

Experiences of Teacher Students Regarding the Management of Behavior Problems of Children with Special Educational Needs

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Abstract: This paper focuses on a study that explored the experiences of teacher students regarding managing behavior problems of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in regular classrooms. The objectives of this study were 4 folds; to identify the behavior problems experienced by teachers and their views in relations to it's impact on the teaching and learning process, to explore the factors might be influenced for behavior problems, to examine the strategies taken to manage behavior problems. 10 Student teachers who already have dealt with children with Special Educational Needs selected as the sample by using purposive sampling method. Semi structured interview and questionnaire were used to collect data which were analyzed using descriptive analysis method. The study revealed that the most common behavior problem experienced by teacher students were problems related to aggression, attention, self harm and variety of off task behaviors which might be influenced by impairment, lack of early intervention, family, school and peer related factors. Moreover variety of strategies including reprimand, time out, planned ignorance, giving responsibilities etc. were used by teachers to manage behavior problem in children with SEN. Final outcomes of this research would provide a basis to establish a proper early intervention service for children with SEN and empowering teacher students to deal with behavior problem of children with SEN in inclusive setup.

Key Words- behavior Problems, children with special educational needs, inclusive education

I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in regular classroom setup is becoming a new trend in the current education system in the world (Yuen & Westwood, 2001). These children with SEN often present learning or behavioral problems (Polirstok, 2015) comparing with typical peers. As far as the behavior problems of children with SEN concerned, they may develop these undesirable behaviors due to the deficiencies of skills related to functional communication, personal abilities and social skills (Westling, 2015). These behavior problems jeopardize the healthy social interaction, emotional wellbeing, academic success and ultimately the total development of the particular child with SEN. These behavioral challenges range from verbal or physical aggression, inappropriate social behaviors and stereo type behaviors to self injuries which put a person or those around them at risk (Westling, 2009). Students with behavior problems are at higher risk to be excluded from the general education setting compared with the typical peers (Hayden,

2000) due to different issues including disciplinary matters (Danial, 1998). It was found that children with special educational needs perceived as a specific group of children who show disruptive and disrespect behaviors which impede the smooth functioning of the classroom (Sun & Shek, 2011). Even the highly organized, well structured classrooms, some teachers find it difficulties in managing behaviors of some students particularly children with special educational needs as they display complex behaviors which are difficult manage even with support (Rose & Howley, 2007). There are a number of strategies which could be used to manage behaviors problems of children in inclusive classrooms. Most of these strategies basically influenced from Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory (Skinner, 1969).

This theory emphasized that the behaviors are governed by it's consequences which could be strengthened the relationship between environment and the behaviors. The consequences could be termed as contingencies of reinforcement which may affect to the learning to be expedited and minimize the disciplinary problems. Skinner believe there should be three variables which facilitate for the interaction between individual and the environment; 'the occasion upon the response occur, the response itself and the reinforcing consequences. (P. 27). These three variables are referred as ABC (A- Antecedent; the event which elicit the response, B- Behavior, C- Consequence). The teacher should be consistently paired A to B and B to C systematically to meet the behavior expectation of students systematically. In other words it is essential to deliver positive or negative reinforcement just after the behavior is performed. Then children will learn to perform desired behaviors in a proper manner. Moreover teacher can not change the B but can change A and C to encourage B (Kazdin, 2013). The ABC method has embedded in the Functional Behavior Analysis which is one of most common method of evaluating behaviors of diverse needs of students according to Skinner's theory. The principles of Operant Conditioning theory such as using reinforcement, behavior shaping, behavior contact, token economy and Premak Principle presented by Premak (1959) are most commonly used in education world to manage behaviors of diverse needs of students. Accordingly, this theory emphasize the consequence is the determinant factor in changing behaviors. Furthermore selective ignorance, develop

