ACADEMIA International Journal for Social Sciences
Volume 4, Issue 6, 2025 ISSN-L (Online): 3006-6638

Beyond Punishment: Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom Disruption and Behaviour Management Practices in Pakistani Secondary Schools

Dr. Abida Nasreen
Associate Professor, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Dr. Anjum Naz
Head of Teaching & Learning (CSA), AL. Arden University, London, UK

Zubia Hashmat
Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: Dr. Abida Nasreen

Received: 15-10-2025 **Revised:** 13-11-2025 **Accepted:** 21-11-2025 **Published:** 29-11-2025

ABSTRACT

Classroom discipline is often conceptualized as the control of student misconduct, although contemporary scholarship emphasizes relational, instructional and organizational approaches to behavior support. This study revisits archival survey findings to examine how secondary-school teachers in Punjab, Pakistan, understood perceived sources of disruption and endorsed behavior-management responses. A descriptive secondary analysis was undertaken of tabulated findings from an existing cross-sectional questionnaire survey involving 302 teachers in 50 public secondary schools across Lahore and Kasur. The 52-item instrument covered perceived contributors to discipline problems (35 items) and maintenance practices (17 items). Reported item-level results indicated strong endorsement of classroom rules (93.0% agreement), concerns about overcrowded classrooms (87.7%) and aggressive teacher behaviour (90.7%), and support for reward, praise and motivation (82.1%). However, 59.6% also agreed that teachers often use corporal punishment, revealing a tension between supportive and punitive practices. The findings are descriptive measures of teacher perceptions, not direct estimates of student behavior or causal effects. Archival inconsistencies in demographic and inferential tables preclude defensible subgroup conclusions without reanalysis of the original dataset. The article argues for a school-wide, relational and instructionally grounded approach to behavior support, while identifying the importance of measurement transparency, student perspectives and stronger designs for future Pakistani research.

Keywords: *Classroom management; school discipline; teacher perceptions; positive reinforcement; secondary education; Pakistan.*

INTRODUCTION

Classroom behaviour management is central to students' opportunities to participate, feel safe and learn. Disruptions can restrict instructional time, but responses based primarily on sanctions may themselves compromise relationships and belonging. The OECD's analysis of PISA 2022 highlights the relationship between classroom disciplinary climate, teacher support and conditions for learning (OECD, 2023). Yet the practical question for schools is not only what teachers identify as problematic behaviour, but also which practices they regard as legitimate ways of responding.

In Pakistan, school discipline must be interpreted within distinctive public-school conditions: the practical challenges of large classes, unequal resources and expectations concerning teacher authority and parental involvement. The thesis on which this article draws surveyed teachers in Lahore and Kasur in 2020. Instead of treating its multiple item categories as isolated lists of "causes", the present article reads the published descriptive findings through an integrated framework of contextual pressures, classroom relationships and behaviour-management responses. Its specific contribution is to illuminate coexistence: endorsement of preventive, supportive practices alongside acceptance of potentially punitive methods.

The research questions guiding this secondary analysis are: (1) Which family-, classroom- and peer-related conditions were most salient in teachers' responses? (2) Which supportive and controlling approaches to classroom discipline were endorsed? (3) What implications follow for professionally and ethically defensible behaviour-management policy? These questions concern perceptions, not observed prevalence, efficacy or causation.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

From compliance to classroom climate

Classroom management encompasses more than enforcing rules; it includes instructional organisation, management of transitions, teacher–student interaction and responses to student behaviour. Chow et al. (2024) mapped substantial variation across measures of classroom management, underscoring why studies should state precisely what an instrument captures. The OECD (2023) likewise reported that students' experience of disciplinary climate is tied to the wider environment for learning. These accounts challenge narrow assumptions that discipline can be assessed adequately by counting transgressions or endorsing sanctions.

More recent syntheses strengthen this expanded perspective. Korpershoek, de Boer and Mouw (2025) reviewed controlled intervention studies on classroom management and student outcomes, indicating the importance of examining management as an evidence-informed educational practice. Duan, Bissaker and Xu (2024) found that teachers' classroom-management self-efficacy is associated with teacher-, classroom- and school-level characteristics. Consequently, professional development should address institutional conditions and teachers' working environments as well as individual techniques.

