



Managing Disruptive Behaviors: Excessive Talking

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Abstract: Disruptive behaviors in the classroom are a daily problem educators must grapple with. Teachers need effective strategies to mitigate these disruptions. High on the list of troublesome disturbances in the classroom are consequences of disruptive talking. The aim of this study is to review the literature in this realm and to inform readers as to effective methods for decreasing disruptive talking in the classroom.

Keywords: General education, disruptive behavior, incessant talking.

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Introduction

For many years, parents and teachers have voiced their concerns about discipline and classroom management (Perkins, 2019). Specifically, disruptive talkers pose a significant problem interrupting during direct instruction and learning in general. Constant interruptions during instruction cause a problem for the educator and all students in the classroom therefore, this type of behavior has become a high priority for intervention. Further, empirical evidence from a study conducted by Fitzgerald (2016) indicates that disruptions not only lead to lower grades overall, but also interferes with college goals, careers, and income prospects.

In a more recent study, (Rafi, Ansar, & Sami, 2020) utilizing B. F. Skinner's Operant Conditioning method, it was discovered responding to students in an effective and consistent manner can significantly decrease disruptive talking habits. The study determined Operant Conditioning was an effective intervention to decrease or even bring the undesirable behavior to extinction. Some of the strategies associated with this method involve praise, positive or constructive feedback, rewards, and incentives specific to the individual student. A decrease of interruptions caused by excessive talking will enable the educator to maintain student engagement and improve academic outcomes for individual students (Long, 2023). If not addressed appropriately and effectively, disruptions caused by excessive talkers will persist, adversely impacting the other students in the classroom

Review of Literature

This literature review examines studies and the literature concerning disruptive behavior, operant conditioning, and excessive talking defined as disruptive behavior in the classroom. The review is divided into four portions. The underlying research question being examined is, what are effective strategies to decrease disruptive talking in the classroom? First, causes of disruptive behavior are researched and managing disruptive behavior is addressed. Next, the theory of operant conditioning is observed, and finally, the issue of excessive, irresponsible, or disruptive talking, is examined. The review seeks to synthesize the reviewed literature to find an efficient, quantitative methodology to

research effective strategies to manage the excessive talker in the classroom.

Causes of Disruptive Behavior : Effects of diet on disruptive behavior Ajmal et al. (2022) studied young children's eating habits in relation to effects of frequency of certain foods on behavior in a study held between 2011 and 2017, with a 6-year follow-up. One hundred and eighty-five mother-child participants responded to the study. Six were eliminated due to stated mental health problems. At the six-year follow-up, 34 mothers were no longer available. This brought the participants to 124 mother-child dyads. The children were between one-year-old to six-years-old. There were 67 boys and 57 girls.

The purpose of the study was to examine the association between the regularity of specific foods consumed and the child's behavior problems, over a six-year period. It was hypothesized that eating behavior in early childhood could predict behavior problems later in the child's life. The children's behavior problems were assessed using a behavioral screening tool in which the parents answered questions using a scale of 0 – 2. 0 = not true, 1 = somewhat true, and 2 = certainly true. Questions ranged from conduct, anger, emotional, peer, hyperactivity/attention, pro-social, and restless problems.

The mother submitted information requested by the authors on the frequency of food their child ate. Specifically, the study asked how often their child ate leafy green vegetables, light-colored vegetables, fruits, soybeans, soy products, dairy products, eggs, fish, and seaweed.

Data on gender and family dynamics were also considered due to the bearing this data had on eating habits and social-emotional development. Results found that children who frequently consumed leafy green and light-colored vegetables lowered the probability of behavior problems. Specifically, the reduction was seen in conduct and prosocial behavior problems. The implication of this study is that there is association between the consumption of green leafy and light-colored vegetables and the decrease of conduct and prosocial behavior problems, which presents one potential proactive approach to affecting disruptive behavior.

Long-term influences on disruptive behavior

Bierman et. al. (2013) conducted a study regarding influences long-term of student academic outcomes which include grades, retention, special education referral in a self-contained classroom, identification of behavior issues, and high school graduation. The study looks at two different periods of the student's schooling: elementary and secondary. The study also examines the influence of intervention and disruptive behavior on school readiness skills.

For methodology, 55 schools were included that were selected as high-risk schools. Over a period of 3 years between 1991-1993, disruptive behavior in all 9,594 kindergarteners were rated by teachers.

