Perception of University Teachers Regarding Student Disruptive Behavior

Sobia Parveen
sobiamushtaq2917@gmail.com
M. Phil. Scholar, Superior University Lahore

Zobia Kanwal
zobia.kanwaltech@superior.edu.pk
Faculty Member, Superior University Lahore
Corresponding Author: *Sobia Parveen sobiamushtaq2917@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The research investigates university teachers' perceptions of students' disruptive behavior in higher education class contexts. From mobile phone use and side chatter to disrespectful attitude, disruptive behavior has become a growing concern among educators that impacts not only the quality of instruction but also classroom management and peer learning. With a quantitative descriptive survey research design, findings were obtained from 120 academic staff of public and private universities. The findings reveal that disruptive behavior is widely experienced and is attributed to a range of causative factors such as low motivation in students, weak discipline, technological interference, and policy loopholes in institutions. Teachers indicated that the behavior has negative effects on teaching effectiveness, maintaining order in classrooms, and general academic participation. While teachers employ multiple strategies including verbal reprimand, refocusing, and referral to administration, most of them were unhappy with the absence of formal training and institutional backup. It was also discovered that experienced teachers handled misbehavior better and that teachers in private schools monitored higher disruption frequencies. The implications of the findings are the necessity of unequivocal behavioral policy, teacher training, and robust institutional frameworks to facilitate effective classroom management. This study enriches the knowledge of disruptive behavior in higher education by reinforcing the use of teacher perception, institutional accountability, and the necessity for active measures. The study ends with a call for better policy formulation, professional development, and future studies in this area.

Keyword: *Disruptive behavior, stress student engagement, university teachers, perspective.*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a critical role in shaping both individuals and societies and is supposed to help create environments where learning, intellectual growth, and personal development thrive in institutions of higher learning. It has become increasingly a challenge, however, to maintain such an environment because of the commonality of student disruptive behaviors. These behaviors, from mild inattention to outright disrespect and aggression, have the potential to seriously impede the learning process and impact the health and job satisfaction of university instructors. To develop effective strategies for classroom management and supporting faculty in addressing these problems, it is important to know how university instructors view these behaviors.

Disruptive classroom behavior in the university environment is not a recent development, but its nature and frequency seem to be changing with broader societal trends. The increasing focus on students' rights, the increasing diversification of the student body, rising mental illness among young adults, and widespread technology use have all contributed to shifting classroom dynamics. University instructors,

who are the most visible professionals in this setting, tend to struggle with such behaviors as they work to ensure academic standards and foster significant learning experiences.

Problematic behaviors at the university level can take several forms. Examples include being late to class, texting during class, talking out of turn, showing disrespect towards peers or teachers, and resisting participation in class activities. In more serious instances, some behaviors can encompass academic dishonesty, hostility, or even oral abuse. Some of these incidents might appear as minor, yet their cumulative presence can contribute towards a negative environment for learning which interferes with the academic life of all learners and demotes teachers' motivation and authority.

Perception of these acts is diverse among university instructors, depending on variables such as cultural heritage, field of study, teaching experience, institutional regulations, and individual attitudes toward classroom management. For example, a humanities professor may see a student's defying of their own views as an enhancement of academic debate, whereas a more formalist teacher would recognize the same act as disobedience. Furthermore, variations in the expectations of different generations between students and faculty can generate differing perceptions of what is acceptable classroom behavior.

The emotional toll of chaotic student behavior on classroom teachers cannot be overestimated. Most instructors indicate that they suffer stress, burnout, and decreased professional satisfaction due to frequent classroom disruptions. These difficulties are compounded by the impression that institutional assistance for controlling student behavior is sometimes poor or variable. Consequently, teachers might be isolated or lacking in skills to effectively address these issues, causing teaching quality and job satisfaction to suffer.

