

BEYOND TEACHING: EXAMINING SUBJECT TEACHERS' ROLE IN CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract. Indiscipline in Malaysian primary and secondary schools remains a significant concern, placing substantial disciplinary responsibilities on teachers in addition to their teaching duties. This study examined the role of subject teachers in classroom discipline management, grounded in the premise that effective teacher leadership is essential for addressing student behavioral issues. The research pursued five specific objectives: evaluating awareness levels of classroom discipline among teachers, examining influencing factors on discipline management, identifying effective teacher strategies, and investigating the school's supportive environment. Findings reveal that while most teachers acknowledge their responsibility for classroom discipline, they recognize that school management attitudes, class time constraints, and perceived difficulty significantly impact their efforts. Teachers employ diverse strategies, including peer collaboration, reflective practice, and soliciting student feedback, to enhance discipline. The study implies that effective classroom discipline is vital for student success, as it directly influences learning outcomes. Establishing clear rules, consistent procedures, and implementing reward systems focused on both effort and success are recommended to minimize disruptions, promote self-regulation, and foster a more productive learning environment.

Keywords: *classroom management, school discipline, student behavior, subject teachers, private education institution*

Introduction

Indiscipline among students remains a significant concern within both primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. A study by Yahaya et al. (2009), involving approximately 100 discipline teachers from secondary schools in a southern Malaysian state, revealed a high prevalence of discipline problems among students. Their findings indicated that peer group influence was the dominant factor contributing to these issues, with no significant correlation observed between student indiscipline and either their family background or academic performance. Consistent with these concerns, a subsequent study by Ishak et al. (2017), conducted in a northern Malaysian state, and further documented a range of disciplinary problems among students in both urban and rural settings. This research categorized misconduct offenses according to Ministry guidelines, encompassing criminal acts, self-indulgence, truancy, rudeness, time neglect, vandalism, dishonesty, and obscene behavior. The Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM) has expressed significant concern regarding student disciplinary misconduct. In response, KPM implemented the Student Self-Development Program (PPSDM). This program emphasizes the development of human skills to guide students towards positive attitudinal and behavioural changes, ultimately fostering their holistic potential (KPM, 2022). Initially, PPSDM aimed to mitigate five serious categories of misconduct: criminal behavior, obscenity, destructive acts, truancy, and bullying, along

with addressing student involvement in drug-related issues. In 2022, the program broadened its focus to include other prevalent concerns such as rude behavior, self-indulgence, general delinquency, inattention to time, and smoking.

Research consistently highlights the critical link between teacher leadership in the classroom and the development of student character. Susanto et al. (2019) demonstrated this connection, emphasizing how a teacher's guiding patterns directly influence the establishment of student values. Further supporting this, Yusof et al. (2020) underscored that experienced teachers possessing strong leadership abilities can significantly contribute to mitigating the rise of societal issues and improving student discipline. More recently, Yaakob et al. (2023) conducted a study with 120 secondary school teachers, which further confirmed that an improved teacher leadership competency reduces student disciplinary breakdown. Their findings suggest that to ensure continuous improvement in school discipline, the leadership qualities of teachers must be intentionally developed.

Problem statements

The presence of undisciplined student behavior consistently poses a significant impediment to the optimization of learning activities and the maintenance of conducive classroom environments. While student conduct itself is a recognized challenge, the problem's severity is demonstrably escalated by a teacher's perceived or actual lack of proficiency in implementing effective behavioural management strategies. This confluence of factors not only compromises instructional fidelity but also contributes to teacher stress, potentially negatively impacting student academic achievement and socio-emotional development.

Research objectives

This study broadly aimed to investigate and characterize the multifaceted role of subject teachers in fostering and maintaining effective classroom discipline management. To achieve this overarching goal, the specific objectives were to: assess the degree of awareness among both subject teachers regarding established principles and practices of classroom discipline management; explore and analyse the perceived influencing factors affecting classroom discipline management, as reported by subject teachers; document and categorize the diverse strategies employed by subject teachers for effective classroom discipline management; and evaluate the perceived level of institutional support and resources available within the school environment that facilitate effective classroom discipline management for subject teachers.

