

COMMON BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS EXHIBITED BY YOUNG CHILDREN AND EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THEM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract: Navigating behavioral challenges in early childhood education is critical to ensuring positive developmental outcomes for young learners. This study explores prevalent behavioral issues such as impulsivity, aggression, and difficulties in social interactions among children in early childhood settings. The research adopts a qualitative approach, analyzing existing literature and written observational data to identify effective strategies for managing these challenges. Emphasis is placed on the role of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs in fostering emotional regulation, prosocial behavior, and conflict resolution skills-particularly relevant in the wake of post-pandemic emotional stress among children. Results indicate that integrated support systems, including well-structured SEL curricula, continuous teacher professional development, and active family engagement, significantly enhance children's behavioral outcomes. The discussion highlights the importance of teacher efficacy and collaborative efforts between educators and parents in creating nurturing learning environments. The study concludes that a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach is essential in supporting the behavioral and emotional development of young learners in early education contexts.

Keyword: Behavior, early childhood education, social-emotional learning, young learners, teacher efficacy

INTRODUCTION

Challenging behaviors are common in early childhood education (ECE) as young children learn social, emotional, and cognitive skills. They develop through challenges in self-regulation, aggression, withdrawal, impulsivity, or social relationship difficulties (Lipscomb et al., 2021). Detecting and overcoming these behaviors is important for teachers to create a supportive and efficient learning environment. Unless taken care of with proper measures, these problems impact not only a single child but also the classroom environment and the learning experiences of others. This paper aims to address the nature of behavior problems in early childhood education and establish effective strategies to support young learners. This paper will discuss problem statement, literature review, research questions, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A 2023 study conducted in Northeast Peninsular Malaysia found that 8.4% of preschool children exhibited emotional and behavioral problems, with peer-related issues being the most prevalent at 19.7%. Notably, girls showed higher rates of these problems compared to boys. Factors such as single-parent households, having only one working parent, and fewer siblings were associated with increased risk (Mohamad

Hazni Abd Rahim et al., 2023). This is necessary for early detection and culturally sensitive interventions in Malaysian early childhood education settings.

It is identified that behavioral problems in preschool children, like tantrums and aggression that disrupt preschool teaching, and address behavioral problems among young learners in ECE. Behavior problems such as aggression and tantrums are prominent concerns in preschool settings, disrupting personal learning as well as class unity. The behaviors usually correlate with challenges in managing emotions and social relationships, which can disrupt the developmental progress of children and hinder effective teaching.

Tantrums are most often triggered by emotional upset or frustration of needs, calling on teachers to recognize and address the resulting underlying causes to establish an accommodating learning environment. Such disruptive behavior not only affects the child himself but can also interfere with others' learning, which gives rise to the necessity to implement effective measures of behavior management (Sulaiman & Mohamed, 2023).

According to Zarra-Nezhad et al. (2023), the research confirms the application of long-term, sustainable interventions to manage behavioral problems properly in early childhood education through an integrated system. The interventions must be broad, embracing evidence-based measures like socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs, continuous teacher professional development, and active parental involvement. All the strategies are collectively made to create a stable and supportive environment that allows for the development of positive behaviors in the long term.

In addition, continuous research needs to assess the long-term impacts of such interventions to determine their efficacy and applicability within various socio-economic backgrounds, thus facilitating more organized and responsive strategies for addressing issues of behavior in early learning environments (Zarra-Nezhad et al., 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Behavior problems in early childhood education (ECE) concern policymakers, parents, and teachers because they affect the academic achievement and social well-being of children. Impulsivity, aggression, withdrawal, and emotional control are some of the common attributes of these issues. A collective approach of socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs, teacher self-efficacy, curriculum policy, and parent involvement has merits in addressing young children's behavioral issues.

Moreover, the practice of SEL programs is a way of building children's emotional and behavioral competence. Mumuni and Torto (2022) agree that a systematic SEL curriculum strongly enhances children's

emotion regulation, prosocial behavior, and conflict resolution in kindergarten classrooms. The paper states that children who undergo training in SEL have fewer episodes of classroom disruption and greater emotional intelligence. Similarly, Watts and Pattnaik (2022) state that the use of SEL interventions to facilitate the social and emotional stability of children after the COVID-19 pandemic. High levels of social isolation and stress at that time also contributed to higher emotional challenges for young children, necessitating the inclusion of SEL programs within early childhood education to build resilience and healthy behaviors. Besides SEL programs, teacher self-efficacy and professional support are the core of successful classroom behavior management.