Relationships, participation and teacher authority

Positive teacher–student relationships offer a relational foundation for behaviour management. A second-order meta-analysis by Emslander et al. (2025), synthesising 26 meta-analyses, identified substantial associations between teacher–student relationships and multiple developmental and educational outcomes. Association should not be equated with simple causality, but the breadth of the evidence supports treating trust, respect and supportive interactions as substantive dimensions of classroom management. The OECD (2025) also connects stronger teacher support with teacher–student relationships and favourable disciplinary climates.

Research conducted before the original thesis likewise illustrates the value of teacher perceptions of restorative approaches (Rainbolt, Fowler, & Mansfield, 2019). A later integrative review found promising associations between school-based restorative practices and lower exclusionary discipline, while noting the limitations of the underlying evidence base (Samimi et al., 2023). This literature situates behaviour management in preventive instruction, relationship repair, proportional responses and school culture, rather than assuming that punishment is the default response.

Interpreting family and peer influences

Family–school communication and peer relationships may affect the contexts in which classroom challenges arise. However, a teacher's attribution of student misconduct to parental absence, separation or peer influence is a perception and must not be represented as proof that such circumstances cause student misbehaviour. Causal claims would require longitudinal or otherwise appropriately designed evidence, and ideally information from students and families. This distinction is particularly important when questionnaires include negatively framed propositions about families or stereotypes about boys and girls.

An interpretive framework

The article therefore distinguishes three overlapping domains: (a) perceived contextual pressures, including class size, home–school communication and peer interactions; (b) proactive and relational management, including clear expectations, praise, instructional planning and equitable responses; and (c) controlling or punitive responses, including public correction and corporal punishment. These categories provide a conceptual synthesis of the original instrument; they are not newly estimated latent factors or validated scales.

RESEARCH METHOD

Design and source of evidence

This is a secondary, descriptive analysis of an archived, cross-sectional questionnaire study reported in Hashmat's 2020 MPhil thesis. The analysis uses the thesis's published aggregate tables and descriptions, not respondent-level data. The original study employed a quantitative survey with proportionate stratified sampling reported by the researcher. No new recruitment, intervention, interview, survey or statistical re-estimation was undertaken for this article. The reframing changes the analytic emphasis and interpretation, not the historical study design.

Participants and setting

The thesis reports 302 public secondary-school teachers recruited from 50 schools: 33 in Lahore and 17 in Kasur. District totals in its demographic table are Lahore n = 215 (71.2%) and Kasur n = 87 (28.8%). The original narrative states that 128 respondents were male and 174 female, whereas its demographic table states 142 male and 160 female and misprints their percentages. Since the respondent-level records were not supplied, gender composition cannot be reconciled reliably. This article therefore reports the unambiguous overall sample and district breakdown and does not interpret gender differences.

Instrument

The Questionnaire on Discipline Problems and Their Maintenance Practices (QDPMP) contains 52 five-point Likert items: 35 addressing perceived discipline-related problems across seven categories and 17 assessing management practices across four categories. The thesis reports an overall Cronbach's alpha of .820 (the abstract lists .790 for problems and .808 for practices); some factor-level coefficients were appreciably lower, including parents' busy routine (.599) and establishing rules (.587). The study describes expert review, piloting and exploratory factor-analysis outputs, although the source does not provide enough information to fully evaluate dimensionality, factor extraction or measurement invariance. The underlying scales should consequently be treated as provisional rather than definitively validated.

Analytic procedure and reporting safeguards

Selected thesis item-level percentage distributions were reviewed for relevance to the present questions. Agreement was calculated transparently as the sum of the published "agree" and "strongly agree" percentages when those cells were internally usable; small rounding differences are possible. Rather than reproducing disputed inferential results, the analysis foregrounds descriptively interpretable items. Responses refer to beliefs or reported practices, as indicated by item wording, and are not direct behavioural observation. Ethical consent and confidentiality procedures are described in the source thesis; verification of original institutional approval and permission for secondary publication remains an author responsibility.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Contextual and school-based concerns

Teachers' responses highlighted institutional conditions and teacher conduct as salient elements of the discipline environment. In the source tables, 87.7% agreed or strongly agreed that overcrowded classrooms generate discipline problems. A similarly high proportion (90.7%) agreed that aggressive teacher behaviour causes students to dislike a class. In contrast, 93.0% endorsed the importance of school rules and regulations for maintaining the environment. These are perceptions concerning the role of school conditions, not proof that any particular factor caused behaviour incidents.

