

**EXPLORING TEMPER TANTRUMS IN YOUNG CHILDREN:
CAUSES AND TEACHER RESPONSES**

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to observe temper tantrums among Grade II learners aged 7 to 8 years at Musuan Integrated School to understand their natural behaviors in a classroom setting. Five children (Child A, Child B, Child C, Child D, and Child E) participated in the study. Using a naturalistic observation design over three consecutive days (October 20, 21, and 22, 2025), researchers recorded spontaneous tantrum episodes during regular class activities without interfering. A total of 15 tantrum incidents were documented across morning and afternoon sessions. Key findings revealed that tantrums manifested through crying, shouting, refusal to participate, throwing objects, and physical agitation, commonly triggered by frustration, peer teasing, boredom, and attention-seeking. Children's interactions during tantrums ranged from withdrawal to impulsive conflict with peers, highlighting the role of social dynamics in emotional regulation. Teachers responded with calm redirection, positive reinforcement, and emotional validation, which effectively de-escalated behaviors and promoted a supportive classroom climate. These findings underscore the importance of empathetic and consistent teacher responses in guiding children's moral and emotional development. The study recommends incorporating emotion regulation activities, fostering positive peer interactions through social-emotional learning, and providing ongoing teacher training in behavior management. This research contributes valuable insights into practical strategies for promoting self-regulation and harmony in primary classrooms.

Keywords:

temper tantrums, naturalistic observation, emotional regulation, classroom behavior, teacher response

INTRODUCTION

Temper tantrums are intense emotional outbursts commonly observed in children as they develop emotional and behavioral self-regulation. These episodes, which may involve crying, shouting, hitting, or refusing to follow instructions, often occur when a child experiences frustration, fatigue, or a sense of loss of control (Davidson, 2003). While tantrums are most common in toddlers and preschoolers, they can still occur among school-aged children, particularly those aged seven to eight, who may still be developing the ability to manage emotions in structured environments such as classrooms (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2025). Such occurrences in school settings often serve as indicators of unmet needs or difficulty adapting to classroom expectations and social interactions.

This study focuses on exploring temper tantrums among Grade II learners aged 7 to 8 years at Musuan Integrated School. It seeks to understand the causes and triggers of tantrums during daily class routines, how these behaviors manifest in peer and teacher interactions, and the strategies teachers employ to address them.

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Although much of the literature and advice on tantrum management emphasizes early childhood or home settings (Swanson, 2021), fewer studies have examined how teachers in actual classroom environments respond to tantrum behaviors among primary-grade children. By observing classroom dynamics directly, this study aims to provide context-specific insights into how temper tantrums unfold and are managed within the learning environment (Briggs, 2022).

The results of this study may contribute to a deeper understanding of children's emotional regulation in school settings and inform teacher training and classroom management practices. Specifically, identifying common triggers and effective teacher responses can guide the development of practical interventions, such as emotion-coaching strategies and positive behavior support systems, that promote a calmer and more supportive learning environment. Additionally, findings from this research can help administrators and educators design professional development programs that strengthen teacher preparedness and improve student well-being.

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to explore how temper tantrums manifest among Grade II learners aged 7 to 8 years within their natural classroom environment at Musuan Integrated School.

Specifically, it aims to:

- 1) To describe how temper tantrums typically manifest during daily classroom activities among Grade II learners aged 7 to 8 years.
- 2) To examine how children interact with their teachers and peers during temper tantrum episodes in a Grade II classroom setting.
- 3) To identify the techniques and responses teachers use to manage temper tantrums and determine how these strategies affect the overall classroom environment.

METHODOLOGY

This part describes the methods used to conduct the study on temper tantrums among Grade II learners aged 7 to 8 years at Musuan Integrated School. It outlines the research design, setting, participants, data collection procedures, and ethical considerations followed throughout the observation. These methods were carefully chosen to ensure that the behaviors observed were natural, authentic, and ethically documented within the regular classroom environment.

Research Design

This study used a naturalistic observation design to examine temper tantrums among young children in a regular classroom. The naturalistic approach allowed the researchers to record behaviors as they happened, without changing the environment or influencing the children's actions. This design was chosen because it effectively captures real and spontaneous behavior. The observation lasted one week and included three days, with each session ranging from one to two hours during normal class activities. During these sessions, the researchers watched and noted instances of temper tantrums as they occurred.

