Exploring the Infringing Behaviours of Students inside a University Classroom:
A research study from the Teacher's vantage point

Rakhshinda Jabeen, Shaista Hassan Chashoo, Dr.Najmus Sarifa
English Language Centre, College of Science King Khalid University, Abha , Saudi Arabia
rwahla7@gmail.com, shaistachashoo@yahoo.com, najmus.sarifa@gmail.com

Abstract: The infringing behaviour of students is defined as a set of undesired and objectionable behaviour that hampers the flow of teaching-learning activities inside the classroom. The student's problematic behaviour is something related to the student's disposition and temperament. This research intends to investigate how university teachers perceive student's misbehaviour and throws light on the underlying causes behind these undesired behavioural traits. This research is based on a descriptive survey. In this research, 50 teachers teaching undergraduate students in various departments of King Khalid University have participated. The authors have collected the data manually by filling two sets of a questionnaire. The result of the study shows: what are some common inappropriate behaviour that a teacher encounters, and why a student displays various types of misbehaviours? The findings of this study will help to develop the establishment of a well-managed classroom.

Keywords: classroom management, disrupting behaviour, infringing behaviour, misbehave, problematic behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Undesirable behaviour is one of the attributes related to a student's personality that influences both the class and the fellow students negatively. The students often show objectionable behavioural traits inside the classroom. These undesirable behaviours cause a disturbance inside the class and further hinder the learning process. It is not only annoying for the teachers but also creates a compromising situation for the learners that makes the whole learning environment irritating, exasperating, and tiresome. In such cases, the teachers need to be active and apply classroom management strategies that can affect student's behaviour and improve the functioning of the class. Maintenance of discipline in the classroom is a challenging issue. If encouraged in classrooms, then students will learn more etiquette, politeness, and will acquire self-control. The most common behaviour problems and traits noted in the students are disobedience, rudeness, non-attentiveness, daydreaming, and at times rule-breaking activities like unpunctuality, not completing the tasks, and verbal aggression are also present. It is necessary to highlight that all the misconducts by the students are not always serious. The misbehaviours of students are mild to severe. The authors have included such mild to severe classroom behavioural items in this study. Talking to classmates and not completing homework are mild misconducts. Whereas showing

rudeness to the teacher and disturbing the classroom setting is counted as problem behaviours or disruptive behaviours. Sometimes the misbehaviours like bullying other students, verbal abuse and quarrelling with teachers are also noted inside the classroom. These are serious and challenging behaviours. Whatever type of misconduct is, it irritates the teacher, and the learning process slows down, and sometimes the learning outcomes are meeker. To overcome certain situations, the teachers need to be active, resourceful, and build a friendly student-teacher relationship to involve the learners in the learning process and guide them to work as a team. This study sets forward the teacher's observations on what are the common behavioural problems seen in university students and what are the possible causes behind it. The researchers have explored the teachers' perspective in detail and further suggested some remedies to cope with student's infringing behaviour inside the classroom.

Problematic behaviours and its repercussion in the classroom – a review

In an educational institution, a teacher needs to employ proper classroom management approaches to avoid **undesired** behaviours on the part of the students. Education is not only about bookish knowledge but also a mode for the students to restore positive behaviours. According to Özer, Bokurt, and Tuncay [1], Education focuses to reiterate unacceptable student's behaviours and assist students to procure positive behaviours. So, to achieve such educational goals, it's important to create an ideal learning environment, which a person can accomplish through the positive attitude shown by every member in the classroom.

While discussing problematic behaviours, it is necessary to know what behaviour is and what underlies misbehaviour. Johnson [2] defines behaviour as the action, reaction, and function of a person directed by his or her motives. Aydin [3] stressed that individual needs are the key to human behaviour. These needs form simulations to fulfil them, which further create motivation, and this motivation drives a person to show certain behavioural traits.

