

**МЕДИЦИНА, ПЕДАГОГИКА И ТЕХНОЛОГИЯ:  
ТЕОРИЯ И ПРАКТИКА**

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**DEALING WITH STUDENT BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS IN THE  
CLASSROOM**

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**ABSTRACT**

Student behavior problems pose significant challenges at all educational levels. This article aimed to identify the types, prevalence, and intricate nature of these issues, as well as their impact on teaching and learning. Researchers analyzed archival data on discipline referrals from a middle school. The findings revealed that "Insubordination" was the most common reason for referrals, followed by "Disruption of school/class activity" for both regular and special education students. Referrals for "Use of violence" and "Vulgar language" were less common for both groups. Boys received more referrals than girls, with 74% of regular education and 91% of special education referrals involving male students. The highest rate of behavior problems occurred during the lunch period. The article also explores parental and school factors contributing to these behavior issues and discusses successful intervention and prevention strategies used in similar situations.

**The Challenges of Managing Student Behavior Problems in the  
Classroom**

Managing disruptive behavior in schools has become a prevalent concern. Recently, the frequency of behavior issues in classrooms has risen, with many teachers feeling unprepared to address these challenges effectively. Traditional classroom management techniques often fall short in tackling these problems.

The Council for Exceptional Children (1998) highlighted common student misbehaviors reported by teachers, such as breaking classroom rules, truancy, shifting blame, irresponsible conduct, and property damage. Students with severe behavior disorders not only exhibit poor academic progress but also engage in challenging interactions with parents, placing significant pressure on teachers. This stress can lead to loss of control in the classroom and time diverted from instruction, adversely affecting teachers' job performance, self-esteem, and job satisfaction.

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(Jenson, Reavis & Rhode, 1998). In middle schools, the frustration caused by student behavior issues is so pronounced that Tobin & Sugai (1996) argue for increased resources to identify students needing additional support and to determine appropriate services for them.

Due to the severity of these behaviors, teachers are compelled to spend a disproportionate amount of time managing disruptions, which detracts from instructional time. This situation undermines the learning experience for both the students with behavior issues and their classmates. The main goals of this article are to identify the types and prevalence of behavior problems in middle schools, understand their impact on the teaching and learning environment, and explore the complex factors contributing to these student behavior issues.

## **Factors Contributing to Student Behavior Problems and Ineffective Classroom Management**

Several factors contribute to student behavior problems and poor classroom management. These include teacher training, parenting, the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), school discipline policies, and school funding.

**Teacher Training and Classroom Management:** Regular classroom teachers often report that students with emotional and behavioral disorders negatively impact those without disabilities. However, Knoff (1985) suggests that some defiant classroom behaviors are more often a result of ineffective classroom management than the mere presence of students with disabilities. Inadequate pre-service teacher training is another significant factor contributing to defiant behavior. Many teachers feel unprepared to manage special education students due to insufficient training and lack of support services (Minke and Bear, 1996).

Traditionally, teachers have managed disruptive behaviors by employing various negative consequences such as verbal reprimands, time-out, and suspension. The goal of these measures is to reduce or eliminate the immediate behavior problem (Geddes, 1997). However, Canter & Canter (1993) argue that research indicates negative consequences are generally not the most effective method for eliminating problem behaviors.

Bear (1998) examined teachers' reluctance to use behavioral techniques, attributing it to insufficient training, misunderstanding of the techniques, and

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improper implementation. This can heighten teachers' feelings of inadequacy and frustration when managing challenging students.

**Parenting:** Many students with behavior difficulties come from home environments lacking positive parenting, support, and role models. Reid & Patterson (1991) suggest that parents contribute to the development of noncompliant and aggressive behaviors in their children. Besides modeling and reinforcing such behaviors, parents often fail to promote prosocial behaviors and academic success.

**IDEA:** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that school districts provide and fund an appropriate education for every child with a disability, regardless of cost (Jensen, 1996). This includes inclusion, where children with disabilities are integrated into regular education classrooms as equal members. The inclusion of students with emotional or behavioral disorders into mainstream classrooms has increased teacher frustration.

## ChatGPT

The preceding discussion emphasized the complex nature of student behavior problems, considering the roles of teachers, parents, and school policies. Research consistently shows that behavior management approaches most likely to succeed involve positive reinforcement and prevention, where teachers anticipate and plan for potential issues before they arise (Doyle, 1980). However, Bear (1998) reviewed Brohy's (1996) study on school discipline strategies and found that positive methods, such as praise, modeling, contracting, group contingencies, and social problem-solving, are less common. Instead, students with externalizing discipline problems often face more punitive and controlling disciplinary actions.

Gartrell (1995) reinforced the significance of a positive environment, suggesting that this approach aims to create a nurturing learning atmosphere through positive intervention strategies. It is crucial for teachers to be well-trained in understanding learning principles and effectively implementing behavior management techniques. Nevertheless, the operant learning approach in schools is not without its critics. Research by Lepper, Keavney, and Drake (1996) indicates that while rewards can improve behavior in the short-term, they may not have lasting effects in the long-term.

