

Reducing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom of Grade 3 Learners

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Abstract—Disruptive behavior challenges learning and teaching in classrooms. This research explores how different seating arrangements affect grade 3 students' disruptive behaviors. Using social learning theory and Dickens and Watkins's Action Research model (Planning, Action, Observation, Reflection), the seven-week study includes a pre-intervention phase, four weeks of varied seating, and post-intervention unstructured interviews. Behavior checklists show a significant drop in distractions, while off-task behaviors change sporadically. Interviews reveal student perceptions of disruptive behavior and seating impacts. Findings highlight the need for tailored classroom strategies, recommending individualized approaches, ongoing professional development, technology policies, and continuous monitoring. This study offers valuable insights for managing classroom disruptions effectively.

Keywords— Disruptive behavior, classroom management, seating arrangements, observation checklist, thematic analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Disruptive behavior is a pervasive issue in classrooms, and it can negatively impact the learning experience of both disruptive and non-disruptive students (Henderson et al., 2018). Teachers employ various strategies to manage disruptive behavior, including varied seating arrangements, which are rooted in social learning theory. According to Bandura (1977), individuals learn by observing others' behavior, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors. In the context of classrooms, students may observe their peers' behavior and model it. Varying seating arrangements could reduce the likelihood of students modeling disruptive behavior by altering the social context of the classroom (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018).

Studies show that seating arrangements have a significant impact on classroom behavior and student engagement. According to Kornilova and Smirnova (2019), a seating arrangement that promotes interaction and collaboration among students results in better academic performance and fewer behavior problems. In a study by Shukla et al. (2019), students' behavior improved when they were seated in groups facing each other, rather than in rows facing the teacher. Similarly, a study by Zhang et al. (2020) found that a circular seating arrangement promoted student engagement and participation.

Furthermore, varied seating arrangements have been shown to improve student attention and focus. In a study by Kim et al. (2021), students' visual attention improved when they were seated in a semicircular seating arrangement compared to a traditional row seating arrangement. Similarly, a study by Rieser et al. (2021) found that a semicircular seating arrangement improved students' cognitive processing and recall of lesson content.

Overall, the literature suggests that varied seating arrangements could be an effective strategy for managing disruptive behavior and promoting student engagement and attention. The purpose of this action research project is to investigate whether using varied seating arrangements can reduce disruptive behavior in the classroom and promote student engagement and attention. This paper also analyzed the pupils' perception towards classroom disruptive behaviors.

II. INNOVATION, INTERVENTION, AND STRATEGY

This action research (AR) explored the idea that disruptive behaviors among students can be mitigated through the use of diverse seating arrangements as an intervention strategy in the classroom (Wangdi & Namgyel, 2022). The research is based on Dickens and Watkins's (1999) AR model, which includes four stages: Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection. The AR model is structured as follows:

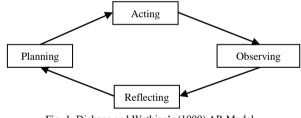


Fig. 1. Dickens and Watkins's (1999) AR Model.

To carry out the intervention program of this AR, researcher imposed the following steps:

A. Planning

The researcher conducted a literature review on the prevailing issues and practices related to pupils' disruptive behavior during teaching and learning, as well as its adverse impact on students' overall academic engagement and performance. After examining various intervention strategies, the researcher opted to investigate the effectiveness of frequently changing seating arrangements in mitigating disruptive behavior.

B. Action

Step 1. In the initial phase of this action research (AR), the researchers conducted two weeks of class observations (Figure 2) to identify the most prevalent disruptive behaviors among students. This observation period served as the pre-intervention stage and occurred before any treatment was implemented. The



methodology involved two primary instruments. Firstly, the researchers recorded observations of various disruptive behaviors during classroom instruction. They alternated responsibilities in documenting these behaviors. Secondly, a daily checklist was employed to pinpoint the most common and recurring disruptive behaviors, facilitating a comparative analysis against the pre-intervention data.