Aydin [4] said student's misbehaviours are the ones that hamper teaching and learning activities in class and influence it negatively. While talking about student's problematic behaviours Sun and Shek [5] mentioned that problem behaviours are the behaviours that include rule-breaking, defying the implied norms or beliefs, being unsuitable in classroom environments, and distressing teaching and learning. Problematic behaviours while educating students in the classroom are a crucial problem as it not only affects teaching and learning but also stresses the teachers. "Students misbehaviours retard the smoothness and effectiveness of teaching and also impede the learning of the student and his/her classmates". Arbuckle and Little [6] referred misbehaviour to: "an activity that causes distress for teachers, interrupts the learning process and that leads teachers to make

---

[1] BAYRAM ÖZER, Necati Bozkurt, and Abdulkadir Tuncay, "İstenmeyen Öğrenci Davranışları ve Öğretmenlerin Kullandıkları Başa Çıkma Stratejileri," *Turkish Journal of Educational Studies* 1, no. 2 (2014).

[2] Stephen E Johnson, "Behavioural Safety Theory: Understanding the Theoretical Foundation," *Journal of Professional Safety* 48, no. 10 (2003): 39–44.

[3] Ayhan AYDIN, "Sınıf Yönetimi," *Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık* (1998).

[4] Ibid.

[5] Rachel C F Sun and Daniel T L Shek, "Student Classroom Misbehavior: An Exploratory Study Based on Teachers' Perceptions," *TheScientificWorldJournal* 2012 (2012): 208907, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22919297.

[6] Christie Arbuckle and Emma Little, "Teachers' Perceptions and Management of Disruptive Classroom Behaviour during the Middle Years (Years Five to Nine).," *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology* 4 (2004): 59–70.

continual comments to the students". Kyriacou and Martin [7] defined student misbehaviour as "any behaviour by pupils which interferes with the smooth running of a lesson". Finn et al[8] commented that student's misbehaviours are the ones that mess-up the teaching and learning process or hinder the organized functioning of the class.

Misbehaviour inside a classroom is something unavoidable. There are different reasons as to why a student misbehaves. Aydin[9] stated that different students with variegated characters may show problematic behaviours for various reasons. Bull and Solity[10] said that a student's misbehaviour is the outcome of some past experiences inside or outside the classroom. Stephens and Crawley[11] pointed out that at times the students misbehave not because of his or her identities but because of the teacher's attitude towards the students. Sometimes indistinct classroom rules or an unbalanced classroom atmosphere also adds to student's misbehaviour. A university classroom constitutes a diverse group with students from different family settings and socio-economic environments; sometimes this diversity gives rise to undesired behaviours inside the class.

It is a big challenge for a teacher to maintain a well-managed classroom. Classroom management is a key feature for generating effective teaching and learning process. As Harmer [12] mentioned, that the productiveness of the teacher and his/ her guidance relies on how effectively a classroom is managed.

In this research, the authors have provided a set of recommendations to manage the classroom disrupting behaviours. The researchers in the past have also presented many models to help teachers in creating positive behaviours inside the classrooms. A famous model that is highlighted by researchers is socialization model. It indicates that the teachers have to be caring and socializing with the students like their families do[13].

METHODS

This study is based on a descriptive survey and there are two parts of this survey questionnaire. First part of the questionnaire focuses on some common problematic behaviours of students which almost all the University teachers face inside the classroom. The second part of the survey investigates the common causes behind the disruptive behaviour of the students. Majority of the University teachers favoured the existence of some factors behind these challenging behaviours of students. The items in both parts of this study are intended to measure the perspective of the University teachers, who belong to the different specialties but every day they face few infringing students inside their classrooms. These students behave differently and

---

[7] Chris Kyriacou and José Luis Ortega Martín, "Beginning Secondary School Teachers' Perceptions of Pupil Misbehaviour in Spain," *Teacher Development* 14, no. 4 (2010): 415–426, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2010.533481.

