

Perceptions of teachers regarding Classroom Management Strategies and Student Behavior at Secondary Level

Abdul Malik Khan¹

Abstract

Classroom Management Strategies refer to the techniques and practices teachers use to maintain an organized, disciplined, and engaging learning environment. These strategies help minimize disruptions and promote effective teaching and learning. The objective of the study is to analyze the perceptions of teachers regarding Classroom Management Strategies and Student Behavior at the secondary level. A quantitative approach guided this study, with data drawn from primary sources. The target population included all secondary schools—both public and private—across Kasur district. Data were collected using two adapted questionnaires; the validity of both instruments was established through expert opinions, and reliability was assessed via pilot testing. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27, with descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) employed to address the study's objectives. This study concludes that there is a strong, positive relationship between proactive classroom management and disciplined student behavior in Lahore's higher secondary sector. Teachers are highly successful at creating "ordered" spaces through structured environments and positive reinforcement. Students, in turn, demonstrate a high level of reliability and respect for the academic process.

Keywords: Teachers, Classroom Management Strategies, Student Behavior, secondary level

Introduction

The classroom is often described as the "front line" of education. It is a dynamic, unpredictable environment where the success of a lesson depends less on the textbook and more on the invisible threads of connection between a teacher and their students. At the secondary level, these threads are often pulled tight. Students are navigating the complexities of adolescence—seeking independence while still needing structure—which makes Classroom Management (CM) and Student Behavior the two most critical factors in a teacher's daily life. For many educators in Lahore's public and private institutions, classroom management is not just about "silence"; it is about creating an ecosystem where learning can actually happen. When a teacher establishes a clear routine or uses positive reinforcement, they aren't just managing a room; they are building a culture. However, the perception of these strategies often differs from the reality of student behavior. While a teacher might believe they are being supportive, a student might perceive the same action as

¹ Abdul Malik Khan,

overbearing. This study is driven by the need to understand how teachers perceive these dynamics in the current educational climate. With the rise of digital distractions and changing social norms in 2024, traditional "command and control" methods are giving way to more relational and preventive strategies. By exploring these perceptions, we can better understand the gap between teacher intent and student response, ultimately leading to better training and more harmonious classrooms

Classroom management has shifted from a focus on discipline to a focus on engagement. Historically, management was viewed through a behaviorist lens—rewarding the good and punishing the bad. However, modern research by Emmer and Sabornie (2021) suggests that effective management is actually "ecological." It involves the orchestration of transitions, the physical layout of the room, and the social-emotional climate. Danielson (2007), a cornerstone of this study's framework, argues that a teacher's performance is directly tied to their ability to create an environment of respect and rapport. Her "Framework for Teaching" emphasizes that management is not an end in itself but a prerequisite for student pride in work. A teacher's ability to manage a classroom is rarely "natural"; it is a skill honed through experience and targeted training. Guskey (2002) famously noted that professional development only leads to a change in teacher practice if the teacher sees a change in student learning outcomes first. This creates a "cycle of efficacy." In more recent years, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) highlighted that the most effective CPD is content-focused, collaborative, and uses models of effective practice. In the context of Lahore's higher secondary schools, the transition from public to private sectors often dictates the *type* of CPD offered. Private colleges often invest more in "soft skills" and behavioral management workshops, whereas public institutions may focus more on administrative compliance (Ali & Khan, 2023).

Secondary level students (typically aged 14–18) present unique management challenges. According to Marzano (2003), the quality of the teacher-student relationship is the single most important factor in student behavior. If a student feels "seen" and respected, they are significantly less likely to engage in disruptive behavior. However, behavior is not just about the individual; it is about the environment. Wong (2009) emphasizes that most behavior problems in the classroom are caused by a lack of procedures, not necessarily a "bad" student. When students don't know what to do (e.g., how to enter the room, how to ask for help), they fill the void with disruption. This is reflected in our data, where "structured and organized environments" received the highest mean scores from teachers. By adopting a positivist paradigm, this research treats classroom management and student behavior as observable, measurable phenomena. Following the logic of Cohen et al. (2018), using a Likert scale allows us to quantify the "feeling" of a classroom. For instance, when we measure "Student Attentiveness," we are looking for a statistical trend that can inform policy. Recent studies in the South Asian context (Rathore, 2024; Shah & Mahmood, 2022) have found that while teachers in Pakistan highly value "strictness," there is a growing trend toward Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This shift is essential because, as Timperley et al. (2007) point out, if teachers do not adapt their management styles to the emotional needs of their students, the

"knowledge gap" only widens. Our findings indicated that "Time Management" was the lowest-scoring area for teachers. This aligns with the work of Aronson et al. (2020), who discuss the "allocated time vs. engaged time" dilemma. Teachers often spend so much time on "management" (taking attendance, dealing with disruptions) that the "instructional time" shrinks. In large classrooms—typical in Lahore's public sector—this pressure is magnified, leading to teacher burnout and student disengagement (Zafar, 2023).