Step 2. The researcher implemented several classroom seating arrangements as an intervention strategy in this AR to try to reduce pupils' negative behaviors. Over the course of a month, students were observed throughout the learning process. Twice a week, they experienced different seating arrangements, including pair seating, changing pair seating, group seating, U-shape seating, double U-shape seating, and circle shape seating. To manage and assign pupils to their seats, name cards were used to indicate their designated spots for each day. These cards were randomly assigned to the seats by the researchers before each class, and the pupils were instructed to locate their cards and sit accordingly.

Step 3. To evaluate the success of the intervention strategy used in this study in decreasing pupils' disruptive behavior in the classroom, the pre-intervention data was compared to the average post-intervention data.

Step 4. A week after the intervention, ten students from the two sections (comprising five males and five females) were randomly chosen for a semi-structured interview to gather their views on disruptive behavior in the classroom. Each student participated in a seven to ten-minute interview guided by an unstructured framework. The students' responses were recorded and subjected to thematic analysis, which involved transcribing, coding, organizing, verifying themes, naming these themes clearly, and compiling interview excerpts to address the research questions. Researchers carefully examined and analyzed the transcripts to discern potential common themes. These preliminary themes identified from the participants' feedback were then refined through multiple readings by the researchers. Ultimately, several themes were determined to accurately reflect the students' perceptions of disruptive behavior in the classroom.

C. Observation

In this research, a mixed-method action research approach was implemented for data collection. Following the intervention, semi-structured interviews and naturalistic observations were carried out to understand students' daily behaviors. A consolidated list of disruptive behaviors was created, and researchers alternated in observing each class, documenting the frequency of these behaviors. This methodology improved the construct validity of the data by pinpointing prevalent disruptive behaviors within the classroom. To maintain consistency, the researchers developed weekly checklists for all observations.

D. Reflection

Once the observations were finished, the students were interviewed to understand their views on classroom disruptions. The goal of the interview was to delve deeply into how students perceive disruptive behavior when it is exhibited by their friends. Subsequently, the researchers discussed and reported the findings in this paper for future implications.

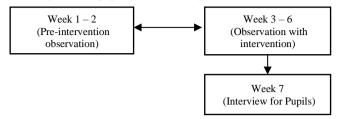


Fig. 2. Conceptual framework of the study.

III. ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This action research aims to report the common classroom disruptive behaviors of grade 3 pupils of Dela Paz Elementary School, Dela Paz, Liloy, Zamboanga del Norte. This report also investigated the benefits of varied seating arrangements in the classroom learning environment. Specifically, this research sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1. What are the most common disruptive behaviors among the grades 5 and 6 pupils inside the classroom?
- 2. Does the intervention strategy implementing varied seating arrangements could help reduce students' disruptive behavior in the classroom?
- 3. What are the pupils' perceptions about classroom disruptive behavior?

IV. ACTION RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This action research study employed a mixed-method approach to evaluate the impact of different seating arrangements on minimizing disruptive behavior in grade 3 students at a primary school. The study spanned 7 weeks, which included a 2-week pre-intervention phase, a 4-week intervention phase with ongoing observation, and a 1-week post-intervention phase dedicated to conducting unstructured interviews with students.

Quantitative data were gathered using a behavior checklist and analyzed with both descriptive and inferential statistics. The checklist documented the frequency and types of disruptive behaviors exhibited during class. Frequencies and percentages of these behaviors were calculated for both the pre-intervention and post-intervention phases. Descriptive statistics were used to depict the distribution of disruptive behaviors across the two stages, while inferential statistics, including chi-square tests, assessed whether there was a significant difference in behavior frequencies between the stages.

Qualitative data were collected through classroom observations and unstructured interviews with a purposive sample of students. The researcher conducted observations during the intervention phase to monitor the implementation of varied seating arrangements and to identify any potential issues or areas for improvement. Unstructured interviews with selected students were held during the post-intervention phase to gain insights into their experiences with the new seating arrangements and its effects on their behavior. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and subjected to thematic analysis to extract recurring themes from the students' responses.



