

CLASSROOM UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOURS AND STRATEGIES USED FOR CONTROLLING THEM AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

DADA, E.M (MRS)

Institute of Education, Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti

OKUNADE, H.F (MRS)

*Department of Educational Foundations and Management
Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University
Ado Ekiti*

Abstract

The goal of education goes beyond making individuals acquire knowledge and skills but it is also to make individuals worthy in character. In recent times, there has been a general outcry about undesirable behaviours among children in the society at large and particularly in schools. This study therefore sought to identify undesirable behaviours common among primary school pupils and the strategies used by teachers to control them in Ado Ekiti metropolis in Ekiti State. A descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted and the population consisted of all public primary school teachers in the metropolis. 200 teachers randomly selected formed the sample for the study. The instrument used was a self-designed questionnaire which was validated and a correlation co-efficient of 0.94 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance. The result obtained showed that undesirable behaviours common among primary school pupils in the study area include bullying, excessive noisemaking in the classroom, use of foul languages, and lying among others. Strategies used by teachers to control them include, corporal punishment, time-out reward for good behaviours and so on. Teachers' years of experience was also found to be significant on the kind of strategies they used. Appropriate recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: Undesirable Behaviours, strategies for controlling undesirable behaviours, behaviour modification, standards of pupils' behaviours.

Introduction

The issue of undesirable behaviours among children today is a cause of concern among parents, teachers, governments and even children themselves. This is because in recent times there has been a general outcry about undesirable behaviours among children in the society at large and particularly in schools. Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf (2003) comment that, a common persistent problem among teachers, and perhaps the greatest fear of new teachers, is student misbehavior. This problem has also been found to be responsible for many teachers leaving the teaching profession.

There is the belief among experts that there is a link between behaviour and learning and as such behaviour should not be considered in isolation from teaching and learning (Grigg, 2010). Undesirable behaviours are believed to have the tendency to impede learning rather than promote learning. Other terms used to refer to undesirable behaviours include, abnormal

behaviour, misbehavior, inappropriate behaviour, disruptive behaviour, among others. Efforts have therefore been made to develop strategies that can be used to control undesirable behaviours. To this end there is what experts call behaviour modification theories. These are used as guides to control/modify children's behaviour.

It is worthy of note that the causes of many undesirable behaviours in schools are beyond the scope of the school. Factors such as poverty, lack of social support and parenting patterns contribute a lot to pupils' behaviours. It might therefore be difficult for teachers to influence such factors but they can seek for ways of controlling them, especially in the classroom. Undesirable behaviours can impact on the efficiency and productivity of the class in a situation where the classroom teacher is unable to maintain effective classroom control. Some common undesirable behaviours among pupils in the classroom include noise making, failing to do assignments, not paying attention, chewing or eating during lessons, missing classes, bullying and lying among others (Machumu, 2011).

The notion of whether behaviour is good or bad is not static because it varies from place to place and from time to time. This is why Grigg (2010) comments that one of the difficulties in assessing the extent of disruptive behaviour in schools is that it is context-specific. Johnston, Halocha and Chapter (2007) also opine that good behaviour in children is not a fixed or definite thing, anymore than the good life is an agreed notion among adults. What we require of children will differ from one society or age to the other; therefore our present expectations must be seen as temporary rather than certain solutions. This is why there have been concerns about standards of pupils' behaviour. This notwithstanding, there are certain behaviours that are actually undesirable especially in the classroom irrespective of the place, the time and even the culture. Therefore concerns about undesirable behaviours in schools are being expressed all over the world today.

A teacher will have to engage in good classroom practices and management in order to control undesirable behaviours among his/her pupils. Evertson and Emmer (2009) comment that for a teacher to sustain good behaviour throughout the year, he/she will have to be actively involved in maintaining pupils' cooperation and compliance with necessary classroom norms, rules and procedures. Therefore, they suggest four important guidelines a teacher can use to prevent classroom undesirable behaviours which are:

- Monitor pupils' behavior and academic progress carefully.
- Be consistent in the use of procedures, rules and consequences.
- Deal with inappropriate behavior promptly.
- Build positive climate with an emphasis on reinforcing appropriate behaviours.

