

Disruptive behaviour of students at elementary level: A Case study from a Public School at Lahore, Pakistan



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Abstract: *Disruptive behaviour of students has recently become an emerging problem at school level in Pakistan. Although there have been a very few studies as to determine the ratio of such scenarios between public and private sector schools, however, both the systems have evidence for it. The current research study was aimed at identifying the causes and then introducing some remedial treatment to one of the identified cases exhibiting high levels of disruptive behaviour. For this purpose, the study was divided into two phases. At the first stage, the teacher researcher identified some of the causal factors underlying the disruptive behaviour of the child, in the light of literature review, by different means. In order to comprehensively identify the factors, interviews of the teachers, peers and family were conducted. At the second phase, keeping the identified causes in view, a remedial treatment was introduced for the child for a period of about 8 weeks. The treatment was successful for the duration of the study, but the absence of the treatment led to the turning back of the child to the previously adopted ways. The study explores interesting day to day behavioural changes and attempts to answer how a treatment can be helpful for the future researchers and practitioners.*

Keywords: Disruptive Behaviour, classroom management, primary schools, behavioural issues.

Introduction

Despite teaching at elementary level for ages, teachers still have to face disruptive behaviour of students almost all the time. In different situations students have different characteristics. Those who behave well in classroom make their environment suitable for learning while other students who show a disruptive behaviour make their environment ineffective for learning. For dealing with disruptive behaviour of student's teachers should become familiar with reasons which force them to behave disruptively.

Within a classroom, in order for an academic activity to go smoothly as expected and for it to be actually fruitful for the students, both the students and the teachers interact in a way that suits their roles. This interaction has a significant

role towards the sustainability of learning activity. Fakhruddin (2018) notes that in real life however perfectly planned, learning activities also go through some unexpected and problematic scenarios in most of the real-life situations. Teachers have to deal with a wide range of behaviours whilst conducting the teaching and learning activity.

Levin and Nolan (1996) choose to define disruptive behaviour through four rubrics; 1) intruding in the process of teaching and learning, 2) messing with the rights of other students, 3) unsafe from physical or psychological perspective, & 4) causing destruction around (classroom materials or property).

Therefore, the identification of disruptive behaviour is necessary before administering the

treatment for such kids. Li et.al (2018) relate that previous research studies that aimed at identifying the causes of disruptive behaviours of students, reveal the role of family, socio-economic background upon the performances of the students. Ghazi et. Al (2013) notice that various complaints of teachers have been reported against disruptive behaviour of students in classroom. Classrooms exhibiting disruptive behaviour are observed to get lesser time for teaching and learning activities, hence they lag behind in achievement levels as well, as compared to the other classes of the same level, where disruption of academic activities has either been dealt with or does not exist.

Disruptive behaviour is not mere a naughty behaviour of students, rather, it goes beyond the routine disturbance in the classroom. Stavnes (2014) states in his thesis that students of school generally exhibit two kinds of behaviours, 1) externalized, & 2) internalized behaviour. Externalized negative behaviour may refer to the aggressiveness and hyperactive nature of students, leading to intrusion with teachers, peers as well as the academic activities. Whereas, internalized behaviour refers to fear and anxiety like internal issues meddling with the academic achievement.

Disruptive behaviour according to various research studies is identified by a number of observed phenomena on the behalf of the child, e.g. fighting around, pushing others, disturbing the peers and teachers, tearing and damaging one's own belongings, harming others and damaging the property of peers and the school, not paying attention towards studies, being unresponsive to the punishments, not striving to change the behaviour, not knowing where one is wrong, etc. (Luiza et. Al; 2018).

Before proceeding towards the administration of some treatment as a remedial for the disruptive behaviour, it is necessary to identify the factors leading towards the disruptive behaviour. In a study, conducted at an Indonesian English classroom, Jati et. Al (2019), note two types of factors that are involved in causing a disruptive behaviour viz. the internal and the external factors. The internal factors included feeling bored, the underlying feeling of anxiety and an

attention seeking nature. On the other hand, the identified external factor was fatigue, which led to the disruptive behaviour of the students.

Various research studies in different parts of the world reveal a long list of causes that may have led to various kinds of disruptive behaviours in different situations. This list may be true to some contexts and may not be significant to other cases. These underlying causes and factors include, family issues, (child belonging to a broken family, unaware of his father and/or mother, and knows that he has been adopted by an aunt), poor socio-economic background, lack of care at home, low self-esteem, stress of school, piled up burden of classes, attention seeking attitude, learnt aggression over time, wrong values adopted from the social interactions after school, continuous changes in the social environment, curriculum related idiosyncrasies, individual differences, the relationship between the student and the teacher, the role of the teacher in the classroom, the need for social recognition, absence of academic success, impulsive behaviour, etc. (Jigau, 2006; Soitu, 2001).