Jenson, Reavis, and Rhode (1998) proposed that students should increasingly rely less on their teachers for guidance, reinforcement, and control, and instead become active participants in their own improvement, viewing themselves as more

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competent (p. 114). Teachers issued more referrals for regular education students for aggressive behavior, violence, fighting, and assault (15%) compared to special education students (5%). This finding contrasts with Roach's (1994) report, which noted that teachers and parents of regular education students have begun to express concerns and question the inclusion of disruptive students. Parents argue that the primary issue should be ensuring a safe environment, not merely placing disabled students in regular classrooms (Page 22). In this study, special education students were not found to pose a greater threat to classroom safety than their regular education peers. Behavior problems appeared to be widespread across the school, not confined to any specific group. Furthermore, regular education teachers were responsible for issuing 63% of the special education referrals (414) and all of the regular education referrals (1,349). These findings indicate that teachers are struggling to manage their classrooms effectively, regardless of whether students have disabilities.

In-school restriction (ISR) proved ineffective as a deterrent. Despite stringent guidelines and the knowledge that any violation in ISR would lead to a one-day suspension, students continued to receive referrals. It seems that removal from the classroom or school served as a form of positive reinforcement, encouraging students to engage in behaviors that led to their removal in the first place. A small number of students, 2% (12 students), were expelled, increasing their risk of dropping out. Moreover, students with behavioral issues often face rejection or neglect from peers, putting them at risk for dropping out, juvenile and adult crime, and childhood and adult psychopathology (Stein & Merrell, 1993). Clearly, discipline procedures need to be re-evaluated and revised.

Since students with behavior problems struggle more in unstructured environments, it was unsurprising that the highest number of referrals occurred during lunch hour—21% for regular education students and 19% for special education students. Lunch periods were staggered across periods 4 and 5, meaning some students were in lunch while others were in class. Both groups exhibited significant disruptive behaviors throughout the school year, whether they were in class or at lunch. Conversely, behavior problems significantly decreased during Club (<1%) and Star (homeroom) periods (2%).

Club, held on Fridays, allowed students to choose one club per semester. Misbehavior on Fridays resulted in losing the privilege to attend Club for that day.



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This practice, a form of positive reinforcement, proved effective, making Fridays the best day for the school with very few referrals. Star, a 20-minute homeroom period at the start of each day, allowed students to report to the same teacher throughout the year, fostering relationship-building and providing time to complete assignments due that day. Star appeared to fulfill its purpose with few infractions reported.

The challenge remains in generalizing these successful practices to everyday school routines. Encouragingly, behavior problems decreased for both regular and special education students as they progressed from 6th to 8th grade, likely due to various factors, including increased maturity.

The discussion so far has emphasized the significant challenges students with behavioral difficulties impose on the educational environment and identified various contributing factors. The rest of the paper focuses on prevention and intervention strategies.

The authors advocate that preventing the development of negative behaviors in children should be society's primary goal. They urge policymakers to prioritize prevention and proactive practices by mandating child development and parenting classes for parents and offering enrichment and intervention programs for their children. They argue that poor parenting and lack of support should be considered forms of child neglect and abuse due to their correlation with children's behavioral problems (Reid & Patterson, 1991). While this may seem radical, they believe a radical approach is necessary given the current situation.

For intervention programs for students with behavioral problems to be effective, a comprehensive, broad-based approach is essential (Bear, 1998). The objective should be collaborative efforts to foster more socially responsible behavior in students. Supporting this collaborative approach, Bondi and Wiles (1998) suggest that student achievement improves significantly when there is a high level of parent involvement, a robust guidance program, opportunities for tutoring from peers, parents, and other adults, positive reinforcement from both teachers and support staff, and maximized instructional time (p.338).

## ChatGPT

Roach (1994) notes that teachers face numerous demands, such as increasing test scores, accommodating each child's learning style, handling minor injuries with caution, paying for a child's lunch out of pocket, and boosting self-esteem. In such conditions, immediate solutions to complex problems often take precedence over

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prevention and long-term strategies (Reschly & Ysseldyke, 1995; Bear, 1998). Hence, teachers should be receptive to the expertise of other school professionals and seek additional support from parents and the community.

The saying "It takes a village to raise a child," attributed to African wisdom, should be genuinely applied. Adelman (1996) emphasized the significance of integrating school and community resources to address behaviors related to school discipline. Mentoring is an underutilized community resource that can provide additional external support (Mayer et al., 1983). Numerous studies highlight the benefits of mentoring, including the development of emotional support and friendship, enhanced social networks (Fishman et al., 1997), improved self-esteem and confidence (Utley et al., 1997), expanded knowledge and skills (Harper et al., 1995), and the modeling of values such as honesty, sharing, and empathy (Miller, 1997, cited in Barton-Atwood, 2000). According to Townsel (1997), mentors offer support, control, structured time, and internal assets like educational commitment, positive values, and social competence.

Mentoring has been shown to positively impact academic performance. Berry (1991) found that mentoring led to enhanced academic achievement, increased attendance, reduced suspension rates, and greater participation in extracurricular activities (as cited in Campbell-Whatley et al., 1997). Similarly, special education students facing behavior challenges demonstrated greater receptiveness to learning when consistently supported by an adult mentor who served as both a guide and an advocate (Fishman, Stelk, & Clark, 1997).

## Conclusion

In summary, this article underscores the prevalence of behavior issues among middle school students, which often compromise the teaching and learning environment. The root causes of such behaviors are multifaceted and complex. Factors such as parental influence (including inadequate parenting and lack of environmental support), insufficient teacher training in behavior management and collaboration skills, individual student characteristics, and rigid interpretation and implementation of IDEA contribute to behavior challenges in children.

Consequently, this study suggests that addressing and intervening in student behavior problems requires a multifaceted approach. Schools must prioritize prevention and intervention efforts, which should include training programs for both parents and teachers, the implementation of positive reinforcement strategies,

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instruction in social-cognitive problem-solving skills for students, and the utilization of mentoring programs.

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