Research Locale

The study took place at Musuan Integrated School in Musuan, Maramag, Bukidnon. The Grade II classroom was the main setting for the observation, providing a familiar learning environment where students participated in daily academic and interactive activities. Observing in the classroom allowed the researchers to record authentic instances of temper tantrums during regular lessons and routines. This setting also offered insights into how these behaviors arose and were managed in a typical classroom context.

Participants of the Study

The participants were a section of Grade II aged 7 to 8 years old learners at Musuan Integrated School. The researchers observed the entire class as a group to capture the natural flow of classroom interactions and to identify when temper tantrums occurred during regular lessons and activities. No specific tasks or interventions were introduced to keep the authenticity of their behavior and classroom dynamics. Before the observation, consent was obtained from the school principal and the class adviser for ethical approval and coordination throughout the study.

Data Collection Procedures

The researchers conducted three days of naturalistic observation at Musuan Integrated School to study temper tantrums among Grade II learners during regular classroom sessions. Permission was obtained from the school principal and the class adviser before the observation. During the data collection, the researchers acted as

non-participant observers, maintaining a passive role and avoiding communication or interaction with the students to keep the natural classroom environment. No checklist was used; instead, the researchers took detailed notes on events as they occurred, including the time, situation, displayed behaviors, teacher responses, and children's reactions. Observations took place during both morning and afternoon sessions over one week, lasting one to two hours each. After each observation, the researchers reviewed their notes to find patterns, common triggers of temper tantrums, and how these behaviors were handled within the classroom activities.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers followed ethical guidelines to protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants in the classroom observation. Before starting the study, they obtained informed consent from the school principal and the Grade II classroom adviser. The consent form outlined the study's objectives, procedures, duration, and the minimal potential risks involved. To ensure confidentiality, the actual names of the children were removed from all records and reports. Instead, pseudonyms or code identifiers were used to protect their identities. All observation notes and relevant documents were securely stored and accessible only to the research team. The collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes. Additionally, the researchers took precautions to ensure that no child experienced emotional distress, discomfort, or any form of harm during the observation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents and analyzes the observed temper tantrum behaviors of Grade II learners aged 7 to 8 years at Musuan Integrated School. The results are organized by observation dates, October 20, 21, and 22, 2025 and are discussed based on the study's objectives. Each set of observations highlights how tantrums manifested during classroom activities, how children interacted with teachers and peers during these episodes, and how teacher responses influenced the classroom environment.

Date	Time of tantrum	Describe what happened before the tantrum	Describe what happened during the tantrum	Teacher's response	Child's reaction
October 20, 2025	Morning session	Child A was asked to read aloud during reading activity; experienced academic pressure	Refused to participate, shouted, and expressed anger verbally	Teacher reminded classroom rules and offered praise for small efforts	Child calmed down after the reassurance and rejoined the activity
October 20, 2025	Morning session	Child B was teased by classmates during group work	Threw objects and pushed chairs in frustration	Teacher used calm redirection and validated the child's emotions	Child gradually regained focus and participated again
October 20, 2025	Afternoon session	Child C experienced boredom during repetitive classroom activities	Refused to participate and made disruptive noises	Teacher offered rewards for participation and redirected attention	Child responded positively to rewards and resumed task
October 20, 2025	Afternoon session	Child D faced frustration during group activity where peers dominated	Shouted at peers and expressed anger verbally	Teacher reminded rules and facilitated fair participation	Child calmed down and engaged after being given a role
October 20, 2025	Afternoon session	Child E was asked to participate in a classroom game they found difficult	Refused to participate and cried	Teacher offered encouragement and simplified the task	Child eventually participated with teacher support

Table 1. Temper Tantrums Behavior

As shown in Table 1, five tantrum incidents were observed on October 20, 2025, during both the morning and afternoon sessions. The behaviors displayed included refusal to participate, shouting, throwing

objects, pushing chairs, and expressing anger verbally. The tantrums were triggered by academic pressure (Child A during a reading activity), teasing from classmates (Child B during group work), boredom (Child C during a repetitive activity), frustration during group activities (Child D when peers dominated), and difficulty with tasks (Child E during a classroom game).