[8] Jeremy D Finn, Reva M Fish, and Leslie A Scott, "Educational Sequelae of High School Misbehavior," *The Journal of Educational Research* 101, no. 5 (2008): 259–274, http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/joer.101.5.259-274.

[9] AYDIN, "Sınıf Yönetimi."

[10] Shirley Bull, Phillip Feldman, and Jonathan Solity, "Classroom Management" (Routledge, 2013), http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315002439.

[11] Paul Stephens and Tim Crawley, *Becoming an Effective Teacher* (Nelson Thornes, 1994).

[12] W Joellen, "The Historical Evolution of Theories and Conceptual Models for Nursing," *Rie* (1988).

[13] J Wilkinson and M Meiers, "Managing Student Behaviour in the Classroom," last modified 2007, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44296277_Managing_student_behaviour_in_the_classroom.

are noticed by the class teachers. Secondly, the items in the second half of the questionnaire measure the teacher's point of view in finding out the reasons for such behaviours.

Sampling and tools

This research article is based on the survey opinions of the teachers of King Khalid University, teaching undergraduate level, belonging to different departments (Business Administration and Management, Computer Science, English, Arabic, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, and Islamic Studies) and diverse nationalities. The total number of participants is 50, and a simple random sampling technique is used to collect the data. The questionnaire is filled manually by each instructor, and it proves the authenticity and originality of the data. The participants got sufficient time to crosscheck and confirm their opinions professionally.

Procedure:

The data intended to analyze has used a Likert scale. There are five Likert response items (strongly disagree, disagree, I don't know, strongly agree, and agree). The first part of the questionnaire is measuring the University teacher's opinions in detecting some intricate and baffling behaviour inside their classrooms. The Likert scale data is analyzed in MS Excel shown in table 1. The percentage of each response item is present in table1. After analysis, the results are presented in the form of a graph (Figure 1), to demonstrate the percentages of each response.
The second part of the questionnaire also measures the opinions of the University teachers, who agreed to the provided reasons for the student's incongruous behaviours. In this part, there are also five Likert response items (strongly disagree, disagree, I don't know, strongly agree, and agree). The data obtained for this part of the questionnaire is also analyzed in MS Excel shown in table 2. The percentage of each response item is also highlighted in table 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the authors is to prove that almost all University instructors face some challenging behaviours of the students inside their classrooms. These troublesome behaviours affect the teachers, and they wish to find the reasons behind it. There may be various psychological and social reasons for the student's complex behaviours inside the classroom. The authors have tried to gather the opinion of the participants on some basic reasons behind these behaviours of the students.

Table: 1- What are some problematic and challenging behaviours faced by you in the University classroom

Response Items	Total	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	I don't know (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)
1- Coming late or leaving early	50	4%	4%	4%	68%	20%	100%

2- Cell phone usage in class during lecture	50	6%	0%	2%	70%	22%	100%
3- Side conversations	50	6%	2%	4%	30%	58%	100%
4- Disregard for deadlines	50	4%	2%	0%	46%	48%	100%
5- Sniping remarks	50	4%	0%	4%	30%	62%	100%
6- Cheating	50	4%	0%	0%	90%	6%	100%
7- Sitting with their legs on chairs	50	4%	2%	0%	18%	76%	100%
8- Drowsiness and making faces	50	4%	2%	0%	16%	78%	100%
9- Staring and indifference	50	4%	2%	0%	20%	74%	100%
10-Interrupting the lecture rudely	50	4%	10%	0%	42%	44%	100%

Table: 1. Some Problematic Challenging behaviours in the classroom

In the above table 1, most of the respondents found "Cheating" as the challenge inside the classroom i.e. strongly agrees (90%). The second major issue that the respondents highlighted is "Drowsiness and making face" i.e. agree (78%). Then 76% of the respondents agreed that students "sitting with legs on chairs" also pose a challenge to the instructors. 74% of the respondents found the students "staring and indifferent" in the classroom. "Cell phone usage during the lecture" by the students also caused a problem to the instructors and they strongly agreed (70%) to it. Another vexing attitude is "coming late or leaving early" is also strongly agreed by 68% of the respondents. Sometimes "sniping remarks" from the side of the students also cause trouble for the teachers and 62% of the respondents have agreed to it. Another 58% of the respondents have disliked the "side conversations" by the students inside the classroom. "Disregard of deadlines" and "interrupting the lectures rudely" is also chosen as the major problematic behaviours of the students inside the class.