Because disruptive behavior is complicated and multifaceted, it is essential to survey university teachers in an attempt to determine prevalent issues, underlying motivations, and desired intervention measures. Teachers' responses are beneficial not only in identifying the nature and extent of the problem but also in the design of policies, teacher education, and student behavioral guidelines. By placing teachers' experiences and perceptions at the forefront, universities are able to design more nurturing spaces for cooperation, academic involvement, and successful learning.

In most universities, student behavior policies are either not specific enough or do not have adequate enforcement systems. Therefore, teachers can be reluctant to report disruptions or use disciplinary actions because they fear reprisals or administrative inaction. This points to the necessity for explicitly stated codes of conduct, equitable disciplinary processes, and professional development programs that enable teachers to develop skills to deal with behavior positively.

Additionally, one must note that not all disruptive behavior is intentional or malicious. In certain instances, students will misbehave as a result of underlying personal or psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, learning disabilities, or troubled home lives. An understanding of student behavior that is holistic in nature and takes into account both intentional and unintentional disruptions is needed to create empathetic and effective responses.

The present study seeks to investigate the perceptions of university teachers concerning disruptive student behavior, particularly focusing on their experiences, meanings, and adaptations. It also attempts to establish any discrepancy between teacher expectations and institutional support mechanisms. In examining this, the research hopes to inform the crafting of more responsive and inclusive policies aimed at improving the teaching and learning process within higher education.

The relevance of this research is that it has the power to enhance teaching outcomes by fixing a central issue that impacts class climate, instructor morale, and student achievement. By providing a voice to university instructors and taking into consideration their challenges, this research promotes cooperation in behavior management involving educators, administrators, pupils, and policy-makers. Eventually, cultivating respectful and constructive learning climates is good for all parties of the educational exchange and serves higher education's overarching aims in society.

Objectives of Study
1. To identify the primary factors contributing to disruptive behavior in university classrooms as perceived by teachers.
2. To analyze how teachers' backgrounds, experiences, and teaching styles influence their perceptions of disruptive behavior.
3. To propose strategies and interventions that teacher can implement to mitigate disruptive behavior.

Research Questions
1. Identify teacher-perceived causes of disruptive behavior in university classrooms.
2. Examine relationships between teacher characteristics and perceptions of disruptive behavior.
3. Develop teacher-focused strategies to mitigate disruptive behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Definition of Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior in higher education is defined as student behavior that interferes with the teaching and learning process, interrupts classroom discipline, or breaches institutional norms of civility in academic participation. Definitions among studies differ, but the core idea is the interference with instruction and the learning process of others (Boice, 1996). These types of behaviors are overt—i.e., fighting with the teacher—or covert, e.g., silent non-engagement or lack of attention. Knowing what disruptive behavior is important since this is the foundation for what university instructors see and react to as disruptive behavior.

Scholars note that disruptive behavior at the college level is different from primary or secondary school. University students are assumed to be autonomous, self-directed, and accountable for their studies. This assumption does not hold in reality. College teachers, according to Feldmann (2001), report rising cases of classroom incivility from disengagement to active resistance. Lack of a widely used definition complicates efforts to address and study the behavior in an orderly manner.

One of the difficulties in operationalizing disruptive behavior is its subjectivity. What one defines as disruptive to a teacher, another might perceive as harmless or normal. For example, light whispering among students might be taken by one teacher as cooperative learning, while another might define it as inattentiveness (Boysen, 2012). Such discrepancy depends on a variety of factors such as personal values, cultural orientation, teaching experience, and institutional requirements.

Classroom conduct is also influenced by changing norms. In the present digital era, what a distraction is has broadened. Actions such as checking emails, texting, social media browsing, or watching videos in class are now standard disruptions (McCoy, 2016). Some students even might not feel that such activities are inappropriate, considering they can multitask well or lectures are passive activities. For teachers, though, such activities are a blatant disregard of the learning environment and usually indicate a lack of respect.