Homeschool communication was also salient: 86.4% agreed or strongly agreed that poor parent–teacher interaction causes discipline problems. Peer influences were recognised, with 72.6% agreeing that friends push students to misbehave in class. The wording of these items invites attribution rather than directly measuring the incidence or antecedents of misconduct. They should inform dialogue with families and students, rather than become grounds for blame.

Preventive, Relational and Instructional practices

The questionnaire records strong support for positive and structured practices. For the proposition that reward, praise and motivation can overcome discipline problems, 82.1% agreed or strongly agreed. Teachers also reported using brief verbal cues (90.0%), nonverbal cues (86.1%) and positive reinforcement for appropriate conduct (87.8%). Clear instructions were strongly valued (94.0% agreement); 85.5% endorsed consistent and equitable enforcement of classroom rules. Mixed-ability group activities received 81.1% agreement. These results indicate normative endorsement and reported frequency proxies as expressed in the items, not intervention effectiveness.

Punitive Practices alongside Supportive Approaches

A notable tension emerges in the same dataset. The item "Teachers often use corporal punishment to maintain discipline" attracted 59.6% combined agreement, compared with 28.5% disagreement and 11.9% undecided responses. The responses do not establish how often punishment actually occurred, which schools practised it or whether individual respondents themselves used it. Nevertheless, this level of perceived normalisation is analytically important when set alongside strong endorsement of praise, clear instructions and positive reinforcement. A separate item on changing the seat of disruptive students attracted 96.1% agreement, but seating changes are context-dependent management actions and must not automatically be classified as corporal or harmful punishment.

Table 1 presents selected items with interpretable five-category response distributions taken from the original results tables.

Domain / item (abridged)	**Agree + strongly agree**
Overcrowding creates discipline problems	87.7%
Aggressive teacher behavior undermines class acceptance	90.7%
Rules are important to school environment	93.0%

Poor parent–teacher interaction contributes to problems	86.4%
Friends encourage classroom misbehavior	72.6%
Reward, praise and motivation support discipline	82.1%
Short verbal cues to stop misbehavior	90.0%
Clear instructions support behavior	94.0%
Rules enforced consistently and equitably	85.5%
Teachers often use corporal punishment	59.6%

Note. Percentages are sums of the source table's agree and strongly agree response cells (not fresh analysis of individual records). The substantive meanings differ: some items concern teachers' beliefs; others claim to describe prevailing practices. The item concerning rules is not an estimate of observed compliance.

Why subgroup inference is withheld

The thesis contains t tests and ANOVA comparing gender, district and academic-qualification groups. However, several reported inferential statistics cannot be reconciled with corresponding sample counts, means or p values. For example, the gender-labelled table for discipline problems shows n = 215 and n = 87, which match the district totals rather than either reported gender distribution; its quoted t and p values also require verification. The source additionally reports starkly different district means for a discipline-problem score while concluding negligible difference, another indication of transcription or labelling error. Therefore, no statistical significance claims based on these comparisons are advanced here. The original dataset is required for verification and robust reanalysis.

DISCUSSION

These findings suggest that the teachers surveyed did not hold a purely punitive conception of classroom discipline. They strongly endorsed predictable rules, positive reinforcement, clear instructions and teacher communication. At the same time, perceived endorsement or normalization of corporal punishment coexisted with these supportive practices. This coexistence is the central contribution of the present interpretive reanalysis: a school may value positive discipline rhetorically without having fully moved away from punitive norms.

The salience of overcrowding and teacher aggression supports a contextual rather than solely individualized explanation of classroom disruption. The professional response to behavior challenges must therefore include manageable classroom structures, well-planned learning activities, respectful adult conduct and consistent routines. This accords with contemporary perspectives that connect management to school culture, educator self-efficacy and relationships (Duan et al., 2024; Emslander et al., 2025). Training focused only on sanction schedules would leave these contextual dimensions insufficiently addressed.

Parent–teacher interaction and peer influence were highly endorsed as explanatory factors, but the evidence cannot show that specific families or student subgroups cause disciplinary problems. Deficit narratives about parental separation, gender or socioeconomic position risk unfairly pathologising students. A more constructive use of these findings is to strengthen two-way communication and targeted support while including students' own accounts of conflict, belonging, safety and classroom engagement. Respondents' endorsement of an item should not be reified into a fact about families.