routing and structure for smooth daily functioning of the classroom, increasing internal locus control of students, less use of punishments (Polirstok, 2015) ignoring minor inappropriate behaviors, setting constant routing and schedules (Powell, 2006) are some of the strategies which could be utilized to manage challenging behaviors. Fox et al, (2003) presented a four layer hierarchical model on prevention and intervention of challenging behaviors of all children. The 1st two layers of this model focus on all young children with challenging behaviors and top two layers devoted to young children who are at risk to develop challenging behaviors and severe level of challenging behaviors respectively. The preventive and intervention mechanism focus on child, family and school level measures to reduce and manage the challenging behaviors. Further individualized intervention methods are necessary for the children who have severe levels of challenging behaviors. Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) is such effective and evidence based management strategy which focuses on to develop well planned behavior support system by considering about the all aspects of the challenging behaviors (Powell,2006). There are strategies available which focus on 3 aspects such as school-wide, classroom based or individual child-focused interventions (Parsonson,2012). Accordingly School wide Positive Behavior Support (SPBS)has been identified as the comprehensive behavior management strategy which is based on Response to Intervention (RTI) which introduced primarily for the children with disability and then all students who are struggling from academic and behavioral problem. RTI is 3 tire model ; tire 1 focus on all students in a school and tire 2 approach the on students those who were not succeed in tire 1 intervention . Individual students those who have not responded the intevention of tier 1 and 2 provided with more intensive interventions (Frank et .al, 2019).

However, a range of behavior management strategies available in the literature, studies have found that regular classroom teachers still not prepared to handle the behavior problems of children (Bulter & Monda- Amaya,2016), particularly children with special educational needs in regular classrooms (Westling, 2015). Further the teachers have not provided a sufficient support to handle behavior problems of students and effective strategies have not been used by teachers to handle them in regular classrooms (Westling,2009). The unpreparedness and inexperience of teachers in handling behavior problems of children with special educational needs bring a risk for smooth functioning of the classroom and it would be a matter for teachers' time and effort. Similarly teachers felt the behavior problems always stressful and they become frustrated and upset when dealing with it (Male, 2003;Axup & Gersch,2008). Furthermore they believe that behavior problems of children are sometimes intolerable, caused to stress and significant amount of time and effort to be made to manage such a classroom with problem behaviors. Teachers are moderately confident in managing the behavior problems in children

(Bulter & Monda- Amaya, 2016). They viewed that the student with behavior problems are the group most difficult to place in inclusive setup (Ntinat al,2006).Teachers believe that children with behavior problems become adverse effect on them and students as well (Westling, 2009; Bulter & Monda- Amaya,2016) . The above evidences imply that there are issues in relation to behavior problems of children with special educational needs in inclusive setup. The attempt for inclusive education would be weakened due to lack of training regarding behavior intervention strategies (Ntinat al,2006). Therefore this study made an attempt to explore the experiences and views of teacher students regarding behavior problems of Children with Special Educational Needs included in the inclusive set up.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This qualitative study was conducted to explore the views of teachers who deal with children with special educational needs in regular class room setup. This study employed the qualitative approach which allows researcher to obtain in-depth inquiry in natural setting (Crouch & Mckenzie, 2006).

Sample

The purposive sampling method was used to select ten (10) teacher students of the Bachelor of Education in Special Needs Education Degree Programme who dealt with Autism Spectrum Disorders, children with Intellectual Disabilities, children with attention related problems and children from low socioeconomic background in inclusive primary classroom set up. The sample was selected among the teacher students who have experiences in dealing challenging behaviors of children with special educational needs.

Table 1: Details of the Sample

Primary classroom Teacher	Nature of student with special educational needs
Class teacher A	Child with Autism
Class teacher B	Child with Autism
Class teacher C	Child with Autism
Class teacher D	Child with Intellectual Disability
Class teacher E	Child with Intellectual Disability
Class teacher F	Child with Intellectual Disability
Class teacher G	Child with attention related problems/ADHD
Class teacher H	Child with attention related problems/ADHD
Class teacher I	Child with hearing Impairment
Class teacher J	Child from a disadvantages area

The main mean of data collection method was semi structured interviews. Before conducting interviews participants were made aware about the purpose of the study and the recording method of data. 20-30 minutes were spent per participant for interviews by using self constructed semi structured interview schedule which developed to cover the research questions of the study as follows.

- To identify behavior problems of children with SEN experienced by teachers?
- To investigate the impact of behavior problems of children with SEN on the teaching learning process?
- To examine the factors might be influenced for behavior problems of children with SEN?
- To examine the strategies could be taken to manage the behavior problems of children with SEN?