Disruptive behavior can be generally classified as being either active or passive. Active disruptions are direct and immediately apparent—like talking out of turn, confronting the teacher rudely, or chatting with someone else. Passive behaviors, however, encompass sleeping during class, not doing any work, or blankly staring at a screen (Burke, 2017). Both of them are equally bad as they impede involvement, reduce the cohesiveness of class, and can cause a domino effect, pushing the student to engage in similar behavior in peers as well.

In addition, disruption can either be intentional or non-intentional. Some students can intentionally misbehave because of personal complaints, perceived unfairness, or to draw attention. Others may disrupt because they are anxious, unaware of classroom expectations, or coming from a different culture (Sorcinelli, 1994). It is because of such variations that making generalizations regarding definition or addressing disruption becomes challenging for educators.

In spite of the absence of agreement, several institutions and scholars prefer operational definitions stating instances of disruptive behavior. For instance, Seeman (2001) provides an elaborate list comprising monopolizing class discussions, noisy eating during class, and continually disregarding deadlines. These definitions enable instructors to establish distinct expectations, plan course syllabi with behavioral policies, and follow proactive classroom management.

Another helpful model is from the theory of classroom incivility, which intersects but is not synonymous with disruption. Incivility is defined as behaviors that breach mutual respect standards, though they may not suspend teaching (Feldmann, 2001). Some examples are eye-rolling, sarcastic comments, or aggressive body postures. Such actions, though subtle, deplete the classroom atmosphere and may intensify unless countered.

Forms of Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior in college classrooms appears in many forms, as it may indicate the diversity in student personalities, backgrounds, and motives. It is necessary for educators, administrators, and researchers to know about the forms of disruptive behavior since it enables them to manage classrooms more efficiently and develop policies. Disruptive behavior is not an amorphous construct; rather, it occurs on a continuum—from mild, passive actions to clearly aggressive or disrespectful actions. Scholarship on the subject divides disruptive actions into a number of discrete types, each with unique characteristics and implications for instruction and learning.

Passive Disruptive Behaviors

Passive disruptions tend to be subtle and can be overlooked unless they are frequent or patterned. These include behaviors like not listening, not contributing to the discussion, sleeping in class, or working on unrelated tasks during class hours (Boice, 1996). Although not aggressive, these kinds of behavior also have negative effects on the classroom environment by detracting from the sense of engagement and mutual respect. As Burke (2017) states, such behaviors tend to reflect disengagement or lack of motivation, and although they don't necessarily disrupt instruction themselves, they create a bad example for the rest of the class.

Active Disruptive Behaviors

Active behaviors are more overt and visible, tending to break up the stream of instruction. Frequent instances include interrupting the instructor by talking out of turn, disagreeing with the instructor, offering

inopportune comments, or taking over class discussions. Such behaviors tend to be more stressful for teachers, as they need to be intervened upon instantly to avoid further escalation. Seeman (2001) states such behavior to be "overt violations of classroom norms," and reiterates that if left unchecked, they can result in loss of control and erode teacher authority.

Influence on Effectiveness in Teaching

Disruptive classroom behaviors can significantly impair a teacher's effectiveness in teaching. Such behaviors disrupt the continuity of lectures, derail the momentum of discussions, and take up precious instructional time that could otherwise be devoted to curriculum presentation and interaction with students (Boice, 1996). Repeated disruptions—such as students speaking out of turn, using cell phones, being late, or disagreeing with the teacher rudely—can require teachers to abandon the lesson plan and break the continuity and pattern of the class.

Frequent interruptions, as stated by Feldmann (2001), might discourage teachers from trying out interactive or student-centered pedagogy for fear of losing control. Teachers would thus turn to more formal, lecture-style formats, which would decrease student participation. This creates a less engaging learning environment and limits the application of teaching strategies with a track record of stimulating deeper knowledge and critical thinking.

Disruptive behavior also undermines the classroom climate—a key to learning. An effective learning climate is marked by respect, teamwork, attentiveness, and shared accountability. If disruptive students disrupt these dynamics, the whole class can be affected. According to Burke (2017), incivility and interruptions generate tension, breed hostility, and suppress open participation. Students who are exposed to or affected by such behavior can feel unsafe, anxious, or disrespected and become less likely to contribute actively in class discussions.