Then, parents were contacted in the top 40% of these students. Ninety one percent agreed to an interview about their child's behavior. A Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum was implemented along with training and other criteria for the study. Data was collected during the time of the study over certain measures determined ahead of time.

The findings of the study indicate there are specific factors implicating school maladjustment of students who show certain disruptive behaviors. Compared with their peers, these students show consistently lower cognitive levels of ability, do not pay attention, and lack reading readiness skills. The study showed a correlation between school maladjustment, early childhood aggression, and disruptive behavior.

The conclusion is that the prevention program implemented helped change some of the key causations of the disruptive behavior which led to even more serious problems later in school. The children in the program showed higher reading achievement scores, higher grades in language arts, better adaptability socially, and lower rates of aggressive-disruptive behavior at school than the students in the control group.

Management of Disruptive Behaviors: Function-based intervention

Lane et al. (2010) documented the efficacy of a function-based intervention in a study containing a single participant; six-year-old Harry, a public-school kindergarten student who did not qualify for special services according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). His teacher referred him based on frequent disruptions in the classroom by Harry's excessive talking, being out of his seat, and refusal to comply with teacher instruction. The purpose of the single-subject study was three-fold: to replicate effects of interventions that have proven effective in treating disruptive behavior, including self-monitoring (Stage & Quiroz, 1997), to apply science-based intervention methods based on a systematic functional assessment of that behavior, and to collect data and examine levels of fidelity in relation to changes in student disruption using single case design methodology.

Total disruptive behavior (TDB) was chosen as the target behavior and was assessed via duration recording. The observation sessions were ten minutes. The desired replacement behavior, academic engaged time (AET), was also measured. AET was defined as the time Harry spent actively engaged in acceptable classroom behavior.

Data from functional assessment tools were analyzed using a matrix of two columns of reinforcement functions (positive and negative) and three rows of three types of consequences (attention, tangibles/activities, sensory). All data was placed in one of six cells, where the cell with the most data was identified. Results from all data hypothesized that Harry's disruptive behavior was

maintained by positive attention from teachers and peers, and an intervention for two weeks was established. Self-monitoring and differential reinforcement were put in place to set disruptive behavior on extinction.

The authors concluded that the study provided further evidence that hypothesis-based interventions are effective, and that empirical data was extended while providing a methodological template for future functional assessment and intervention research. The implications of this study support earlier data showing that pre-emptive action has positive effects in modifying students' disruptive behavior and shows the efficacy of a study based on a small (single) number of participants.

Classroom good behavior game

Donaldson et al. (2017) conducted a study on the Good Behavior Game (GBG) and the effects on individual student behavior. The GBG is a class-wide intervention that includes specific rules, putting the students into groups, or teams, giving them immediate feedback for breaking rules, and giving out rewards based on less frequent breaking of the rules. Research has largely focused on class-wide effects and has shown repeatedly to reduce disruptive behavior in the classroom from kindergarten through high school.

The problem in the study is identifying non-responders to the GBG and recording individual data on students who have higher incidences of disruptive behavior and using it as a screening tool for individual students who require individualized strategies. The idea is to catch these students sooner and identify their disruptive behaviors and provide them with interventions earlier to help deal with this. This is consistent with the school-wide positive behavior interventions and support model (SWPBIS), which identifies students who do not respond to universal interventions and provides more intensive tier 2 interventions.

All students were involved in this study from three different classrooms in a large urban public school; two kindergarten (46 students) and one first grade (26 students). Teachers from these classrooms were asked to identify the most disruptive students for individual observation during the GBG. The teachers chose 12 students out of the three classes for individual observation.

The effects of the GBG on the disruptive behavior of the 12 students was evaluated in an ABAB Reversal design. Experimenters observed and recorded students' data while teachers were asked to teach as they normally would. The results showed that 9 out of 12 participants responded to GBG and their disruptive behaviors were decreased. For the individual students whose disruptive behavior was not decreased, data suggested that the GBG could be used as a screening tool.

One limitation of this study was that there was no data for the whole class, which could have given information to compare with the individualized data. The study provides viable ideas for designing both class-wide and individual interventions in early elementary school settings.

Teacher management skills

Gage & MacSuga-Gage (2019) conducted a study on what classroom management skills significantly predict student engagement and student disruptive behavior during whole group instruction. The study looked at data from direct observation of teacher's using classroom management skills over a period of 25 consecutive school days.

For this study, 12 elementary school teachers were recruited from two different elementary schools in the Southeast United States.

