

Exploring the Relationship between Teachers' Social Intelligence and Classroom Discipline Strategies

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyze the social intelligence level of teachers employed in government secondary schools in Malaysia based on selected demographic variables such as age, and how they relate to the classroom discipline strategies used. The sample of the study comprises 203 teachers. The study also revealed that there were significant differences between teachers' age groups and their social intelligence. Further a significant relationship was noted between teachers' social intelligence and the six strategies of classroom discipline strategies (discussion, recognition, involvement, hinting, punishment and aggression).

Keywords: Teachers' social intelligence, Classroom discipline strategies, Age group

1. Introduction

Behavior management is a set of interactions employed to assist teachers to influence the students' behavior and teach them to act positively. These interactions are developed not only to reduce teacher's stress but to help these professional people and the students to establish social climates of cooperation, a setting in which children and adults can learn together, play together, and build quality relationship (Danforth & Boyle, 2007). Successful behavior management does not rely merely on knowledge for behavioral change. It also calls for realizing the environmental setting of behavior. In the past decade, discipline was considered the main problem in classrooms for teachers (Chiodo & Chang, 2000). Teachers accepted the fact that disciplinary problems are becoming an epidemic phenomenon in public schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1996; Rose & Gallup, 2004). Many teachers have been reported to have quit schools because of frequent problems of classroom disruption (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Disciplinary problems have long been recognized as a major issue in schools (Edwards, 2008). Classroom discipline management refers to control of time and behavior of students as well as of teachers in a classroom setting (Fredrick, Deitz, Bryceland, & Hummel, 2000). Classroom discipline management involves teachers encouraging positive social interactions as well as active management in learning and self-motivation. They shape a positive learning society in which the students are actively engaged in individual learning process and classroom management. They establish the physical climate, control students' behavior, establish an environment full of respect, ease instruction, create safety and wellness, and communication with others when required. All these issues are related to classroom discipline management, the major goal of which is to establish a positive learning environment and take steps to maintain this positive climate by directing and correcting students'

behavior (Burden & Byrd, 2002). This study is focused on this narrow view of classroom behavior management, which includes managing students' behavior in the classroom, as well as promoting and maintaining appropriate student behavior. The tactics teachers use to manage student behavior are referred to as classroom discipline or behavior management (Charles, 2008). It encompasses activities by teachers, ranging from instructional strategies to manipulation of environmental variables (for instance, arrangement of desks in the classroom) to procedures required to respond towards disruptive behaviors.

The methods used by teachers to control students' behavior are referred to as discipline or behavior management (Charles, 2008). In other words, classroom discipline is commonly referred to as actions taken by teachers in response to students' misbehavior (Lewis, 1997). It involves organizing suitable lessons, showing new content as well as assigning proper practical activities (Hunter, 1982). Teachers are expected to be able to create a non-disruptive classroom environment (Doyle, 1986).

There are three major points of view about classroom discipline, each supporting special tactics (Burden, 2003; Lewis, 1997; Wolfgang, 1995). Firstly, some psychologists argue that to encourage responsibility among children, teachers should set up obvious expectations for their students' behavior and then fairly use a range of rewards and support for good behavior as well as punishments for misbehavior (Canter & Canter, 2002; Swinson & Melling, 1995). According to this point of view, children are viewed as being molded by the impacts received from the environment. Other researchers are of the view that this objective could only be achieved by placing less stress on students' obedience and teacher's force, and more on students' self-regulation. The teacher has the responsibility to structure the classroom environment to make the students at ease and have control over their own behavior (Burden, 2003).

The third approach supports group participation and decision making, in which the group is responsible for the behavior of its members (Edwards & Mullis, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 2006). Hence control of the students' behavior is a shared responsibility between both the students and the teacher. Teachers who believe in moderate control advocate the student-oriented psychology, which is manifested in the low control philosophy, but they also recognize that learning occurs in a group environment (Burden, 2003).