In table 1, the range (percentage) strongly disagrees and disagree lies between 0%-10percent, which is very low. The range of neutral or "I don't know" responses lies between 0%-4percent, which is very low. So, it is clear that the ten items mentioned in table 1, are considered as problematic and challenging in the opinion of the respondents. The respondents have either strongly agreed or agreed to them.

Table: 2-Why do you think some students behave badly in the University?

Response Items	Total	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	I don't know (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Total (%)

1- Do not like the teacher	50	2%	8%	0%	12%	78%	100%
2- Get bad results in exam	50	4%	2%	2%	14%	78%	100%
3- Angry about something	50	4%	2%	10%	14%	70%	100%
4- Get bad comments in class assessments	50	4%	4%	0%	10%	82%	100%
5- Hang around with others who misbehave	50	4%	4%	18%	10%	64%	100%
6- Showing off in front of peers	50	2%	2%	22%	8%	66%	100%
7- Having problems at home	50	2%	0%	4%	14%	78%	100%
8- Don't like university	50	2%	10%	46%	4%	34%	100%
9- Find the assessments challenging	50	2%	0%	30%	4%	64%	100%
10- Teachers ignore them	50	2%	14%	8%	2%	72%	100%
11- Boring or lack of motivation in lectures	50	8%	0%	0%	4%	88%	100%
12- Feeling detached to a subject	50	2%	8%	4%	6%	80%	100%

Table: 2.Reasons of student's problematic behaviours

In the above table 2, the respondents have given their opinion on the provided causes of the student's problematic behaviours inside the classroom. The majority of the participants have agreed (88%) on the very important and most commented issue that is "boredom and lack of motivation in lectures". The second reason for the incongruous behaviour of the students is "getting bad comments in-class assessments" i.e. agreed by 82% of the respondents. Thirdly, another reason for the student's complex behaviour is: "feeling detached to the subject" i.e. agreed by 80% of the respondents. It's wonderful to know that 78% of the respondents have agreed on three major psychological causes behind the bad behaviour of the students. These three causes are: they don't like the teacher (it may be in any respect like personality, teaching style, behaviour, etc.), "get bad results in an exam" and "have problems at home". It is apparent in Table 1 that 66% and 64% of the respondents have agreed on the reason for "showing off in front of the peers", "hanging around with others who misbehave", and "finding the assessment challenging", respectively.

The range of strongly disagree and disagree lies between 0%-14%, which is not remarkable as compared to the percentage of those respondents who agreed to the provided items. In this table, few things are notable, that the respondents have logically chosen the response "I don't know" where they are not clear to judge the given item.

It is also apparent that in table 2, the percentages have increased gradually from left to right column. The objective of the authors is to take the opinion of the participants in favour of some main factors causing the baffling and complex behaviours of the students inside the classroom. This objective is achieved and proved by the respondents by agreeing to all the provided items.

Disciplinary actions recommended to the University teachers

Almost all University teachers face continuously interrupting and misbehaving students, during their lectures. These behaviours are specific to some students, and they continue such disruptions in the classroom for a long time. There is another situation that the teachers have to face, suddenly a student disrupts and disturbs the teaching process. So, both long terms planning and prompt management are needed to solve such issues.

