since it seeks to guarantee social change, transforming the educational social reality. With the purpose of promoting a socio-educational change that allowed students to become aware of the importance of emotional self-control.

The results of this research show that the strategies applied for the control of frustration in children from 4 to 6 years old were effective and pertinent due to the results evidenced by the teachers, since these elements became a habit or routine in the classroom, allowing students to reduce frustration both inside and outside the classroom, thus generating an impact on the development of classes and their cognitive processes.

In conclusion, the strategies were successfully applied in the study population, since from the focus group and the follow-up through checklists it was possible to verify that the students understood how each strategy worked, thus allowing them to make use of the tool that best helps them to achieve emotional control when they become frustrated.

Materials and methods

The present study was developed under a qualitative approach, allowing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of frustration management in children from 4 to 6 years of age based on their experiences and behaviors in the school environment. An action-research design was adopted, whose purpose was to transform the educational reality through the identification of needs, the implementation of pedagogical strategies and the analysis of the results obtained in the specific context of the classroom. The research was carried out in the school Gimnasio Campestre Nueva Alejandría, located in Cajicá, with a sample composed of 13 students from kindergarten and transition grades, and two teachers responsible for the group. The sample was equivalent to the total selected population, justified by the interest of working directly with the target group without the need for a partial selection.

For the collection of information, various qualitative research techniques were used, which guaranteed the depth and richness of the data obtained. The instruments used were checklists applied through direct observation, initial and final semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers, and a focus group with the participating students. All the instruments were validated by experts in the field, which ensured their relevance and reliability for the purposes of the study.

The methodological development was organized in four main phases. In the first phase, the students' difficulty in regulating

frustration was identified through systematic observations in the classroom and the review of theoretical references on emotional control in early childhood. In the second phase, the collection instruments were designed and the pedagogical strategies to be implemented were planned, which included activities such as the turtle technique, the calm bottles, breathing exercises and the emotional meter. The third phase corresponded to the implementation of the socioemotional strategies in the classroom through two pedagogical sessions, where teachers and students learned about the use and benefits of each technique, thus achieving an initial appropriation of the proposed tools. Finally, in the fourth phase, the information collected was analyzed through a triangulation matrix where the data were organized by categories and subcategories, making it possible to compare the findings with the theoretical framework and evaluate the impact of the strategies implemented on the emotional behavior of the students.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were maintained, such as respect for the privacy of the children, confidentiality of the information and informed consent of the parents. This methodology guaranteed the validity and reliability of the findings, thus contributing to the understanding and improvement of frustration management in the early childhood educational context.

Results

The results of this research show that the strategies applied for the control of frustration in children from 4 to 6 years of age were effective and pertinent due to the results evidenced by the teachers of the population with whom the research was applied.

These strategies, such as the calm bottles, the turtle technique, breathing exercises and the emotionometer, allowed the students to develop socioemotional competencies, such as assertive communication, understanding of their own emotions and improvement in their interpersonal relationships with classmates and teachers. The teachers emphasized that, thanks to these tools, the students began to recognize the importance of their feelings and to manage their emotions in a more conscious and controlled manner. In addition, observed a notable improvement in the emotional control of the children, both inside and outside the classroom, as the strategies became part of the students' daily

routine, which reflects the effectiveness of the strategies implemented.

The motivation proposed by the teachers played a crucial role in this process, as it facilitated the students' participation in the activities, even when these were not of their immediate interest. This reinforces the idea that managing emotions in the classroom depends not only on the tools used, but also on the approach and guidance provided by the educators. Likewise, these strategies have allowed teachers to expand their knowledge on how to address situations of frustration in the classroom, which has contributed to a more comprehensive emotional education, as stated by Bisquerra (2016), who considers this approach as a necessary educational innovation for the development of students' emotional competencies.

Additionally, significant progress was observed in the development of emotional intelligence in children, thanks to the strategies worked on, contributing to students being able not only to become aware of and control their emotions, but also to cultivate an emotional intelligence that allows them to react appropriately to various social and emotional situations both personally and to learn to recognize other people's emotions.

Although the results are encouraging, further research on practices and strategies to help children develop emotionally, preparing them for personal and social challenges is encouraged.

Discussion

The social-emotional strategies proposed in this research proved to be an effective guide for the teachers of the study group, allowing them to work on the management of frustration in their students. These tools not only expanded their knowledge about the importance of strengthening emotional skills in children, but also provided them with innovative techniques applicable in their professional practice. This made it easier for the children to become aware of their emotions and learn to control frustration when it arose. It is recommended that, in future research, these strategies be adapted to the context and to the size of the group of students being worked with, thus ensuring their effectiveness in different educational settings.

The main causes of frustration identified in children aged 4 to 6 years were related to difficulties in achieving objectives in areas

such as literacy and mathematics, the development of group activities and interpersonal conflicts with peers. Faced with these situations, the socioemotional strategies implemented became key tools for teachers to help students regulate their emotions during various activities.

The adaptation of the strategies to the specific needs of the group was key to their success, allowing them to offer more precise and effective responses for handling frustration both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the importance that teachers, managers and other members of the educational community who wish to use these strategies in other contexts should consider the particularities of each population, since the factors that generate frustration may vary according to the context.

The application of socioemotional strategies in the study group showed positive results. Through the focus group and the follow-up through checklists, it was evident that the students understood the importance of recognizing and controlling their emotions, becoming familiar with the functioning of each strategy, using them autonomously when they experienced frustration, contributing significantly to the development of their emotional awareness. Likewise, the teachers understood the functioning and relevance of these strategies in the classroom, which ensures their continuity in daily practice.

The findings of this study demonstrate that social-emotional strategies, such as the calm bottles, the turtle technique and the "Emotionometer", were effective in the management of frustration in children aged 4 to 6 years, supported both by direct observation and by the teachers' testimonies, who highlighted a notable decrease in the levels of frustration, an improvement in interpersonal relationships and academic performance.

Although this study offers important findings on socioemotional strategies for the management of frustration in children, it is important to recognize its limitations: it worked with a small sample in a specific context, which makes it difficult to generalize the results. In addition, the time of application of the strategies and teacher training was limited, so future research should extend these periods, include larger and more diverse samples, and evaluate the long-term impact on emotional and academic development.

Despite these limitations, the project highlights the importance of prioritizing emotional education from an early age, as it fosters skills such as self-regulation, tolerance and self-control, benefiting

both students and teachers. These results underscore the importance of implementing and continuously improving social-emotional strategies in the classroom, as they are fundamental for the well-being and future development of children.

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