

# Classroom management strategies and behavior problems in junior middle schools in China

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Received: 25 May 2024

Available Online: 30 July 2024

Revised: 25 June 2024

DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2024.24708

Accepted: 20 July 2024

ISSN: 2243-7703

Online ISSN: 2243-7711

OPEN ACCESS



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## ***Abstract***

This study investigates the relationship between classroom management strategies and student problem behavior in Chinese middle schools, aiming to help teachers understand and address these issues. A questionnaire survey was conducted among 325 teachers from four schools in Guangdong Province, China, using standardized testing. The results showed that better classroom management strategies led to fewer instances of student problem behavior. Additionally, male teachers with a master's degree and over ten years of experience had more effective strategies. Based on these findings, improvement plans focusing on enhancing the classroom environment and delegating authority have been proposed to increase teacher control and student participation.

***Keywords:*** standardized testing, questionnaire survey, improvement plans, teacher control, effective strategies

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### 1. Introduction

The realm of education in China has undergone significant changes in recent years, reflecting a dynamic interplay of social expectations, technological advancements, and pedagogical shifts. Technological integration, such as smart boards and educational software, further facilitates personalized learning experiences while presenting new challenges for maintaining order and focus (Sevensma et al., 2018). Schools are adopting positive behavioral support systems that encourage good conduct through recognition and rewards rather than solely through punishment. Nonetheless, the transition from traditional to modern classroom management is not without challenges. Teachers must navigate between upholding the respect for hierarchy deeply rooted in Chinese culture and fostering a more democratic and inclusive classroom environment. Classroom management strategies are the process that teachers and schools use to create and maintain appropriate student behavior in classroom settings. It involves creating a structured and orderly environment where students can engage in learning activities, collaborate with their peers, and follow classroom rules and procedures (Rosenberg & Jackman, 2003) (How do you develop an effective behavior management plan?, 2023). Teachers' different approaches to classroom management can also lead to a range of behavioral feedback from students.

Effective classroom management strategies are associated with higher levels of school connectedness (Vairamidou & Stravakou, 2020). It encompasses various aspects, including establishing expectations and rules, maintaining student discipline, promoting student engagement and participation, managing classroom resources and materials, and addressing individual student needs. This study discusses the three aspects of classroom management strategies in junior middle school: teaching management, delegation of authority and classroom environment, and student behavior management: insufficient behavior, excessive behavior, and inappropriate behavior. How teachers can manage class efficiently, the sorts of behavior problems of junior middle school students and their solutions, as well as the relationship between classroom management and students' behavior problems.

In China, junior middle school education lays the foundation for secondary education and plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic and social development (Lai et al., 2017). Despite the recognition of behavior problems as a significant challenge within the Chinese education system, limited research has explored the specific classroom management strategies employed by teachers to address these issues, and even fewer studies have examined their effectiveness. Confucian principles, such as respect for authority, collectivism, and harmony, may influence teachers' management styles and students' behaviors in ways that are not entirely understood or addressed by current research. Additionally, the role of parent involvement, school policies, and societal expectations in shaping classroom behavior could provide valuable insights into the development of more effective classroom management strategies in China (Cheng, 2014). For example, while some studies have investigated the prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in China (Liu et al., 2018) (Huang et al., 2017), there is limited research on other behavior disorders, such as oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), conduct disorder, or anxiety disorders, which may affect students' behavior in the classroom.

In conclusion, filling the research gap on classroom management strategies and students' behavior problems in China is essential to enhance the quality of education and promote student well-being. The thesis also seeks to investigate the prevalent behavior problems in junior middle school students in China and examine the classroom management strategies employed by teachers. The primary objectives include identifying common behavior problems, analyzing the factors that contribute to these issues, and evaluating the effectiveness of various classroom management approaches.

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by teachers in managing behavior problems in junior middle school students in China. By shedding light on effective classroom management strategies, this research aims to provide practical recommendations that can assist educators in creating a positive and engaging learning environment.