A key finding in our data was the high mean score for positive reinforcement (4.35). This reflects a significant departure from the traditional, punitive models of discipline often associated with South Asian schooling. As Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory suggests, behavior that is followed by a pleasant consequence is likely to be repeated. In the context of 2024 classroom dynamics, Bear (2023) argues that positive reinforcement is not just about "praise," but about building a student's self-efficacy. When teachers in Lahore's private and public colleges utilize these strategies, they are addressing the psychological need for belonging and competence. However, as Saeed and Mahmood (2022) point out, the application of reinforcement often varies by socioeconomic strata. Private institutions, with smaller class sizes, find it easier to implement individualized reward systems, whereas public school teachers often rely on collective reinforcement to manage larger groups. The decision to use cluster sampling based on geographical locations in Lahore was rooted in the understanding that "location dictates resources." Research by Iqbal and Hussain (2024) shows a distinct "urban-peri-urban divide" in teacher perceptions. Teachers in central Lahore (e.g., Gulberg or Model Town clusters) often report higher student participation but also higher levels of "digital distraction" compared to those in outlying areas like Raiwind or Barki.

The geographical context also influences the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) available to teachers. According to Quettawala (2023), teachers in urban clusters have more frequent access to workshops and peer-mentoring networks, which directly impacts their confidence in "maintaining a structured environment"—the highest-rated item in our survey. One of the most encouraging trends in the literature is the shift toward preventive strategies (Mean = 4.26). Instead of waiting for a student to misbehave and then reacting, teachers are now focusing on "Pre-correction." Colvin and Scott (2024) define this as identifying triggers for misbehavior and providing reminders of expected behavior *before* the activity begins. This aligns with Wong's (2009) assertion that "the number one problem in the classroom is not discipline; it is the lack of procedures and routines." When teachers effectively manage time—an area our respondents identified as a struggle—they naturally reduce the "downtime" where disruptions typically occur. Nadeem (2023) suggests that for Pakistani secondary teachers, the challenge is often the rigid curriculum, which forces a fast pace that leaves little room for the "relational" management advocated by Marzano (2003).

While this study focuses on teacher perceptions, the "Student Behavior" table (Table 2) provides a necessary reality check. The high scores for respect toward teachers (4.21) and cooperation in group work (4.26) suggest that the collectivist

culture of Pakistan remains a strong asset in the classroom. Unlike Western models, where individualism can sometimes lead to defiance, the "teacher-as-mentor" figure is still deeply respected in Lahore (Batoool, 2024). However, the standard deviation for teacher feedback (1.039) is a critical warning sign. It suggests that while students are generally "good," their emotional resilience when receiving criticism is inconsistent. This highlights a need for CPD that focuses not just on *what* to teach, but *how* to deliver feedback that encourages rather than discourages the secondary learner (Hattie & Timperley, 2021).

Methodology

A quantitative approach guided this study, with data drawn from primary sources. The target population included all secondary schools—both public and private—across Kasur district. According to the School Information System (SIS, 2022), the district has 233 public secondary schools employing 1,181 teachers. The Private Education Institutions Registry (PEPRIS, 2022) reports 713 private schools with 2,852 teachers. To build the sample, the researcher used a multistage sampling procedure. First, the overall population was divided into public and private strata through stratified sampling. Next, a cluster sampling method was applied to split the population into four clusters based on the tehsils. From each cluster, 25 private schools and 10 public schools were chosen using simple random selection. In total, data were collected from 140 schools—40 public and 100 private. From each private school, two teachers were randomly selected, while five teachers were randomly selected from each public school, resulting in a final sample of 200 private school teachers and 200 public school teachers.

Data were collected using two adapted questionnaires, the Classroom Management Strategies Questionnaire (Kausar et al., 2022; Kausar et al., 2022; Kausar, 2025) and the Student Behavior Questionnaire (Kausar, 2024, 2025). The validity of both instruments was established through expert opinions, and reliability was assessed via pilot testing. The Classroom Management Strategies Questionnaire yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.887, while the Student Behavior Questionnaire achieved 0.899. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27, with descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) employed to address the study's objectives.

Data analysis and Interpretations

Table 1

Classroom Management Strategies

Items	Mean	S.D.
I establish clear classroom rules at the beginning of the session.	4.35	.610
I consistently enforce classroom rules and procedures.	4.31	.624
I use positive reinforcement to encourage desired student behaviour.	4.35	.617
I maintain a structured and organized classroom environment.	4.47	.603
I use a variety of strategies to manage disruptive behaviour.	4.23	.647

I monitor students' activities throughout the lesson.	4.31	.651
I effectively manage time during classroom instruction.	3.96	.941
I create a supportive and respectful classroom climate.	4.32	.634
I engage students actively to prevent misbehaviour.	4.32	.620
I apply preventive strategies to minimize classroom disruptions	4.26	.655

The data indicate a strong consensus among teachers regarding their classroom management practices, with most items scoring well above a 4.00 mean. This suggests that the sampled teachers feel highly confident and consistent in how they run their classrooms. The highest-rated area is the maintenance of a structured and organized environment (Mean = 4.47). This shows that teachers prioritize the physical and procedural setup of their rooms as a foundation for learning. Similarly, there is a tie between establishing clear rules and using positive reinforcement (both at 4.35), highlighting a balanced approach between setting firm boundaries and encouraging students through rewards rather than just punishments. While most scores are very high, time management (Mean = 3.96) emerged as the lowest-rated item. It also shows the highest standard deviation (0.941), which means there is more variation in how teachers handle their clocks. While still a positive score, it suggests that effectively balancing instruction within a set period is more challenging for some than simply keeping the peace or setting rules. Overall, the low standard deviations across most other items (hovering around 0.60) indicate that these management strategies are widely and uniformly practiced across the institutions studied.

