

Early Childhood Teachers' Attitudes towards Teacher-directed Classroom Management Strategies in Inclusive Settings

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Abstract

This qualitative interpretative phenomenological study aimed to explore early childhood education (ECE) teachers' attitudes (perceptions, feelings, and practices) towards classroom management strategies in inclusive early childhood education classroom settings in Lahore. Inclusive education is presently an extensively debatable issue in the education field around the world. Pakistan also lacks adequate provisions of inclusive education in schools, and there are insufficient awareness and training for teachers about inclusive education. However, proper awareness of inclusive education among teachers has the potential to improve the student's positive outcomes. International theoretical literature suggests that ECE teachers often use teacher-directed strategies in inclusive classrooms to achieve positive outcomes for all students. This study used the phenomenological research design, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 ECE teachers who were working in inclusive ECE classroom settings in Lahore. The interpretative phenomenological analysis of interview data was conducted using NVivo 12 software to analyze and generate themes. The findings highlight that most ECE teachers have positive attitudes towards teacher-directed classroom management strategies that are considered effective in managing inclusive early childhood education classroom settings. However, they feel that the implementation of these strategies is challenging because of the presence of students with disabilities in their classes. This study provides a base for further research and, eventually, interventions.

Keywords: inclusive education, lived experiences, early childhood, managing inclusive classroom

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Introduction

Classroom management in ECE primarily performs two functions: It captures students' attention on tasks by implementing ways to engage them in curriculum tasks. Secondly, it helps students to regulate their conduct by focusing more on the social milieu of the classroom (Carter & Doyle, 2006a). Early years of schooling are critical in developing the identities of students (Hunkin, 2019). Students learn various procedures and routines which help them to manage their behavior better in schools (Battistich & Watson, 2003). As children progress in the preschool class, so they learn how to be co-operative, friendly, and more the chances of conflicts also incur, particularly in inclusive settings. Thus, there is a more need to help students how to control their self and behavior in a setting (Carter & Doyle, 2006a), and one way of overcoming their concern is to help them how to behave during peer interaction.

Managing events in class is of primary importance as its management communicates behavioral norms and expectations from students (Carter, 1993). The physical arrangement of the class acts as an antecedent to the attitudes and conduct of the students (Weinstein, Romano, & Mignano, 2006). The teacher is expected to purposefully manage physical arrangement in the class not only to involve maximum students but to use proximity as an effective classroom management technique and avoid arising of behavioral issues because of traffic congestion. The structured room helps in the completion of individual assignments and a marked decrease in behavioral issues that otherwise pop up working in cluster form.

Inclusive education has a myriad of meanings in a different context (Caumont Stipanovic, 2020; Hernández-Torrano, Somerton, & Helmer, 2020), but in the context of Pakistan, it is generally perceived as one in which students with disabilities work with their regular age group fellows and are valued equally (Kazimi & Kazmi, 2018; Pasha, 2012). They receive similar treatment in teaching and support as their normal counterparts.

It is identified that inclusive settings have a significant impact on the academic and social behaviors of students with disabilities (De Bruin, 2020). The inclusion of students with disabilities in general settings results in increased interactions with peers. Such social interactions among peers not only increase time spent together but helped in making new friends. However, such outcomes are not possible without planned interventions from teachers (Jolivet & Steed, 2010). Teachers in the inclusive setting are in more need of developing positive interactions

among students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities; otherwise, in the absence of such interventions, a culture of rejection could prevail (Buysse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002). Therefore, teachers' facilitation in peer interactions is instrumental in the social and academic inclusion of children with disabilities (Soodak & McCarthy, 2006). In addition, students with disabilities placed in inclusive settings have earned better grades, developed better social behaviors, received fewer suspensions, and improved attendance (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