The data collectors randomly selected which students to observe in each instance. One hundred and ninety-five observations of both teachers and students were collected.

Classroom management skills were observed on the teacher's side of it, and student behaviors were observed with disruptive behaviors being noted. Teacher's use of 3 specific classroom management skills were identified and data was collected. The data collectors also noted the length of time students were engaged on the academic task and frequency of disruptions during each observation. Fifteen minute direct observations were collected of each of the teachers during whole group teaching.

When data was analyzed, the individual and group disruptions for each observation were noted per observation and the classroom skills identified were observed and rated per minute. The results of the study showed students across all observations and teachers were engaged with the academic tasks 80% of the time. A few of the teachers had nearly no disruptions, but one teacher averaged 6 disruptions for each observation. The findings were that out of the classroom management skills observed in the research, behavior-specific praise (BSP) was the only classroom management skill that largely led to positive student behaviors.

Operant Conditioning and Mitigation of disruptive behavior

Peras et al. (2023) utilized an experimental design to create a study to validate the effectiveness of operant conditioning in mitigating student's disruptive behavior. The researchers conducted the study to examine the growing and observable disruptive behavior of a sixth-grade class in a central elementary school, with the purpose of noting the number of pre-intervention occurrences of disruptive behavior in the class, the number of post-intervention occurrences, and to discover whether there was a significant difference between the two. Operant conditioning, both positive and negative approaches was employed.

For methodology, the researchers conducted pre-intervention in one month for five sessions. After the pre-intervention, five sessions of intervention were conducted and a final one-month time period of five sessions for the post-intervention. Participants were 24 students, ranging in age from 11-12 years old.

The true experimental research design, with all studies having at least one dependent outcome variable and at least one independent variable that is experimentally modified (Daves, 2010) looked for a cause-and-effect relationship between various variables, based on a quantitative reckoning tally of pre-intervention and post-intervention observations. The study determined the occurrences of disruptive behavior through a frequency count.

Over five days there were 1105 pre-intervention occurrences of disruptive behavior among the 24 students, with student V racking up the most incidents at 199 incidents, followed by student TOR with 187, and TA with 102. There were 711 occurrences of post-intervention disruptive behavior. The results show that the disruptive behavior of V, Tor, and TA decreased, as well as among the remainder of the 24 students. The study concluded that the mean difference between pre- and post-intervention was statistically significant at a significance level of 0.05, nullifying the hypothesis that there would be no difference between pre- and post-intervention interactions. The implications of this study are that a statistical improvement in disruptive behavior occurs when operant conditioning is employed.

Scoping review study on positive reinforcement strategies Rafi et al. (2020) carried out a scoping review study based on a PRISMA

flow chart of published studies built on Skinner's operant learning principles. The purpose was to identify and assess positive reinforcement strategies and their effect in managing disruptive behavior. The literature was mapped out with educational innovations based on the positive reinforcement theory. Teacher-centered approaches were constructed to assess positive reinforcement and its effects. The databases accessed in the scoping study were ERIC, PubMed, and Google Scholar, including only those published between 2009-2019.

A data extraction form was developed with 657 records identified in the electronic databases and 15 records from other sources. Among the 657 records accessed, 300 were duplicate studies, with 225 studies being non-relevant. Only 45 articles fulfilled all the eligibility criteria, and only 24 were located containing full-text articles, which were subsequently included in the study and reviewed.

A quantitative analysis of the data calculated the percentage and number of reviews, the type and year of publication, and the target population. Journal articles provided the foremost contribution to the study. A definition of Skinnerian operant condition and positive reinforcement strategy was mentioned in the introduction of 83% of the journal articles. Study methods were quantitative, qualitative, and a mixed methodology. The four strategies upheld showing an underlying principle of operant conditioning were 1) praise, 2) positive or constructive feedback, 3) classroom management strategies, and 4) the role of faculty in managing disruptive behavior.

The findings were positive for operant conditions, with an added caveat that teacher training is imperative, as well as parent involvement, with reinforcement programs for the academic success of the students with disruptive behavior.

Operant conditioning landmark study

Staddon & Cerutti (2002) utilized an experimental design to create a study to show a review of empirical studies and theoretical perspectives toward interval timing and choice in relation to operant conditioning. There is a discussion within the study of cognitive vs. behavioral approaches to timing, the "gap" experiment and what it means, proportional timing and Weber's law, temporal dynamics and linear waiting, and simple chain interval schedules. The point is made that operant conditioning is different from other educational research in that it has a focus on reversing behavior. Skinner had a belief that the operant behavior should connect to a response that can easily be repeated.