Issues that need prompt action by the Teachers and strategies to overcome

Sometimes during the teaching process, two students start chatting, this is possible to spread to six students. Rudeness by one student can eventually become rudeness by several. In this case, prompt action is required. Delaying a response from a teacher is inappropriate in such a situation. There are a variety of responses and actions that a teacher can adopt for sudden interruptions. The authors have recommended some possible actions here but none are effective all of the time. It depends on the teacher's wisdom and alertness to choose proper disciplinary action on the misconduct of the students.

a. **Ignoring Misbehaviours**

This technique works sometimes. For example, a student stays silent and well behaved throughout the class and suddenly he/she whispers to the neighbouring student. The teacher should ignore this. As long as such action doesn't bother others, ignoring it is wise enough. In another example, if a student changes the seat, pushes the chair, passes a remark in a low tone, starts staring around, and should also be ignored by the teacher until it disrupts the other students. If these behaviours become frequent and more students start doing this, the teachers need to think about some serious disciplinary action on it.

b. **Gesturing nonverbally**

Only a gesture, using eye contact or body language without speaking may also help to control the disturbing behaviours of the students. For example, if a student interrupts the class by using a loud voice, raising a hand, or even standing in the class, can be just stopped by a glance or hand movement, etc. Sometimes if few students start to chat, secretly check their cell phones or cheat from the next student, the teacher moving closer to that student or gesturing with the hand can stop him /her. A risk of relying on nonverbal cues is that some students may not understand their meaning or may ignore them. In this situation, the teacher needs to think of another disciplinary action.

c. **Praising positive behaviours**

This technique, of praising good and positive behaviours inside the classroom, will inspire the rudely behaving students. The teachers should praise more instead of scolding the students. This will attract other students to behave well, to gain attention and appreciation. The teachers can also offer positive rewards (like giving break time, allowing to party etc.) to maintain interest and civility inside the classroom. This technique is similar to the "Ripple Effect". The technique is mentioned by Kounin[14], he described that you can correct the behaviour of one student by influencing others.

d. Maintain a good relationship with the students

A teacher in modern and progressive age is only a facilitator in the learning process, not a frowning, scolding dictator. The teachers should maintain a good relationship with the students. For this purpose, instead of standing on the rostrum, the teacher should walk inside the class, instruct the students in their class work, pass encouraging remarks to the keen and hardworking students, etc. This gesture will gain respect, and the students will start loving the teacher. Once this healthy and friendly relationship develops, the infringing behaviours will stop.

Long term planning and disciplinary actions with strategies to implement

Sometimes, the students persistently misconduct inside the classroom, the teachers need some strategies that are more active and assertive. First of all, the teacher needs to identify the root cause of the student's continuous misconduct. Secondly, the teacher needs to remind the students of the classroom rules and expectations, without being harsh.

A carefully planned first meeting, clear syllabus, and relating to students on a personal basis can help establish a positive atmosphere and avoid problems that may arise from confusion about guidelines for classroom behaviour[15] .

The first task of the teacher is to explore the problems that cause a student to behave weirdly inside the classroom. There are various factors that the authors have included in the research questionnaire also. There may be personal or family problems, health problems adjustment issues, and academic difficulties, etc. In every campus the supportive services are available, and such students can be referred to the appropriate committees to solve these issues. As far as the teachers are concerned, they may use the following long-term strategies to minimize the disruption inside the classroom.

a. Decrease Anonymity

In large classes, the teachers face a variety of disrupting and challenging behaviours. They should try several strategies to build a connection with students. For example, teachers should learn the names of the students and use them often. Just make them realize that they are in your list of preferences.

Another thing is that during and after class, try making small one-on-one talk with the students, especially with those who show any misconduct in the classroom. The teachers should use their office hours in the best possible way. Increase their interaction with the

---

[14] Jacob S Kounin, "Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms." (1970).

[15] Mary Dean Sorcinelli, "Promoting Civility in Large Classes," *Engaging large classes: Strategies and techniques for college faculty* 44 (2002): 57.

students during office hours, especially in the starting weeks of the semester. Assure the students that you are always there to help them in difficult lectures.

b. *Give and take the feedback and encourage learning*

Some student's incivilities are due to the instructor's incivilities. The teachers should not stay aloof from the students. The teachers should provide quick feedback after each assessment or assignment. Taking student's feedback is also important. A class representative can provide the student's feedback and their concerns to the teacher. This strategy is helpful and creates an environment of mutual interaction and trust between the teacher and the student.