A comprehensive review of the literature on classroom management in inclusive settings (Soodak & McCarthy, 2006) suggested that teachers use various teacher-directed strategies to enhance the positive academic outcome for all and develop acceptance and friendship among students with disabilities and normal students. Most of the available international literature indicates that the research on classroom management in inclusive settings has focused on junior or upper schools, and the less literature is available to see classroom management practices at the preschool level, particularly in an inclusive environment (Carter & Doyle, 2006b; Soodak & McCarthy, 2006). This is same in the Pakistani context where little attention is paid to inclusive classrooms and the research has mainly explored classroom management in general classroom settings (e.g., Saleem, Muhammad, & Masood, 2019, 2020). This research study is designed to bridge the gap in the literature, acting as a baseline for future researchers in the field of ECE classroom or behavior management in Pakistan. This study is guided by the following research question:

What are early childhood education teachers' attitudes (perceptions, feelings, and practices) towards classroom management strategies in inclusive early childhood education classroom settings in Lahore?

Conceptual Framework

Teacher-directed strategies (see figure 1 for detail) were used as a conceptual framework to understand teachers' sense-making of their lived experiences in inclusive ECE classrooms.

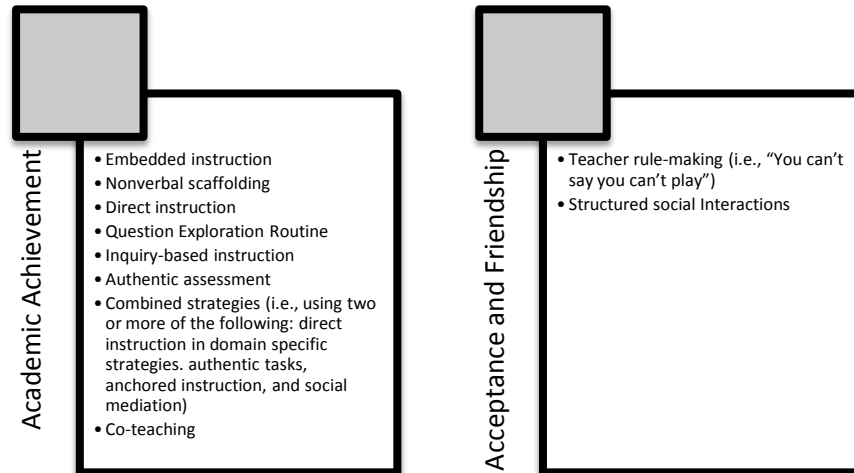


Figure 1: Teacher-directed Strategies to Enhance Achievement, Acceptance, and Friendship in Inclusive Classrooms—adapted from Soodak and McCarthy (2006).

Each individual case was analyzed inductively and the specific content of each transcript provided material for within-case analysis. However, teacher-directed strategies provided an overall conceptual framework for the cross-case analysis of data in the cases, thus helping in the identification of the significant emergent themes for the whole group of ECE teachers.

Methodology

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) design (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) was adopted to illuminate the meaning of the lived experiences of ECE teachers in relation to classroom management. IPA is a qualitative research methodology and is most suitable for the studies aiming “to explore in detail participants’ personal lived experience and how participants make sense of that personal experience” (Smith, 2004, p. 40). It uses careful and systematic procedures and emphasizes interpreting features of lived experience in the analysis of data. It starts with the analysis of a lived experience account from one research participant and then compares accounts of a group of research participants—aiming to establish the common features underlying the differences among various participants (Eatough & Smith, 2017). In the

current study, IPA was specifically used to explore, describe, interpret, and theoretically situate our participants' sense-making of their teaching experiences in inclusive ECE classrooms.

The current IPA study involved several participants who had experienced the phenomenon of teacher-directed classroom management strategies in inclusive early childhood education classroom settings in Lahore (Eatough & Smith, 2017). The use of IPA was appropriate for this study because IPA permitted the researchers' previous understanding and knowledge of existing theoretical constructs to help the researcher with the interpretation of the researched phenomenon, thus providing a valuable guide to the study (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Thus, for the interpretation of the complex problem of ECE teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the classroom management strategies in inclusive settings through semi-structured interview data obtained from ECE teachers was an appropriate decision for exploring how teachers made sense of their own experiences.