Data analysis involved triangulating the quantitative and qualitative results. The findings from both methods were integrated to offer a comprehensive understanding of the research problem and to formulate recommendations for enhancing classroom management strategies. Quantitative results were displayed in tables and graphs to visually represent the data, while the qualitative findings from the thematic analysis of student responses were presented narratively to provide a rich and detailed account of their experiences with the varied seating arrangements and its influence on their behavior.

Ethical considerations were meticulously observed by obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study.

A. Participant and/or other Sources of Data and Information

The participants of this study were grade 3 students from a primary school, encompassing a total of 17 participants. These students were crucial to the research, as they offered insightful perspectives on their experiences with the altered seating arrangement and its impact on their behavior. During the postintervention phase, unstructured interviews were conducted with the students to delve deeper into their experiences with the intervention. The interviews concentrated on topics such as the students' views on disruptive behavior, their experiences with the different seating configurations, and their suggestions for enhancing classroom management strategies. By involving the students in this research, their voices are acknowledged, and their insights guided the formulation of recommendations to improve classroom management techniques. It's important to highlight that the ethical considerations of this study emphasized the safety and well-being of the students. Informed consent was obtained from the students' parents or guardians, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. The students were reassured that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time.

B. Research Instruments

To assess the impact of different seating arrangements on reducing disruptive behavior, two custom research instruments were employed: observation checklists and unstructured interview guides for students.

The observation checklists were utilized during both the pre-intervention and intervention phases to document the frequency and types of disruptive behaviors. These checklists were designed to record specific actions, such as speaking out of turn, off-task activities, and interrupting others. Observations were conducted during normal classroom activities with the observer logging each student's behavior on the checklist. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to detect any behavioral trends or changes.

Unstructured interviews with pupils were conducted in the post-intervention stage to capture their views on the seating arrangement changes and how these affected their behavior. The interviews also explored students' perspectives on disruptive behavior in general. The purpose of these interviews, which are conducted individually, is an open space for students to express their thoughts and feelings. These sessions were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. A thematic analysis identified common themes from the students' responses, highlighting their understanding of disruptive behavior and their experiences with the new seating arrangement.

Both the checklists and unstructured interviews are wellsuited for this study as they offer a holistic view of the effectiveness of varied seating arrangements in mitigating disruptive behavior. Utilizing multiple research tools enhances the study's validity and reliability by triangulating the data. Incorporating students' perceptions of disruptive behavior provides crucial insights into their viewpoints, helping to develop effective classroom management strategies.

C. Data Gathering Methods

This AR study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. Quantitative data was gathered through observation checklists, while qualitative data came from unstructured interviews with pupils.

The observation checklists recorded the frequency and types of disruptive behaviors during normal classroom activities such as teacher-led instruction, independent work, and group activities. These observations were made both before and during the intervention to evaluate the effectiveness of different seating arrangements on reducing disruptive behavior. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to pinpoint any patterns or behavioral changes. Furthermore, a chi-square test was conducted to determine if there was a significant reduction in these behaviors after implementing the intervention.

Unstructured interviews with pupils provided insights into their views on the varied seating arrangement and its effects on their behavior. Conducted one-on-one and audio recorded with consent, the interviews took place in private settings ensuring pupil confidentiality. Thematic analysis was utilized to extract common themes from the responses, focusing on pupils' perceptions of disruptive behavior and their experiences with the new seating arrangement.