Research framework

This study adopts a research framework centred on Positive School Discipline (PSD), conceptualizing it not as a discrete program but as an integrated, school-wide cultural ethos. This framework posits that effective classroom management and student behavior are outcomes of a collaborative, multitiered approach that prioritizes the proactive teaching and consistent reinforcement of positive behaviors. Central to this framework is the shift from punitive measures to restorative and instructive interventions. It emphasizes understanding and addressing the root causes of unwanted behaviors, thereby fostering the acquisition of alternative, constructive responses. The framework integrates key evidence-based components, including Positive Behavioral

Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), and restorative justice practices. These integrated practices are hypothesized to create a supportive and equitable school culture where all students feel valued, engaged, and safe. The expected outcomes within this framework include a reduction in negative disciplinary actions, such as student suspensions, along with a decrease in bullying incidents and feelings of rejection among students. Furthermore, a critical tenet of this framework is its association with more equitable discipline practices across diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, promoting fairness and inclusivity in educational environments. This comprehensive model thus serves as the guiding theoretical lens for investigating effective discipline strategies within school settings (*Figure 1*).

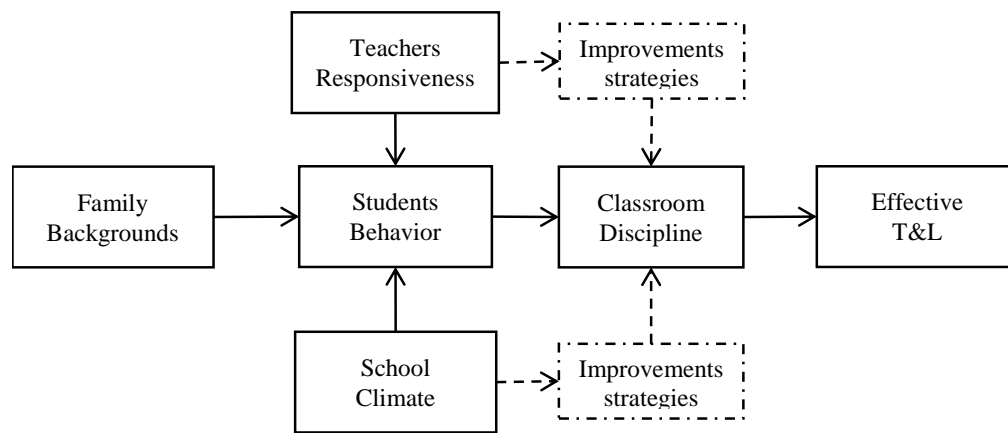


Figure 1. Proposed research framework.

Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional survey investigated private educational institutions in Selangor, Malaysia. While Selangor encompasses 661 primary and 279 secondary government and government-aided schools with a significant proportion (95%) of degree-holding teachers, this study specifically targeted the diverse landscape of private education. Included in the study were private primary and private secondary schools, and international schools. The sample size for this investigation was determined following the guidelines established by Singh and Masuku (2014). Data were collected using a questionnaire, adapted from Sun and Shek (2012). To ensure robust content validity, the questionnaire underwent rigorous expert validation by a university senior lecturer and an experienced Principal of an international school. The questionnaire comprised 21 items across five domains: teacher awareness (5 items), knowledge and skills (4 items), influencing factors (4 items), improvement strategies (5 items), and school supportive environment (3 items). All items utilized a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Results and Discussion

Respondents profile

The study participants comprised teachers from private education institutions in Selangor, Malaysia. The respondent pool was drawn from international secondary

schools (41.7%), private secondary schools (33.3%), and private primary schools (25.0%). The majority of these educators were female (64.6%), held an undergraduate qualification (87.5%), and possessed over 10 years of teaching experience (64.6%). Their primary teaching subjects included science-related subjects (33.3%), social science-related subjects (22.9%), language (12.5%), and other subjects (31.3%). A detailed profile of the respondents is presented in *Table 1*. Parental choice of private schools is significantly influenced by family and financial status (Mohd Kamal et al., 2020; Krishnapillai et al., 2016; Yaacob et al., 2015). Concurrently, international schools must strategically invest in enhanced teacher education, continuous professional development, and robust support systems to ensure the successful integration and retention of novice educators during their critical first year (Marudadorai et al., 2023). This investment is essential for meeting escalating demands and parental expectations.