The corporal-punishment item deserves particular ethical attention. Its 59.6% agreement reflects teachers' reporting of a perceived practice, not evidence that such a practice improves discipline. A defensible behaviour policy should prioritise student dignity, protection from harm, proportionality, prevention, constructive responses and opportunities for relationship repair. Restorative approaches may offer additional options, although implementation conditions and the quality of the evidence warrant caution (Samimi et al., 2023).

The reported alpha values also make a methodological contribution. While the overall instrument reliability appears satisfactory, low reliability for some subscales and mixed item content caution against interpreting composites as established constructs. Future validation should attend to item direction, internal structure, contextual relevance and measurement comparability. The absence of reliable archival subgroup statistics means that claims concerning male versus female teachers and district differences should be deferred, not polished into seemingly precise findings.

Implications for policy and practice

For school leaders, the practical implication is to align discipline policy with an explicit supportive philosophy. The rules and consequences students encounter should be clearly taught, consistently applied and reviewed for fairness; equally important are positive acknowledgement, curriculum engagement, calm de-escalation and reliable communication with families. Staff development could use the reported contrast between praise and punishment as a structured reflection exercise, inviting teachers to consider how their everyday responses foster or diminish trust. School-level review should distinguish minor interruption, safeguarding issues and serious violence and select proportionate responses rather than applying a single punitive logic.

For researchers, future designs should combine teacher surveys with student voice and, where feasible, classroom observation or school records. Prospective studies could evaluate specific interventions or test whether perceived classroom climate mediates associations between management practices and engagement. A fresh study should not be presented as a continuation of this historical survey unless a genuinely new sample is collected.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The work draws on a survey conducted around 2020 in two districts; it is not a current estimate of the situation in Pakistani schools. Findings are based solely on teacher self-reports using several leading or normative item formulations and cannot establish causation or effectiveness. No student reports, observations or incident records are available. The original text contains discrepancies in respondent counts, item descriptive statistics, analysis labels and significance tests. Raw responses, missing-data patterns, school clustering, item coding and factor-model fit were unavailable. Descriptive agreement percentages reproduced here must therefore be regarded as an auditable but preliminary extraction from the thesis tables. The scope of generalisation is restricted to the surveyed schools and context.

CONCLUSION

This secondary analysis identifies a productive tension in Pakistani secondary-school teachers' descriptions of discipline: strong recognition of relational and preventive management accompanies continued normalisation of punitive approaches. Class size, teacher behaviour, clear expectations and family communication featured prominently in teachers' responses. The contribution is not to claim

new causal evidence, but to reposition historical survey findings within a contemporary account of supportive classroom climate. A credible research and policy agenda should move beyond punishment towards preventive instructional design, respectful relationships and accountable school-wide practice, supported by stronger data and explicit attention to students' experiences.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Chow, J. C., et al. (2024). A systematic meta-review of measures of classroom management in school settings. Assessment for Effective Intervention, 49(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/15345084231208671

Duan, S., Bissaker, K., & Xu, Z. (2024). Correlates of teachers' classroom management self-efficacy: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Educational Psychology Review, 36, Article 43. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-024-09881-2

Emslander, V., Holzberger, D., Ofstad, S. B., Fischbach, A., & Scherer, R. (2025). Teacher–student relationships and student outcomes: A systematic second-order meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin, 151(3), 365-397. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000461

Hashmat, Z. (2020). Current discipline related problems and their maintenance practices at secondary school level [Unpublished MPhil thesis, University of the Punjab].

Korpershoek, H., de Boer, H., & Mouw, J. M. (2025). An update of the meta-analysis of the effects of classroom management interventions on students' academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and motivational outcomes. Review of Educational Research. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543251361903

OECD. (2023). PISA 2022 results (Volume II): Learning during and from disruption. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/a97db61c-en

OECD. (2025). What can we learn about teacher support for students from PISA data? PISA in Focus. https://doi.org/10.1787/506b03a1-en

Rainbolt, S., Fowler, E. S., & Mansfield, K. C. (2019). High school teachers' perceptions of restorative discipline practices. NASSP Bulletin, 103(2), 158-182.

Samimi, C., Han, T. M., Navvab, A., Sedivy, J. A., & Anyon, Y. (2023). Restorative practices and exclusionary school discipline: An integrative review. Contemporary Justice Review, 26(1), 28-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2023.2204884