

Chapter 35

Managing Behavioural Emotional Problems in Inclusive Classrooms and Understanding the Best Practices

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ABSTRACT

An inclusive classroom comprises diverse learners with varying levels of abilities, skills, intelligence, and so on. The diversity of the class imposes great challenges on educators and the presence of any deviant behavior should not become a stumbling block for the progress of the children. Problem behaviors of children in the classroom may frustrate the teachers as long as they learn to handle them which is considered to be an integral part of the teaching profession. Numerous best practices have been followed across the globe to manage such behavioral issues exhibited by the students. This chapter would bring in various perspectives of identifying and managing problem behaviors that are commonly found among the young children and the best practices and strategic approaches to tackle such issues piloted by various researchers.

INTRODUCTION

Behavioral/emotional problems among children at school level are of significant concern to the general and special educators and parents as well. These problems do have direct or indirect consequences on the all-round development of the child including education. Prevalence of emotional, cognitive, and be-

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behavioral disorders is observed among young children across the world (Ellen & Kenneth, 2009). Kessler et al. (2005) reported in their study that most of the adults having psychiatric problems might have their onset prior to the age of 14 years. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 20% of children and adolescents do experience mental health problems. Recent research indicates an alarming increase in the psychiatric disorders below the age of 16 years which potentially affects their academic pursuits and meaningful lifestyle. Studies also report that there is a steady increase in behavior problems especially among preschoolers in the past few decades which is found to be more than the students of higher grades.

BACKGROUND

Research reveals that sufficient behavior management techniques such as offering clear expectations and routines, indicating classroom rules and consequences, and the use of praise and other rewards not only results in appropriate classroom behavior among children but also decreases disruptive behaviors (Ferguson & Houghton, 1992; Sutherland et al., 2000; Van Acker et al., 1996), while other behavior management techniques such as reprimands, corrections, and commands may elicit more child disruptions (Nelson & Roberts, 2000; Wehby et al., 1995). Behaviour interventions may vary based on the individual needs, involvement of the educators and family.

It is a common fact that these behavior interventions do differ across various stages of childhood. The teachers when following the evidence-based behavior modification strategies systematically, they can bring greatest impact on the behaviors of the students. Prior to the selection of intervention for behavior modification, the function of problem behaviors is to be determined through structured observations and interaction with the parents or peers. The intervention strategies then could be implemented based on the unique and individual needs of the students (Mather & Goldstein 2001; Pfiffner & Haack 2014). According to Lane (2007), teacher education focuses on certain concepts such as classroom management, social skills instruction, conflict resolution, and anger management but fails to emphasize its association with academics. Hence, it is extremely important for the teachers to integrate the skills and knowledge that are learnt during their teacher education training with the academic progress of the learners by helping them to exhibit age-appropriate and healthy behaviors.

Involvement of family members is also crucial to address the challenging behaviors. When adopted positive approaches, the family systems prove to achieve meaningful outcomes. When cohesive and reciprocal family relationships are built for young kids with challenging behavior from the early years, it can mark a significant impact on the inclusive lifestyle of that child and his or her family (Turnbull & Ruef, 1997). However, as there is no one single strategy to resolve the challenging behaviors of the students in classrooms, a systematic and holistic approach blending various best practices and the dedicated involvement of the educators and family members inevitably contribute to the positive behavior change.

BEHAVIORAL/EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Behavioral problems among school going children are of significant concern to teachers and parents. These are known to have both immediate and long-term unfavorable consequences (Gupta et. al, 2017). Any behavior becomes problematic, when it affects the development of the individual and/or others while

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