

Students' Behavioral Problems in the Classroom and Coping Strategies: Experiences of Secondary School Teachers

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the most prevalent and unacceptable classroom behavioral issues among public secondary school students in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Moreover, the study identified the reasons for these problem behaviors and ways to address these behaviors. The sample of the study was twenty-three (23) teachers (Female:14 & Male: 09) having minimum sixteen years of education along with professional qualification. Teachers have wide experience of teaching ranging from 10-32 years and teach students aged between thirteen to fifteen years. In this qualitative research data was collected through semi-structured individualized interviews after getting consent from the Federal Directorate of Education and from study participants. Through thematic analysis, the main themes emerged were *lack of attention, creating a disturbance in the class, disobedience, and display of aggressive behaviors*. The key causes of classroom problem behaviors were *parenting style, teachers' attitude/teaching strategies, society, home environment, and social media*. Moreover, teachers also think that *lack of counseling and character building* along with *outdated teaching strategies and a boring classroom environment* were causes behavioral problems in the class. Teachers should incorporate student-centered teaching with engaging techniques, parents should pay attention in developing good relationship with children at home. Moreover, counseling facilities about psychological issues of teenage students' needs to be provided at school level. The limited yet empirical data can form a logical foundation for management to create a policy document addressing these issues in schools, offering guidance for parents and teachers to tackle student challenges effectively.

Keywords: Problem behaviors, secondary school, coping strategies, disruptive behaviors

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Introduction

The education system in Pakistan is experiencing rapid changes with an emphasis on improving student academic performance. To achieve this objective, curriculum revisions, instructional strategies, and student interventions are vital. However, students still face barriers despite addressing these concerns and showing varying results which differ from time to time (Hayat et al., 2018). For teaching and learning to be effective, the school and classroom environment needs to be improved. This includes reducing distracting and disruptive behaviors (Joshi et al., 2012). Students frequently engage in classroom behavioral problems like disruptive talking, avoiding assignments, harassing classmates, interrupting lessons, verbally abusing teachers, being rude to teachers, and displaying hostility (Jacob & Aloka, 2023; Ngwokabuenui, 2015; WO & Akinola, 2020). The challenge of disruptive behavior in the classroom persists across generations, posing a significant burden on teachers (Abeygunawardena & Vithanapathirana, 2019). Teachers frequently express their distress over these disruptive behaviors, citing increased stress levels (Cascales & Prieto, 2019). Difficulty in managing classroom misbehavior not only leads to stress and burnout among teachers but also drives many to leave the profession (Aloe et al., 2014; Kollerova et al., 2023), discouraging potential educators from entering the field (Jacobson, 2016). Addressing classroom discipline demands a considerable investment of time and energy from teachers (Yuan & Che, 2012). Additionally, the disruptive behavior of students can directly impact the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of teachers, thereby impeding their ability to effectively educate students (Shakespeare et al., 2018). It is obvious that students' misbehaviors hinder the smoothness and effectiveness of teaching and obstruct the learning of students and their classmates. Such an environment affects the overall performance and efficiency of teachers as well as the academic performance of the students (Joshi et al., 2012). It is vital to address such problem behaviors in the classroom and lessen gradual adverse effects on students being in the classroom. The causes of this disruptive behavior have therefore been investigated in numerous studies to develop intervention strategies (Jacob & Aloka, 2023; Kollerova et al., 2023; Rafi et al., 2020).

Behavior is not an easy concept to define and there are many ways of doing so. Behavior, in general, refers to any action or function a person performs in each situation. In its broadest sense, behavior can be anything that school children do, for example how they make choices about relationships with peers, what they eat & play, or how active they are (Moore et al., 2019). Problem behavior is considered a problematic way of behaving for students who are unacceptable in society or against the social norms and values (Sun, 2014). From a broader perspective, problem behavior is a set of all unacceptable behaviors or actions of students that disturb or decrease the learning in the classroom (Gomez Marmol et al., 2018; Narhi et al., 2017; Ozturk, 2017). A mismatch

between students' needs and their immediate environment causes them to misbehave (Belle, 2017). It can also be defined as classroom disruption which is caused by the continuous repetition of such behavior that affects the conducive environment of the classroom or disturbs the teacher to continue the classroom instruction effectively (Malak et al., 2014; Schleicher, 2015). As a result of such behavior, teachers and administrators are unable to accomplish their set goals.