**Objectives of the Study** - The primary objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of various classroom management strategies in addressing behavior problems among Chinese junior middle school students. The study aims to identify the most effective strategies that can be employed by teachers to promote a positive learning environment and improve student academic performance. Specifically, it aims to assess classroom management strategies in junior middle school in terms of teaching management, delegation of authority and classroom environment, and student behavior management (behavior management strategies and verbal instruction); identify the problem behaviors that students may appear in junior middle school class as to insufficient behavior, excessive behavior and inappropriate behavior); test the significant relationship between classroom management strategies and students' behavior problems; and propose a continuous improvement plan based on the results of the study.

## 2. Methods

**Research Design** - The researcher used descriptive research method in this study. This research employed this approach to investigate classroom management strategies and behavior problems in junior school students in China. A survey was conducted among junior school teachers in China to gather information about their classroom management strategies and the most common behavior problems observed in their students. The survey included questions to allow teachers to provide detailed responses about their experiences. Data from the survey, observations, and interviews were analyzed using quantitative method to identify patterns and themes related to classroom management strategies and behavior problems among junior school students in China. The results of the data analysis were used to answer the research questions and inform recommendations for effective classroom management strategies in junior school settings in China.

**Participants of the Study** - In this study, a total of 325 middle school teachers covered from Grade 7 to Grade 9 were selected from 4 schools in Guangdong Province in Southern China by stratified random sampling. The research objects were composed of middle school teachers of different genders, different educational backgrounds and different subjects, and they came from different provinces, including head teachers, subject teachers, teaching teachers and school management teachers, which ensures the objectivity of the investigation to the maximum extent. One of the characteristics of the research objects is that they cover a wide range of age groups, including novice teachers in their 20s and old teachers in their 50s with rich teaching experience. Another feature is that the teachers teach a wide range of subjects, covering all subjects at the secondary level: Chinese, mathematics, English, politics, history, geography, biology, physics, chemistry, PE, music, art and psychology.

**Instruments of the Study** - Two research instruments were utilized in this study: the classroom management strategies scale and the students' behavior problems scale. Five likert scales were employed to depict the respondents' perception of the relationship between teachers' classroom management strategies and students' behavior problems in junior middle schools. The survey questionnaire comprised three parts. The first part pertained to the background information of junior middle school teachers, providing details about their gender, age, highest educational attainment, and years of teaching experience. The second part was the classroom management strategies scale, designed to assess the effectiveness of classroom management strategies and practices in educational settings. It was adopted from Magableh, et al., (2017). There was a total of 21 items, encompassing three dimensions: teaching management, delegation of authority, and classroom environment. The third part was the students' behavior problems scale. It was used to assess students' behavior problems and provide a measure of their behavior over a predefined of time. It was adopted from Hong (2021). There were 22 items in total, organized into three dimensions: insufficient behavior, excessive behavior and inappropriate

behavior. To test the reliability of the instruments in the study, 30 participants took part in the pilot test. Data from these participants were collected through Questionnaire Star and entered into SPSS for analysis. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the subscales, as well as that of the whole questionnaire, were calculated. The  $\alpha$  coefficients for all subscales ranged from 0.749 to 0.846 coefficient for the entire questionnaire. Additionally, the Cronbach Alpha reached 0.826. Therefore, the internal consistency reliability coefficients for both the subscales and the whole questionnaire were deemed acceptable, as they all exceeded 0.70 (Taber, 2017)

**Data Gathering Procedure** - Data were gathered using the online survey platform Questionnaire Star. Researchers distributed links to the surveys to teachers either directly, as they were personally known to them, or through sharing with colleagues via WeChat. Following approval of the study title, researchers sought guidance from departmental experts and conducted a pilot study with 30 respondents to ensure the questionnaire's efficacy. Upon achieving satisfactory results, a formal large-scale survey was conducted with the participants' consent. The teachers' responses were retrieved from Questionnaire Star, then the researchers translated, coded, and evaluated the data in Excel before transferring it to the research center for encoding using SPSS.

**Data Analysis** - The following statistical tools were employed for data analysis: Weighted means and ranking were used to evaluate the level of students' behavior problems in terms of insufficient behavior, excessive behavior, and inappropriate behavior, as well as assess junior middle school teachers' teaching effectiveness in terms of teaching management, delegation of authority, and classroom environment. The Shapiro-Wilk Test revealed that the p-values of the main variable were less than 0.05, indicating that the dataset is not normally distributed. Spearman rho was used to test the significant relationship between treated variables. Additionally, post hoc tests were conducted. All data were processed using PASW version 26 statistical software to further interpret the study results with an alpha level of 0.05 and 0.01.

