

# INTERVENTION STRATEGIES OF REGULAR ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS FOR STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

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## Abstract

This study sought to explore intervention strategies employed by teachers in teaching pupils with behavioral problems through qualitative research using phenomenological design. To gather the data, the researcher conducted semi-formal virtual interviews with four teachers. The data gathered through the interviews were triangulated with document analysis of the pupil's behavioral logbook. Three themes, collaborating with others to have a common rule, collaborating with others to have a calmer, and collaborating with others to have an angel, emerged from the study. Based on the findings, managing student behavior is not the sole responsibility of the classroom teacher; rather, it needs the cooperation of everyone in the school. Collaboration as an intervention strategy in managing behavior and teaching children with behavioral problems is a powerful tool. The study recommends exploring strategies in other grade levels and including classroom observation to triangulate data gathered.

**Keywords:** Behavioral Problems, Collaboration, Intervention Strategies.

## Introduction

Behavioral problem (BP) is manifested by children exhibiting maladjustment indulging in behavior problems such as nail-biting, anti-social or unfriendly acts [20]. On the other hand, Döpfneras cited in Spilles [30] described pupils with BP as characterized by oppositional, aggressive, destructive, impulsive, and hyperkinetic behavior, leading to considerable suffering and significant impairments in different areas of life. These characteristics lead to significant impairments of a pupil or inability to perform well in social, academic, or studying functions [19].

Despite their lack of training, teachers used a variety of personal strategies that had worked for them in different settings [7]. However, dealing with children with BP requires implementing intervention strategies. Furthermore, effective intervention techniques are required to attain and maintain positive youth development outcomes [6]. Evans et al. (2012) [9] identified three major strategies that teachers used, which include academic support, environmental support, affective behavior/psycho educational support.

Academic support refers to activities delivered outside the standard classroom to assist pupils [32]. One of which is through peer assessment- technique which provides pupils with a better learning environment in which higher-order thinking is encouraged and led by evaluation [31]. Challenging behavior and academic failure often occur in elementary school [1, 26, 27].

Environmental support refers to the classroom and social environment that a teacher develops and fosters. Pupils who find it hard to receive environmental support are withdrawn or isolated, disruptive, and unsettling, hyperactive, and lacking concentration; moreover, they have undeveloped social skills [7].

Affective behavior support refers to the assistance provided to pupils who have or are at risk of developing emotional and behavioral disorders or who have BP. These pupils pose a significant challenge to educators, resulting in poor academic and social outcomes [34].

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Emotional and BP displayed by young children represent a great concern for teachers [25]. Though the strategies above are proven effective by teachers, it is preferable to conduct a thorough study to make it more robust and adaptive [7].

According to Nanwani [22], out of 30 children in the Philippines, over six were undiagnosed and exhibited various BP. Moreover, Millapre [21] pointed out that classroom discipline remains to be one of the most challenging problems in primary education in the Philippines. Furthermore, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) published a full report, on Out of School Children (OOSC), in which undiagnosed learning disabilities were observed as one of the prime reasons for pupils dropping out in grades 1 through 6 [3]. UNICEF reported that 2.85 million children aged 5-15 were out of school due to the same cause of dropouts - untreated learning difficulties [12].

Though Evans [9] focused a lot on pupils with emotional disturbance, their definition is like the characteristics of undiagnosed children with BP. Because pupils with emotional disturbance and BP are taught across the continuum, it is essential to investigate what strategies teachers use to address their challenges [9].

According to a study [2], handling a varied group of pupils is still a problem in Philippine rural schools. Though there is DepEd Order no.18s. 2015 [8] that helps a Filipino child with BP, which contains the DepEd Guidelines and Procedures on the Management of Children-at-Risk (CAR) and Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), this focuses on children who in one way or another was able to commit an act against the law and not on the typical BP that a pupil may exhibit. As a result, further study is needed to find specific strategies to help children at risk for BP and to achieve better outcomes and change their behavior [35]. The need to understand the teaching practices [18] and the strategies [35] for helping pupils with BP develop their potential prompted this study.