Late arrivals, bunking classes, bullying, fighting, and stealing in school are some of the common classroom problem behaviors of students. Destruction, assault on school prefects, insults against educators, not wearing uniforms, smoking, using foul language in class, not finishing homework, disrupting the classroom, and immoral behavior are among the many ways students misbehave in the classroom (Ghazi et al., 2013; Gutuza & Mapolisa, 2015; Ngwokabuenui, 2015; WO & Akinola, 2020). It is important to note that a particular behavior viewed as problematic is not necessarily a rulebreaker, but an inappropriate or disturbing behavior in the classroom. A few examples of "problem behaviors" are daydreaming in class, unfinished homework, talking in class, disrupting lessons, bullying, and rudeness to the teacher (Ho, 2004).

There is no question that humans cannot be fully free to behave however they choose for themselves or that their behavior is exclusively shaped by the social norms that are prevalent in the community. To maintain a peaceful environment and smooth performance, it is essential to establish and uphold some customary rules and regulations. Traditionally, schools disciplined their students by using some traditional methods (Warnick & Scribner, 2020). In the teenage years, when children enter secondary school, they are still considered juveniles. Adolescence is a critical period in a child's development that requires appropriate care from parents, teachers, and foster parents. Instead of focusing on education, skill acquisition, value orientation, and other domestic duties that would prepare them for tomorrow's contemporary development, teenagers would engage in and ultimately lose themselves in this euphoria of so many unnecessary and irrelevant activities (Teibowei, 2022). It is at this age that any psychological or biological deficit manifests vigorously and leads to obtrusive behavior on the part of the student. The researchers aim to explore the various types and underlying causes of disruptive behavior among students in Pakistan, with a particular focus on teenagers who have been identified as the primary perpetrators.

The identification of common causes of problem behaviors among students in the classroom, as well as coping strategies from the teacher's perspective, is equally valuable. Existing research showed that, among various types of student problem behaviors, "talking out of turn," "hindering others," and "idleness" were commonly reported by secondary school teachers as the most frequent and troublesome misbehaviors (Little,

2005). Primary and secondary school teachers rated “talking out of turn” as the most frequent and troublesome misbehavior, which is followed by “non-attentiveness” and “forgetfulness” - two other disruptive behaviors that students tend to exhibit in Hong Kong classrooms (Leung & Ho, 2001). Research in three provinces of mainland China indicated that "non-attendance," "talking out of turn," and "overactivity" were the three most common classroom behavior problems reported by teachers (Shen et al., 2009). The frequent classroom misbehaviors, however, were rated by elementary, middle, and high school teachers in two additional provinces as being "daydreaming," "talking out of turn," and "playing with personal stuff." In the study Ding et al. (2008) "daydreaming," "slowness" and "talking out of turn" were the most troublesome classroom misbehaviors. Apparently, according to all the above-mentioned research, "talking out of turn" has been demonstrated time and time again to be a highly common and disturbing classroom behavior across cultures and grades.

Researchers have prioritized this issue due to its detrimental effects on the learning and teaching environment. Misbehaving students disrupt the rights of others to learn, impede teachers' effectiveness, and squander valuable time and energy (Charles & Senter, 2005). It is widely believed that the existence of disruptive behavior or disciplinary issues within the classroom context significantly hampers students' learning (Gomez Marmol et al., 2018; Wangdi & Namgyel, 2022), leading to diminished academic performance (Granero-Gallegos et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important that teachers effectively handle students' problem behaviors in the classroom to improve the learning environment. We may be able to improve the effectiveness of such interventions through better understanding of teachers' perceptions and reasoning about classroom problem behaviors (Koutrouba, 2013). The key to improve future learning environments would be to understand how teachers perceive students' problem behaviors and to examine how they conceptualize them at various levels and in different contexts (Ozturk, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the types and causes of students' problem behaviors in classrooms of secondary schools in Islamabad, Pakistan. The study also explores the coping strategies to reduce students' classroom problem behaviors. With a specific focus on studying the problem behaviors of secondary school students in Pakistani classrooms, this study attempts to replicate the previous studies in examining the problem behaviors experienced by teachers as the most common and disruptive.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the common problem behaviors of secondary school students in the classroom experienced by the teachers?