Most tantrums that day occurred during instructional activities such as reading and classroom games. Child A and Child E exhibited emotional outbursts when they were asked to participate in tasks they found difficult or when they felt teased by peers. The teachers often responded by reminding them of classroom rules, offering rewards or praise, and using calm redirection techniques. In most cases, the children eventually calmed down and rejoined the activity after receiving reassurance or positive feedback. The teachers' calm and consistent responses, such as validating emotions and redirecting behavior, helped the children regain focus.

The incidents observed on October 20 highlighted that temper tantrums often arose from emotional frustration and a desire for control or attention. The teachers' ability to maintain composure and apply positive reinforcement proved crucial in resolving conflicts quickly. This demonstrated that a supportive classroom climate encouraged children to self-regulate and return to task engagement after emotional outbursts. According to Potegal and Davidson (2003), tantrums among school-aged children were expressions of frustration when emotional demands exceeded coping abilities. Sisterhen et al. (2023) further supported this by noting that tantrums arose from difficulties in expressing emotions, and calm redirection, along with positive reinforcement, effectively reduced tantrum behaviors. The teachers' calm responses reflected strategies supported by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2025), which recommended patience and consistent discipline to guide emotional learning. Thus, the day's observations reinforced the importance of empathetic teacher intervention in de-escalating behavioral challenges. The findings suggested that when teachers maintained emotional composure and provided structured support, children developed better self-regulation skills and recovered more quickly from emotional episodes.

Date	Time of tantrum	Describe what happened before the tantrum	Describe what happened during the tantrum	Teacher's response	Child's reaction
October 21, 2025	Morning session	Child A experienced peer conflict during group activity	Threw objects and shouted at classmates	Teacher reminded rules and offered one-on-one talk	Child calmed down after individual attention and rejoined group
October 21, 2025	Morning session	Child B was hit by another learner during play	Hit peer back and refused to follow instructions	Teacher allowed short break and encouraged empathy discussion	Child eventually calmed down and apologized to peer
October 21, 2025	Afternoon session	Child C felt hot and uncomfortable in warm classroom	Excessive talking and disruptive behavior	Teacher allowed movement break and adjusted seating	Child settled down after environmental adjustment
October 21, 2025	Afternoon session	Child D sought attention during instruction time	Refused to follow instructions and made loud noises	Teacher provided positive attention for appropriate behavior	Child responded to praise and followed instructions
October 21, 2025	Afternoon session	Child A experienced teasing from peers about appearance	Shouted and threw learning materials	Teacher validated feelings and addressed teasing behavior	Child calmed down after validation and peer correction

Table 2. Temper Tantrums Behavior

As shown in Table 2, five tantrum episodes were documented on October 21, 2025. Common behaviors included throwing objects, shouting, hitting peers, refusing to follow instructions, and excessive talking. The triggers varied from peer conflict (Child A during a group activity and later due to teasing),

physical aggression (Child B being hit during play), classroom heat and discomfort (Child C), and attention-seeking (Child D during instruction time).

The tantrums on that day were mainly socially and environmentally triggered. Heat, noise, and teasing among peers appeared to have heightened irritability. Child B's aggression toward a classmate reflected impulsive anger linked to frustration, while Child A's and Child D's restlessness indicated boredom and a need for engagement. The teachers responded by reminding the children of classroom rules, offering encouragement, and allowing short breaks or one-on-one talks. Most children eventually calmed down and participated again after these interventions. The teachers' approach, which allowed space and involved the children in learning activities, proved effective in helping them regain control and focus.

The observed behaviors suggested that external factors such as the classroom environment and social relationships contributed to the frequency and intensity of tantrums. The teachers' ability to maintain structure while addressing emotional needs prevented further escalation. This showed that effective classroom management required both emotional awareness and environmental sensitivity. These findings were consistent with Shafer, Wanless, and Briggs (2022), who emphasized that caregiver responses grounded in calmness and empathy supported faster emotional recovery. Likewise, Swanson (2021) recommended redirection and positive attention as effective tools for managing school-age tantrums.

The teachers' measured responses aligned with research-based practices, promoting a safe and emotionally responsive classroom. The observations demonstrated that addressing both environmental factors (temperature, seating arrangements) and social dynamics (peer conflicts, attention needs) was essential for comprehensive behavior management. This multi-faceted approach supported not only immediate de-escalation but also the long-term development of social-emotional skills in young learners.