## **Research Objective and Significance**

This study aimed to determine the administrative competence of the school heads in elementary schools in terms of school leadership, Parent Involvement and Community Partnership, School Management and Operation, Personal and Professional Attributes, and Interpersonal Effectiveness.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The study used phenomenological research design which an approach to research that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon. Groenewald [11]

illustrates the design with the different steps which involved consent, interviews, and data analysis. The phenomenon and the context in which it takes place together serve as interpretational factors for us to gain an understanding of the participants' worlds and/or the studied events and incidents [10].

### **Research Participants and Setting**

The study was conducted in a private laboratory elementary school. The participants were chosen based on purposive sampling which is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest [23]. To ensure that the correct information about the intervention strategies for pupils with BP will be gathered, the following were the criteria for selecting the participants: the teacher (1) experienced teaching a student with BP, and (2) is willing to be a part of the research. Out of the five teachers identified, four teachers with pupils with BP agreed to participate in the study.

### **Data Gathering Tool**

In the gathering of data, an aid memoir was used which composed of the following questions: In your experience, what intervention strategies did you use to manage pupils with oppositional behaviour, aggressive behaviour, destructive behaviour, impulsive behaviour, hyperkinetic behaviour?; How did you manage pupils with significant impairments or learning difficulties in the different fields?; What instructional support did you provide to your pupils with BP in order for them to achieve and sustain their expected learning competencies?; How did you promote the holistic development of pupils with BP? Follow-up questions were asked during the interview to clarify vague information. The conversations were audio recorded. Aside from the aid memoir, the behavioural logbooks of teachers for their pupils with BP was used to triangulate the gathered data during the interview.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The researcher asked permission from the school principal to interview the teachers and to access the behavioral logbooks. After which, the researcher virtually interviewed four teachers. The logbook was borrowed from the assistant principal's office, analyzed through note taking, and returned to the office on the same day. The data from the interview and the logbook were triangulated. Methodological triangulation involves using more than one method and may adopt within-method or between-method strategies [5]. An in-depth interview and data analysis were used in this study.

### **Data Analysis**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the data. IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of personal lived experience, the meaning of experience to

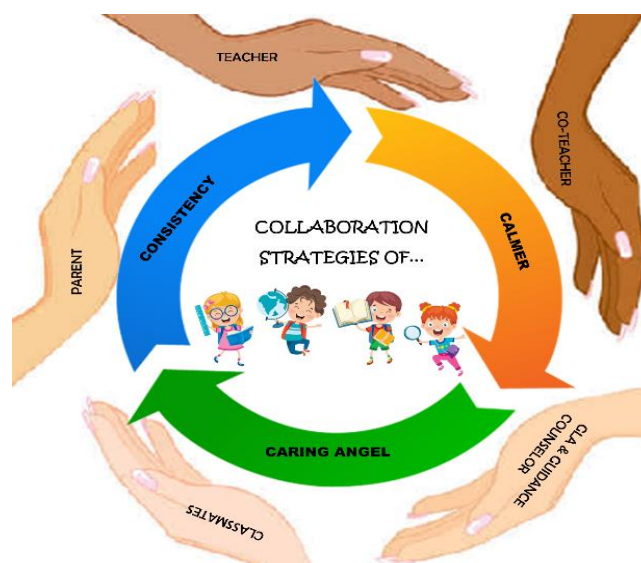
participants, and how participants make sense of that experience [29]. Like the analysis used by De Guzman and Tan [4] and Fazli [10], the recorded interviews were transcribed in a verbatim manner. The significant statements were subjected to phenomenological reduction using cool and warm analysis. Through a repertory grid, the cool analysis involves the analysis of the respondents' significant statements and actions taken in the different incidents in their classes from the behavioral logbook which were placed in the first column. The second column had the categorical divisions of similar statements and actions taken. The statements served as bases in the conduct of the warm analysis where data categories were formulated, and themes were generated and were placed in the third column

of the grid. The themes that emerged were identified and represented into a simulacrum to be used as a guide by teachers in dealing with pupils with BP.

