

**Modifying the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners
through Stop-Prepare-Go (SPG) lights technique**

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ABSTRACT

One prevalent issue in the classroom setting is learners' disengagement, leading to off-task behaviors. Off-task behaviors encompass activities such as talking and engaging in unauthorized actions, displaying aggression, daydreaming, not paying attention to teachers, and playing with objects or individuals. This kind of behavior is considered reasonable, but it affects the teaching and learning process. Hence, this study was conducted in one of the Laboratory Schools in the Province of Ilocos Norte. It was done in the 3rd quarter of the academic year 2022-2023. There were 37 kindergartners enrolled in the session, eighteen (18) boys, and nine (9) girls served as participants in the study. This study aimed to modify the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners during the teaching and learning process specifically, during meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2 through the use of the Stop-Prepare-Go (SPG) Lights Technique. Observation analysis was used to identify the exhibited off-task behaviors of the participants before the implementation as well as the modification in the off-task behaviors of the participants after the implementation of the intervention. While the descriptive analysis was used to describe and analyze the results that helped to improve the utilization of the SPG Lights Technique in modifying the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners. Based on the findings of the study, it revealed that numerous off-task behaviors

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were exhibited by the kindergartners before the implementation of the intervention. After the learners were exposed to the SPG Lights Technique, the off-task behaviors exhibited by the kindergartners decreased. However, it was also noted that several off-task behaviors still persisted even after the intervention. Therefore, modifications to the SPG Lights Technique should be considered to further reduce and eliminate these off-task behaviors. Despite this, the Stop-Prepare-Go (SPG) Lights Technique remains an effective strategy for modifying the off-task behaviors of kindergartners.

Keywords: Stop-Prepare-Go (SPG) lights technique, off-task behaviors, kindergartners.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education refers to formal and informal educational curricula that support the growth and development of young children from infancy through preschool. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, early childhood education encompasses the period of learning from birth to eight years old, although it may also include education from birth to kindergarten. During these formative years, both formal and informal educational experiences play a crucial role in supporting the holistic development of children. Alvarado (2018) emphasized that this stage is essential because it marks the child's initial interactions with peers, teachers, and parents, thereby shaping personal interests and influencing lifelong development. Within this context, social and emotional development becomes a central concern in early childhood education because it provides the foundation for children's ability to interact, participate, regulate behavior, and engage meaningfully in classroom activities.

Social and emotional development encompasses children's experience, expression, and management of emotions, as well as their ability to form positive relationships with others (Cohen et al., 2005). It fosters confidence, empathy, the ability to establish lasting friendships, and a sense of importance within social groups. Ashdown and Bernard (2012) further explained that social and emotional development occurs from birth to age five and enables children to build trusting relationships with adults and peers, express emotions appropriately, and become independent explorers of their environment. Social development specifically refers to children's ability to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with adults and other children. It involves the acquisition of values, knowledge, and skills necessary for effective interaction and positive contribution to families, schools, and communities. Emotional development, on the other hand, pertains to children's capacity to express, recognize, and manage their own emotions while responding appropriately to the emotions of others. Children who are emotionally developed demonstrate greater self-awareness because they can recognize their emotional states, personal characteristics, and possible actions. They also become more capable of understanding and interpreting the emotions of others. Moreover, emotional development involves recognizing and regulating intense emotions, which supports the formation of effective relationships and enables individuals to interpret emotional cues accurately and respond appropriately (Sprung et al., 2015).

The importance of social and emotional development becomes particularly evident in classroom situations where learners are expected to listen, participate, follow instructions, and interact appropriately with teachers and peers. One prevalent concern in the classroom setting is learner disengagement, which often results in off task behaviors. These behaviors include

talking without permission, engaging in unauthorized activities, displaying aggression, daydreaming, failing to pay attention to teachers, and playing with objects or other individuals during instructional time (Pate Clavenger et al., 2008). Although off task behaviors are common across school settings, they remain a significant concern worldwide because they affect both teaching and learning processes (Elliot & Place, 2012). Zimmerman and Schunk (2013) emphasized that addressing these behaviors is essential for academic success. While such behaviors may be viewed as common among learners at different educational levels, they hinder the learning process, reduce instructional time, and create challenges that may prevent learners from achieving academic success (Kraemer et al., 2012). Consequently, immediate intervention is necessary because failure to address off task behaviors may lead to long term consequences (Meany Wallen et al., 2015).