The data were audio taped while conducting the interviews and then transcribed in verbatim after the interview. The data were analyzed descriptively according to the themes which were inductively derived from the collected data.

III. FINDINGS

The findings of the study presented in this section.

Common Challenging Behaviors

The respondents stated that they have come across a number of challenging behaviors in their classroom setting. The data regarding the challenging behaviors of children with special educational needs summarized in the table 1. In this table it was emphasized that the most common challenging behaviors of children with special educational needs experienced by teachers.

Table 2: Most common Behavior problems

Primary classroom Teacher	Nature of student with special educational needs	Most common behavior of the particular child
Class teacher A	Child with Autism	Physical Aggression: -Self harm, throwing things, grabbing others belongings
Class teacher B	Child with Autism	Verbal Aggression: Screaming Off task behaviors- Wandering around the classroom
Class teacher C	Child with Autism	Verbal Aggression- Screaming Physical aggression- Screaming
Class teacher D	Child with Intellectual Disability	Physical Aggression Quarrelling/fighting with students, striking
Class teacher E	Child with Intellectual Disability	Physical Aggression: Throwing things, Off task behaviors: Inattentiveness
Class teacher F	Child with Intellectual Disability	Physical Aggression: Quarrelling/fighting with students, striking
Class teacher G	Child with attention related problems/ADHD	Off task behaviors: inattentiveness. Running away from the classroom, changing seats while the class work
Class teacher H	Child with attention related problems/ADHD	Off task behaviors: inattentiveness, wondering around the classroom, striking, pushing

Class teacher I	Child with hearing Impairment	Off task behaviors- Sleeping, day dreaming, inattentiveness , not following teachers directions
Class teacher J	Child from a disadvantages area	Aggressive behaviors- Fighting with teacher, Speaking lower level language, teasing classmates, Off task behaviors: Chatting with peers when lesson is progressing

According to the above table the most common behavior problem experienced by teachers were aggressive behaviors. Seven (7) teachers who handle children with Autism, Children with Intellectual Disabilities and children who are from low socio economic background have experienced physical and verbal aggressive behaviors in the classroom. In addition other children such as children with ADHD and Hearing Impairment often involved with off task behaviors as perceived by teachers.

Impact on Challenging behaviors on the teaching and learning process

These challenging behaviors were problematic not only teachers, but also teachers’ instructional behaviors. All teachers agreed that the challenging behaviors are not facilitated for the smooth functioning of the classroom.

Some of the quotations of teachers as follows.

“This affect the learning of all children, including the child with disabilities..

All can not access to the teaching learning process properly..”

“Having a child with challenging behaviors affect others in a negative manner..It a wasting of time of the teacher and other children..There are safety issues also...”

‘I think negative impact..When I focus of my attention to manage the behaviors of children, another additional time necessary to keep on track in the lesson...

The above quotations clearly highlighted that having a child with challenging behaviors have different types of negative consequences in terms of time management, behavior management and physical safety of other students. Overall, it affects ultimately in ensuring effective teaching and learning process for children in the inclusive setup.

Factors affecting for behavior problems

The respondents attributed some factors affecting for behavior problems of children. The majority of respondents stated that the causes of behavior problems may vary according to the background of the individual child. They further highlighted that they cannot find out the exact causes

for the particular behaviors problems, because the causes may be multifaceted. For instance, one teacher stated;

‘It is very difficult to say exact causes for behavior problems , but we can assume that.

The motives which caused for behavior problems vary and it depends on the factors related to impairment, family, school and peer influence. Six (6) teachers out of 10 stated that impairment itself will be a cause for the behavior problems. The responses of some teachers as follows.

Table 3: Factors affecting for behavior problems

Code of the Teacher	Responses
Teacher A	I think the impairment sets lot of limitations for child. For example, I have an autistic child in my classroom cannot cope up with any change in daily routine... then he make harm to himself”
Teacher B	The child in my classroom is having some sensory issues, if the classroom is so noisy then he screaming and cannot control even.
Teacher C	He is living in his own world..If we make disturb his world, if we force him to do something what we want.. Then he behaves aggressively..
Teacher G	In my class there is a child with attention problem, he cannot sit still any where always hanging around the classroom... he cannot follow my instruction.. That is not problem with the child....disability is the cause...”
Teacher H	I think the child innate problem may be the cause of the challenging behaviors, how much we struggle to do it, they always off task because of this problem..
Teacher D	I think the disability influence to some extent to develop behavior problems..