D. Data Analysis

This action research study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. The quantitative data, gathered through observation checklists, were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages. These statistics were utilized to report the frequency of disruptive behaviors both before and during the intervention period, allowing for a comparative analysis. Chi-square tests were performed to assess whether there was a significant difference in the frequency of disruptive behaviors before and after the intervention, aiding in evaluating the effectiveness of the varied seating arrangement in mitigating disruptive behavior. The qualitative data, collected via unstructured interviews, were analyzed through thematic analysis. This approach involved identifying and examining patterns within the data to uncover themes and sub-themes. The interview transcripts from the pupils were scrutinized to identify their perceptions of disruptive behavior and the varied seating arrangement. The emergent themes provided insight into the pupils' experiences with the intervention and their



understanding of disruptive behavior.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND REFLECTION

The data collected over a one-month observation period sheds light on the frequencies and trends in various disruptive behaviors exhibited by students in the classroom. These behaviors encompass talking out of turn, being disruptive during transitions, not following directions, being disrespectful to peers and teachers, using inappropriate language, being physically aggressive, not completing assignments, not participating in class discussions, using electronic devices without permission, and being off-task.

One of the observed behaviors, "Talking out of turn, off-task behavior," exhibited fluctuations, with sporadic increases on the 2nd and 9th day. This suggests that this behavior remained relatively infrequent and that the intervention may have had limited impact. Research in classroom management strategies has indicated that maintaining a structured and engaging classroom environment can reduce off-task behavior (Evertson & Emmer, 1982).

In contrast, "Distracting others, not following directions" displayed a more encouraging pattern. After the intervention on the 7th and 8th day, a noticeable reduction was observed. The literature supports the idea that effective classroom management strategies, such as providing clear instructions and addressing disruptions promptly, can reduce this type of disruptive behavior (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

"Being disruptive during transitions, getting out of seat without permission" demonstrated a clear trend, starting with a high frequency on the 8th and 9th day, and gradually decreasing post-intervention, eventually reaching zero instances. This suggests that interventions like changes in seating arrangements can be effective in curbing such disruptive behaviors (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

The behavior "Being disrespectful to peers/teacher, using inappropriate language" initially showed varied frequencies. However, it exhibited a notable reduction after the intervention, indicating the effectiveness of the intervention in curbing this behavior. The literature emphasizes the importance of creating a positive classroom climate through strategies like positive teacher-student relationships and classroom rules to minimize disrespect (Morrison, 2009).

Conversely, "Talking out of turn, being physically aggressive" displayed mixed frequencies and occasional spikes, making it challenging to discern a clear pattern. This suggests that this behavior may require more targeted interventions and a more detailed analysis to assess the significance of these changes.

Another behavior that displayed a significant reduction postintervention was "Distracting others, not completing assignments." Although occasional spikes were observed, there was a general decrease after the intervention. Research on classroom interventions, such as task modifications and individualized support, suggests that they can be effective in reducing off-task behavior and increasing assignment completion (Heward et al., 2005).

"Being disruptive during transitions, off-task behavior" showed fluctuations without a clear pattern. This underscores

the need for further research to identify specific factors affecting this behavior. It is possible that a combination of individual student characteristics and classroom-specific dynamics plays a role in this disruptive behavior (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001).

Behaviors such as "Not participating in class discussion, being disrespectful to peers/teacher" demonstrated variable frequencies both before and after the intervention. The sporadic effects of the intervention suggest that individual classroom dynamics may significantly influence these behaviors. The literature indicates that creating an inclusive classroom environment, encouraging active participation, and addressing disrespectful behavior promptly are key strategies to tackle these issues (Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

"Using electronic devices without permission, not following directions" remained relatively infrequent with almost no instances observed. This implies that factors other than seating arrangements may be responsible for its consistent low frequency. Research on technology use in the classroom has emphasized the role of clear rules and expectations regarding device usage (Crompton, 2019).

Finally, "Being physically aggressive, using inappropriate language" initially exhibited fluctuations but consistently declined after the intervention. This suggests that the intervention was effective in reducing the frequency of this behavior. Strategies such as positive behavior support and conflict resolution techniques can contribute to reducing physical aggression in the classroom (Colvin et al., 2010).