## Findings and Discussion

The teachers described the pupils with BP as those who are often given several warnings in terms of repeated and continuous misbehaviour. The intervention strategies utilized by the teachers were classified into three major themes, namely "Collaborating with others to have consistency," "Collaborating with others to have a calmer," and "Collaborating with others to have a caring angel." These themes were used to come up with the figure shown below.

Figure 1: 3C's of Collaboration



The three Cs of collaboration are the themes that emerged - Consistency, Calmer and Caring Angel. The five hands represent the teacher and the different people such as the co-teachers, GLA, Guidance Counsellor, parents, and other pupils with whom the teacher collaborates while the circle represents the environment, they are creating for the children to have holistic growth with the use of the three Cs. It further explains that a child's learning and development is the responsibility of everyone. The children represent the pupils with BP who are happy because they are included in the regular class. The arrows represent the continuous use of collaboration strategies by the teachers to prevent and minimize the misbehaviours of the pupils.

### Theme 1: Collaborating with others to have Consistency

Collaborating with others to have consistency refers to the unity of the teachers in implementing specific rules in the classroom that will promote proper behaviour.

The teachers used the terms **Tough Love and Firmness** in explaining their approach to pupils with oppositional behaviour. A teacher alluded that "Tough Love" is used in the grade level to earn the pupil's respect. Another teacher relayed a similar approach in which consistency is used to discourage the pupil from exhibiting oppositional behaviour. Thus, being tough and consistent in implementing rules for the child to follow is essential in maintaining good behaviour.

When it comes to **Rewards and Consequences**, the teachers mentioned using common consequences such as not letting the pupil join the group activity or removal of stickers or stars which they achieved for being behaved, to address pupils with hyperkinetic behaviour. The other participants also mentioned giving the child another task that he/she will do alone or with the teacher, such as overseeing the group or monitoring finished tasks. Pupils find group work enjoyable and stimulating, giving them a platform of belonging [13]. When the desired

stimulus, such as group work is eliminated from the experiences of a pupil due to undesired behaviour, it is more likely that the behaviour will not occur again [28].

Academic achievement and appropriate behaviour are encouraged through extrinsic reinforcers [15]. Teachers use smiley on the board or a simple “very good” or even just allowing the child to do what he loves for a while, like walking. Teachers find that it helps the child feel better with the good actions that he does and is more likely to repeat the said action. Teachers also conducted Parent Conferences. They use this strategy for pupils with destructive behaviour, especially when an item is destroyed. The conferences are usually done after classes and necessary consequences stipulated in the pupil’s handbook are administered.

Consistency in the implementation of common rules was also seen in the actions taken in the pupil’s behavioural logbook.

Similar with the study of Patrick [24] the school conducts an orientation week. During this time, the teacher adviser of each discusses the school rules as well as the consequences in case these rules are not followed. Doing such will allow the child to become aware of the possible consequences to bad behaviour and be able to get used to the proper behaviour in the classroom. In addition, most teachers use this time to know the pupil better.

After a grading period, the teachers meet for a conduct deliberation. They discuss each child’s behaviour in class. They also take this meeting as an opportunity to share the effective techniques and strategies they used that work best for the child and possible planned activities that they will let the child do for improvement.

### ***Theme 2: Collaborating with others to have a calmer***

Collaborating with others to have a calmer emerges when teachers deal with a pupil exhibiting signs of anger, aggressiveness, and impulsive behaviour. Most of these teachers reported the presence of a co-teacher, a Grade Level Adviser (GLA), or a Guidance Counsellor (GC) who will help them pacify the situation, and even process the situation by talking to the parents on the specific incident that happened in class. A GLA is tasked in seeing to it that the rules and regulations in their specific grade level are properly implemented by the teachers and are followed by the pupils. They also schedule conferences with a pupil/parent when needed and give written reprimands or suspensions for non-adherence to rules. A GC monitors the behavioural progress of the child. His/ Her task includes providing the advisers with homeroom guidance activities to reinforce good behaviour. The GC also

conducts counselling sessions with a child if needed or requested.

In collaborating with others, teachers would usually have the child go for a modified “Time Out” or a “Talk” with the aid of a calmer who may be a co-teacher, the GLA, or a GC.

