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Article

Optimizing Learning Environment Through Inclusive Classroom Management Strategies

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Abstract: This study explored the relationship between the teachers' demographic profiles and their utilization of classroom management strategies in inclusive classrooms. Utilizing a descriptive correlational research design, data were collected from 30 teachers through comprehensive questionnaires. The findings revealed a predominantly female and relatively young teaching staff, with the majority having master's units and specializing in General Content and Early Childhood Education. Analysis showed that classroom management strategies were generally well-utilized, particularly those involving positive reinforcement, parent communication, and student involvement in rule-setting. However, more punitive measures were less frequently employed. Statistical tests indicated no significant relationship between the teachers' age, field of specialization, educational attainment, or length of service and their use of classroom management strategies. These results suggest that demographic factors do not significantly influence the application of these strategies, highlighting the potential importance of other influences, such as individual teacher attitudes or institutional policies, in effective inclusive classroom management.

Keywords: Inclusive classroom management, demographic profile, educational attainment, length of service, classroom strategies, inclusive education.

Introduction

Inclusive classroom management is an educational approach aimed at creating a supportive and effective learning environment that accommodates the diverse needs of all students, including those with special educational needs (Tiernan et al., 2020). It involves implementing strategies that ensure every student feels valued, respected, and capable of succeeding academically and socially (Hunter et al., 2023). Fostering an inclusive atmosphere, educators can

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better address the varying learning styles and behavioral needs within their classrooms, promoting equity and access to quality education for all students (Soodak, 2003). Additionally, inclusive classroom management emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves, to foster a sense of community and belonging (Osterman, 2023). Teachers are encouraged to use collaborative learning techniques that allow students to work together and learn from each other's strengths and perspectives (Igitim, 2021). This holistic approach not only improves academic outcomes but also enhances social skills and emotional well-being, preparing students for success both inside and outside the classroom (Polirstok, 2015).

Optimizing the learning environment for diverse student populations is crucial for several reasons (El-Sabagh, 2021). It enhances student engagement, encourages positive behavior, and supports academic achievement. In an inclusive classroom, students from various backgrounds and abilities can learn from one another, fostering a sense of community and mutual respect (Banks & Smyth, 2021; Ferguson-Patrick, 2020). This environment not only benefits students with special needs but also enriches the educational experience for all learners by exposing them to different perspectives and teaching them empathy and collaboration (Polirstok, 2015).

Inclusive classroom management refers to the systematic and proactive measures taken by educators to create a learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all students (Tahira et al., 2023). This includes developing classroom rules that promote respect and inclusivity (Cortes et al., 2022), organizing the physical space to accommodate different abilities (Kadiri, 2022), and employing instructional strategies that engage all learners (Li et al., 2022). The relevance of these strategies in today's educational landscape is underscored by the growing recognition of the rights of students with disabilities to be educated alongside their peers (Rahmadani & Kurniawati, 2021). Effective inclusive classroom management is essential for meeting legal requirements and achieving educational equity (Tahira et al., 2023).

The benefits of inclusive classroom management are manifold. For students, it leads to improved academic performance, better social interactions, and a heightened sense of belonging (Tahira et al., 2023). Teachers benefit from a more harmonious classroom environment and the professional growth that comes with developing and implementing diverse teaching strategies (Rahmadani & Kurniawati, 2021). Overall, schools that embrace inclusive practices experience a more positive school culture and community engagement (Thote & Gowri, 2023). However, educators face challenges such as insufficient training, lack of resources, and the need to balance the diverse needs of all students (Cortes et al., 2022). Addressing these challenges requires ongoing professional development and institutional support.

The purpose of this paper is to explore effective strategies for inclusive classroom management, providing educators with practical tools and insights to create supportive and effective learning environments. Examining current research and case studies, this paper aims to highlight successful approaches and identify areas for improvement, ultimately contributing to the advancement of inclusive education practices. This paper will cover several key points, including the profile of respondents in terms of age, gender, field of specialization, highest educational attainment, and length of service. It will also examine the extent to which these respondents utilize various classroom management strategies in handling inclusive classrooms. By analyzing these factors, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how different backgrounds and experiences influence the implementation of inclusive practices.

The direction of this research will focus on elementary schools, where the foundation for inclusive education can have the most significant long-term impact. By concentrating on this educational level, the study aims to identify strategies that can be effectively implemented early in students' academic journeys, setting the stage for a more inclusive and supportive learning environment throughout their education.

Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive correlational research design to investigate the relationship between the demographic profile of respondents and the extent of utilization of theory-based classroom management strategies in handling inclusive classrooms. The research focused on teachers, who were provided with survey questionnaires to collect relevant data. Initially, transmittal letters were sent to obtain approval from the necessary authorities. The research design examined demographic variables such as age, gender, specialization, educational attainment, and length of service. A comprehensive teacher questionnaire was developed and pilot-tested to ensure clarity and effectiveness before being distributed to the participants. The questionnaire included two parts: the first part collected demographic data, and the second part assessed the extent of classroom management strategy utilization using a 5-point Likert scale. Data verification procedures were implemented to ensure accuracy, followed by rigorous statistical analysis to identify patterns and correlations. The results were then interpreted to draw conclusions about the relationship between the respondents' profiles and their utilization of classroom management strategies. Based on the findings, a Classroom Management Enhancement Plan was formulated to improve strategies for handling inclusive classrooms and foster a supportive learning environment. The methodology ensured a thorough and systematic

approach to understanding and enhancing classroom management practices in an inclusive educational setting.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Age and Gender of the Respondents

Age (in years)	Female		Male		Total	
	f	%	F	%	f	%
55 and above	1	3.33	0	0.00	1	3.33
45-54	4	13.33	0	0.00	4	13.33
35-44	6	20.00	0	0.00	6	20.00
25-34	17	56.67	2	6.67	19	63.33
Total	28	93.33	2	6.67	30	100.00

Table 1 provides an overview of the age and gender distribution of the teacher respondents. The data reveals that the majority of the respondents are female, accounting for 93.33% (28 out of 30) of the total sample, while males comprise only 6.67% (2 out of 30). In terms of age distribution, the largest age group among the teachers is 25-34 years, with 56.67% (17 females and 2 males) of the respondents falling within this range, making it the predominant age group at 63.33% of the total sample. This is followed by the 35-44 years age group, which includes 20% (6 females) of the respondents. The 45-54 years age group constitutes 13.33% (4 females) of the sample, while the 55 and above age group represents the smallest portion, with only 3.33% (1 female) of the respondents. The data indicates a significant skew towards younger female teachers, highlighting a youthful and predominantly female teaching workforce.

Table 2. Field of Specialization of the Respondents

Field of Specialization	F	%
English	1	3.33
General Content	12	40.00
SPED	2	6.67
Science	1	3.33
Math	1	3.33
Filipino	3	10.00
Early Childhood Education	10	33.33
Total	30	100.00

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the respondents' fields of specialization. The largest group of teachers specializes in General Content, comprising 40% (12 out of 30) of the total respondents. This is followed by those specializing in Early Childhood Education, who make up 33.33% (10 out of 30) of the sample. Teachers specializing in Filipino account for 10% (3 out of 30). Special Education (SPED) specialists represent 6.67% (2 out of 30) of the respondents. Each of the remaining fields—English, Science, and Math—has a single representative, each constituting 3.33% of the total sample. This

distribution highlights a diverse range of specializations among the teachers, with a notable emphasis on General Content and Early Childhood Education.

Table 3. Highest Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational Attainment	F	%
With Doctorate Units	1	3.33
Master's Graduate	6	20.00
With Master's Units	23	76.67
Total	30	100.00

Table 3 provides an overview of the highest educational attainment among the teacher respondents. The majority of the teachers, 76.67% (23 out of 30), have completed coursework for a master's degree but have not yet graduated. Another significant portion, 20% (6 out of 30), have successfully graduated with a master's degree. Only 3.33% (1 out of 30) of the respondents have undertaken doctorate-level coursework. This distribution indicates that a substantial majority of the teaching staff have pursued advanced studies, with a notable concentration on master's level education, reflecting a strong commitment to professional development among the teachers.

Table 4. Length of Service of the Respondents

Length of Service (in years)	F	%
16 and above	3	10.00
11-15	2	6.67
6-10	11	36.67
1-5	14	46.67
Total	30	100.00

Table 4 presents the length of service of the teacher respondents. The data indicates that the largest group of respondents, 46.67% (14 out of 30), have been teaching for 1-5 years. This is followed by those with 6-10 years of service, making up 36.67% (11 out of 30) of the sample. Teachers with 16 or more years of service constitute 10% (3 out of 30), while those with 11-15 years of service represent the smallest group at 6.67% (2 out of 30). The distribution shows a predominantly early-career teaching staff, with the majority having less than 10 years of service, highlighting a relatively young and potentially dynamic workforce.

Table 5 provides a detailed analysis of the extent to which respondents utilize various classroom management strategies in handling inclusive classrooms. The aggregate weighted mean of 3.92 suggests that, overall, the strategies are generally "Utilized." Several strategies are "Highly Utilized," with the highest scores reflecting strong engagement with students and parents. For example, informing parents about classroom expectations (WM = 4.63), sharing reasons behind disciplinary

approaches (WM = 4.53), making students aware of consequences for misbehavior (WM = 4.53), and informing parents about mobile phone

Table 5. Extent to which the Respondents Utilize the Classroom Management Strategies in Handling Inclusive Classrooms