A purposive homogeneous sampling technique (Patton, 2015) was used to select 12 participants for this study since relatively small sample sizes are required in IPA studies. The criteria for the selection of participants were that the participant was an ECE teacher working in an inclusive school setting in Lahore for at least one year. Researchers knew the population and the purpose of this study—therefore, a purposive sampling technique was used for this study. Moreover, an in-depth understanding of the teachers' lived experiences was required—the logic and power of semi-structured interviews coupled with purposeful sampling, indeed, ensured this (Khine, 2015; Krosnick, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2005).

Data Collection

We gathered lived experience descriptions of classroom management using “respondent interviews” (Tracy, 2020) with teachers—all holding similar subject positions and had sufficient experiences of classroom management in inclusive ECE classroom settings. In phenomenological research, the most recommended method of data collection is the individual interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect rich information from the participants. The interviewer can explain its questions according to the need, and the interviewee may also provide a bulk of information that is helpful for the study (Brinkmann, 2013; Roulston, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are usually used in IPA

studies as an instrument (Merriam, 2009), in which structured and unstructured interview questions, both with combining elements, are also used. The list of questions mostly guided a semi-structured interview, but open-ended and flexible questions were used in the most significant portion of the interview (Roulston & Choi, 2018). These questions were developed after conducting an extensive review of the literature related to classroom management strategies used in inclusive early childhood education classroom settings. Most specifically, the works by Carter and Doyle (2006b) and Soodak and McCarthy (2006) were seminal in informing the theoretical foundations of this study.

All the interviews were conducted at the convenience of participants and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. With permission from participants, all the interviews were audio-recorded using digital recorders—which ensured not only clarity but also accuracy during the transcription process. During interviews, each participant shared their perceptions and practices in relation to classroom management strategies they were using in their inclusive ECE classrooms. Wherever required, relevant probes were used to clarify the meanings of their ambiguous responses. Each participant was thanked upon completion of the interview for their voluntary participation in the study.

Data analysis

IPA was used in conjunction with NVivo software. All the transcribed interview data were inserted into NVivo 12 Pro, which provides a set of tools that help in recording, sorting, matching, and linking of data, thus facilitating the process of analysis of a large amount of qualitative data from semi-structured interviews (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Edhlund & McDougall, 2019). The systematic analysis of data in NVivo assisted in developing themes from the data. Existing theoretical concepts from the field of classroom management helped us to develop and elucidate these themes (Larkin et al., 2006).

IPA analysis began with a detailed analysis of the transcript of one interview—by reading and rereading the interview transcript. For the initial coding of the interview, line by line analysis was done on the transcript. Each interesting or significant passage was identified and coded at the node using a keyword or a phrase that captured the essential quality and psychological essence of that passage. However, it was ensured that the phrase contained enough abstraction to be conceptual and enough particularity to be grounded (Smith et al., 2009). Similarly, all the passages in the interview transcript were fully, systematically, and

rigorously labeled with themes by formulating “a concise phrase at a slightly higher level of abstraction” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 12) at specific nodes in NVivo. During this process, several connections between various sections of transcripts were identified; thus, similarities and differences in the teacher’s views on various issues were also identified. All the transcript data were treated equally, and nothing was omitted from thematizing the data.

In the next step, all themes were grouped into clusters. For each cluster, a new superordinate theme expressing the essence of that cluster was identified. This created some order from the wide range of concepts and ideas that were initially extracted from the participant’s responses. Additionally, new clusterings of themes were compared with the interview transcript to make sure the connections work for the primary source material. The use of NVivo software for the coding “themes” helped the researcher in viewing both the transcript and themes at nodes simultaneously (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). This was helpful in appreciating the uniqueness of a participant’s experience and connections that arose between and across themes—in terms of parent and child nodes in NVivo.