The current study focuses the disruptive behaviour of students in Pakistani context. There have been various studies conducted in this regard, but majority of them have aimed at providing statistical data regarding this issue at various levels.

The ultimate goal of this research study is to provide a comprehensive idea and insight about students' disruptive behaviour in order to devise an adequate and intelligent decision and treatment to manage such behaviour. The study was conducted in a Public sector educational institution at Lahore, Pakistan. This study will help the practitioners to get to know more about the causes, facts, and treatments for the disruptive behaviour. The rationale behind the study was to explore and address the ways in which disruptive behaviour of students during the class makes classroom environment least feasible for learning

Students at primary schools in the public sectors come from various backgrounds and exhibit a wide range of externalized disruptive behaviour

that hinder, not only their own learning and academic achievement but also that of their peers. Teachers complain about such issues but are unable to cater to the needs of such children. The current study is aimed at explaining the causes of disruptive behaviour and coming up with an adequate treatment to deal with such behaviour at primary level.

The nature of the study was such that its various stages and action-oriented methodology required more time to be spent for the study. In order to find solutions for a prevailing problem, a small scale and single subject case study was conducted, the findings of which may be employed for future treatments and studies initially in the same context, before generalizing them.

1. To explore and dig deep into the root causes behind exhibiting disruptive behaviour at primary level.
2. To determine the role of a teacher in catering to the needs of a child with disruptive behaviour.
3. To identify the ways in which the behaviour of the primary level students may be controlled.

Methodology

The population of the study includes students of primary schools of public sector in Punjab. However, as a sample of current study, a section of grade 3 of a public sector primary school in Lahore was selected via convenient sampling.

After the identification of the student, causing disruptive behaviour at first step, interviews were conducted at three levels. Initially interviews of teachers, peers and guardians of the identified student were conducted in order to identify the causes of disruptive behaviour, before administering the treatment. In parallel to these interviews, keen observation of the selected student was also done by the teacher researcher during the time of the treatment and these observations were noted from time to time.

Interviews of the concerned teachers:

In the beginning informal interviews of the teachers of the concerned subject (student) were

conducted. The interview questions were focused around the previous academic achievements, the complaints teachers had regarding the kid, and the nature of disruption caused. Most of the respondents complained about low grades in studies, lack of focus, mischievous attitude during lessons, poor hygiene and lack of response to punishments and warnings. However, one of the teachers also mentioned, that the child was not disobedient, despite all the behavioural issues.

Interview of the guardians:

An interview of the guardian (aunt) of the concerned student was conducted in order to gather information about the family set up, social background etc. of the kid. It was revealed at this point that the parents of the child had been separated, and he had been adopted by a paternal aunt, who also had her own children. The child belonged to the working-class family, residing in a lower middle-class neighbourhood.

Interviews of the peers:

The peers (fellow students) of the child with disruptive behaviour were interviewed in order to gather data about the social attitude and dealings of the kid. Most of the students only had negative remarks about the child, regarding how was he always fighting and damaging stuff, harming himself and others a well. It was revealed that the child loved to spend time in isolation and was not very friendly at playtimes. However, the other students also mentioned, that he was also helpful to other students occasionally in the times of need.

Nature of the treatment:

The treatment of the kid included psychological aspects, in the light of the known factors lying behind the disruptive behaviour. The factors listed down in the light of previous studies, were analysed and a few of them were found true to the case for this study. The factors found true to the case under study were 11 in number, and included, family issues, (child belonging to a broken family, unaware of his father and mother, and knows that he has been adopted by an aunt), poor socio-economic background, lack of care at home, low self-esteem, stress of school, piled up

burden of classes, attention seeking attitude, learnt aggression over time, and the wrong values adopted from the social interactions after school.

In view of these factors, the treatment included following measures:

- Removal of punishment for the span of the treatment
- Counselling during and after lectures
- Assigning a responsible role to the student in class
- Building up a relationship of trust with the student
- Individual attention to the child
- Assigning the first desk, closest to the teacher
- The teachers were asked to report any cases of misconduct by the child only to the researcher and not deal with them on their own
- The peers were invited to remain conscious of the child and be helpful towards him when he needed
- Repetition of lessons and after-school coaching of the kid.

Involving guardians and teachers for the treatment:

After compiling the causes of the disruptive classroom behaviour, the teachers and the guardian were involved in executing a treatment to deal with the behavioural issues of the kid. It was not very difficult to involve the teachers for the treatment. They were asked to mention all their observations or complaints to the researcher and not deal with the child on their own, to which they all agreed and cooperated. However, it wasn't possible to acquire much help from the guardians, as the need to address the behavioural issue of the child was not really significant for them.

Research Design

The role of researcher in this study was that of a teacher researcher/practitioner, teaching English to the class of selected student. In this study

qualitative research design was adopted. This study deals within interpretivist paradigm.