It is important to study how teachers promote classroom discipline and limit or reduce disruptive behavior of students. Scholars believe that high intelligent quotient (IQ) does not necessarily guarantee success in a person's life (Goleman, 1997). It is not responsible for the differences beyond personality factors and characteristics (Mehrabian, 2000). Hence, other forms of "intelligence" were investigated (Goleman, 1997). Social intelligence is yet an effective element in classroom discipline management.

Albrecht (2006) claimed, the teachers whose behaviors are associated with high social intelligence, stress the value of collaboration. Similarly, there is a need for educational system which equips students to state their opinions obviously in order to make themselves understood, and to try to understand others before they show any reactions to the behavior. One concept of social intelligence referred to it as the "ability to read nonverbal cues or make accurate social inferences" and "one's ability to accomplish relevant objectives in specific social settings" (Brown & Anthony, 1990, p. 197; Ford & Tisak, 1983).

Zirkel (2000) believed that social intelligence is closely related to one's own, personality and individual behavior. Those with social intelligence are fully aware of themselves and understand their environment. This enables them to control their emotions, make decisions about their goals in life. Her model centered on the term "purposive behavior" which is deliberate action taken after evaluating one's environment, opportunities and risks and the goals set. In fact this model of social intelligence assists in creating a sense of identity for the individual, emphasizes intrapersonal and interpersonal skills and focuses on thinking and resultant behavior within social contexts.

The teachers who are socially intelligent, organize the classroom through establishing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, developing the lessons which are based on the students' strong points and abilities, creating and applying behavioral guidelines in the ways which enhance intrinsic motivation (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). Social intelligence has an impact on aggressive behavior in schools. Sameer Babu (2007) stated in India, social intelligence among secondary school students is of average. Relationship between social intelligence and aggression scores in secondary school students is found negative and negligible for the whole sample.

Magida (2006) agreed that educators' with high levels of social intelligence are able to mould individuals from different age groups to lead a wholesome life (Dincer, 2007). Albrecht (2006) considers social intelligence as a prerequisite for teachers. He is of the view that the educational system and teachers should respect the rules and behaviors associated with high social intelligence. Thorndike (1920) stated social intelligence increases with age

and experience of a person (Jonçich, 1962). In this study, the researcher used a multifaceted theory of social intelligence as it facilitated the understanding of social behavior in the academic settings. Social intelligence involves a number of different capabilities, special social habits, and attitudes (Thorndike & Stein, 1937). Some people argue that it is a multidimensional component that does not necessarily apply across all situations (Ford & Tisak, 1983). Silvera and his colleagues (2001) introduced three components of social intelligence meaning, social information processing, social skills and social awareness (Silvera et al., 2001).

The main objective of the study is to analyze the teachers' social intelligence and their classroom discipline strategies in secondary schools in Selangor State of Malaysia. The social intelligence level of teachers is important for teachers and students communication and for improving classroom discipline strategies. According to Rahimah and Norani (1997), among the disciplinary problems faced in Malaysian schools are crimes, immoral conduct, untidiness, truancy, disrespect for others and maladjustment with the school environment. Bullying, violence and maladjustment are also becoming an increasing phenomenon. The Khaleej Times (March, 2006) stated that the government had warned that some school teachers will soon not be allowed to publicly punish students for disciplinary offenses. In earlier years, students who had severe disciplinary problems such as stealing, vandalism and smoking were punished by school principals. It was easier to manage classroom discipline then and there were lesser problems. The specific objectives of the study involve examining the relationship between classroom discipline strategies and level of teachers' social intelligence, possible differences between the level of teachers' social intelligence and teachers of different genders, as well as investigating any difference between the level of teachers' social intelligence and teachers of different age group.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Quantitative approach is applied in this study. This study is designed to use a descriptive correlational design to examine the relationship between classroom discipline strategies, and teachers' social intelligence.

