

Pre-Service Teachers Knowledge of Classroom Management*

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Abstract

Classroom management is one of the main factors that give a significant impact on the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Teachers with good classroom management skills are able to deal with challenging behavior issues positively. But, teachers with poor classroom management skills will feel frustrated whenever they fail to deal with behavior problems. This situation also disrupts the teaching and learning session. The purpose of this study is to determine the level of pre-service teachers' knowledge regarding classroom management. This research used survey research design and the questionnaire was adopted from the previous researcher. Pre-service teachers' knowledge was measured based on their understanding regarding behavior management and the implementation of positive and negative reinforcement. The purposive sampling technique used in sample selection. To be selected in this research, respondents must be final year students who have completed the courses and teaching practicum and specialized in special education programs. A total of 100 respondents from three public universities participate in this research. Research findings showed respondents demonstrated a good understanding regarding classroom management with a high level of the mean value. This outcome revealed public university in Malaysia provides a great teacher training program, particularly in a special education program. With a good understanding of behavior management, is to be expected pre-service teachers will be able to be good teachers once they enter the real world of education soon.

Keywords

Classroom Management, Behavior Management, Pre-Service Teacher, Positive Reinforcement, Negative Reinforcement

*Classroom management.

1. Introduction

Classroom management is a major contributor to effective teaching and learning process in the classroom. Poor classroom management frequently linked to misbehaviors that interfere with teaching and learning and produce tremendous stress (Rosas & West 2009; Friedman, 2006). Therefore, classroom management often discussed together with behavior management including positive and negative reinforcement.

Challenging behavior is a common issue facing by special education teachers. This challenging behavior may disrupt the learning session and causes of burnout to teachers if they failed to deal with the situation (Yunus & Mohamed, 2019). Nevertheless, teachers who are skillful with classroom management are able to handle students' behavior issues well. Many studies showed teachers who demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of behavior management could handle this situation confidently and positively (Butler & Monda-Amaya 2016; Ahmad & Hanifah, 2015). A review of the literature agreed on knowledge as a basic component that needs to empower to make sure teachers are competent enough dealing with challenging behavior (Zulkifli & Mohamed, 2019; Wei & Yasin, 2017; Bari, Yasin & Hamzah, 2014).

Despite all the research spotlight focuses on teacher's knowledge, perceptions, attitude and practice towards behavior management, only a few studies investigated the readiness of pre-service teachers in dealing with behavior issues of their students (Butler & Monda-Amaya 2016; Reupert & Woodcock, 2010). Are they well prepared to deal with this situation? Studies reveal pre-service teachers have ranked behavior management as one of their concerns (Wei & Yasin, 2017; Black, Noltemeyer, Davis, & Schwartz, 2016; Peters, 2012; Rosas & West, 2009; Cakmak, 2008; Ritter & Hancock, 2007; Bromfield, 2006).

Pre-service teacher's emphasis concerns on their ability in dealing with behavior issues in the classroom. They feel unprepared and do not have the skills to handle the situation (Flower, McKenna, & Haring, 2017; Shook, 2012; Beran, 2005). On the other hand, some pre-service teachers feel they have knowledge and skill in classroom management, but they lack expertise about it (Anthony & Yasin, 2019; Shook, 2012). They cannot practice what they have been learned in the university when faced with behavior issues in the classroom.

Therefore, it is pivotal to make sure the pre-service teachers possess a good understanding of classroom management before they enter public education as a teacher. This research aims to investigate pre-service teachers' understanding of classroom management based on the aspect of behavior management, positive reinforcement, and negative reinforcement.

2. Methodology

2.1. Instrument

This research used survey research design and quantitative approach. Questionnaire for this research was adapted from research by Ahmad and Hani-

fah (2015). The questionnaire has been reviewed to make it compatible to answer the research questions. Two experts in special education with Doctor of Philosophy degree and over twenty years' experiences were appointed to examine the content validity of the instrument. Recommendations for improvement by the experts have been considered. Two special education students appointed to investigate face validity of the instrument. Based on the feedback, the clarity and understanding of items in the instrument were very good. Cronbach Alpha was ranged from 0.92 to 0.96 for all the sub-scales. The questionnaire comprises four sections, which are demography information, behavior management, positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was distributed to the respondent and collected back after two weeks. Feedback from the respondent was key-in in the Statistical Package for Social Science and was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistic.

2.3. Participants

A total of 100 pre-service teachers from three public universities participate in this research. The purposive sampling technique was used in sample selection. Respondent that participant in this research must be a final year's students for a degree in education and specialized in special education. This criterion was assigned to make sure the respondent already finishes the courses and teaching practicum for their degree study. Descriptive analysis from demography information show, 39% respondent is from University A, 28% from University B and 28% from Institution of Teachers Education. Further, 22% respondent is male and 78% are female.

3. Findings and Discussions

Descriptive analyses of data revealed that special education pre-service teachers' have a very good knowledge of general behavior management with overall mean value 4.78. According to **Table 1**, pre-service teachers have a very good knowledge of behavior management, positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement with mean value is 4.78, 4.83 and 4.72 respectively. This finding is similar to research conducted by Bari, Yasin, and Hamzah in 2012. The researcher reported special education trainees in Malaysia to have a good knowledge and attitude towards special education including classroom management.