Since the study was based on a number of individuals’ transcripts, the analysis proceeded by applying the “master-theme list” created from the analysis of the first interview transcript. The process of thematizing continued by beginning the process anew with, going through all the stages outlined above, thus generating a master list for the second transcript. Similarly, all the interview transcripts were thematized, and a master list for each interview was created. All mater lists were read together, and a consolidated list of master themes for the group was generated. This was a laborious task; however, NVivo easily allowed for changes in conceptualization and organization of data and themes as the project developed (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The reordering and refining of coding structure were done by moving, splitting, or merging various nodes as the analysis progressed (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). The use of NVivo facilitated transparency in the dialogue between textual data and researchers and improved the possibility of confirmability through an external audit.

Research Findings

This section presents the findings of the interviews conducted to understand how teachers interpret various classroom management strategies in inclusive classrooms to achieve positive outcomes for all

students. The responses of the participants categorized in the consolidated list of master themes are provided. The emergent themes provided in this section elaborates the lived experiences clearly and evocatively so that the readers can recognize the essence of teachers' interpretation of classroom management phenomenon for themselves. This thematic account also uses verbatim extracts from the transcripts to elucidate and exemplify each theme.

Using reinforcement to achieve positive outcomes for all students

Most of the participants report that they use various strategies such as reinforcement and appreciation in inclusive classrooms so that students can achieve positive outcomes. They report that they appreciate students to make them self-confident. They believe that appreciation is essential for all students, and this is very effective. Some participants use different forms of counseling. For example, a participant state:

I do not use the same strategy every day. I use different strategies in my inclusive classroom every day. I change strategies according to students' moods or students' needs. So, it varies from day-to-day. (Participants 11)

If a child does good work, we should praise him so that he is motivated and tries to do better in the future as well. He is happy when he notices that he did a good job, so the teacher rewarded him, and the student clapped for him. (Participant 06)

Some participants report that they use counseling strategies for getting positive outcomes for inclusive classrooms. In addition, they believe that turn-taking and wait for a turn, and token economy are useful techniques in inclusive classrooms. They mention that if students show hyper behavior, then they also use a pull-out technique, which takes students out of the classroom only to change their mood. Participants also state that they use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and also make the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) according to their student's needs—believing in their usefulness in achieving positive outcomes for all students in inclusive classrooms. For example, a participant states:

The strategy I use for this purpose is UDL, and everything is planned according to it. You know, this is only used by those teachers who need to do their work in a better way. Because it gives more outcomes as compared to others, and it also allows the development of students' potential. The other technique that I

use is “IEP” planning. That is also very effective for this purpose. (Participants 01)

Developing Class Routine

Most of the participants describe how they develop class routines in their inclusive ECE classrooms. They set a time table, and all students follow this. Some post timetable on the wall, and all students look at this and follow it. They assert that only the syllabus is modified according to the needs of special students, and no modification is done in the timetable to accommodate diversity. For example, three participants state:

My students are very settled with me. I make a timetable, and they follow it. Activities which I use during class are also mentioned in the timetable. (Participant 04)

We follow the same timetable and the same syllabus as a regular class. And lunchtime is also the same. They follow the same rules and attend the morning assembly. In breaktime, they play the same games. And the Quran class is the same. Just the syllabus is the same as both students, but normal students' syllabus is a bit lengthy, and students with disabilities have a short syllabus. (Participant 05)

The class routine is set according to the timetable. Class starts with a dua (prayer), and then the instruction of English, math, science, or Urdu starts. If we have some spare time, then students play games or do the coloring. (Participant 10)

Using non-verbal gestures to achieve positive outcomes for all students

Most of the teachers use non-verbal gestures to enhance the learning of all students in an inclusive setting. Some participants mention that they use non-verbal gestures, especially when a student does not do work, or they have to forbid anything; they do it with gestures. Moreover, they also use non-verbal gestures to appreciate the students. For example, a participant states:

Yes, I use non-verbal gestures every day. They understand my facial expressions. If they are doing something wrong, I look at them with anger, and then they understand that they are doing wrong. During a lesson, they look at my face, and from my facial expressions, they figure out the correctness of their responses. (Participant 07)