An over the world, punishment in one form or the other is used to control undesirable behaviours. However, it is used extensively and freely in some parts of the world than others (Machumu, 2011). This is with particular reference to Africa where corporal punishment is still widely used. According to him, the way punishment is used in Africa is due largely to factors like, teachers do not know any better ways due to low level of education, there are no legal measures in existence to restrain the use of punishment and there is hardly any law prohibiting teachers from ill-treating pupils. If there are such laws, they remain unenforced. It should be noted that corporal punishment which takes the form of caning, kicking, slapping, punching and even throwing pupils against the walls is still widely used all over African schools and even homes despite the existence of certain circular laws and guidelines of corporal punishment in schools.

Strategies that can be used to prevent or control undesirable behaviours in the classroom are many. They range from mere warning to all forms of corporal punishments. The ability of a teacher to use any of these strategies and of course the appropriate one depends on a lot of factors which range from the teachers' personality, years of experience, the class size, the teachers' qualification to the teachers' gender. Johnston, Halocha and Chater (2007) comment that less experienced teachers can learn to go beyond merely imitating what they think they see (techniques and rules) and can learn that techniques work only when backed by inner authority and rules are worthwhile only when supported by understanding and more experienced teachers can understand that what works in any given situation need to be professionally discussed and shared.

This factor underscores the need for teachers to be properly trained especially at the level of teacher preparation/training while in training institutions in good behavior management techniques and skills. This include training teachers on how to apply procedures and rules consistently, handling classroom problems promptly using accepted approach, monitoring disruptive behaviours until they stop among others.

Previous studies on undesirable behaviours have revealed that undesirable behaviours found among pupils in the classroom include, lying, fighting, stealing, cheating, talking without permission, chewing or eating during lessons among others (Gulec and Balcik, 2011; Magela 1986). According to Winzer(2002), behavioural disorders in children occur among the rich, the poor, the gifted, the intellectually disabled, and members of all racial and ethnic groups. It is also noted that children rarely can decide for themselves that they are behaviourally disordered except their parents and teachers determine that. This study therefore sought to find out the kind of undesirable behaviour common among pupils in the study area and the strategies used by their teachers to control such behaviours.

Statement of the Problem

The manifestation of undesirable behaviors among pupils these days seem to be on the increase. Going by media reports, official reports and education stakeholders' comments, there seem to be an increase in acts of violence among pupils in recent times. These include antisocial behaviours and delinquent behaviours among children and these have brought about unprecedented level of juvenile delinquency in our societies all over the world. Could it be that teachers are not able to control such undesirable behaviours or that the strategies are not effective? An observation of what goes on in our schools today seem to reveal that undesirable behaviours manifested by pupils are to a large extent, either completely unchanged or ineffectively changed. This is inimical to the system because undesirable behaviours in the classroom have the capacity to impede the teaching and learning process if not properly checked.

The goal of education is beyond making individuals acquire knowledge and skills but also to make individuals worthy in character. The most conspicuous evidence of classroom management is the kind of behaviours exhibited by the pupils. The moment pupils are seen to be unruly in the classroom, the teacher is adjudged to lack classroom control/ management skills. Thus, this study aimed at assessing the kind of undesirable behaviours manifested by primary school pupils and the strategies used by the teachers to control them in the study area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

- 1) What are classroom undesirable behaviours prevalent among primary school pupils in the study area?
- 2) What are the strategies used by teachers to control these undesirable behaviours among these pupils?
- 3) What are the possible influences of classroom undesirable behaviours on the teaching and learning process?

Hypothesis

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between teachers' years of experience and the strategies they used for controlling undesirable behaviours in the classrooms.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive research design of the survey type. 200 primary school teachers were randomly selected as sample from the entire population of primary school teachers in Ado Ekiti metropolis. The instrument used was a self designed questionnaire titled. "Questionnaire on Prevalent Classroom Undesirable Behaviours and the Strategies Used for Controlling Them". The instrument was subjected to face and content validity and the test-re-test method of reliability was carried out. The person product moment correlation was used to analyse it and the reliability co-efficient obtained was 0.94 at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results of the study are presented based on the research questions and the hypothesis for the study.