Existing literature suggests that some interventions may have limited effectiveness because they do not fully address the underlying conditions that contribute to off task behaviors. Roberts (2002) argued that many available interventions may be ineffective when they fail to respond to the actual causes of disengagement and behavioral difficulty. In the case of kindergartners, the available interventions have shown limited effectiveness in reducing off task behaviors, which indicates the need for developmentally appropriate, visible, and easily understood classroom strategies. This gap led to the development of the Stop Prepare Go Lights Technique as an intervention for modifying off task behaviors among kindergartners. Although this technique has not yet been utilized at the kindergarten level, Calma et al. (2010) suggested that the use of lights in teaching Mathematics, Science, and Health at the elementary level has proven effective in maintaining good behavior among students during recitations in Grades I, IV, and V. This finding provides a relevant basis for exploring how light cues may be adapted for younger learners in kindergarten classrooms.

The Stop Prepare Go Lights are designed as a prototype of traffic lights and are intended to provide clear behavioral cues for kindergartners. The device is made of plywood and attached to a wooden stand. Its case contains three partitions for the colored bulbs, with the red bulb placed at the upper portion, the yellow bulb in the middle, and the green bulb at the bottom. An electric wire supplies power to the bulbs. To make the device more engaging for young learners, facial features, a hand, and a hat are attached to its structure. The device is also controlled remotely, allowing the teacher to manipulate it easily when kindergartners display off task behaviors during classroom activities. In this manner, the device is both instructional and behavioral because it provides a simple visual signal that learners can recognize, understand, and follow.

The Stop Prepare Go Lights Technique is used to modify the off-task behaviors of kindergartners inside the classroom during the teaching and learning process, particularly during meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2. The technique uses three different lights with distinct meanings. The red-light signals stop and indicate that everyone must come to a complete pause before proceeding with a specific instruction. The yellow light signals prepare and remind learners to get ready to listen to the teacher's instructions. The green light signals go and indicate that learners may proceed and follow the teacher's instructions. Through repeated exposure to these cues, the technique is expected to encourage positive behavior among kindergartners as they associate each light with a specific classroom expectation. Its purpose is not merely to stop undesirable behaviors but to guide learners toward readiness, attentiveness, and appropriate participation.

The theoretical grounding of the Stop Prepare Go Lights Technique is supported by classical conditioning. Bottaro (2022) described classical conditioning as an unconscious learning method that is often used as a technique for modifying undesirable behaviors. In the

classroom setting, it may be used to minimize undesirable or off task behaviors by associating a specific stimulus with a desired response. Elmer (2020) similarly argued that learning through classical conditioning occurs when an unintentionally conditioned response becomes linked with a specific stimulus to produce a behavior. Millacci (2021) also cited the positive use of classical conditioning in the classroom, explaining that when a teacher consistently turns on the lights to capture learners' attention, the act of turning on the lights may become associated with quietness and attentiveness. These perspectives suggest that teachers may use repeated visual cues to help learners adjust to classroom expectations, rules, and routines.

In relation to the present intervention, the Stop Prepare Go Lights Technique applies the principles of classical conditioning by repeatedly pairing visual light cues with expected classroom behaviors. The red, yellow, and green lights serve as stimuli that guide learners to stop, prepare, and proceed according to the teacher's instruction. Over time, kindergartners may learn to associate each light with a corresponding behavioral response, thereby supporting the modification of off task behaviors. This approach is developmentally appropriate because young learners often respond well to concrete, visual, and engaging cues. It also supports classroom management by providing the teacher with a clear and consistent system for redirecting behavior without relying solely on verbal reminders.

The implementation of the Stop Prepare Go Lights Technique involves a systematic process designed to determine its effectiveness in modifying the off-task behaviors of kindergartners. First, the learners are oriented on the use and meaning of the different lights so that they can understand the expected response for each cue. This orientation is necessary because the intervention depends on the learners' ability to recognize the meaning of the red, yellow, and green lights. After the orientation, the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners are analyzed through observation during meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2. Through this process, the researchers identify which learners exhibit behaviors that affect concentration, socialization, participation, and the overall learning environment. The intervention is then implemented during the same classroom periods to modify the observed off task behaviors and encourage more appropriate participation.

Taken together, the literature on early childhood education, social and emotional development, classroom disengagement, off task behavior, and classical conditioning provides a coherent basis for the present study. Early childhood is a critical period for developing emotional regulation, social participation, attention, and classroom readiness. However, off task behaviors can interfere with these developmental and instructional goals by reducing learners' engagement and disrupting the teaching and learning process. While existing interventions have been used to address such behaviors, their limited effectiveness among kindergartners suggests the need for a more concrete, engaging, and developmentally suitable strategy. The Stop Prepare Go Lights Technique responds to this need by using visual cues that are simple, meaningful, and easily integrated into classroom routines. By examining how this technique modifies the off-task behaviors of kindergartners, the study contributes to the development of practical classroom-based interventions that support positive behavior, learner engagement, and a more conducive learning environment.