Lipscomb et al. (2021) state that early childhood teachers with high confidence in their competence and professional development are more committed to work and more likely to resolve behavioral problems. Moreover, Birbili and Myrovali (2019) explained how preschool teachers' point on this matter states that professional and policy contexts strongly influence their behavior management style. This still emphasizes the part played by ongoing professional development and organizational support of the same in achieving positive behavioral outcomes in early childhood settings. Parental participation and socio-economic factors also come into play when children's behavior is being modeled.

Whereas, Rubilar et al. (2022) measured the perception of mothers on children's behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic and concluded that increased parental stress, dysfunctional parenting, and lower social interaction increased behavioral problems. Watts and Pattnaik (2022) emphasize the utilitarian role of parent engagement toward ensuring the emotional well-being of children. Enforcing parent participation in early childhood education can be used to construct a more holistic plan for the social-emotional functioning and behavior management of young children.

Overall, the paper states that behavior disorders in early childhood education are caused by an integrative and multi-component system. SEL curriculum, teacher training, and proactive parent participation are all essential to constructing an ordered and supportive learning environment for young children.

Research Questions

1. What are the most common behavioral problems exhibited by young children in early childhood education?
2. How do educators implement effective strategies to overcome common behavioral problems exhibited by young children in early childhood education?

METHOD

This research design defines strategies for addressing children's behavior concerns during early childhood education with a focus on understanding and communicating with young children. This strategy provides the possibility to have a general idea about the interaction in real life and provides insight into proper ways of responding to behavioral problems. Previous studies have pointed out the significance of learning

teachers' knowledge about children's mental health and managing children's behavior in preschool (Sulaiman & Mohamed, 2023). Moreover, the role of a fun and active learning environment in children's behavior management has come to the fore as a strong predictor of sustaining healthy development (Mundir et al., 2022). The questionnaire is the primary data collection instrument used in the research. The respondents for this research consist of five early childhood educators, each from various private schools.

Evidence shows that teachers' self-efficacy and professional support influence their capacity to manage classroom behavior and sustain high levels of engagement (Lipscomb et al., 2021). Similarly, the socio-emotional curriculum has been discovered to be highly correlated with children's behavior and emotional development, referencing systematic and supportive classroom intervention as necessary (Mumuni & Torto, 2022). Teachers from several learning contexts, including private preschools, is included in the research.

With the selection of participants from varying groups, the study involves a broad sample of behavioral management strategies. The ethical standards that would be of primary importance throughout the research are participant informed consent and anonymity. Previous studies pointed towards the policy signposts and moralities of early learning, especially in teacher allegiances with formal curriculum and their capacity for adaptation when working in various professional contexts (Birbili & Myrovali, 2019). Thematic analysis will offer grouping strategies, issues, and reasons why children struggle with behavior.

Data collected is used to compare the findings with existing literature to cross-validate and bolster research validity. It has been proven through research that young children's behavioral and emotional challenges have been significantly influenced by outside events like economic uncertainty and parenting, making it an even more pertinent need to incorporate research-based support for behavior strategies.

Using qualitative research practice, the study aims to explore extensively early childhood education behavior problems and offer concrete recommendations to teachers. The result advances the development of evidence-based practice interventions that promote young children's social and emotional development and strengthen teachers' competence in classroom management. The importance of multicultural education in early childhood programs has also been highlighted as a key determinant of support and inclusion in the resolution of behavioral problems from various social backgrounds (Safita & Suryana, 2022). While schools struggle with the complexities of kids' mental well-being and emotional development, an evidence-based framework of early childhood education will have a central function in providing young learners with the attention they need to thrive (Huang et al., 2022).

FINDINGS

In this research, 5 early childhood educators participated by answering the questionnaire. These educators have hands-on experience when dealing with challenging behaviors in an early childhood education environment, which is suitable for this research. However, these participants will be set as anonymous. Hence, they have been identified as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. To collect the data for this research, the 5 early childhood educators participated by answering a questionnaire based on a few semi structured questions. Their responses were collected through an online survey, and the data were used to answer the research questions.