The teacher needs to promote active learning to present himself/herself as a role model. The teacher should enter the class on time, with full preparation and confidence. This strategy will involve the students in the classroom, will motivate them, and reduce infringing behaviours. The involvement and engagement of learners in the process further promote a better learning environment.

Several other classroom strategies can help university teachers to create a smooth and well-behaved atmosphere in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

It is vivid that the students do not behave badly without any reason. The participants in this study have agreed on the common behavioural issues in the classrooms. Despite belonging to different departments, the participants have faced some common behavioural problems inside the classrooms. This point is arguable in the sense that regardless of the subjects under study, some students show misconduct in the classroom. It further opens up the discussion that there are some outside factors as well as inside factors responsible for disrupting behaviours. These factors or reasons may arouse immediately inside the classroom and maybe continuously piling up for a long time. To build up a classroom free from any disruption and annoying situation, the teachers should come forward and take necessary precautions to avoid the student's misconduct and if such a situation arises in the class, devise effective plans of management.

Finally, the authors would recommend exploring the reasons for the misconduct of the students, which will show the direction to take the relevant disciplinary actions. It is also notable that in some institutions, the management, the environment, work overload, and monotonous teaching methodologies are also contributing to the undesirable behaviours of the students. The institutions, departmental heads, relevant disciplinary committees, and the class teachers all need to address such behavioural issues collectively.

REFERENCES

Arbuckle, Christie, and Emma Little. "Teachers' Perceptions and Management of Disruptive Classroom Behaviour during the Middle Years (Years Five to Nine)." *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology* 4 (2004): 59–70.

AYDIN, Ayhan. "Sınıf Yönetimi." *Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık* (1998).

Bull, Shirley, Phillip Feldman, and Jonathan Solity. "Classroom Management." Routledge, 2013. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315002439.

Finn, Jeremy D, Reva M Fish, and Leslie A Scott. "Educational Sequelae of High School Misbehavior." *The Journal of Educational Research* 101, no. 5 (2008): 259–274.

http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/joer.101.5.259-274.

Joellen, W. "The Historical Evolution of Theories and Conceptual Models for Nursing." *Rie* (1988).

Johnson, Stephen E. "Behavioural Safety Theory: Understanding the Theoretical Foundation." *Journal of Professional Safety* 48, no. 10 (2003): 39–44.

Kounin, Jacob S. "Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms." (1970).

Kyriacou, Chris, and José Luis Ortega Martín. "Beginning Secondary School Teachers' Perceptions of Pupil Misbehaviour in Spain." *Teacher Development* 14, no. 4 (2010): 415–426. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2010.533481.

ÖZER, BAYRAM, Necati Bozkurt, and Abdulkadir Tuncay. "İstenmeyen Öğrenci Davranışları ve Öğretmenlerin Kullandıkları Başa Çıkma Stratejileri." *Turkish Journal of Educational Studies* 1, no. 2 (2014).

Sorcinelli, Mary Dean. "Promoting Civility in Large Classes." *Engaging large classes: Strategies and techniques for college faculty* 44 (2002): 57.

Stephens, Paul, and Tim Crawley. *Becoming an Effective Teacher*. Nelson Thornes, 1994.

Sun, Rachel C F, and Daniel T L Shek. "Student Classroom Misbehavior: An Exploratory Study Based on Teachers' Perceptions." *TheScientificWorldJournal* 2012 (2012): 208907. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22919297.

Wilkinson, J, and M Meiers. "Managing Student Behaviour in the Classroom." Last modified 2007. Accessed November 30, 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44296277_Managing_student_behaviour_in_the_classroom.