Thus, according to the above responses it is clear that teachers strongly believe that nature of child may affect to develop behavior problems of children.

On the other hand, some teachers (4) teachers stated that parent related factors may affect for different types of behavior problems. They emphasize that the nature of parenting styles, may badly affect for behavior problems of children. The responses of some teachers mentioned below. Class teacher E stated that

“I think the most responsible cause of problematic behaviors of children with special educational needs are the way of rearing children by the parents.....I have a child with disability always need whatever he wants...if not become severely aggressive...this is happening because of the parents”.

It is clear that the above quotation the parenting style can cause behavior problems of children. The parents are permissive and indulgent in nature, children can not cope up with the frustration because they are extremely responsive and less demanding. On the other hand parents who are neglecting the child or overprotect the child may cause different types behavior problems according to the views of teacher F,

“I believe that the way of raising the child is critical than the disability in developing behavior problems in children. Both extremes such as negligence and overprotection may cause to develop different types of attention seeking behaviors and impulsive and aggressive behaviors.... “

Class teachers I and J made responses differently on this matter. They stated that children develop problematic behaviors in the absence of the healthy family background.

I-The child in my classroom coming from both disadvantaged area and family background and very difficult to handle him sometimes saying filthy words...

J-Most teachers do not have much expectation regarding these types of children because we can not control the things which they bring from home...

The data assert that family related factors such as parental conflicts, unhealthy social interactions, lack of good parenting etc. influence to the great extent to develop behavior problems of children who are having special educational needs. The most highlighted facts derived through data is that school related factors also affect to escalate behavior problems because teachers still unaware that their responsibility of managing children behaviors, instead they put all the responsibilities on home back ground which can be proved of the responses of Teacher J . Further the participants of this study pointed out the problems in the school environment and peers as some factors for behavior problems which can be proved by some quotations.

“Most of time children with special educational needs are labeled by upper primary class children are ...”

“I think the responses of peers towards children with special educational needs seriously affect to develop challenging behaviors.”

The views of teachers highlighted that children with special educational needs were severely affected by the peer particularly in upper primary grades.

Some teachers attributed that the teacher related factors significantly affect for the behavior problems of children. Teachers’ negative attitudes and negative attributes such as prejudice, negligence, and non-tolerant nature regarding the students’ differences may lead to escalate negative behaviors of children in to a great extent. According to the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, if the basic needs of children not met due to non tolerant behaviors of teachers, there is an increasing risk to develop challenging behaviors in children.

The teachers’ professional knowledge in handling behavior problems also critical factor to create a conducive learning environment in the classroom. But this study found that most teachers used some strategies through their experiences and no systematic knowledge gained by teachers in this regard.

Participants stated that

“Actually, we also do not know regarding the suitable techniques in managing behaviors.. Still use trial and error method and other commonly used method”

“Managing behavior problems of a normal child is not much more problematic.. But it is very difficult with regard to a child with a disability because we don’t have proper knowledge both their condition and behavior management”

The above evidences highlighted that handling and managing the problems of children with special educational needs are problematic in the absence of teachers proper knowledge regarding the particular condition and behavior management strategies. All the evidences of teachers indicate that the causes of behavior problems are multifaceted.

Behavior Management Strategies

The responses of participants highlighted that the majority of them used verbal reprimands to control the behaviors of students. A representative responses of participants as follows.

“I think we know shouting at the child is not good. But what my experience was it is only the method could be used to control behaviors of relevant children..”

“I believe we have to use verbal punishment to some extent to reduce the power of behaviors and not to happen it again...”

According to the responses of the participant, still they tend to use verbal reprimands to control the behavior, particularly to reduce the severity and to break the continuity of the behaviors. However, there were some respondents who used other alternative methods to manage the behavior problems of children. Time out, planned ignorance, giving responsibilities, retain the child after school, change the environment that elicit the behavior problems are some of them.