**Ethical Considerations** - To protect their identities and to uphold ethical considerations regarding ethnic sensitivity, the names of all respondents were kept confidential. The researcher clearly informed the participants beforehand that the questionnaire was strictly for gathering large-scale data relevant to this study, without any secondary purposes. Additionally, the questionnaire was distributed only after ensuring that all participants fully understood the research instructions and the items being investigated. Regarding scholarly references, the researcher ensured that all necessary citations were accurately included in the references section.

### 3. Results and discussion

**Table 1**

*Summary Table on Classroom Management Strategies*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Teaching Management	3.12	Effective	1
2. Delegation of Authority	2.94	Effective	3
3. Classroom Environment	3.06	Effective	2
Composite Mean	3.04	Effective	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Very Effective; 2.50 – 3.49 = Effective; 1.50 – 2.49 = Less Effective; 1.00 - 1.49 = Not Effective*

Table 1 summarizes the three dimensions of classroom management strategies - teaching management, delegation of authority and classroom environment. The overall mean score of 3.04 indicates that these three indicators are effective in measuring classroom management strategies. Specifically, the overall mean score for teaching management is 3.12, which is better than the other two indicators. This means that teaching management is the most effective classroom management strategy. Delegation of authority is ranked 3. It is the least effective ones because it may be risky. There is always the chance that the students will misuse their authority. This could lead to problems in the classroom.

**Table 2***Summary Table on Students' Behavior Problems*

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Insufficient Behavior	2.72	Agree	1
2. Excessive Behavior	2.49	Disagree	2
Composite Mean	2.60	Agree	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

Table 2 is the summary of two dimensions of students' behavior problems - insufficient behavior and excessive behavior. The overall mean score of 2.60 indicates that both indicators are effective. Among them, the effectiveness of insufficient behavior is slightly higher than that of excessive behavior, that means insufficient behavior is more common than excessive behavior among junior school students in China. The weighted mean for insufficient behavior is 2.72, while the weighted mean for excessive behavior is 2.49. This means that students are more likely to not do their schoolwork, not pay attention in class, not follow directions, and not participate in class discussions.

One reason is that insufficient behavior may be more common than excessive behavior among junior school students in China because of cultural differences. This may lead students to be less likely to speak up in class or to participate in other activities that require them to be assertive. Students who are insufficiently behaved may be seen as being shy or withdrawn, while students who are excessively behaved may be seen as being disruptive or attention-seeking. As a result, teachers may be more likely to tolerate insufficient behavior than excessive behavior. In Chinese schools, students are often expected to memorize facts and figures and to regurgitate them on tests. This type of learning environment may not encourage students to be creative or to think critically, which may lead to them being less likely to participate in class discussions or to do their homework (Ahmad et al., 2023).

In summary, this study provides insights into the nature and prevalence of behavior problems among junior middle school students in China, as well as the classroom management strategies employed by teachers. The findings suggest that insufficient behavior is more common than excessive behavior, which may be influenced by cultural factors.

**Table 3***Relationship Between Classroom Management Strategies and Students' Behavior Problems*

Teaching Management	rho-value	p-value	Interpretation
Insufficient Behavior	.078*	0.019	Significant
Excessive Behavior	-0.071	0.200	Not Significant
Delegation of Authority			
Insufficient Behavior	.145**	0.009	Significant
Excessive Behavior	0.097	0.080	Not Significant
Classroom Environment			
Insufficient Behavior	.137*	0.013	Significant
Excessive Behavior	0.056	0.316	Not Significant

*Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01*

Table 3 presents the association between classroom management strategies and students' behavior problems. It was observed that the computed rho-values indicates a moderate direct correlation. Delegation of authority, teaching management and classroom environment vs. insufficient behavior shows significant relationship. This means that the better the classroom management, the more that they will not exhibit insufficient behavior. This clarity helps prevent misunderstandings and reduces the likelihood of students engaging in inappropriate or disruptive behavior. If teachers fail to implement appropriate management strategies, students may become disengaged, leading to insufficient behavior such as tardiness, absenteeism, and a lack of effort in completing assignments.