Interval timing is described, as well as temporal dynamics and linear waiting, and the problem of simple chain-interval schedules. Further research is needed in the area. Weber's Law is a connection between acknowledged sensory processes and interval timing.

The study concluded that a fresh focus on the causal factors working in reinforcement schedules might help to bring together research that has been defined in an unusual way. The implications of this study are that these aspects of operant conditioning with timing and choice may further develop and come together in the future.

Disruptive Talkers: Talking as disruptive behavior

Sun & Shek (2012) conducted a study to examine classroom problem behaviors among junior secondary schools in Hong Kong with two aims: to generate a list of problem behaviors alleged as the most commonly perceived among the teachers, and to identify

the disruptive classroom behaviors that caused the most interference to the teacher and learning of the students.

For methodology, three schools were invited to join the study with 4 teachers in each school who taught grades 7, 8 and/or 9 and were also part of the counselling or discipline department. The 12 teachers, which included 5 males and 7 females, were individually interviewed. The interviewer asked the teachers to define disruptive behaviors and data collected from the interviews was analyzed. General qualitative analysis techniques were used to analyze the data.

The findings were laid out in a table, which showed 88 responses categorized into 17 areas of disruptive behavior, with six (6) of them divided into subcategories. Doing something in private, and talking out of turn, were deemed the most common and most disruptive to teaching and learning. The remaining categories found were verbal aggression, disrespecting teachers, non-attentiveness, out of seat, habitual failure in submitting assignments, physical aggression, copying homework, nonverbal communication, clowning, playing, lateness to class, eating, drinking, and passive engagement in class. Teachers consider each of these behaviors disruptive to teaching and interfering with learning of students.

There were limitations to the findings in that twelve teachers were interviewed, and due to the small number of teachers interviewed, the findings could include assumptions and biases of their role as “teacher.” The implication of the study is that there are many behaviors considered disruptive, and disruptive talking, or “talking out of turn,” was among those considered most disruptive.

Irresponsible talking

Glenn and Waller (2009) presented a study exploring irresponsible talking and the fact that it interferes with the education of all students within the classroom setting. The study approached the issue by looking into why the participant was engaged in irresponsible talking. For methodology, the participant selected was a 13-year-old 7th grader named John (a pseudonym). John was a special education student who received support for math and language arts. He participated in an inclusion environment during social studies and science. He participated in irresponsible talking in which he talked during class without the teacher’s permission and made comments unrelated to the instructional content.

The findings of the study indicated that John’s irresponsible talking was for the purpose of acquiring attention. After John received instruction and help for self-monitoring his behavior and reducing his irresponsible talking, he markedly improved. John was given an appropriate way to receive teacher attention and was able to decrease talking out during teaching time. Some limitations mentioned in the study were that John was not a model student. He had other disruptive behaviors not addressed in this study. The study indicated that behavior, disruptive or not, is designed to receive teacher and peer attention.

This literature review had a fourfold emphasis. First, causes of disruptive behavior were examined with Ajmal’s (2022) study on the beneficial effect of leafy, green, and light-colored vegetables on children’s diet and subsequent lessening of disruptive behaviors, and the Bierman et al. (2013) study showed the correlation between early childhood aggression, disruptive behavior, and school maladjustment.

Second, management of disruptive behavior was discussed with an example of a singular function-based intervention by Lane et al. (2010) the effects of a good behavior game in the classroom

examined by Donaldson et al. in 2017, and through a study on teacher management skills by Gage and MacSuga-Gage in 2019. B. F. Skinner’s operant conditioning was in the forefront of three studies: the mitigation of disruptive behavior through operant conditioning in Peras et al’s (2023) study, Statton and Cerutti’s (2003) landmark study about operant conditioning in general, and Rafi’s (2020) scoping review study on positive reinforcement strategies.

Summary and Conclusions

This literature review narrowed at the end to address issues about seeking effective strategies for disruptive talkers, with two articles on disruptive talkers, with Sun & Shek (2012) expressing that teachers considered talking out of turn one of the foremost disruptive behaviors in the classroom, and Glenn and Waller (2009) examining a single-participant student for irresponsible talking. It is hoped that this review will provide an impetus for future research and investigation into this classroom problem behavior.

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