2. What are the reasons behind the classroom problem behaviors of secondary school students?
3. How secondary school students' classroom problem behaviors can be addressed?

Methodology

Research Design

To achieve the objectives of the study, this exploratory study was conducted using a qualitative approach under constructivist paradigm. The qualitative method entails the opportunity of inductive reasoning which is suitable for the nature of the present study as it provided in depth exploration of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

Participants of the Study

Convenience sampling technique was used in this research to select the participants. Total twenty-three (23) teachers with varied nature of experience, qualifications, training, and age level from public secondary schools situated in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Pakistan were selected. Convenience sampling is one of the non-probability sampling techniques and a way of selecting participants from the target population based on ease of access (Golzar et al., 2022). Additionally, qualitative studies usually consist of smaller samples and in-depth exploration, which takes time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the study, after interviewing twenty-three participants the researchers reached saturation point and stopped the interviews. The detail of the study participants is given in the following table:

Table1

Participants of the Study

| Sr. No | Code of Respondent | Gender (M/F) | Qualification | Experience years & Class level |
|--------|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--|
| 1. | AM-1 | M | MA/M. Ed | 23 (9 th) |
| 2. | AM-2 | M | MA/B. Ed | 15(9 th & 10 th) |
| 3. | AG-3 | F | MA/B. Ed | 10 (7 th & 10 th) |
| 4. | AG-4 | F | MCS | 13 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 5. | BM-5 | M | M.Sc | 10 (7 th -10 th) |
| 6. | FM-6 | M | MA/B. Ed | 30 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 7. | FF-7 | F | MA/M. Ed | 11 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 8. | FF-8 | F | MCS | 10 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 9. | IF-9 | F | B.Sc/M. Ed | 14 (10 th) |
| 10. | KF-10 | F | B. Ed/M. Ed | 18 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 11. | MM-11 | M | MA/M. Ed | 32 (9 th & 10 th) |

| | | | | |
|-----|-------|---|--------------|--|
| 12. | MM-11 | M | MA/M. Ed | 32 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 13. | MF-13 | F | M.Sc/M. Phil | 20 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 14. | MM-14 | M | B. Ed/M. Ed | 30 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 15. | MF-15 | F | MCS | 10 (9 th – 12 th) |
| 16. | NF-16 | F | MA/M. Ed | 12 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 17. | RF-17 | F | MA/B. Ed | 26 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 18. | SF-18 | F | MA Eng. | 15 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 19. | SF-19 | F | MA/M. Ed | 10 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 20. | UM-20 | M | MA/M. Ed | 16 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 21. | UF-21 | F | MA/M. Ed | 10 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 22. | YF-21 | F | MA/M. Ed | 20 (9 th & 10 th) |
| 23. | ZM-23 | M | MCS | 10 (9 th & 10 th) |

Note: F=Female; M=Male; MA=Master of Arts; M. Ed=Master of Education; B. Ed=Bachelor of Education; M. Sc= Master of Science; MCS= Master of Computer Science; M. Phil=Master of Philosophy

Instrumentation

This study used semi-structured interviews for data collection. While specific information was consistently sought from all participants, most of the interview was guided by a flexible list of questions and topics, without predetermined wording or order. This format allowed the researchers to adapt to the respondent's response and new insights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Validity and reliability in such interviews depend on conveying equivalent meaning rather than using identical wording. The collected data thoroughly describes the research context, making the behaviors and experiences meaningful to an outsider (Kyngas et al., 2019).