Statement of the problem

This action research aimed to modify the off-task behaviors of kindergartners during the teaching and learning process, particularly during meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2. Additionally, it aimed to determine the effectiveness of the Stop-Prepare-Go (SPG) Lights Technique in modifying the off-task behaviors of kindergartners during the teaching and learning process.

Specifically, the research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What off-task behaviors are exhibited by kindergartners during the teaching-learning process before the implementation of the SPG Lights Technique?
2. What modifications can be observed in the off-task behavior of kindergartners after the implementation of the SPG Lights Technique?
3. How can the utilization of the SPG Lights Technique be improved to modify the off-task behaviors of kindergartners?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. The choice of descriptive qualitative research design was made because it aimed to describe the off-task behaviors exhibited by kindergartners before the implementation of the intervention. Additionally, it aimed to describe the modifications observed in the off-task behaviors of kindergartners after the implementation. The design was also used to determine areas for improvement in the SPG Lights Technique to modify the off-task behaviors of kindergartners.

This study was conducted in one of the Laboratory Schools in the Province of Ilocos Norte. The school is known for its academic excellence and for its performance in provincial, regional, and national contests. It was conducted during the 3rd quarter of the academic year 2022 to 2023. This school provided the ideal research setting for conducting the study as it was the place where the researchers observed numerous off-task behaviors exhibited by the kindergartners during their field study course. Hence, this setting was very much suited to conduct the study.

The study involved 37 kindergartners from the afternoon session who were enrolled for the Academic Year 2022 to 2023. Observation notes were collected based on the observed off-task behaviors of the participants during the scheduled sessions. In addition, the researchers obtained feedback and observations from their resource teacher to gain further insights into the kindergartners' behavior both before and after the intervention.

This study utilized observation notes in jotting down information to identify the exhibited behaviors of the learners during the teaching and learning process, particularly during meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2. Observation notes served as a method of data collection, involving the written recording of classroom events and activities. This instrument was used to identify off-task behaviors and track modifications in the off-task behavior of the kindergartners. Furthermore, the observation notes were validated by the adviser to ensure consistency and reliability.

In gathering data, the researchers first obtained permission from the School Principal, with the endorsement of their CBAR Adviser, to conduct the study. Upon approval, they coordinated with the class adviser and the learners, explaining the study to the research participants by providing them with a brief description. They then observed the exhibited off-task behaviors of the pupils before the intervention. Next, they introduced the device to the pupils, explaining the meaning of each light, and instead of revealing the purpose of the device, they focused on explaining its function to the pupils. They then implemented the intervention. Finally, they analyzed, interpreted, and summarized the gathered observation notes using descriptive methods with the guidance of their CBAR Adviser. These phases, namely the securing of permission, the coordination with the class adviser and learners, the pre intervention observation, the orientation of pupils to the device, the implementation of the intervention, and the final analysis and interpretation of the gathered observation notes, comprised the complete sequence followed in the data collection process.

In gathering the necessary observation notes for this study, specific ethical considerations were strictly followed. Participants considered for the study were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, procedures, confidentiality, potential discomforts and risks, anticipated benefits, and the grievance procedure. Prior to conducting the study, the purpose of modifying kindergartners' off-task behaviors through the use of the SPG Lights Technique was explained to the parents of the kindergartners. The participation of the kindergartners in the study was entirely voluntary, meaning that their involvement would not affect their relationship with the school or their academic performance in any way. The researchers explained that the intervention would consist of five (5) sessions and would be implemented exclusively during meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2. Any information gathered in the study was treated with the utmost confidentiality and was only used for these purposes. The researchers also assured the parents that there was minimal risk associated with their child's participation in the study. However, participating in the study offered benefits to their child's development and contributed to the enhancement of the teaching and learning process. Lastly, the grievance procedure was explained to the parents. If they were dissatisfied with any aspect of the study, they were encouraged to address the school administration, anonymously if desired, or contact the researchers directly.