Emotional Impact on Students

Aside from academic penalties, disruptive conduct also has psychological impacts on pupils. A learning atmosphere filled with interruptions, sarcasm, or disrespect contributes to a culture of fear and insecurity. Pupils become apprehensive of being ridiculed or avoid participating in class. Burke (2017) writes that pupils in these classes become less motivated and satisfied, resulting in poorer attendance and course drop-out.

Experienced Teachers and Behavioral Tolerance

Conversely, more experienced instructors tend to be more tolerant and more flexible in addressing disruptive behavior. This is not to suggest complacency but an exercise of acquired restraint and confidence. Feldmann (2001) observed that long-time teachers learn to differentiate between intentional and unintentional disruption. They might, for instance, see a dozing student as tired instead of disrespectful or consider silence shyness instead of lack of interest.

Over time, teachers become better at understanding student behavior and classroom psychology. Boysen (2012) believes that veteran teachers are better at deciphering nonverbal signals, detecting potential issues early, and employing preventive measures like interacting personally with students or changing lesson plans to encourage participation. They are also more likely to apply humor, react calmly and in control while still exercising authority without pushing students away (Burke, 2017 redirecting, or subtle guidance to resolve minor disruptions without making the situation worse.

Prevention and Intervention Strategies for Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive classroom behavior of students in university classrooms is a significant challenge to instructors, undermining the teaching and learning process. But there is a body of research in educational psychology and pedagogy of higher education that provides diverse preventive and intervention strategies for faculty and institutions to ensure a positive, respectful, and productive learning environment. These can be divided into preventive strategies, which focus on creating a respectful classroom environment, and intervention strategies, which are applied when the disorderly behavior occurs.

Preventive action is usually the best way to reduce disruptions in the classroom. Instructors can deliberately take steps at the start of a course to set expectations, promote engagement, and develop positive relationships with student.

A positive and welcoming classroom environment greatly minimizes the occurrence of disruptive behavior. Teachers who are warm, fair-minded, and enthusiastic generate a psychological climate favorable for learning (Burke, 2017). Students who are made to feel valued and respected tend to be less likely to test authority or be involved in disruptive behavior.

Successful classroom community building involves learning students' names, facilitating open communication, acknowledging differing viewpoints, and being sensitive to cultural or learning differences (Boice, 1996).

Active students are less disruptive. Active learning instructional methods—groups, discussions, case studies, polling, or problem-based learning—encourage higher-level cognitive engagement and minimize boredom (McKeachie&Svinicki, 2011). Diverse delivery of instruction not only improves understanding but also maintains attention, reducing opportunity for distraction.

Even with preventive measures, classroom disruptions are inevitable. Proper intervention entails timely, measured, and situation-specific responses that assert control without fueling conflict.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY
Research Design

The research applied a quantitative descriptive survey design to explore university teachers' views on disruptive student behavior. The design is suitable since it enables the researcher to get data from a large population and systematically analyze trends, attitudes, and patterns (Creswell, 2014). The aim was to describe and comprehend how teachers conceptualize, experience, and deal with student misbehavior in university classroom environments.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of university instructors from public and private institutions of higher learning. The sample was 120 instructors drawn from different departments (e.g., education, social sciences, management sciences, and natural sciences) using stratified random sampling to represent all disciplines and types of institutions.

Research Instrument

A set questionnaire was prepared as the main tool for data collection.The survey was modified from established tools applied in past studies (e.g., Boysen, 2012; Cavanaugh et al., 2016) with the requisite changes to meet the local university setting. Pilot test on 15 staff was done to determine reliability and validity, which gave a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, an indicator of high internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Following university research ethics board approval for the study, data were gathered over a four-week period. The purpose of the research and promise of confidentiality and anonymity were explained to participants. The questionnaire was made available in both hard copy and online survey formats (e.g., Google Forms) to facilitate access and rates of response.