2.2 Sample

The target population for this study was secondary school teachers, however the accessible population was level two and level four teachers in the schools. This study employed the multi-stage sampling procedures: random sampling and cluster sampling. To obtain the required number of samples, two moderate classes (one class level two and one class level four) were chosen from each school. Once the class was identified, about 10 teachers teaching different subjects in the class were selected. This was based on cluster sampling where each teacher teaching the selected class was included as sample for the study. Based on this method, 203 teachers were chosen in eleven schools. Moreover, a sample size of 180, based on Cohen table (1992) is considered sufficient to answer all the research questions that required the use of mean, standard deviation, percentage, Pearson 'r' and ANOVA. The sample was chosen according to government secondary school types (public) and region.

3. Measures

Two instruments were used to collect data from the respondents.

3.1 Social Intelligence Scale

Silvera, Martinussen and Dahl, (2001) constructed a scale for the assessment of social intelligence, the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS). In this questionnaire, after recoding items that were negatively worded, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using principal components analysis and varimax rotation was conducted on the 103 preliminary TSIS items. This solution explained a total of 30% of the variance in the original item set. Based on this result, items were selected according to the following criteria: (a) a minimum factor loading of 0.45 on one of the three factors and a maximum cross-loading of 0.35 on the other factors; and (b) a maximum correlation of 0.30 with the MCSD (Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale). In addition, it was agreed that an equal number of items would be selected to represent each factor. This resulted in the selection of 21 items, seven of which represented each of the three factors in the EFA solution. Based on the content of the items loading on each factor, the subscales of items representing the three factors were labeled Social Information Processing, Social Skills, and Social Awareness. The scale has a Cronbach alpha of .89.

3.2 Classroom Discipline Strategies

In 2009 Shlomo Romi developed this questionnaire. The questionnaire for classroom discipline strategies for teachers' perception comprises 25 items and six strategies. The strategies measured include punishment, reward or recognition, involvement in decision-making, hinting, discussion and aggression, all of which are based on teachers' perceptions. This questionnaire focused on teachers' perceptions on classroom discipline strategies.

Examination of a number of discipline texts (Charles, 2008; Lewis, 1997; Tauber, 2007; Wolfgang, 1995) indicated that one or more of these strategies were the basis for most of the available approaches to classroom discipline. The scale has a Cronbach alpha of .86.

3.3 Data Analyses

SPSS version 17 was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the relationship with respondents. Pearson correlation was used to examine the association between teachers' social intelligence and classroom discipline strategies. ANOVA test was used to examine the different age groups.

4. Result

4.1 Level of Teachers' Social Intelligence

The results in Table 1, displays the teachers' level of social intelligence. The findings indicated that the majority of the respondents' social intelligence scores were moderate ($n = 151$, 74.4%). The data also showed that 52 respondents (25.6%) had high social intelligence scores, while none scored in the low level of social intelligence. Based on the six point Likert scale used in the survey instrument, the minimum score result was 3.43 and the maximum was 6.19, with a standard deviation of 0.56. The mean score for social intelligence was 4.66 implying that the level of social intelligence score was moderate.

4.2 Teachers' Age

Table 2 shows that the age of participants' ranges from 24 to above 54. About 32 % are between the ages of 24 and 34, 42.4% between the ages of 35 and 44 and 25.6% e between the ages of 45 and 54.

A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. Table 3 shows that there were statistically significant differences in the means of social intelligence ($F(2, 200) = 10.06$, $p = .000$) across different age group.

4.3 Relationship between Teachers' Social Intelligence and Their Classroom Discipline Strategies

Table 4 displays the results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation between teachers' social intelligence and their classroom discipline strategies. The data revealed that the relationship between social intelligence and six strategies of teachers' classroom discipline was significant at the level of $p < 0.05$. The results also revealed that there was a positive and linear relationship between four strategies of teachers' classroom discipline (discussion, recognition, involvement, hinting) and negative relationship between two strategies (punishment and aggression), by the teachers in the current research.