S/N	Indicators	WM	Verbal Description
1	I involve students in establishing rules and procedures.	4.40	Highly Utilized
2	I share with students the reasons behind the disciplinary approach(es) I use.	4.53	Highly Utilized
3	I provide positive reinforcement to students for appropriate behavior (e.g. special helper, extra computer time, tangible rewards)	4.27	Highly Utilized
4	I make students aware of consequences for misbehavior (e.g. loss of break time, extra classroom time).	4.53	Highly Utilized
5	I use class time to reflect on appropriate behavior with students as a group.	3.97	Utilized
6	I redirect inappropriate behavior on the spot, using loud voice.	2.97	Moderately Utilized
7	I ignore misbehavior that is non-disruptive to class.	2.57	Less Utilized
8	I use short verbal cues to stop misbehavior (e.g. say student's name aloud, use "shh" sound).	4.07	Utilized
9	I use nonverbal signals to stop misbehavior (e.g. make eye contact, approach and touch disruptive students).	4.27	Highly Utilized
10	I use self-assessment forms for students to evaluate their own behavior (e.g. checklists).	3.47	Utilized
11	I inform parents about classroom expectations.	4.63	Highly Utilized
12	I send for parents to report inappropriate behavior.	4.27	Highly Utilized
13	I send for parents to report good behavior.	4.23	Highly Utilized
14	I collaborate with parents on a home school behavior plan.	4.17	Utilized
15	I teach parents activities to do with students at home to reinforce good behavior at school.	4.00	Utilized
16	I inform parents about the policies regarding the use of mobile phones at school.	4.60	Highly Utilized
17	I inform parents about social networks and their correct use (e.g. "Facebook", "Twitter", "Instagram").	4.23	Highly Utilized
18	I send home Teacher-to-Parent Communication letters or newsletters regarding positive and negative aspects of their children's behavior.	4.00	Utilized
19	I send students home for aggressive or disruptive behavior.	2.83	Moderately Utilized
20	I send students to the principal's office for misbehavior	2.30	Less Utilized
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.92	Utilized

policies (WM = 4.60) all received high utilization ratings.

Other strategies that were also "Highly Utilized" include providing positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior (WM = 4.27), using nonverbal signals to stop misbehavior (WM = 4.27), and reporting both inappropriate (WM = 4.27) and good behavior (WM = 4.23) to parents. Some strategies were "Utilized" to a moderate extent, such as using class time to reflect on appropriate behavior with students as a group

(WM = 3.97), using short verbal cues to stop misbehavior (WM = 4.07), collaborating with parents on home school behavior plans (WM = 4.17), and teaching parents' activities to reinforce good behavior at home (WM = 4.00). Conversely, strategies such as sending students to the principal's office for misbehavior (WM = 2.30) and ignoring non-disruptive misbehavior (WM = 2.57) were "Less Utilized." Notably, redirecting inappropriate behavior using a loud voice (WM = 2.97) and sending students home for aggressive or disruptive behavior (WM = 2.83) were "Moderately Utilized." The data suggests a strong emphasis on proactive and positive engagement with students and parents, alongside the use of various reinforcement techniques to manage behavior. However, more reactive or punitive measures, such as sending students to the principal's office or home for misbehavior, are less commonly used, indicating a preference for in-classroom management and parent collaboration over more severe disciplinary actions.

Table 6. Test of Relationship between the Respondents' Profile and their Classroom Management Strategies

Variables	χ^2 -value	Df	p – value	Decision	Remarks
Age and Classroom Management Strategies	0.032	1	0.858	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Field of Specialization and Classroom Management Strategies	1.086	2	0.581	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Highest Educational and Classroom Management Strategies	0.709	1	0.400	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Length of Service and Classroom Management Strategies	0.475	1	0.491	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

*significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 6 presents the results of the test of relationship between the respondents' profiles and their utilization of classroom management strategies. The variables examined include age, field of specialization, highest educational attainment, and length of service. For each variable, the p-value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that none of these variables have a statistically significant relationship with the extent of classroom management strategies utilized by the respondents. Specifically, the relationship between age and classroom management strategies yielded a p-value of 0.858, the field of specialization and classroom management strategies had a p-value of 0.581, the highest educational attainment and classroom management strategies had a p-value of 0.400, and the length of service and classroom management strategies had a p-value of 0.491. Since all p-values are well above the threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho) for each variable is not rejected. This indicates that there is no significant

relationship between the respondents' age, field of specialization, highest educational attainment, and length of service, and their use of classroom management strategies. Therefore, it can be inferred that these demographic factors do not significantly influence how teachers apply classroom management strategies in handling inclusive classrooms.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between the demographic profiles of teachers and their utilization of classroom management strategies in handling inclusive classrooms. The analysis revealed a predominantly female teaching staff, with a significant proportion being younger and having less than 10 years of service. Most teachers specialized in General Content and Early Childhood Education, and the majority had attained master's units. The classroom management strategies were generally well-utilized, with particular emphasis on positive reinforcement, parent communication, and involving students in rule-setting. However, more reactive measures, such as sending students to the principal's office, were less commonly used. Statistical tests showed no significant relationship between teachers' age, field of specialization, educational attainment, and length of service with their utilization of classroom management strategies. This indicates that demographic factors do not significantly influence how these strategies are applied, suggesting that other factors, such as individual teacher beliefs or school policies, might play a more crucial role in shaping classroom management practices in inclusive settings.

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