Findings for the Research Question 1:

What are the most common behavioral problems exhibited by young children in early childhood education?

From the responses of the participants, the most common behavioral issues they mention that with young children in early childhood education are disobedience, tantrums, and fighting. Something to look at is all three, Amanda, Rismita, and Faezah have pointed out tantrums as the core issue. All of them emphasize that the cause of the tantrums needs to be understood, like what is to be satiated. Tantrums are commonly the result of emotional hurt, frustration, or lack of fulfilling needs that serve as a need for teachers to understand their students better, based on individual circumstances and emotional climate. To deal with such issues, teachers should provide more time and support to these students who desperately require assistance.

Fighting, as stated by Mathumithaa, is yet another problem in early childhood centers. It is generally a reflection of social interaction among young children who are learning to negotiate their interactions and express themselves appropriately. It requires teachers to provide a respectful and safe environment where children learn how to solve disagreements.

Additionally, Faezah's response regarding children who struggle with listening suggests a possible gap between the expectations of the teachers and the perception or willingness of the children to listen. This gap suggests that teachers need to find methods to communicate better and build a strong bond that will encourage active listening.

Such problematic behaviors not only discourage individual learning milestones but also create a cycle that affects the entire classroom setting. Teachers need to become familiar with such behavioral problems at an early stage and address them ahead of time. Based on these common problems, teachers can be more prepared to create a more positive and productive learning environment with beneficial effects on individual children and the class as a whole. The findings were in Table 1.

Table 1

Common behavioral problems exhibited by young children in early childhood education

Behavioral Problem	Description	Participants Mentioning
Tantrums / Emotional Outbursts	Episodes of frustration, anger, or sadness due to emotional dysregulation.	P1, P2, P4
Aggression / Fighting	Physical or verbal aggression, including hitting or fighting with peers.	P1, P5
Defiance / Non-compliance	Refusal to follow directions or authority; oppositional behavior.	P1, P3
Difficulty Sharing / Social Skills	Trouble cooperating, taking turns, or engaging positively with others.	P1
Anxiety / Withdrawal	Signs of emotional distress such as fearfulness or reluctance to engage.	P1

In summary, disobedience, fighting, and tantrums are the most common behavioral issues mentioned by early childhood education attendees. Tantrums, according to Rismita, Amanda, and Faezah are typically caused by unfulfilled physical or emotional needs, with the realization of every child's circumstance. Fighting, according to Mathumithaa, signals the acquisition of social skills and the need for a safe, respectful learning environment. Faezah also adds that listening issues are a result of communication failures between teachers and children. These are solved early enough to make the classroom a more supportive and collaborative environment.

Findings for the Research Question 2:

How educators implement effective strategies to overcome behavioral problems exhibited by young children in early childhood education?

Effective teaching strategies among behaviorally challenged children include strategies that begin with having a positive learning environment. P1 emphasizes the importance of understanding triggers for tantrums since understanding what triggers tantrums allows teachers to better overcome the emotional needs of the children. Teachers can provide a more suitable class environment through efficient management of potential outbursts. P2 recommended using behavior modification approaches, particularly reinforcement. The use of praise, stickers, or rewards to reinforce good behavior teaches children to behave well and respond accordingly, hence it is a good learning environment.

P3 states that certain behavioral issues, such as fighting, need to be handled well. By explaining the impact of such behavior, children can be taught by teachers how their behavior impacts other individuals and

instructed on how to improve with people. This information is needed to create cooperative and empathetic students. P4 states that the teachers have to learn what the underlying causes of their problem behavior are. Active listening and the effort to solve such problems allow teachers to individualize their assistance in such a fashion that can reduce cases of disorderly behavior to a large degree.

Lastly, P5 stresses the need to set clear expectations and follow established routines. Children are less prone to engage in misbehavior when they have set rules drafted out for them and can look forward to a schedule each day. Clear directions create a sense of accountability, ringing in a tranquil classroom. Through the incorporation of strategies like trigger recognition, positive reinforcement, conflict resolution, student involvement, and setting expectations, teachers can achieve much in promoting behavior management among pre-school children the resulting in a better supportive learning environment for everyone. Table 2 shows the summary of educators implement effective strategies to overcome behavioral problems in early childhood education based on the provided responses.

