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Acceptability of child treatment techniques: The influence of treatment efficacy and adverse side effects *

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Acceptability of alternative treatments for deviant child behavior was evaluated in two experiments. In each experiment, undergraduate students rated four different treatments applied to clinical case descriptions of children. The treatments (reinforcement of incompatible behavior, positive practice, time out from reinforcement, and medication) were presented in a 4 × 4 replicated Latin Square design. The investigations evaluated the effects of treatment efficacy (Experiment 1) and the influence of adverse side effects associated with treatment (Experiment 2) on ratings of treatment acceptability. Treatments were consistently different in their acceptability ratings. In both experiments, reinforcement was rated as more acceptable than the other treatments which followed in order, positive practice, time out, and medication. The effectiveness of treatments in altering behavior did not influence acceptability ratings, although they did influence perceptions of strength of treatment. In contrast, the presence of undesirable side effects markedly influenced acceptability ratings.

the presence of undesirable side effects markedly influenced acceptability ratings. Stronger adverse side effects reduced acceptability ratings of all treatments.



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