Data Collection and Data Analysis

For data collection, twenty-three (23) public secondary school teachers were interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured, and audio recorded. To establish themes and main concepts based on transcribed data, open coding was employed within the research structure provided by the research objectives and questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Researchers transition from raw data to meaningful concepts or themes by adhering to the three Cs of analysis: coding, categorization, and development of concepts or themes (Lichman, 2013).

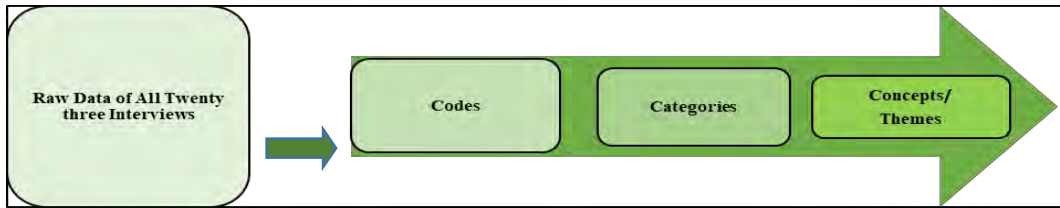


Figure 1. Process of Qualitative Data Analysis (Lichman, 2013)

Interviews were recorded and transcribed because recordings offer a more objective and accurate account of the dialogue, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the situation (Sullivan, 2012). Transcription serves as the initial step in data analysis. Following the transcription of twenty-three interviews, data analysis commenced, guided by six sequential steps outlined by Lichman (2013): initial coding, revisiting initial coding, development of an initial list of categories, modification of the initial list through additional rereading, revisiting of categories and subcategories, and moving from categories to concepts.

The process of member checking was used to ensure the credibility of the data. Participants provided feedback on interpretations of the data and added additional perspectives to clarify analysis. Once themes were identified, the findings were interpreted and discussed.

Ethical Considerations

Human subjects research involves ethical considerations (Hoover & Cohen, 2021) and these concerns have been considered carefully before and during both phases of the study. Informed consent of each participant was taken before the conduct of the interview. The objectives and interview protocol were shared with each participant of the study to take them into confidence. Participants of the study were assured that their details would remain confidential, and their interviews would be used purely for research purposes. To save the credentials of the participants, pseudo names were used in the data. For this purpose, each participant of the study was given a code that reflects the first letters of the name, gender, and serial number in the original list. The date and time for the interviews were decided with the consent of the participants.

Findings and Discussion

Common Classroom Problem Behaviors

Table 02 summarizes responses regarding students' problem behaviors inside classroom reported by twenty-three (23) secondary school teachers. The data were classified into thirteen (13) sub themes which merged into four (04) main themes through inductive

process. As shown in Table 02, the common problem behaviors reported by the teachers were “lack of attention, disturbance in the class, disrespecting teachers, and aggressive behaviors”. Apart from the common problem behaviors in the classroom discussed in the table below, teachers also mentioned attention seeking, leaving class without permission, telling lies, and coming late in the class as problem behaviors of students in the classroom.

Table 2

Common Classroom Problem Behaviors

| Sr # | Themes | Sub-Themes | Frequency | Evidence |
|------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|--|
| 1. | Lack of attention | Looking outside of the class | 05 | “Sometimes they were more interested in activities outside the classroom they keep looking outside and pay no attention to the class” (Participant 20) “They are involved in all other activities such as they start talking, due to this they did not pay attention to the class” (Participant 18) “Students sit with the blank faces in class and did not pay attention to the teacher and class...they fail to answer or respond in class” (Participant 9) |
| | | Talking with each other | 04 | |
| | | | 05 | |
| | | Passive listener/Being nonresponsive | | |
| 2. | Disturbance in the Class | Making noise | 08 | “When teacher writing on board, they start making noises by clicking the pens and start chattering” (Participant, 19) “Students sometimes ask irrelevant questions e.g., when lesson will finish? Can I go to restroom, or to drink water? By asking such questions they disturb the momentum of the class” (Participant 9) “Children didn't sit peacefully in class and start throwing pencils& paper towards each other which create disturbance in class” (Participant 11) “After 10 to 15 minutes of the class students start to move around to take copy, eraser, and pencils or to drink water, etc.” (Participant 3) |
| | | Asking irrelevant questions | 04 | |
| | | Throwing objects | 05 | |
| | | Moving around | 04 | |