Few participants mentioned that they use counters, flashcards, and blocks for special students to enhance their learning. Also, they use body gestures in poem recitation, in which all students are involved in the study. For example, a participant states:

Sometimes, I use non-verbal gestures to enhance the learning of students. Like I use thumb sign, nod to keep it up, or pat on their shoulders for letting them know that they are doing well. These signs are positive. Also, I appreciate the students with body gestures in the poem recitation activity. (Participant 09)

Encouraging All Students to Question

Most of the teachers report that they use questioning strategy in the inclusive ECE classrooms to enhance the learning for all students. They argue that if they ask questions about the curriculum, all students participate, and in this way, they come to know about the understanding level of the students. For example, a participant state:

I use questions for the student's brainstorming. If I want to know the level of any student's learning, then I do the questioning techniques to know the child's prior knowledge. (Participant 02)

Participants report that they conduct the questioning activity to know about the understanding level of students. They believe that questioning is critical in teaching since this form of formative assessment is the quickest way to determine the understanding level of the students; therefore, they ask questions about the taught content in each lesson. They conduct the questioning activity to know about the interests of their students, like story-based activity. For example, a participant stated:

I use a questioning strategy whenever I teach a new lesson as a story first and then ask questions about the lesson. So, in this way, I know about students' knowledge and understanding, how much they understand, and how much not. I also use questioning for assessing their prior knowledge: If I want to teach students the concept of energy, I will ask them where do we get the most energy. So, the students say the sun. That is how I bring them to the lesson. (Participant 12)

Few participants state that autistic students do not ask questions. Moreover, other students with disabilities also do not ask questions. However, they clarify that ECE students are "new learners" and do not have the ability to ask questions about anything, but when teachers ask

questions repeatedly, then they respond—and only some extraordinary students ask questions. For example, a participant state:

I ask questions. However, autistic children do not participate in questioning, so I ask them many questions about their daily routines so they can also participate in the classroom conversation. (Participant 09)

Assessing the Learning of Students Using Differentiated Assessment

Assessing the learning of students in the inclusive classroom through activities and questioning was another theme in data. In the inclusive classroom, the students with disabilities have separate teachers to teach them. In one classroom, two teachers ensure the learning of students in the inclusive classroom. For example, a participant narrates:

In our school, the disabled students study all courses along with the mainstream students, with the whole class. We assess them like all other students when we teach the content. We ask questions related to that to know whether they have understood the content or not. We give them extra time. The shadow teacher assesses the learning of disabled students. At the time of the final term, the final assessment is done with the help of the shadow teacher. During the exam, the shadow teacher provides a little support so that they can understand the nature of the questions and write answers on their own. (Participant 02)

Some participants mention that they assess the learning of students in the inclusive classroom through formative and summative assessments. They believe that students with disabilities forget everything too quickly; therefore, they assess their learning through formative assessments on a daily basis. They do not teach new lessons until the students have not learned the last day's lesson—and they ensure this by making the students repeat the whole thing again and again. For example, a participant state:

We hold a curriculum-based test. Through observation and formative assessment, we assess the students. We also assess through the daily lesson. If we have taught anything and we have asked the students about the lesson during the lecture, then it shows us whether the children understood the lesson properly. (Participant 02)

Few participants report that they assess the learning in an inclusive classroom according to their needs or student's capacity. They modify

the curriculum according to the needs of an individual student so that they can easily understand the concepts. For example, a participant state:

We have different teaching methods. Likewise, we have different tests, according to every student. For example, if a student can communicate quickly, while the other one can write easily, and he does not have good speaking skills, we will assign their tests according to their abilities. (Participant 01)

Another participant report that, according to his views, academic learning of students with disabilities in an inclusive setup is very limited, but they do learn how to behave in a class like talking, walking, and sitting. He underscores, "I also feel a problem in assessment in the inclusive classroom because the cognitive level of students with disabilities is different from general students. I am working with another shadow teacher, but I still feel a problem here" (Participant 09).