To analyze the observed off-task behaviors exhibited by the kindergartners, data were analyzed using observation analysis and descriptive analysis. Observation analysis was used to analyze the identified off-task behaviors exhibited by the participants both before and after the implementation of the intervention, and it helped in observing the modifications in the off-task behaviors of the participants. On the other hand, descriptive analysis was used to describe and analyze the results, providing insights that facilitated the improvement of the utilization of the SPG Lights Technique in modifying the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results presented in this section were derived from observation notes gathered from 37 kindergartners enrolled in the afternoon session of one of the Laboratory Schools in the Province of Ilocos Norte during the 3rd quarter of the academic year 2022 to 2023, together with supplementary feedback obtained from the resource teacher. The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, with participants drawn from the entire afternoon session class and data collected through observation notes documenting classroom events during meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2. The gathered data were examined using observation analysis to track behavioral modifications before and after the intervention, and descriptive analysis to describe and interpret the findings in relation to the utilization and refinement of the SPG Lights Technique. The discussion that follows is grounded entirely in the observation notes gathered and is organized according to the specific objectives of the study, namely the off-task behaviors exhibited by the kindergartners before the implementation of the SPG Lights Technique, the modifications observed in these behaviors after implementation, and the potential improvements that could enhance the effectiveness of the technique.

Before the implementation of the SPG Lights Technique, five observation sessions were conducted to note the various off-task behaviors exhibited by the kindergartners. During meeting time 1, the kindergartners exhibited behaviors such as being out of their seats, talking with seatmates, lying on the desk, rocking chairs, fidgeting, playing with seatmates, creating unnecessary noises, tapping tables, not paying attention, and not socializing. These behaviors disrupted the entire class and hindered the learners' engagement in the teaching-learning process. According to Baker (2007), primary school learners spend 10-50% of their time

engaging in off-task behavior during class, a proportion that indicates a significant amount of learning time is wasted by learners who exhibit various off-task behaviors, underscoring the importance of addressing this issue for teachers. During work period 1, the most common off-task behaviors observed were playing with seatmates, not participating, lying on desks, tapping tables, creating unnecessary noises, being out of seats, rocking chairs, and talking with seatmates. These off-task behaviors carried implications for the learners' concentration, listening skills, socialization, and academic performance, and while off-task behavior is prevalent in almost every class and grade level, it nonetheless disrupts and hampers the learning process. This pattern is consistent with the findings of Sabourin et al. (2011), who reported that off-task behavior interferes with the learning process, and with Kraemer et al. (2012), who noted that it reduces instructional time and makes it more challenging for students to succeed academically. Moreover, during work period 2, the most common off-task behaviors observed were being out of their seats, talking with seatmates, proceeding with the activity without permission, making unnecessary noises, tapping tables, rocking chairs, and lying on desks, behaviors that clearly had a negative impact on the learners' academic performance and concentration during activities.

Taken together, the observation notes revealed that numerous off-task behaviors were exhibited by the kindergartners during the teaching and learning process before the implementation of the SPG Lights Technique. These behaviors are consistent with prior research documenting the detrimental effect of off-task behavior on academic performance in general, and in this study, they significantly affected the kindergartners' academic performance, classroom concentration, socialization, and listening skills. The findings align with the study conducted by Sabourin et al. (2011), which concluded that off-task behavior disrupts the learning process and reduces instructional time, making it more challenging for learners to succeed academically (Kraemer et al., 2012). The success of learners in their studies depends on their ability to achieve and organize their activities and time effectively. Furthermore, other studies have highlighted the disadvantages faced by learners as a result of off-task behavior, including a lack of understanding of the learning material, decreased academic performance, reduced study time, and diminished likability among peers due to unpleasant behavior. Learners exhibiting such behavior also often face reprimands from teachers, negative records at school, and low learning achievement, findings that reinforce the importance of addressing this issue promptly to reduce off-task behavior among learners.

After being exposed to the SPG Lights Technique, the off-task behaviors exhibited by the kindergartners decreased, with observations showing that only several behaviors continued to occur during meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2. During meeting time 1, only three behaviors were observed, namely tapping tables, creating unnecessary noises, and talking with seatmates. In work period 1, three off-task behaviors likewise remained, namely playing with seatmates, creating unnecessary noises, and talking with seatmates. In work period 2, only two behaviors occurred, namely being out of the seat and talking with seatmates. As a result, the number of off-task behaviors occurring during the sessions was significantly reduced following the intervention. Based on these observations, it is evident that the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners were modified, as only a few off-task behaviors continued to occur. This outcome is consistent with the explanation offered by Glasser (1990), who suggested that even after the implementation of an intervention, off-task behaviors may still exist because learners have specific needs that need to be met, and learners may seek to fulfill these needs in ways that create distractions or disturbances in the classroom. It is also consistent with the view of Roberts (2002), who proposed that off-task behaviors can be a response to challenging academic tasks.