The strongest of positive linear relationship was observed for recognition or reward ($r = .55$), hinting ($r = .55$ and followed by discussion ($r = .54$). The strategy, involvement ($r = .35$) was moderate and positively correlated. However, the strategy, aggression showed negative and moderate correlation with social intelligence ($r = -.45$), followed by punishment ($r = -.21$). All of these correlations were significant at $p < 0.01$ level.

5. Conclusion

The results showed that there were significant differences between teachers' age groups and their social intelligence. The findings of this study are parallel to works supported by Thorndike (1920), who posed that the development of social intelligence starts immediately after birth, and develops with age. The finding on the relationship between social intelligence and age is also in agreement with the findings of Goleman (1998) that suggested social intelligence skill increases as one gets older.

Statistically significant relationships were found between the six strategies of classroom discipline and teachers' social intelligence. Positive relationships were found between teachers' social intelligence and recognition or reward, hinting, discussion and followed by involvement. However, negative and moderate relationship was established for aggression and low relationship for punishment and teachers' social intelligence.

The results in this study support Albrecht's (2006) research regarding social intelligence to be required for the teachers and the important role it plays in classroom behavior management. He pointed out that we need teachers who enjoy high levels of social intelligence and model them for their students. The findings of the present research also agreed with Marzano et al. (2003). They stated that the teachers who are socially intelligent, organize the classroom through establishing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, developing the lessons which are based on the students' strong points and abilities, creating and applying behavioral guidelines in the ways which enhance intrinsic motivation, such as discussion, hinting, recognition and involvement.

Bjorkqvist and Osterman's (1999) findings are also in line with the findings of this study. These researchers stated that social intelligence has a negative relationship with aggression in school. However, the findings were

not in line with Babu (2007) who noted that social intelligence has a negligible relationship with aggression between secondary school students.

The results in this study supported by Curwin and Mendler (1997) believed that teachers should punish students in private to allow students to maintain their dignity. In addition, McLeod, Fisher and Hoover (2003) stated that the purpose of negative reinforcement or punishment is to change misbehaviors, and not to torture students.

The findings of the current research support the theoretical foundations by Mayer, Caruso and Salovey (1999) who acknowledged that social intelligence and emotional intelligence may share common ground in that they are both concepts related to human behavior, but their contention was that on the one hand, emotional intelligence is broader than social intelligence. Conversely, emotional intelligence is more centered than social intelligence in that its constructs have been described as separate and apart from verbal intelligence (Mayer, Caruso and Salovey 1999; p. 272).

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Table 1. Distribution of respondents' social intelligence scores

Levels	Mean	Frequency	Percentage
Low	1.0 – 3.0	0	0
Moderate	3.1 – 5.0	151	74.4
High	5.1 – 7.0	52	25.6
Total		203	100.0

Mean = 4.66

Std. deviation = .56

Minimum = 3.43

Maximum = 6.19

Table 2. Comparison of teachers' spiritual intelligence across age groups

Variable	Age Group	N	percentage	Mean	S.D	F	Sig.
Social Intelligence	24-34	65	32	4.44	.56	10.06	.000
	35-44	86	42.4	4.69	.52		
	45-54	52	25.6	4.88	.55		

Table 3. Tukey HSD multiple comparisons for age groups

Dependent Variables	Age Group	Age group	Mean Difference	Sig
Social intelligence	24 – 34	35 - 44	-.25	.012
		45 - 54	-.44	.000
	35 – 44	24 - 34	.25	.012
	45 – 54	24 - 34	.44	.000

Table 4. Relationship between teachers' social intelligence and classroom discipline strategies

Variables	r	p
Punishment	-.21*	.003
Discussion	.54*	.000
Recognition or Reward	.55*	.000
Aggression	-.45*	.000
Involvement	.35*	.000
Hinting	.55*	.000

*Significant at $p < 0.01$