Effective Use of Co-Teaching

Most of the participants believe that co-teaching is very necessary for inclusive classrooms because one teacher cannot handle all the students, normal and individuals with special in one classroom. In co-teaching, if one teacher deals with one student, however, the other teacher observes all students. For example, a participant states: "Co-teaching is outstanding; it enhances the learning of all students. If a child is doing something wrong, the other teacher who is observing her will tell her how to do it. Co-teaching is very necessary for the inclusive classroom" (Participant 07). They believe that a teacher cannot deal with both types of students, and they learn a lot from each other. Their experience is very good in relation to co-teaching in inclusive classrooms. For example, a participant state:

Co-teaching is used in our inclusive classrooms, and it is very helpful in enhancing the learning of all students. I have a great experience with co-teaching. We both teachers deal with all the students in an inclusive class. We both observe and teach all the students in one class. In this way, we also learn a lot, new strategies, new methods, and so on. (Participant 09)

Another participant state that in her school, inclusive classrooms have two teachers. All teachers are very co-operative and understand the nature of the job. They report that they encourage all the students, then

the students feel good and work hard to achieve positive outcomes. For example, a participant state:

Every class has two teachers. One is a class teacher, and the other is a teaching assistant or a shadow teacher, but it varies from class to class. Everyone has a good nature. We understand each other and divide the class into groups. The shadow teacher usually deals with children with disabled and also supports other normal students present in his group. He motivates his own disabled students and uses rewards or punishments whenever there is a need. Her punishment does not mean physical punishment. It means if the response of a child is irritating and problematic, we make him realize that he or she is not behaving properly. (Participant 02)

Few participants report that co-teaching is not used in their inclusive classrooms because the number of teachers in their schools is less, so in every class, only one teacher teaches the students. They highlight that it is tough for a teacher to teach both types of students in an inclusive ECE classroom; therefore, they cannot effectively manage the classroom, and the individual needs of students with disabilities are ignored if a class is taught by a single teacher.

Enhancing Social Acceptance through Various Strategies

Some participants note that to enhance the social acceptance and friendship among students, they use multiple strategies such as reinforcement, and student groups, so all students work with collaboration. They perceive that when they make the groups for some group activities, then they become good friends. For example, a participant state:

We do a grouping of students and involve them in different activities and exercises, like simple racing and vocational activities. In this way, friendship is developed among them. In school, we socialize them through greeting and asking questions about their friends. In class, we have a greeting time for them. (Participant 06)

Another participant stated that:

Already my students are very friendly with each other, so I do not face this problem, but sometimes we need this to enhance social acceptance. For example, at the start, a student in my class did not lunch with other students, so I made two student groups.

And I asked them to share their things together. So, participation and sharing helped them to enhance social acceptance and friendship among students. (Participant 09)

Some participants mention that they arrange social campaigns to enhance social acceptance for disabled students. They argue that since in our culture, people do not accept disabled children, and most people are not aware that these children have equal chances to get an education in school as normal students, they arrange social campaigns for this purpose, and both types of students are involved. For example, a participant states: “To enhance social acceptance, we arrange social campaigns, and all normal and special students fully participate in it” (Participant 11).

Encouraging Students to Develop Positive Behavior

Teachers encourage students to develop positive behavior through reinforcement, believing that reinforcement is beneficial for reducing problematic behavior. They use two types of reinforcement, negative and positive—according to the student’s behavior need. If a child shows positive behavior, then he or she is rewarded, and if the child shows disruptive behavior, then he or she is given negative reinforcement. For example, two participants stated:

I use behavior charts and reward charts to encourage students to develop positive behaviors. If a child shows positive behavior, then I reward him, and if the child shows disruptive behavior, then I give him negative reinforcement. In positive reinforcement, I give them golden stars, silver stars, and candies. So, reinforcement is an excellent encouragement to develop positive behavior in students. (Participant 09)

I encourage them on good deeds by awarding them with stars and stickers on their faces or by giving them their favorite toys. Reinforcement is essential to evoke positive behavior. (Participant 06)

A participant stated that he uses the ABC technique to judge the behavior of the students. Through the ABC form, she can diagnose the behavior of a student quickly. For example, a participant states: “I have an ABC sheet: A stands for an accident, B stands for behavior, and C stands for the circumstance. I judge that behavior, the reason behind the behavior, and the effect of that behavior” (Participant 02).