The analysis of the data highlights that the effects of varied seating arrangements on disruptive behaviors are behaviorspecific and influenced by individual classroom dynamics. Further statistical analysis is recommended to determine the statistical significance of these findings and to validate the effectiveness of varied seating arrangements in classroom management. Additionally, qualitative data and a deeper understanding of individual classroom contexts are crucial to provide a more comprehensive assessment of these trends and behaviors.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of varied seating arrangements on disruptive behaviors within a classroom setting. The research period spanning from May 24th, 2023, to June 23rd, 2023, provided a comprehensive understanding of the frequencies and trends of disruptive behaviors exhibited by students. The data collected unveiled a range of insights into how seating arrangements influence these behaviors. The following conclusions emerge from the analysis of the results.

Firstly, it is evident that no one-size-fits-all solution exists for managing disruptive behaviors. The effectiveness of varied seating arrangements was behavior-specific. For instance, behaviors like "Distracting others, not following directions" and "Not participating in class discussion, being disrespectful to peers/teacher" demonstrated a clear reduction in frequency post-intervention. This indicates that modifications in seating arrangements can be effective strategies for curbing these behaviors. The literature suggests that implementing structured



and engaging classroom management strategies can play a pivotal role in reducing such disruptions (Brophy & Evertson, 1976; Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

Conversely, other behaviors such as "Talking out of turn, offtask behavior" and "Being disruptive during transitions, offtask behavior" exhibited sporadic or no significant change in frequency after varied seating arrangements were introduced. These results imply that while seating arrangements can contribute to behavior management, they may not be the sole solution. The complex interplay of various factors within the classroom environment requires further exploration. A deeper understanding of individual classroom dynamics and the specific needs of students is essential when implementing strategies for these behaviors.

Furthermore, behaviors like "Being physically aggressive, using inappropriate language" showed a decline in frequency after the intervention. This is an encouraging sign that modifying seating arrangements can positively impact classroom management. The literature emphasizes that strategies such as positive behavior support and conflict resolution techniques can be instrumental in reducing physical aggression (Colvin et al., 2010). In this context, the results support the idea that varying seating arrangements can complement these strategies in creating a conducive classroom environment.

It is also noteworthy that some behaviors like "Using electronic devices without permission, not following directions" remained consistently infrequent throughout the observation period. This suggests that other factors beyond seating arrangements may contribute to the successful management of certain behaviors. Research on technology use in the classroom underscores the importance of clear rules and expectations regarding device usage (Crompton, 2019).

In conclusion, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on classroom management by shedding light on the behavior-specific nature of seating arrangements' impact. It underscores the importance of recognizing the complexities of individual classroom dynamics and the need for tailored approaches to behavior management. Classroom management is a multifaceted challenge that requires a combination of strategies, which may include varied seating arrangements. The findings from this study provide valuable insights for educators, suggesting that they must consider a diverse array of approaches to effectively manage disruptive behaviors and cultivate a conducive learning environment.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Individualized Classroom Management Strategies: Recognize that disruptive behaviors in a classroom are behavior-specific. Tailor classroom management strategies, including seating arrangements, to address the unique needs of students. Consider students' learning styles, personalities, and specific challenges when designing seating layouts.
- 2. Professional Development: Invest in ongoing professional development for educators in effective classroom management strategies. Training programs should cover diverse aspects of classroom management, including seating arrangements, positive behavior support, and conflict

resolution techniques. This empowers teachers with the knowledge and skills to manage disruptive behaviors effectively.

- 3. Communication and Consistency: Establish clear communication channels between teachers, students, and parents regarding classroom expectations and behavior standards. Consistency in enforcing rules, including those related to seating arrangements, is crucial. Regularly communicating and reinforcing these expectations can positively impact student behavior.
- 4. Technology Integration Policies: Develop clear policies and guidelines for technology use within the classroom. This includes rules about when and how electronic devices may be used. Educators should collaborate with students and parents to create and enforce these policies effectively.
- 5. Monitoring and Feedback: Implement a system for continuous monitoring and feedback on classroom behavior. Utilize tools like daily behavior logs and behavior tracking apps. This data can inform teachers and administrators about the effectiveness of different strategies, including seating arrangements.

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