Research Question 1: What are classroom undesirable behaviours prevalent among primary school pupils in the study area?

Table I: Descriptive analysis showing classroom undesirable behaviours prevalent among primary school pupils in the study area.

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Bullying is prevalent among pupils in the classroom	122	61	78	39
2	Excessive noisemaking is common among pupils in the classroom	170	85	30	15
3	Use of foul language is rampant among pupils in the classroom	129	64.5	71	35.5
4	Slandering is common among pupils in the classroom	114	57	86	43
5	Stealing is common among pupils in the classroom	145	72.5	55	27.5
6	Lying is rampant among pupils in the classroom	154	77	46	23
7	Fighting do occur among pupils in the classroom often	156	78	44	22
8	Truancy is common among pupils in the classroom	118	59	82	41
9	Disobedience to classroom rules is common among pupils	147	73.5	53	26.5
10	Violent acts are common among pupils in the classroom	130	65	70	35
11	Disruptive acts are common among pupils in the classroom	133	66.5	67	33.5
12	Rudeness is common among pupils in the classroom	147	73.5	53	26.5
13	Destructive acts are common among pupils in the classroom	153	76.5	47	23.5
14	Lateness to the classroom is rampant among pupils	149	74.5	51	25.5

Result from table I shows that quite over 50% of the respondents agree that all the itemized undesirable behaviours (1-14) are common among primary school pupils in the study area. That is, those who agree range between 57% and 85%. This shows that buying, excessive noise making, use of foul languages, slandering, stealing, lying, fighting, truancy, disobedience, violent acts, disruptive acts, rudeness, destructive acts and lateness are common among the pupils.

Research Question 2:

What are the method used by teachers to control classroom undesirable behaviours among the pupils in the study area?

Table II: Descriptive analysis showing methods of correcting classroom undesirable behaviours among pupils.

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Agree	%	Disagree	%
15	I use time out (isolation) technique in correcting undesirable behaviours among my pupils	125	62.5	75	37.5
16	I use corporal punishments to instill discipline among my pupils	131	65.5	69	34.5
17	I use satiation (need for something good) as a means of removing undesirable behaviours	137	68.5	63	31.5
18	I use reinforcement (praise) of good behaviour to curb undesirable behaviour among my pupils	158	79	42	21
19	I use reward for good behaviour in controlling undesirable behaviour among my pupils	150	75	50	25
20	I use extinction technique as an means of dealing with undesirable behaviour among my pupils	131	65.5	69	34.5

Table II shows that between 62% and 79% of the respondents use the itemized methods of controlling undesirable behaviours among pupils in the study area. This indicates that isolation, corporal punishment, satiation technique, reinforcement of good behaviour, reward for good behaviour, extinction techniques and token economy are used by teachers in the study area.

Research Question 3:

What are the possible influence of classroom undesirable behaviours on the teaching an learning process?

Table III: Descriptive analysis showing the possible influence of classroom undesirable behaviours on the teaching and learning process in primary schools

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		Agree	%	Disagree	%
21	Classroom undesirable behaviours impedes learning among primary school pupils	169	84.5	31	15.5
22	Classroom undesirable behaviours make teaching difficult on the part of the teacher	168	84	32	16
23	Classroom undesirable behaviours interrupts the teaching-learning processes	161	80.5	39	19.5
24	Classroom undesirable behaviour results into negative interaction among primary school pupils	163	81.5	37	18.5
25	Controlling classroom undesirable behaviours consumes time and this has a negative influence on the teaching and learning process in the long run.	166	83	34	17

Table III reveals that between 80.5% and 84% of the respondents affirm that the listed possible influence of classroom undesirable behaviour on the teaching and learning processes are true. This implies that the possible influence if classroom undesirable behaviours on the teaching and learning process are enormous and negative. These include the fact that these undesirable

behaviours could impede learning on the part of the pupils and even make teaching difficult on the part of the teacher.