Date	Time of tantrum	Describe what happened before the tantrum	Describe what happened during the tantrum	Teacher's response	Child's reaction
October 22, 2025	Morning session	Child A was asked to prepare materials for transition	Cried and refused to participate	Teacher used calm redirection and gave space	Child remained withdrawn but stopped crying
October 22, 2025	Morning session	Child C experienced conflict with peer over shared materials	Fighting with peer and shouting	Teacher separated children and reminded rules	Child calmed but remained upset
October 22, 2025	Afternoon session	Child B observed peer being corrected by teacher	Made disruptive noises and showed empathy-driven distress	Teacher acknowledged feelings and redirected to task	Child slowly rejoined activity with encouragement
October 22, 2025	Afternoon session	Child A faced another activity transition requiring participation	Refused to engage and continued crying	Teacher maintained patient and offered choices	Child stayed withdrawn but accepted quiet alternatives
October 22, 2025	Afternoon session	Child B sought attention during closing activities	Shouting and making loud disruptive noises	Teacher used verbal reminders and positive reinforcement	Child responded to praise and reduced disruption

Table 3. Temper Tantrums Behavior

As shown in Table 3, five tantrum incidents were recorded on October 22, 2025. Most occurred during preparation or activity transitions. The children exhibited behaviors such as crying, refusing to participate, fighting with peers, shouting, and making disruptive noises. Child A and Child B were the most frequently involved, particularly during the afternoon sessions. The triggers included activity transitions (Child A twice), peer conflicts over materials (Child C), empathy-driven distress (Child B observing peer correction), and attention-seeking (Child B during closing activities).

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The incidents suggested an accumulation of fatigue and emotional sensitivity by midweek. Child A's refusal to engage and continuous crying reflected possible emotional exhaustion or low motivation, while Child B's disruptive behavior appeared to have stemmed from attention-seeking and empathy toward peers. The teachers used strategies such as verbal reminders, calm redirection, and space allowance to manage the situations, with mixed results—some children rejoined, while others remained withdrawn. The teacher-maintained composure and patience throughout, focusing on task continuity while addressing the emotional needs of the students. This balance prevented the classroom from becoming chaotic despite repeated disruptions.

The observations indicated that tantrums persisted when the children's emotions were not immediately regulated or when they were overstimulated. However, the teachers' calm and consistent approaches still supported gradual de-escalation. This showed that emotional regulation in children was a process that benefited from consistent support rather than immediate compliance. Teacher patience and understanding remained key to maintaining a positive learning environment despite repeated behavioral challenges. The findings aligned with the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2025), which emphasized the importance of allowing children space to calm down before re-engaging.

Similarly, Prutipaisan (2025) highlighted the role of teacher composure and positive behavioral support in promoting long-term self-regulation. The teachers' management techniques on October 22 demonstrated the effective real-world application of these principles within a Grade 2 classroom setting. The cumulative nature of tantrum triggers by the third day underscored the importance of monitoring students' emotional states over time and adjusting expectations and support accordingly. This suggested that behavioral interventions needed to be flexible and responsive to children's changing emotional capacities throughout the school week.

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CONCLUSION

- 1) The study found that tantrums were expressed through crying, shouting, refusal to participate, throwing objects, and physical agitation. These behaviors were commonly triggered by academic frustration, peer teasing, boredom, and attention-seeking. The observations revealed that tantrums most often occurred during lessons requiring active participation, such as reading or group activities. This indicates that at this developmental stage, children are still learning to manage emotions when faced with challenges or perceived failure.
- 2) The results showed that the learners displayed both withdrawal and impulsive reactions. Some isolated themselves when overwhelmed, while others engaged in conflicts with peers or resisted teacher directions. Peer influence was a notable factor, as teasing, competition, or attempts to comfort peers often intensified the episodes. These interactions suggest that social relationships within the classroom play a significant role in the onset and management of tantrums.
- 3) The study found that teachers employed calm redirection, positive reinforcement, and emotional validation to de-escalate situations. These responses were effective in helping students calm down and return to learning activities. The teacher's composure and consistency fostered a supportive classroom climate where students felt safe and guided. Overall, the findings emphasize that empathetic and structured teacher responses are vital in promoting emotional regulation and maintaining classroom harmony.

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