Wolf [33] described this kind of time-out as isolation, which involves the removal of the child from the reinforcing environment to a place where, at least theoretically, there are no reinforcers available to the child. However, the teachers in this study instead of just removing the child from the room, included a short talk with a calmer that may help pacify the situation.

Pupils misbehaving are brought to the GLA who acts as the overseer, as they are given a chance to finish the task, they were unable to do in the classroom because of their misbehaviour. The child sees this situation of being under the care of the GLA because of his/her bad actions since he/she is separated from the class for a certain period. Such would give the child a reflection of not repeating the action as he would not want to be in time-out again. Hence, the GLA needs to point out that he/she belongs in class and should be with his classmates, but there was a need to send him out because of negative behaviour.

Two teachers, however, stated that before bringing the child to the GLA, there were also times when the child was brought to the faculty room first. The co-teacher then would talk to the child and try to calm him/her so that the teacher in charge could still go back to the class and continue with their lesson. Teacher collaboration in getting desired pupil behaviour is essential. It is better if the teacher who witnessed the incident talks to the pupil to immediately process and give feedback.

The teachers had the same actions taken in the behavioural logbook wherein they conducted a conference with the child immediately while another teacher assisted them or had a conference with the help of the GLA. They also conducted conferences with the parent after classes.

### ***Theme 3: Collaborating with others to have a caring angel***

This theme refers to the “buddy system” that the teachers adapted to have help coming from someone that the child feels a bit closer to. The teachers refer to them as the child’s angel or his buddy. According to Laghi [17], buddy approach constitutes an efficacious classroom arrangement for building friendships. As such, the participants in this study stated that they would often assign responsible pupils that the child likes and respects. They mentioned the importance of “Seat Plans” and “Tutors” for a child interacting with an angel/buddy.

To address aggressive behaviour, the teachers would consider the seat plan, and planning rules would include putting the things or classmates that would trigger bad behaviour away from the child. They would often put those classmates that can act as the child's angel beside him/her or if not near him/her. This would work for children who have the tendency to be impulsive or hyperkinetic. A teacher also stated that the angels or buddies can identify when a classmate is about to be impulsive or aggressive. Thus, these classmates try to stop the child.

Kasanen, Rätty, and Snellman [16], who did chemistry analysis, revealed that a pupil seated next to a person he likes avoids being distracted by looking in the direction of this person and can concentrate better. Similarly, the teacher participants in this study would place the pupil with BP beside a pupil he/she likes, who is also responsible for reminding him/her to behave appropriately.

The angels can also act as the child's tutor, especially for pupils who exhibit difficulty in instructional support or academics due to BP. A teacher mentioned that there are times, when the angels' become tutors to their classmates. The adviser ensures that the classmate is also comfortable helping his seatmate and sees him as a friend and not a burden.

The teachers create an environment that promotes holistic growth for the pupils like that of a family. The teachers deemed it essential then that a child be always considered as part of the class regardless of the behaviour he/she exhibits.

The teachers emphasized collaboration as a striking strategy in the intervention of pupils with BP. Collaboration transpires when they set rules, ask for assistance from a co-teacher, GLA or a GC, a parent, or even ask for assistance from one of their pupils.

Overall, the study shows that the success of the behavior management of students that eventually helps in their school progress is the collaborative culture in the school. The Collaborative learning theory is rooted in Lev Vygotsky's idea of the Zone of Proximal Development. The findings in this proved that positive punishment weakens students' misbehaviors [14].

## Conclusion

The three Cs of collaboration emphasize helping one another to manage student behaviour. Managing a pupil's behaviour is not the sole responsibility of the classroom teacher; instead, it needs the cooperation of everyone in the school. Collaboration as an intervention strategy in managing the behaviour and teaching children with BP is a powerful method. The collaboration strategy gives teachers the feeling

of assurance and support in managing the pupils' behaviour and helping them learn.

The teacher's behavioural management is closely related to Skinner's theory of Behaviourism specifically, operant extinction which involves withholding the presentation of consequences while maintaining a given behaviour. Pupils with BP need the support of every member of the school. There is a stronger impact on managing pupils with BP when everyone in the school is involved.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this manuscript by the authors.

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