Data Collection Methods

This study was divided into two phases, i.e. Phase 1 (Data collection phase) and Phase 2 (Treatment Phase). Data was collected through observation and interviews (qualitative approach) in the first phase and then the treatment was administered in the second phase. This case study was conducted in a rural locality of the district Lahore. The subject selected as the sample for the study, was a student of elementary school at district Lahore.

Validity and Reliability/Trustworthiness

Since the research study is qualitative in nature, the validity and reliability of the data collected was obtained by engaging with other researchers and stake holders in order to reduce the research bias. Data triangulation method was employed whereby different methods and perspectives would help in producing a more comprehensive set of findings.

Data Presentation, Findings and Discussion

Week 1:

In the first week comprising observation as the first step towards the treatment, the selected student was urged to share his personal issues with the teacher. The researcher ensured not to discuss anything related to studies with the student except that discussed during class. The researcher attempted to build confidence in the student such that he won't hesitate while building a relationship of trust with the researcher and then ultimately open up and share his issues with other teachers as well.

Week 2:

In the 2nd week, the researcher initiated an academic counselling of the student. The researcher paid individual attention whereas other teachers employed reward method increasing student's interest towards studies. It was observed that there was a little improvement in the test results of the student already.

Week 3:

In order to identify, whether the counselling had

an impact, the researcher deliberately reduced the amount of special attention towards the child. During this period the selected student also underwent a low-key role. However, it was observed that his behaviour remained under control thus keeping him unnoticed.

Week 4:

In the 4th week, the researcher initiated the method of appreciation for any tiny productive thing that the student did. The student surprised the teacher researcher by obtaining full marks in his English test. It was also observed through this time, that the student never showed disruptive behaviour during the Mathematics class. The underlying cause for this behaviour variation might have been due to the student's interest in Mathematics. However, the same disruptive behaviour was exhibited in all the other subjects.

Week 5:

The counselling of the student was accompanied with assigning him responsible roles by the teacher researcher. It was noticed by this week, that the student's behaviour had improved a great deal. He was observed taking on the role of a helper for the other students of class. The habit of causing damage intentionally and sometimes unintentionally had discontinued by this time.

Week 6:

This week, the researcher intended to gauge the impact of the treatment and therefore, the special attention and planned treatment was cut off. The student turned out to be abiding by the expectations of the teachers and the responsibilities assigned to him on his own.

Week 7:

In the seventh week, a downfall in the acquired behaviour was observed. Test results deteriorated once again. There was an increase in the complaints of the student regarding him hurting other students and the things around. Non-seriousness in behaviour began to return and gradually increase.

Week 8:

In the last week of the treatment, the researcher returned towards individual attention for the

student. The researcher tried to reduce the learning content for this student. These efforts were made in an attempt to restore the confidence of the student.

Findings

- As a result of being inquired, apart from studies, the student felt heard and found his feelings getting validated.
- Getting attention from the researcher and the counselling had a very quick impact, and the test results of the student began to improve quickly.
- Lack of special attention for a limited time had no significant impact initially. The child did not depict any noticeable productive or disruptive behaviour at this time and remained low-key.
- Praise and appreciation for positive behaviour led the child to try to please the researcher.
- The child behaved very well in the Mathematics classroom, owing to his interest in numbers.
- Assigning responsible role to the child had a very positive effect upon him and he was observed exhibiting productive behaviours of help, sacrifice and kindness with other students.
- Studies felt like burden to the child, therefore, reducing the volume of daily tasks helped in restoring the confidence of the child.
- A noticeable break in the treatment initially did not change anything. However, as the break prolonged, the behaviour and the results of the child began to deteriorate once again.
- Expectations of the teachers from the child guided him to try hard to act up to those expectations.

Conclusion:

It can be concluded on the basis of the findings of the study, that the treatment administered for a limited time had positive outcomes for the span

of its administration. Special treatment had a short termed but extremely fruitful impact upon the behaviour of the student towards others, his surrounding as well as his studies. Immediate impact was observed; sometimes it was easy for the researcher while on the other days researcher had to make a lot of effort in gaining the concern and seriousness of the student.

There still remained some issues that were beyond the control of child, like his poor hygiene, worn out shoes, or occasionally not having lunch, all owing to the lack of cooperation from the guardians. However, the long-term concern and seriousness of the child could not be acquired during this time.

It can also be concluded that for long-term results and for a lasting change in behaviour, a long-term administration of the treatment and complete cooperation is required.

Recommendations:

- Lasting results may be obtained by means of more time spent for the administration of treatment.
- Probing into more psychological aspects in order to identify the amount of time and effort required to address the disruptive behaviour of students may yield fruitful results in this regard.
- For coming up with a comprehensive treatment plan, the sample of the future studies may be enlarged by including more subjects with similar behavioural issues.

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