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|----|---|
| 3. | Disrespecting Teachers | Incomplete home/classwork | 06 | <p>“Some students did not do their home/classwork, or they leave it incomplete...I think in this way students disrespect their teacher” (Participant 6)</p> <p>“When students disobey& ignore teacher and didn’t follow their instructions, they disrespect them...and it irritates teacher” (Participant 3)</p> <p>“In my opinion by arguing with the teacher without solid reasons and negatively reacting to the teachers’ comments students disrespect teachers which is now increasing in schools” (Participant 1)</p> |
| | | Ignoring teachers’ Instructions/ Disobedience | 04 | |
| | | | 08 | |
| | | Arguing with the teacher | | |
| 4. | Aggressive Behaviors | Quarreling with classmates | 04 | <p>“A common problem among students is quarreling with each other in and out of class...and sometimes these fights get serious” (Participant 7)</p> <p>“What I noticed in class students tease each other on their performance, being late, or some tease their fellows on their socio-economic status” (Participant 15)</p> <p>“Students disrespect their fellows by making fun of their performance which disturb the class environment” (Participant 11)</p> |
| | | | 05 | |
| | | Teasing class fellows | 02 | |
| | | Showing disrespect towards fellows | | |

The data in table 2 revealed *lack of attention, creating a disturbance in the class, disrespecting teachers, and display of aggressive behavior* as key problem behaviors in the classroom. *Creating disturbance in class* was reported as the most prominent problem behavior in the class by teachers. Teachers reported that students disturb the class environment by making noises, teasing other fellow students, snatching things from others during the class, and throwing objects (pencils, erasers, chalks, etc.). Some students start moving around in the class. Moreover, as far as the teachers are concerned, asking irrelevant questions during lectures also disrupts the class momentum and makes it difficult to accomplish the lesson's objectives. Lack of attention also emerge as a major problem behavior reported by the teachers, students were not responding to teachers’ questions and remained passive/inattentive, they did not listen to teachers' lectures and remained busy in other activities during the class such as looking outside and talking with each other. They were mentally engaged and paid little attention to the teaching and learning process. Aggressive behavior exhibited like the use of harsh words, rashness,

talking irrationally, and blaming others for being bad performers in their studies. Some students do not complete their homework and ignore teachers' instructions. Moreover, they reacted aggressively in response to teachers' comments and argue with the teacher, which shows disrespect towards the teacher.

Reasons for Classroom Problem Behaviors

After exploring the common classroom problem behaviors teachers were asked to share the reasons behind problem behaviors of secondary school students. The responses from the participants summarized in four (04) themes—home environment, social media, society & social connections, and school & classroom environment. These main themes emerged from eleven (11) sub-themes.

Table 3

Reasons for Classroom Problem Behaviors

| Sr # | Themes | Sub-Themes | Frequency | Evidence |
|------|------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|--|
| 1. | Home Environment | Broken families | 07 | "Children face behavior problems because of broken homes where parents get divorced, father or mother marriages 2 nd time" (<i>Participant 22</i>) "One major reason of problem behavior is uneducated parents...most of them are not aware of psychological or mental problems of their children" (<i>Participant 7</i>) "I think in today's generation one cause of bad behavior is minimal interaction with parents... nowadays children did not share their happiness, issues, & problems even with their parents" (<i>Participant 13</i>) |
| | | Uneducated parents | 03 | |
| | | Lack of interaction with parents | | |
| 2. | Social media | Use of mobile phones | 06 | "Use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.) among children is causing a lot of behavior problems...it is making them socially distracted, mentally busy, aggressive, lazy, etc." (<i>Participant 19</i>) "Majority of students have access to TV and recently it has a lot of Indian and foreign content which is not appropriate for children...and they are exposing to the content which contradicts to our social and religious values" (<i>Participant 2</i>) "Social media is easily accessible, and students mostly used it unattended by an adult or parents...so they watch content which is not appropriate according to their age" (<i>Participant 14</i>) |
| | | | 05 | |
| | | Inappropriate content on TV | 03 | |
| | | Unattended use of social media | | |

| | | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---|----|--|
| 3. | Society/Social connections | Friend Circle | 05 | “Look one’s friend circle can make or break them...and I think if they have one bad friend it can affect their personality and cause them to behave badly” (<i>Participant 23</i>) |
| | | Neighborhood/Community | 07 | |
| 4. | School/Classroom Environment | Lack of Co-curricular activities | 07 | “In today’s education set up there are no co-curricular activities such as trips, sports competitions, etc....I think students are unable to express their aggression and energy outside the classroom” (<i>Participant 8</i>) |
| | | Teacher centered curriculum | 03 | |
| | | Zero/minimal emphasis on character building | 04 | |

Table 3 exhibited home and class environment, social media, and society as the common causes behind prevailing classroom problem behaviors among students. These reported factors by schoolteachers play a key role in developing students’ attitudes and temperaments in their teenage years. During the teenage years, adolescents are subject to parental, teacher, peer, and societal influences, controls, and sometimes suppression because they are viewed as inexperienced, unknowledgeable, sometimes unskilled to deal with issues (Teibowei, 2022). According to the participants, home environment plays a vital role in the development of attitudes, behaviors, and actions of children. Some children belong to broken families, where father or mother died/divorced or married again, due to which children suffer in their lives since no one cares about their mental, physical, and psychological health. Children from broken homes bring worries and tensions with them as a carrier and create problems in the class/school. Lack of interaction with parents caused mental issues among children. Sometimes uneducated parents do not pay attention to the home environment, or they are not aware of the problems children face inside and outside of the home, consequently students misbehave in the class. The role of social media was also at large in developing classroom problem behaviors among school children who are in the phase of adulthood. Social media is

creating new ways to interact with friends and family, as well as influencing self-concept. It also changed how these students and their families interacted with each other using social media, as well as how they viewed themselves personally (Parvez, 2019). Additionally, the media showed different kinds of content in the form of dramas, shows, and movies that students watched and adopted behaviors which were not acceptable in schools and society. Negative feeding from social sites is chronic for students' behavior development. Children at home use social media or watch television unattended by an adult and due to this they consume inappropriate content. The participants share that the image of a teacher on social media was not positively portrayed. The students did not give respect to their teachers owing to disrespect experienced on social media sites. The representation of teachers in movies has been studied by Beyerbach (2005) and Dalton (2013) while the representations of teachers in printed and popular media have been explored by Bergman (2017) and Goldstein (2011). These studies show that teachers are portrayed in the media in a variety of stereotypical ways. Furthermore, they explore how the media impact public perceptions of teachers. Additionally, they argue that media portrayals of teachers should be more nuanced and critical. Participants also think that lack of character building in the school causes problem behaviors in the class. Moreover, the respondents point out that the community, society, and social connections play a role in the causation of students' problem behavior in the class because school-based friendship can have a profound effect on the academic motivation and social behavior of young people (Martin & Dowson, 2009, Said et al., 2018). Moreover, school teachers consider boring and teacher-centered classes also a reason for problem behaviors in class. Studies found that student teacher relationship and classroom environment had great influence on students learning and their attitudes and behaviors (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Suyatno et al., 2019).

Coping Strategies of Classroom Problem Behaviors

The final research question explores the coping strategies of existing problem behaviors in the classroom. Secondary school teachers reported multiple strategies to cope with students' classroom problem behaviors. These strategies summarized into main three themes as provision of counseling, Interactive classroom design, and healthy home environment. In addition to these main themes teachers also stated that changes in course content, focused teaching of Islamic values, and strong student teacher rapport will help teachers and administration of schools to address issues of classroom problem behaviors among students.