3.1. Knowledge of Behavior Management

As shown in **Table 2**, respondents demonstrated good knowledge of behavior management ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 0.45$). Item level analysis showed majority respondents respond, "strongly agree" and "agree" to every item in this section and there are a small number of respondents respond, undecided or not sure. Respondent responds undecided to the following item, cannot differentiate between

positive and negative behavior (2%), the importance of behavior management to student with disability (1%), types of negative behaviors (4%), types of positive behavior (3%), the objectives of behavior management (2%), the importance of behavior management to learning process (1%), and behavior management is a component in the national curriculum (1%). This finding in contrast with finding from the previous study by [Oliver and Reschly \(2010\)](#). The researcher reported, higher education institutions provided less preparation on student engagement and behavior management. However, this finding is similar to research conducted in Malaysia by [Bari, Yasin, and Hamzah \(2012\)](#). According to the researcher, pre-service teachers master good theoretical knowledge about behavior management.

3.2. Knowledge of Positive Reinforcement

Respondent demonstrated a good knowledge of positive reinforcement items ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.42$). Most of them respond, “strongly agree” and “agree” to every item in this section. Only a small number of them respond, “undecided” and “disagree”. Item level analysis showed, 1% of respondents respond “disagree” and 5% respondent respond “undecided” to the item “I know strategies to shape positive behavior in the classroom”. Further, 2% of respondents respond “undecided” to the items positive reinforcement can escalate targeted behavior and social reinforcement can be fostering positive behavior. 1% respondent respond “undecided” to the following items, the definition of positive reinforcement, positive reinforcement can reduce negative behavior, motivation is a form of reward and reward can foster positive behavior. This finding is similar with previous research by [Flower, McKenna and Haring \(2017\)](#). The researcher reported most of pre-service teachers implementing behavior-specific feedback and praise to increase appropriate behavior ([Table 3](#)).

3.3. Knowledge of Negative Reinforcement

Respondent demonstrated a good knowledge of negative reinforcement items ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 0.68$). More than 90% of respondents respond, “strongly agree” and “agree” to every item in this section. This finding indicates respondent are aware of the goal and practice of implementing negative reinforcement techniques in the classroom. Only a small number of them respond “strongly disagree”, “disagree” and “undecided”. Previous research reported the majority of pre-service teachers are very good in incorporated concepts about behavior reduction in the classroom ([Flower, McKenna, & Haring \(2017\)](#)) ([Table 4](#)).

3.4. Knowledge of Classroom Management by Universities

To examine the differences of pre-service teachers’ knowledge by universities, a one-way between groups of analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The ANOVA assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were not violated, and the F test was not significant, $F(2, 97) = 2.62$, $p = 0.51$. This showed, learning syllabus in Malaysian cover all the essential elements about classroom

management, which are behavior management, positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement (Table 5).

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of pre-service teachers' knowledge.

Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation
Behavior Management	4.78	0.45
Positive Reinforcement	4.83	0.42
Negative Reinforcement	4.72	0.68
Overall	4.78	0.52

Table 2. Pre-service teachers' knowledge of behavior management.

Items	Responses				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecide	Agree	Strongly agree
Recognize the differences between positive and negative behaviors	-	-	2 (2%)	19 (19%)	79 (79%)
Recognize the importance of behavior management to student with disability	-	-	1 (1%)	25 (25%)	74 (74%)
Recognize the types of negative behaviors	-	-	4 (4%)	18 (18%)	78 (78%)
Recognize the types of positive behaviors	-	-	3 (3%)	19 (19%)	78 (78%)
Recognize the emotion management	-	-	-	22 (22%)	78 (78%)
Recognize the objectives of behavior management	-	-	2 (2%)	18 (18%)	80 (80%)
Recognize the importance of behavior management to learning process	-	-	1 (1%)	11 (11%)	88 (88%)
Recognize the approaches to support self-esteem	-	-	-	24 (24%)	76 (76%)
Recognize the behavior management is a component in the national curriculum	-	-	1 (1%)	18 (18%)	81 (81%)

Table 3. Pre-service teachers' knowledge of positive reinforcement.

Items	Responses				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecide	Agree	Strongly agree
Definition of positive reinforcement	-	-	1 (1%)	21 (21%)	78 (78%)
Strategies to shaping positive behavior	-	1 (1%)	5 (5%)	19 (19%)	75 (75%)
Positive reinforcement can escalate targeted behavior	-	-	2 (2%)	11 (11%)	87 (87%)
Positive reinforcement can reduce negative behavior	-	-	1 (%)	12 (12%)	87 (87%)
Social reinforcement fostering positive behavior	-	-	2 (2%)	11 (11%)	87 (87%)
Motivation is form of reward	-	-	1 (1%)	9 (9%)	90 (90%)
Reward fostering positive behavior	-	-	1 (1%)	14 (14%)	85 (85%)
Variety form of economic token	-	-	-	10 (10%)	90 (90%)

Table 4. Pre-service teachers' knowledge of negative reinforcement.

Items	Responses				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Implementing time out procedures	-	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	15 (15%)	83 (83%)
Punishment can reduce negative behavior	-	3 (3%)	4 (4%)	15 (15%)	78 (80%)
Strategies to reduce negative behavior	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	4 (4%)	14 (4%)	80 (80%)
Negative reinforcement fostering positive behavior	1 (1%)	4 (4%)	4 (4%)	9 (9%)	82 (82%)

Table 5. The differences between level of classroom management by universities.

Universities	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p
Between groups	8.41	2	2.80 2.84	2.62	0.51
Within groups	76.55	97			
Total	84.97	99			

4. Conclusion

This research investigated the understanding of special education pre-service teachers regarding classroom management from aspects of behavior management, positive reinforcement, and negative reinforcements. The findings showed pre-service teachers from three public universities in Malaysia demonstrated a good understanding on classroom management with a high level of the mean value for all the sub-scales. It can be concluded that a public university in Malaysia provides adequate input regarding classroom management in the special education trainee program. However, further studies of pre-service teachers' knowledge and practice in the classroom are needed. Because an effective teacher is able to make a connection between theoretical and practical in the classroom.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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