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to explore ECE teachers' perceptions of teacher-directed classroom management strategies and practices in inclusive ECE classroom settings in Lahore. In addressing the aim of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 ECE teachers from public and private schools to elicit their perceptions and practices regarding classroom management strategies in inclusive ECE classroom settings.

Most participants used reinforcement and appreciation in the inclusive classroom so that all students studying in inclusive classrooms achieve positive outcomes. They perceived that appreciation is very necessary for all students, and this is very effective in making students self-confident. Some participants use different forms of counseling. They report that counseling strategies are also effective in getting positive outcomes for inclusive classrooms. In addition, turn-taking and wait for a turn and token economy are useful techniques in inclusive classrooms. If students show hyper behavior, then they use a pull-out technique, which takes students out of the classroom only to change their mood. They also mention that they use UDL and also make IEPs according to their students' needs since they believe that he is very helpful for achieving positive outcomes for all students in inclusive classrooms.

Literature also suggests that teachers directed practices help teachers successfully manage the academic behaviors of students in inclusive settings (Wallace, Anderson, Bartholomay, & Hupp, 2002). For example, Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) identified that the classes where teachers establish rules and procedures have 28% lesser instances of disruption as compared to those where these were not implemented. In addition, rules are found to be essential in a classroom setting, being a place that is not only crowded, but much interaction is expected—and rules regulate these (Hay, 2016).

In the current study, most of the teachers use non-verbal gestures to enhance the learning of all students in an inclusive setting. Most of the teachers describe their experiences with respect to questions about the curriculum content, all students participate, and in this way, they identify the understanding level of the students. Few participants report that autistic students do not ask any questions. Cawley, Hayden, Cade, and Baker-Kroczyński (2002) have used questioning in an inclusive setting and reported improvement in performance for students with and without disabilities. Most of the participants report that they can assess the learning of students in the inclusive classroom through activities and

questioning. They also report that in the inclusive classroom, the disabled students have separate teachers to teach them. Therefore, two teachers observe the students in inclusive classrooms in one classroom. Participants perceive that co-teaching is very necessary for inclusive classrooms because one teacher cannot handle all students (normal students and students with special needs). They use reinforcement. Davis, Reichle, and Southard (2000) have identified the use of reinforcement, prompts, and modeling as very useful on the engagement of students with disabilities in the preschool setting. In addition, these teachers create students' groups, so all students work collaboratively. When they are involved in group activities, both types of students become good friends. Similarly, literature also suggests that teacher-directed strategies were proven effective in promoting acceptance and friendship in inclusive settings (Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro, & Peck, 1995). The use of group friendship activities like plays, songs, and display of affectionate behaviors enhance positive social behaviors among all students, especially non-participating with disabilities. Beyda, Zentall, and Ferko (2002) have used a variety of teachers directed strategies like positive verbal responses, giving choices to students, clear directions and feedback during seatwork, etc., and reported an increase in appropriate on-task behaviors among students having behavioral disorders in an inclusive setting. Furthermore, co-teaching based on collaboration help teachers to improve positive behavior management program in their class and encourage students to develop positive behavior through reinforcement.

Teachers use embedded instruction in inclusive settings to engage students and to enhance their on-task behaviors. This approach used in inclusive settings and reported achievement of an individualized educational plan. Consistency in intervention with students having disabilities improved their learning. The use of non-verbal scaffolding techniques by Wang, Bernas, and Eberhard (2001) with Down syndrome students in an inclusive setting enhanced their learning and attention span as well.