Hypothesis I

There is no significant relationship between teachers' years of experience and the strategies used for controlling undesirable behaviours in the classroom.

Table IV: One way ANOVA of teachers' years of experience and techniques of controlling undesirable behaviours among pupils in the classrooms.

Source	Ss	df	Ms	f Cal	f-table
Between groups	1609.857	4	402.464		
Within groups	29334.763	195	150.435		
				2.675	2.42
Total	30944.620	199			

Table IV reveals that f-cal (2.675) is greater than f-table (2.42) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between teachers' years of experience and their strategies methods of controlling undesirable behaviours in the classroom.

Discussion

Findings from this study revealed that classroom undesirable behaviours prevalent among primary school pupils in the study area include bullying, excessive noisemaking, and use of foul languages, stealing, fighting, lying, truancy and violent acts among others. This is in line with the claims of Machumu (2011); Magda (1986) and Gulec and Balcik (2011) who in their different studies found that such undesirable behaviours were prevalent among pupils.

The study further found that strategies used in controlling these undesirable behaviours among pupils include time-out, corporal punishment, reinforcement of good behaviour and extinction technique by the teachers. This also corroborates the submission of Grig (2010) that there are a plethora of strategies relating to dealing with poor behaviour among which we can find the above listed but it should be noted that a strategy that works in a certain situation/circumstance may not work in another. It therefore lies on the onus of the teacher to determine the strategy that works in a particular situation.

On the influence of undesirable behaviours on the teaching and learning process, it was in the opinion of the respondents that a lot of negative influences could result which include the fact that undesirable behaviours could impede learning on the part of the pupils, could result into negative interaction among the pupils, make teaching difficult for teachers among others. Evertson and Emmer (2009) comment that if student engage in undesirable behaviours for an extended period of time without being checked, their learning is likely to be adversely affected. The study also reveals that there is a significant relationship between teachers' years of experience and the strategies they use in controlling undesirable behaviours in the classroom.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that there are certain undesirable behaviours manifested by primary school pupils. As to this, teachers use certain strategies to control these undesirable behaviours. Also, undesirable behaviours in the classroom, if not properly checked can impact negatively on the teaching and learning process. Teachers' years of experience is also seen to relate to the strategies that teachers use in controlling undesirable behaviours.

In view of the above, it is recommended that efforts should be made by all stakeholder in the education enterprise to reduce to the barest minimum (if not totally eradicated) the

occurrence of undesirable behaviours in the classroom. Both experienced and newly employed teachers should be trained on effective strategies for controlling classroom undesirable behaviours so that their decision on the choice of strategy is not just based on impulse. This is essentially important at the pre-service teacher education stage. Substantial content of behaviour management strategies should be taught at the pre-service teacher education level. Opportunities should also be provided for stakeholders' forum in order to discuss the issue of undesirable behaviours in children as this will enhance home – school collaboration in checking the menace of undesirable behaviours in schools.

REFERENCES

- Cruikshank, D.R, Jenkins D.B & Metcalf K.K (2003) *The Act of Teaching*. New York: McGraw Hill Companies, Inc
- Grigg, R. (2010) *Becoming an Outstanding Primary School Teacher*. England: Pearson Education Limited
- Johnson, J, Halocha, J., & Chater, M. (2007) *Developing Teaching Skills in the Primary School*. England: Open University Press.
- Evertson. C.M. & Emmer, E.T., (2009) *Classroom Management for Elementary Teachers*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Winzer, M. (2002) *Children with Exceptionalities in Canadian Classrooms*. Ontario: Pearson Education Canada Inc.
- Gulec, S. & Balcik, E.G., (2011) *Undesirable Behaviours Elementary School Classroom Teachers Encounter in the Classroom and their reasons*. Bulgarian Journal of Science and Education Policy. Vol. 5(2) Pg 163-177
- Magda, S. (1986) "lying As a problem Behaviour in Children: A Review" Clinical Psychology Review, (Vol. 6) 267-289