Table 4
Coping Strategies for Classroom Problem Behaviors

| Sr # | Themes | Sub-Themes | Frequency | Evidence |
|------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|---|
| 1. | Provision of Counseling | Students' counseling | 05 | <p>“Look I think counseling is very important and for this, students counseling in class and at school level is essential...they should be guided in their behavior problems” (<i>Participant 9</i>)</p> <p>“Parents can play a significant role in it they are vital for the character building of children...and for this, I think parents counseling is very important” (<i>Participant 13</i>)</p> <p>“Teacher as a role model influence the students, therefore, it is important for teachers to display actions, behaviors which they want to develop in their students” (<i>Participant 1</i>)</p> |
| | | Guide parents/ parents' counseling | 04 | |
| | | Teacher as a role model | 07 | |
| 2. | Interactive Classroom Design | Interactive lessons | 04 | <p>“I think one way to tackle students' problem behaviors in class is interactive lessons. Teachers should design their lessons interactive to fully involve students and make them part of teaching learning process” (<i>Participant 6</i>)</p> <p>“Teaching should be student-centered...but it is teacher-centered and authoritative in Pakistan...mostly teachers and even school organizers did not consider students' needs while designing curriculum and lessons” (<i>Participant 15</i>)</p> <p>“I think keeping students involved in group work/activities and group discussions help in developing good connection among students...so teachers need to design more activities of group work” (<i>Participant 23</i>)</p> |
| | | | 03 | |
| | | Student-centered teaching | 07 | |
| | | Group activities/works | | |
| 3. | Healthy Home Environment | Good relationship with parents | 04 | <p>“Look if students have a good and friendly relationship with their parents, a lot of their problems will be disappeared...so good relationship with parents is essential” (<i>Participant 13</i>)</p> <p>“When we talk about good home environment for students' good behavior, parents' relationship is very important...” (<i>Participant 4</i>)</p> <p>“If the students are brought up under a caring and appreciative environment, I think they will not misbehave, or they have fewer problem behaviors in class...if they are being appreciated, they will be developed as more confident and sound human beings” (<i>Participant 11</i>)</p> |
| | | | 06 | |
| | | Good relationship between parents | 03 | |
| | | Caring and appreciative parenting | | |

Table 04 displayed that most of the teachers think counseling and meeting with parents are the best way to tackle classroom behavior problems. For creating a comfortable classroom environment teachers think that a friendly atmosphere in class is extremely important. The class environment refers to the physical, instructional, and disciplinary conditions in a classroom that is conducive to instilling a positive learning culture and facilitating effective teaching (Jawaid & Aly, 2014). In Pakistan' education system teachers mostly approach teaching in a rigid manner, they did not try to build friendly relationship with students. Classrooms were dominated by "all knowing" and "all controlling" teachers (Rizvi, 2015). Moreover, Di Giulio (2000) found fewer behavioral problems in classes where teachers prefer to interact with students positively, versus classes where teachers are strict or lenient. Participants of this study mentioned that interactive and student-centered classes can be a source to tackle classroom problem behaviors. Sorcinelli (2002) explained that classes are not only constructed buildings but also constructed environments that convey powerful messages about how to think and act in a particular environment. The characteristics of classroom space can have a profound effect on both student and instructor behavior. Classroom socialization and learning are heavily influenced by the material context. Healthy home environment where children have good relationship with parents and experience healthy relationship among parents may have fewer behavior problems. They also think good parenting can solve the behavior problems of students. The quality of the relationship between parents and their children can also play a significant role in adolescents' positive well-being and development (Wang et al., 2007; Zhu & Shek, 2021).

Discussion

The present study aims to explore the types and causes of classroom problem behaviors among secondary school students. Furthermore, the study explores coping strategies for diminishing such behaviors. A total of twenty-three (23) teachers were interviewed from public secondary schools in Islamabad. Overall, the results of the study indicated that participants held similar views about how and why classroom problem behaviors occur among secondary school students. Under the main theme of classroom problem behaviors, there were the subthemes of lack of attention, disruption in class, disrespect of teachers, and aggressive behavior. The study findings were supported by previous studies which reported lack of attention, aggressive behaviors, talking out of turn, etc., the most common classroom problem behaviors (Cabaroglu, 2012; Ding et al., 2008; Kyriacou, 2010; Ozturk, 2017; Shen et al., 2009; WO & Akinola, 2020). However, talking in classroom, and aggressive behaviors seemed to be more prominent among classroom problem behaviors.