Weakness and Strengths of the Study

The study used a qualitative IPA design coupled with semi-structured interviews of a subjective nature. We consider reflexive issues in the collection of data and analysis of data along with rigorous methodology implemented mainly through the systematic analysis techniques in NVivo. However, the subjective nature of the qualitative

research suggests that the IPA analysis and conclusions drawn from this research might be influenced by the researchers' own understanding of effective classroom management strategies in inclusive ECE settings. It offers a holistic yet limited picture as it cannot be generalized to the entire ECE teachers in Pakistan due to the limited number of ECE teachers who participated in interviews, and this study mainly relied on self-reported experiences of ECE teachers' perceptions, feelings, and behaviors in relation to classroom management in inclusive settings. In addition, it uses semi-structured interviews. This method of data collection was in line with the principles of IPA to fully capture "subjective understanding" (Seidman, 2006, p. 10) of the research participants. However, power asymmetries existing in research interviewing between the interviewer and interviews in a societal context might have influenced the way this knowledge about ECE teachers' practices was generated (Berner-Rodoreda et al., 2020; Kvale, 2006).

Although this study employed a small sample of teachers, this research study is significant as it helps in understanding ECE teachers' perceptions, feelings, and behaviors in relation to classroom management in inclusive sessions. This paper provides a baseline study from which subsequent research studies in the area of ECE classroom management could be drawn upon. For example, survey research studies could explore the prevalence of this phenomenon in different geographical areas and different EC educational contexts in Pakistan. As indicated in the findings of the current study, teachers are more inclined towards teacher-directed strategies, and a survey study would allow for an improved understanding of ECE teachers' perceptions, feelings, and behaviors in relation to classroom management in inclusive sessions in different geographical contexts.

Implications

These findings have significant implications for those who are responsible for teacher training and are positioned to support ECE teachers through improvements in knowledge, beliefs, and classroom management practices. In addition, school principals can work with ECE teachers by providing evidence-based recommendations related to how to effectively deal with classroom management issues occurring in an inclusive setting.

In addition, it is important to address teachers' classroom management and inclusion-related beliefs in arranging professional development activities in the area of classroom management for ECE

teachers because it is found that teachers' beliefs influence how teachers perceive or act towards disability (Kiely, Brownell, Lauterbach, & Benedict, 2015; Levin, 2015) and inclusive practices. The results of this study indicated that some teachers did not have specific knowledge of classroom management strategies used specifically in inclusive settings. Therefore, it is important that professional development may focus on sensitizing ECE teachers to specific classroom management strategies such as teacher-directed strategies, peer-directed strategies, and self-directed strategies and their use in inclusive settings.

This study is an addition to the existing literature as well as it would be beneficial for the education department and teachers, especially for understanding teachers' attitudes towards teacher-directed classroom management of the inclusive classroom and for designing professional development activities for enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes towards effective classroom management.

Conclusion

This phenomenological inquiry was undertaken not to produce generalizable findings but to gain rich insight into the essence of teachers' lived experiences in relation to teacher-directed classroom management strategies in inclusive early childhood education classroom settings. In addition, efforts were made to represent experiences as vividly and elegantly as possible in order to make the phenomenological account valid. Findings suggest that ECE teachers use embedded instruction, nonverbal scaffolding, direct instruction, question exploration routine, and co-teaching and authentic assessment in order to achieve positive academic outcomes for their students. However, combined strategies and inquiry-based instruction are not used because teachers feel that the context of ECE and students' cognitive levels do not permit. It is true that in the early school years, a uniform policy of classroom management cannot be implemented as the behavioral expectation and management vary, keeping from event to event. Therefore, classroom management in the early year is not static but relative, and it depends upon what students are expected to perform in that particular time of the class. Therefore, teachers must be sensitized to other strategies such as peer-mediated strategies and self-directed strategies, which are believed to be more contemporary and create more active physical and verbal experiences for young children. These strategies lead to the development of more interest and engagement, and subsequently, positive relationships between students with disabilities

and normal students since students are given more opportunities for hands-on experiences and extensive one-to-one interactions with colleagues to become and remain engaged in lessons.

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