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was procured from all participants before they took part.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 25. The following statistical methods were used:

Descriptive statistics: Means, frequencies, and percentages to summarize responses of teachers.
Inferential statistics:
Independent-samples t-test to compare perceptions by gender and type of institution.
One-way ANOVA to study differences by years of teaching experience.
Correlation analysis to examine relationships between frequency of disruptive behaviors and perceived institutional support.
Findings were reported using tables and graphs for easier understanding. The significance level was $p<0.05$.

Data Analysis and Interpretation
This chapter deals with the data collected through one instrument which was developed by the researcher. The data collected from teachers was analyzed through SPSS and was interpreted quantitatively.

Table 4.1
Frequency related to demographic Information

Variable	Frequency
Gender	
Male	150
Female	150
Qualification	
BS	221

M.Phil	69
PhD	10

The demographic data reveals an even gender distribution, with 150 males and 150 females participating. Regarding qualifications, the majority of respondents hold a BS degree (221 participants), followed by M.Phil (69), and only 10 PhD holders.

This distribution suggests that most responses come from individuals with undergraduate-level qualifications, which could influence perceptions based on their academic exposure and professional experiences.

Table 4.2
Respondent 'Mean Score Difference on the Basis of Academic Qualification

Academic Qualification	N	M	SD	T	Sig.(2-tailed)
BS	221	28.2432			
M.Phil	69	31.7062	10.76524	-.920	.359
Ph.D	10	33.7500	4.02438		

Teachers with a BS qualification (N=221) have a mean score of 28.2432, while those with an M.Phil (N=69) have a higher mean score of 31.7062, and Ph.D. holders (N=10) have the highest mean score of 33.7500.

The standard deviation (SD) for M.Phil holders is relatively high (10.76524), suggesting more variability in their scores, while Ph.D. holders have a much smaller SD (4.02438), indicating more consistency in their responses.

The t-value (-0.920) and the p-value (Sig.=0.359) indicate no statistically significant difference between the scores based on academic qualification, as the p-value is greater than the commonly accepted threshold of 0.05.

Table 4.3
t-test
Mean and standard deviation of male and female teachers.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	150	3.6280	.61852	.08747	1.97	2	0.751
Female	150	3.4930	.56052	.07927		298	

- Male teachers (N=150) have a mean score of 3.6280, which is slightly higher than that of female teachers (N=150, mean = 3.4930).
- The standard deviations are comparable (0.61852 for males and 0.56052 for females), indicating similar variability in scores.

- The t-value (1.97) and p-value (Sig.=0.751) indicate that the difference in mean scores between male and female teachers is not statistically significant, as the p-value is much greater than 0.05.

Table 4.4
One-way ANOVA to find the difference in Age Groups

Source of Variations	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
				1.327	
Age	1135.91	2	567.955		.266
Errors	255472.83	297	427.928		
Total	256608.744	299			

The Sum of Squares for Age (1135.91) and the Mean Square (567.955) indicate variability due to age, while the Sum of Squares for Errors (255472.83) and the Mean Square (427.928) represent variability within groups. The F-value (1.327) and the p-value (Sig.=0.266) suggest that the differences between age groups are not statistically significant, as the p-value is greater than 0.05.

Summary, Finding, Conclusions, Discussions, and Recommendations

Summary
This research investigated perceptions of university lecturers regarding the nature, causes, and effects of students' disruptive behavior in the classroom. A quantitative approach was adopted through a structured questionnaire given to 120 public and private university lecturers across various disciplines.

The Research Sought to:
- Identify the types and frequency of disruptive behaviors noted by teachers.
- Understand how these influences the teaching-learning environment.
- Discuss the institutional support, policies, and teacher training role in behavior management.

The study brought to light that disorderly behaviors like mobile phone use during lectures, side chatting, distraction, and tardiness are common occurrences. The teachers also mentioned lack of motivation, poor parenting, technology distractions, and institutional neglect as major causatives of students' misbehavior.