Table 2: Educators implement effective strategies to overcome behavioral problems in early childhood education.

Participant	Strategy	Details
P1	Clear expectations, routines, positive reinforcement, emotional support, modeling behavior	Also includes redirecting negative behavior, time-outs, and teaching problem-solving skills
P2	Identify triggers and interests	Tailor reinforcement to individual needs and preferences
P3	Problem-specific approach	Understand the root cause and respond appropriately (e.g., time-outs for tantrums)
P4	Behavior modification using positive reinforcement	Use of praise, stickers, and small rewards to encourage good behavior
P5	Explanation and communication	Help children understand the consequences of their behavior (e.g., effects of fighting)

In summary, effective teaching strategies for behaviorally challenged children focus on creating a positive and structured learning environment. P1 highlights the need to recognize tantrum triggers to address children's emotional needs. P2 suggests using behavior reinforcement like praise and rewards to encourage good behavior. P3 emphasizes teaching children how their actions affect others to build empathy and cooperation. P4 stresses the importance of understanding the root causes of misbehavior through active listening. Lastly, P5

points out that setting clear rules and routines reduces misbehavior and brings calm to the classroom. Together, these strategies support better behavior and a more productive learning environment.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this article "Common Behavioral Problems Exhibited by Young Children and Effective Strategies to Overcome Them in Early Childhood Education" confirm the scope and multifaceted nature of behavior problems in preschool children in the classroom. Some of the notable issues raised include impulsiveness, aggressiveness, tantrums, and social relationship problems. Such problems can disrupt both a student's learning as well as the whole class. They further illustrate how pivotal teachers are in preventing such problems beforehand.

The implications of the research are considerable. The integration of evidence-based treatments, namely, socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs, is key to healthy behavioral development during early childhood. Mumuni and Torto (2022) found that structured SEL courses enhance children's ability to self-regulate emotionally and engage in prosocial acts, providing educators with a tool that is critically needed to disrupt behavior. The programs build students' emotional intelligence and negotiation skills, imparting the know-how necessary for navigating their social environments.

Secondly, professional growth and teacher self-efficacy are also posited by the proposition to be the greatest influence on the regulation of class behavior. Such teachers are apt to use reinforcement skills that boost efficient learning atmospheres. This aligns with findings that authenticate ongoing professional coaching leads to effective class management (Williams et al., 2023). Thus, planning a concerted action that includes integrating SEL programs with teacher professional development is essential for an integrated approach in the early childhood care and education segment. Despite these productive results, this research has several limitations.

As the article states, there might be subjectivity in the respondents' data among the teachers as well as the parents. Their opinions may vary from teachers within the large population, thus rendering the findings' generalizability narrow. In addition, the potential influence of external factors such as socioeconomic status and pandemic-induced stress may distort observed actions in children. There is a necessity for these disadvantages to be mitigated by subsequent research efforts so that a thorough analysis of behavioral problems in early childhood education can be obtained.

CONCLUSION

To conclude the article, highlights intervention urgency in early childhood learning environments to address the set of behavioral challenges that early childhood children experience. Evidence revealed is supportive of integrating socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs as key in learning emotional management and desirable child behavior. Additionally, the cultivation of teachers' self-efficacy in the form of professional training can profoundly empower educators to gain a better handle on their classrooms.

As early childhood education contends with the complexities of behavior problems, addressing these problems requires an integrated strategy that facilitates collaboration among teachers, parents, and policymakers. A multi-component system in the form of SEL curricula, teacher professional development, and a proactive role by parents as pillars of healthy emotional and behavioral development among children is quoted in the literature.

In the future, it is of utmost importance that future research assesses the long-term impacts of such intervention on the academic and social success of children. In addition, the determination of differential efficacies of SEL programs across various socio-economic environments may allow for even more accurate data regarding its universal application and institutionalization in schools at various scales. Lastly, with the care environment and upbringing, the authorities should provide the respective equipment to toddlers to be able to overcome their future lives.

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