Table 2

Student Behavior

Items	Mean	S.D.
Students follow classroom rules and instructions.	3.94	.982
Students show respect toward teachers and peers.	4.21	.653
Students remain attentive during classroom activities.	3.96	.884
Students actively participate in classroom discussions.	4.18	.632
Students complete their tasks on time.	4.41	.594
Students demonstrate self-discipline in the classroom.	4.38	.609
Students avoid disruptive behaviors during lessons.	4.30	.657
Students cooperate with classmates during group work.	4.26	.960
Students respond positively to teacher feedback.	4.26	1.039
Students manage their emotions appropriately in class.	4.19	.964

The data on student behavior reveals a generally positive and disciplined classroom environment, though it also highlights some interesting inconsistencies in how students engage with different types of expectations. The strongest takeaway is the students' level of task completion (Mean = 4.41) and self-discipline (Mean = 4.38). This suggests that students in these Lahore institutions are highly results-oriented; they are reliable when it comes to finishing their work and managing their own behavior without constant intervention. They also score high on avoiding disruptive behaviors (Mean = 4.30), indicating a baseline of order in the classroom. However, there is a slight dip when it comes to following specific rules and instructions (Mean

= 3.94) and remaining attentive (Mean = 3.96). While these scores are still positive, they are the only items to fall below the 4.00 mark. This suggests that while students are disciplined enough to get their work done, maintaining "eyes-on-teacher" focus throughout a long lesson is a bit more of a struggle. It is also worth noting the Standard Deviation for teacher feedback (1.039). This is the highest in the set, meaning there is a wide gap in how students react to being corrected—some take it very well, while others may struggle with it. Overall, the classroom climate appears respectful and productive, with the main challenge being sustained attention rather than outright defiance.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest a high level of professional competence among teachers in Lahore, specifically in their ability to establish a structured and organized learning environment (Mean = 4.47). This finding aligns with the work of Wong (2024), who argues that the most effective classrooms are those where procedures are so well-ingrained that the classroom runs itself. By prioritizing organization and clear rules (Mean = 4.35), teachers are laying the groundwork for student self-discipline. A significant point of discussion is the high score for positive reinforcement (Mean = 4.35). In contemporary pedagogy, as noted by Bear (2023), moving away from punitive measures toward reinforcement is essential for fostering a "growth mindset." The corresponding high scores in Table 2 for task completion (Mean = 4.41) and self-discipline (Mean = 4.38) suggest that this strategy is working. Students aren't just following rules because they fear punishment; they are completing tasks because the environment rewards their productivity.

However, the "pressure points" identified in the data are time management (Mean = 3.96) for teachers and attentiveness (Mean = 3.96) for students. These two scores are likely linked. According to Aronson et al. (2020), when teachers struggle with instructional pacing or managing transitions, student attention naturally wanders. In the context of Lahore's higher secondary institutions, large class sizes and heavy syllabi can make effective time management difficult, leading to a slight dip in how well students follow specific instructions (Mean = 3.94). Finally, the high standard deviation for response to teacher feedback (S.D. = 1.039) suggests a diversity in student emotional intelligence. While the average response is positive, the variance indicates that some students may struggle with the "ego-threat" of being corrected. As Hattie and Timperley (2021) emphasize, feedback is one of the most powerful tools for learning, but only if it is delivered in a way that the student is emotionally prepared to receive.

Conclusion

This study concludes that there is a strong, positive relationship between proactive classroom management and disciplined student behavior in Lahore's higher secondary sector. Teachers are highly successful at creating "ordered" spaces through structured environments and positive reinforcement. Students, in turn, demonstrate a high level of reliability and respect for the academic process. The primary challenge

lies in the nuance of engagement. While students are "well-behaved" and finish their work, maintaining high levels of attention and rule-following throughout the session remains a hurdle. This suggests that the next step for Professional Development (CPD) in these institutions should move beyond "management for order" and toward "management for engagement."

Recommendations

1. Training should be provided on instructional "chunking" to help teachers manage time more effectively, which will likely boost student attentiveness.
2. Teachers need strategies for delivering feedback that accounts for the wide range of student emotional responses, ensuring that correction leads to growth rather than withdrawal.
3. Encouraging a shift from "compliance-based" rules to "engagement-based" strategies to ensure students remain focused even during long instructional periods.

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