However, three teachers stated that they use ‘time out’ method to discipline students, particularly students who show aggressive behaviors. One teacher stated that *‘It is called as ‘thinking chair’ which I use to separate the child for a while to give him a chance to be calm and quiet.’*

The child should leave alone up to 2-3 minutes to be effective the time out method. Further child who shows unnecessary behaviors were given responsibilities, which was perceived by the teachers as an effective method without harming the child physically or verbally. Some teachers used planned ignorance as a mean of reducing behavior problems of children. She stated that

‘That child is hot tempered, he is screaming, throwing and doing lots of unnecessary behaviors, then remove all the dangerous objects from the class room and I implied him that I ignore him and let the child to release his tantrum.. After some times child is getting recover and approaching to me’.

She further stated that to make sure the safety of other children before using planned ignorance.

However the fact which should be highlighted that, teachers do not have a systematic knowledge in managing the behavior problems of children. The strategies taken by the teachers were influenced by the trial and error methods and /or observational learning methods.

Moreover some teachers used punishments as a mean of controlling behavior problems of students due to the complexities in today’s classroom such as examination oriented education system, large classroom and time constraints. One teacher stated that,

I’m so fed up with this lifestyle.. See how many children in the classroom, we are struggling... to manage their all problems while teaching to show best results....then we use easiest ways to control behaviors...that is punishment but at last feeling frustration..

The fact that the above quotation highlighted is that, the strategies to control behaviors of children brings an emotional impact on teachers. Most of teacher students are frustrated and fed up with the behavior problems and certain strategies to control the behaviors of children with special educational needs.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate the teachers’ experiences and views regarding behavior problems of children with special educational needs. The finding indicated that children with special educational needs display different types of behavior problems including verbal aggression, physical aggression and off task behaviors in the inclusive set up. Under the aforementioned types various behavior problems which range from self harm to socially inappropriate and off task behaviors are shown by children with special educational needs in inclusive set up. This finding is supported by the finding of Ali, Abdullah & Majid (2014), Jacobson (2013) Male (2003) who highlighted that problematic behaviors such as self harm, off task behaviors; not paying attention, not following directions displayed by children with Special Educational Needs in inclusive setup. The study found that causes for challenging behaviors cannot be analyzed by looking at one factor, instead multiple factors affecting to develop behavior problems of children with special needs. This finding is supported by the finding of Jacobson (2013) who highlighted that the source of problematic behaviors may be different according to the developmental problem, family and peer related problems. Further, it was found, according to the experiences of teachers, most easiest and effective way of controlling the behavior problems were using reprimands which are supported by the finding of Ali et al(2014).The result indicated that some of the teachers did not use effective strategies and believed that the children with behavior problems were additional burden for them and other students. This finding is aligned with the finding of Westling (2009) who found that effective strategies have not used by teachers to manage the problematic behavior of children and viewed

that challenging behaviors as having an adverse effect on them. The finding of the studies (Male, 2003; Ntinis et al, 2006) conform the finding of the current study which highlighted that behavior problems bring teachers the feeling of stress, frustration and other similar types of negative emotional traits.

The finding indicated that small minority of teachers used some effective strategies such as time out, planned ignorance; giving responsibilities so on and so forth as a mean of managing challenging behaviors. However, it was evident by the study teachers do not have a systematic knowledge on managing challenging behaviors, instead the strategies utilized as a result of trial and error methods.

Conclusion

The knowledge regarding the nature of behavior problems of children with special educational needs is equally important as the knowledge regarding the condition of the child with special needs for teacher in inclusive set up. According to the finding of the study most teachers experience different types of behavior problems of children with special educational needs. But they do not have proper knowledge, skill and attitudes towards the challenging behaviors of children with special educational needs. As a result of that, teachers tend to use ineffective behavior management strategies towards children with special educational needs. On the other hand present nature of regular classrooms and issues within the child, education system and family background have been negatively affected for the efforts made by teachers to discipline the students. Therefore the finding of this study will be a base to equip teachers regarding the behavior management in the inclusive classroom setup through short term long term teacher education/ training programmes and develop a proper intervention programme and counseling programmes to identify and manage the behavior problems of children with special educational needs and families as early as possible.

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