In addition, a strong teacher-student relationship fosters trust and respect, making it easier for teachers to

manage their students effectively. When teachers are not able to establish this connection, students may become more resistant to authority and exhibit insufficient behavior as a result. Teaching management strategies are critical components of an effective educational experience that directly impact students' behavior and overall academic success. By implementing appropriate management strategies, teachers can create a positive environment conducive to learning while minimizing insufficient behavior among their students.

Delegation of authority strategies refer to the practice of empowering individuals or groups within an organization to make decisions and take actions without constant oversight from higher-level officials (Anshebo, 2020). In the context of education, teachers and administrators often use delegation to involve students more actively in their learning and classroom management. While delegation of authority strategies can be an effective way to promote student engagement and responsibility, it is essential to implement them carefully and thoughtfully (Kongnyuy, 2020). The classroom environment plays a crucial role in shaping students' behavior and academic performance (Tahir, 2019). By implementing effective strategies that promote structure, engagement, discipline, differentiation, communication, and positive relationships, teachers can help reduce insufficient behavior and create a supportive learning environment for all students.

A well-organized classroom with clear routines and procedures can help students feel more comfortable and focused. This structure can include things like designated areas for different activities, transitions between activities, and consistent start and end times for lessons. When students are actively engaged, they are less likely to become bored or disruptive. Teachers who take the time to build positive relationships with their students can create a more supportive and inclusive classroom environment. When students feel connected to their teacher and classmates, they are more likely to behave appropriately and contribute positively to the classroom community.

**Table 4**

*Proposed Teaching Improvement Plan*

Key Result Areas	Plan Objective	Strategies/ Activities	Success Indicators	Persons Involved
Classroom management strategies	Classroom environment	Conducting regular training programs for teachers to improve their pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and classroom management techniques; Encouraging group work and project-based learning to promote teamwork and critical thinking skills among students.	40% Higher academic achievement and improved performance in standardized tests; 60% Active participation in class discussions, group activities, and extracurricular events.	School Principal; School administrators and leaders; Junior school teachers; Junior school students.
	Delegation of authority	Providing professional development opportunities for teachers on effective delegation techniques and strategies; Encouraging teachers to participate in collaborative planning and decision-making processes.	50% Increased student engagement and participation in classroom activities; 70% Higher levels of teacher satisfaction and reduced feelings of burnout.	
Students' behavior problems	Excessive behavior	Creating a list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors; Teaching conflict resolution skills through classroom discussions and group projects.	70% Reduction in instances of excessive behavior reported by teachers and parents; 60% Increased student engagement in class activities and assignments.	School Principal; School administrators and leaders; Junior school teachers; Junior school students; Parents or guardians.
	Insufficient behavior	Encourage collaborative learning activities that promote teamwork, and problem-solving skills; Implementing classroom-wide and individualized positive reinforcement strategies.	70% Increased frequency of positive behaviors, such as active listening, respect for others, and adherence to classroom rules; 50% Enhanced social skills and relationships among students.	

#### 4. Conclusions and recommendations

Classroom management strategies, particularly teaching management, are highly valued by Chinese middle school teachers. This is followed by creating a conducive classroom environment and delegating authority. Among the student's behavior problems, insufficient behavior is a behavior that junior middle school teachers frequently observe. The second most common behavior observed is excessive behavior. There exists significant

relationship between teaching management, delegation of authority and classroom environment and insufficient behavior. This means that the better the classroom management, the more that they will not exhibit insufficient behavior. A teaching improvement plan was proposed to address behavior problems among junior middle school students.

School principals may build positive relationship through cultivating strong relationships with students, by listening to their concerns and providing emotional support when needed. This can help build trust and foster a more positive classroom environment. School leaders may provide emotional support since behavior problems are rooted in emotional issues, such as anxiety, stress, or trauma. This can involve offering counseling services, creating a safe space for students to express their feelings, and providing resources for students and families who may need additional support. Teachers may establish clear expectations and rules. The rules should be communicated to students at the beginning of the school year and reviewed regularly. They should be specific, reasonable, and easy to understand. Future researchers may explore on other variables like classroom discipline, communication between teachers and students. The continuous improvement plan may be presented and reviewed for implementation. The school administration and stakeholders may collaborate to form group projects, partner activities, and community-building exercises.

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