While responding about the causes of classroom problem behaviors among secondary school students, teachers mentioned that students' home environment—broken families, poor interaction with parents, use of social media—unattended use of mobiles and TV, class, and school environment—teacher-centered learning, and social connections—friends in school and outside school are the main causes of classroom problem behaviors. Earlier conducted studies found parents behavior and home environment major cause of students' misbehaviors (Atici, 2007; Kyriaco et al., 2007; Kyriacou & Martin, 2010; Yu et al., 2020). Moreover, strict classroom environment and curriculum emerged as a significant cause of problem behavior (Koutrouba, 2013). Altinel (2006) reported similar results to this study and reported the use of social media, parents, and class environment main causes of problem behaviors. Contrary to the classroom environment students' personalities found as major cause of problem behaviors (Ozturk, 2017).

The study explored multiple strategies to handle classroom problem behaviors. However, the most common strategies are to counsel students and parents, to provide a positive classroom environment, and to create a healthy home environment. Participants were of the view that in class and at the school level students should be guided and provided counseling facilities to address their issues—mental or psychological. They further stated that an interactive and student-centered teaching-learning environment will help in handling classroom problem behaviors (DiGuilio, 2000; Sorcinelli, 2002). Additionally, a conducive learning environment plays a major role in enhancing students' learning and achieving their educational goals (Ahmad et al., 2020). Healthy home environments where children have a friendly relationship with their parents and parents have a pleasant relationship will also contribute to solving the problem of misbehaviors in students (Wang et al., 2007; Zhu & Shek, 2021). Moreover, a healthy and peaceful home environment enhances students' academic performance (Khan et al., 2020). Flexible parents offer warmth and control equally so that children are aware of the need to obey the rules and can become self-disciplined (Garcia & Santiago, 2017).

Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to identify classroom problem behaviors and their causes in Islamabad's higher secondary schools as well as potential coping strategies. The study concluded that students displayed problem behaviors such as talking during class, making aggressive gestures, and disrespecting teachers. The teaching-learning process is hampered by these problem behaviors. Teachers were unable to achieve their set goals and to maintain a conducive learning environment in the class. Furthermore, the study concluded that home and class environment, use of media/social media, and society/connections affect students and their behaviors. Adolescents, being highly

vulnerable individuals, are influenced by various factors such as family, peers, community, and media. Educators recommend a supportive home environment, student-centered teaching, and counseling to address problem behaviors effectively. Positive behavioral development in adolescents requires guidance and support from schools, families, peers, media, and communities.

Implications

Based on the findings the study recommends that schools should design their curriculum and teaching-learning strategies that inculcate self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, decision-making, and relationship management among students. To develop and manifest positive social-emotional behaviors, these skills must be learned, developed, and practiced. It is also important that schools should avoid using reactive or punitive methods to control or modify student behavior or to solve behavior problems, however, teachers should focus on proactive methods, such as teaching self-discipline. Rather than becoming the problem, adolescents with problem behaviors should be part of the solution. Upon reviewing the findings of this study, principals and teachers should consider that students who manifest problem behaviors need guidance, role models, care, psychological counseling, as well as social and emotional skills development to demonstrate positive behavior. Therefore, different strategies—counseling, teaching methods, and appropriate content should be implemented by the school to cater to different needs and provide students with guidance and opportunities to flourish and develop.

In the future, there should be a more comprehensive study with a larger sample and more detailed discussions. Given the possibility that behaviors such as student problem behaviors may vary across cultures, cross-cultural research could provide useful data and findings in this regard. Furthermore, it would be helpful if different levels of education were included to help teacher educators in creating training courses for future teachers. It would be more comprehensive if the views of the students were also included to understand underlying reasons of these reported problem behaviors by the teachers. Thus, the findings may reveal the assumptions and biases of the teachers due to their social role as “teachers”. So, if students' perspectives were included, the findings would be complete and more comprehensive. Exploring the efficacy of curricular-based interventions in mitigating problem behaviors within classroom settings presents an intriguing avenue for scholarly inquiry.

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