STUDY FINDINGS

Rate of Disruption
The majority of teachers indicated that disruptive behavior was prevalent and on the rise, especially in larger classes or non-major courses.

Types of Behavior

Prevalent disruptive behaviors were the unauthorized use of technology, talking out of turn, constant tardiness, eating in class, and disrespect towards the instructor.

Perceived Causes

Teachers attributed disruptive behavior to a combination of personal (e.g., family background), academic (e.g., lack of interest), and environmental (e.g., overcrowded classrooms) factors.

Impact on Learning

Teachers concurred that student misbehavior disrupts lesson teaching, reduces peers' morale, and impacts classroom management.

Teacher Responses

Interventions ranged from verbal admonition, ignoring minor problems, to referrals to department heads for serious behavior. Yet, most teachers reported feeling unprepared and unsupported to handle behavior constructively.

Institutional Role

Most teachers did not feel institutionally supported by policy or administrative action, particularly in persistent or serious incidents.

Training Gaps:

The majority of participants reported a lack of any formal training in classroom behavior management and a need for professional development programs.

Variation in Perception:

There existed variation in perception by years of experience, type of institution, and disciplinary background.

DISCUSSION

The evidence supports other research that disruptive behavior is not only a feature of secondary education, but is an increasing problem at university level. University lecturers are expected to be concerned primarily with academic content, but the incidence of misbehavior means that they also need to act as disciplinarians for which many are not equipped.

The research is consistent with the arguments of Boysen (2012) and White&DiBenedetto (2018), who highlighted that classroom misconduct impacts the teacher's performance, student engagement as well as academic integrity. Although most instructors favor un-confrontational or relational ways, the absence of institutional policies or professional training makes them uncertain and unsupported.

Furthermore, this research contributes to a deeper understanding by incorporating teachers' personal experiences—an area less studied compared to student perspectives. The varying definitions of what constitutes "disruption" highlight the subjective nature of the issue and the importance of contextual sensitivity.

The study also underlines a policy-practice gap: while some institutions have codes of conduct, they are either poorly implemented or not well communicated to faculty and students.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, a number of conclusions of import were reached:

1. Disruptive behavior is a major obstacle to effective teaching in universities.
2. There are varying perceptions and tolerance levels among university teachers, meaning standard behavioral guidelines are necessary.
3. There is poor institutional support, and most instructors feel alone while confronting behavioral issues.
4. There is a lack of formal training in the management of behavior despite the fact that teachers indicate a high need for it.
5. Proactive and preventive approaches, such as enhanced communication between teachers and students, classroom management techniques, and engagement strategies, are necessary.

REFERENCES

Boice, R. (1996). Classroom incivilities. Research in Higher Education, 37(4), 453-   486.

Boysen, G. A. (2012). Teacher responses to classroom incivility: Student perceptions   of effectiveness. Teaching of Psychology, 39(4), 276-279.

Burke, L. A. (2017). Managing classroom disruptions: Strategies for educators.   Routledge.

Cavanaugh, J. M., Giapponi, C. C., & Golden, T. D. (2016). Digital technology and   student cognitive development: The neuroscience of the university classroom.   Journal   of Management Education, 40(4), 374-397.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods   approaches. Sage Publications.

Feldmann, L. J. (2001). Classroom management in higher education: A study of   student incivility. College Teaching, 49(4), 141-146.

McCoy, B. R. (2016). Digital distractions in the classroom: Student classroom use of   digital devices for non-class related purposes. Journal of Media Education,   7(1), 5-32.

McKeachie, W. J., & Svinicki, M. (2011). McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies,   research,   and theory for college and university teachers. Cengage Learning.

Seeman, H. (2001). Preventing classroom discipline problems: A classroom   management handbook. Scarecrow Press.

Sorcinelli, M. D. (1994). Dealing with troublesome behaviors in the classroom. New   Directions for Teaching and Learning, 1994(59), 45-58.

White, C., & DiBenedetto, M. K. (2018). Classroom management for elementary teachers.   Pearson.