The utilization of the SPG Lights Technique as an intervention in modifying the off-task behaviors of the learners made a significant contribution, as reflected in the marked decrease in the number of off-task behaviors observed across the three instructional periods. This finding parallels the study conducted by Calma et al. (2010), in which the use of lights in teaching Mathematics, Science, and Health at the elementary level was recommended for maintaining good behavior among pupils during recitation. It is further supported by Yusuf (2011), who found that the successful adoption of a motivational strategy would lead to the achievement of determined learning goals, and by Bluestein (2013), who explained that if an intervention successfully reduces off-task behaviors, learners would have the opportunity to achieve academic success. Taken together, these findings indicate that the use of lights to modify the off-task behaviors of kindergartners is highly recommended, as the SPG Lights Technique made a significant contribution to reducing off-task behavior in this study.

Despite this overall reduction, several off-task behaviors persisted during the utilization of the SPG Lights Technique, specifically tapping tables, creating unnecessary noises, talking with seatmates, playing with seatmates, and being out of their seats. This pattern of residual behavior suggests that the SPG Lights Technique could be further improved to eliminate these remaining off-task behaviors. In interpreting this finding, it is useful to consider the explanation offered by Bluestein (2013), who stated that students engage in off-task behavior because they seek recognition and acceptance, often as an attempt to gain attention, as well as the observation of Muijs and Reynolds (2017) that home conditions, family background, and differences in values implemented at home can influence students' behavior in the classroom, with students from unstable family backgrounds tending to exhibit more disruptive behavior at school. Building on these considerations and on direct classroom observation, it is perceived that incorporating sound into the SPG Lights would contribute more to encouraging the learners to eliminate off-task behaviors during the teaching and learning process, with each light assigned a specific sound so that learners could more easily recognize which light was being flashed and thereby capture their attention more effectively. This recommendation was informed by the observation that some learners did not notice the lights when they engaged in off-task behavior and only became aware of the signal when they saw their classmates behaving accordingly or were told by classmates to look at the SPG Lights. Incorporating sound into the SPG Lights would therefore help ensure that even learners who are not visually attending to the lights could still hear the accompanying sound and adjust their behavior accordingly.

Taken as a whole, the findings of this study demonstrated that the kindergartners exhibited a wide range of off-task behaviors across meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2 prior to the implementation of the SPG Lights Technique, that these behaviors were substantially reduced in frequency and variety following the introduction of the technique, and that a smaller set of residual behaviors, namely tapping tables, creating unnecessary noises, talking with seatmates, playing with seatmates, and being out of seats, remained as areas for further refinement. These results directly addressed the three objectives of the study by documenting the baseline off-task behaviors, describing the observed modifications attributable to the intervention, and identifying a concrete avenue for improvement through the incorporation of sound cues into the lights system. In doing so, the study contributes practical, classroom-grounded evidence to the broader literature on behavior management interventions for young learners, affirming the value of visual-cue based techniques such as the SPG Lights Technique while also clarifying the conditions, particularly attentional and sensory factors, that may limit their effectiveness when relied upon in isolation. These findings provide the basis for the summary, conclusions, and recommendations presented in the succeeding chapter, which further elaborate on the implications of these results for the refinement of the SPG Lights

Technique and for future classroom-based behavioral interventions among kindergarten learners.

CONCLUSION

This research implemented an intervention called the Stop-Prepare-Go (SPG) Lights Technique to modify the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners. The researchers conducted five sessions before the intervention to identify the different off-task behaviors exhibited by the kindergartners during the teaching and learning process. Additionally, five sessions were conducted to assess the modifications in the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners after the intervention. Throughout these sessions, the researchers identified areas for improvement in the SPG Lights Technique as an intervention to modify the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners.

Based on the findings of the study, it was revealed that off-task behaviors could occur during specific periods of the teaching and learning process, particularly during meeting time 1, work period 1, and work period 2. Most of the off-task behaviors were observed during meeting time 1, suggesting that a higher level of student engagement during discussions reduces the likelihood of off-task behaviors.

During the implementation of the SPG Lights Technique, it was observed that it greatly helped the teacher in managing the classroom and addressing the off-task behaviors of the kindergartners. The utilization of the SPG Lights resulted in a decrease in off-task behaviors during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the more exposure the kindergartners had to the SPG Lights, the fewer off-task behaviors they exhibited.

However, it was also noted that several off-task behaviors still persisted even after the intervention. Therefore, modifications to the SPG Lights Technique should be considered to further reduce and eliminate these off-task behaviors. Despite this, the SPG Lights Technique remains an effective strategy for modifying the off-task behaviors of kindergartners.

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