Table 1. *Teacher's background.*

Item	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	17	35.4
	Female	31	64.6
Teaching Time (Experience)	Less than 5 years	10	20.8
	5 - 10 years	7	14.6
	More than 10 years	31	64.6
Teaching Subjects	Science-related subject	16	33.3
	Social sciences-related subjects	11	22.9
	Language	6	12.5
	Other subjects	15	31.3
Teacher's Qualification	Diploma	5	10.4
	Undergraduate	42	87.5
	Master	1	2.1
Category of school	International school	20	41.7
	Private secondary school	16	33.3
	Private primary school	12	25.0

Teachers' awareness of classroom discipline management

Teacher awareness regarding classroom discipline management was notably high (*Table 2*). A significant majority of teachers (83.3%) acknowledged their direct responsibility for managing classroom discipline, with an even higher percentage (93.7%) believing that effective classroom discipline guarantees teaching efficiency. Almost all surveyed teachers (95.8%) reported successfully managing their classes and placed considerable importance on classroom discipline. This dedication seemingly translated into positive student relations, as most teachers (87.5%) indicated that their students respect and cooperate with them. A study by Toh and Yan-Li (2024) found a significant connection between teachers' use of transformational leadership and heightened student interest in learning. The study underscores that a vital component of this leadership is a teacher's keen awareness of classroom behavior. This awareness allows educators to cultivate a secure environment that encourages student exploration, questioning, and collaboration, leading to a more effective learning atmosphere. Such practices can, in turn, help private schools attract more student enrollments by demonstrating a commitment to high-quality education, student interest, engagement, and academic achievement. According to Ayebo and Assuah (2017), classroom management is a skill that develops over time, shaped by both a teacher's personal

qualities and the specific circumstances of their classroom. However, teacher training may not adequately prepare educators for the disciplinary challenges they face in the classroom (Lopes and Oliveira, 2022). Improved training in classroom organization and management, addressing minor disruptions, and effective instructional methods could significantly enhance student learning and reduce common, yet draining, disciplinary issues.

Table 2. Teachers' awareness of classroom discipline management.

Statement	SD	D	SAg	A	SA
I am responsible for managing classroom discipline	8	0	0	8 (16.7%)	32 (66.6%)
Classroom discipline is the guarantee of classroom efficiency	3	0	0	9 (18.7%)	36 (75%)
I can manage classroom discipline well	1	0	1	15 (31.2%)	31 (64.6%)
I attach great importance to classroom discipline management	2	0	0	10 (20.8%)	36 (75%)
Students respect and cooperate with my classroom discipline administration	1	0	5 (10.4%)	13 (27.1%)	29 (60.4%)

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; SAg=Slightly Agree; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree.

Influencing factors for classroom discipline management

Teachers identified several key factors influencing classroom discipline, as detailed in *Table 3*. A majority of teachers (64.5%) agreed that the head teacher's class is crucial to the quality of class discipline. Furthermore, a significant proportion (72.9%) concurred that class time and course difficulty notably impact classroom discipline. The findings also highlighted the importance of interpersonal and administrative factors. Most teachers (89.5%) agreed that classroom discipline significantly affects the teacher-student relationship. Additionally, a large percentage (79.5%) believed that school management attitudes have a substantial impact on classroom discipline. Teacher's ability to monitor student attitudes and consistently foster an engaging learning environment, whether in-person or online. This process begins with the careful planning, configuration, and optimization of all learning resources and equipment to ensure high-quality instruction. Furthermore, teachers must proficiently integrate and control various information technologies to maintain student interest, particularly as blended learning models become more prevalent. Ultimately, strong classroom management directly contributes to increased student discipline (Cotton, 2001).

Table 3. Teachers' perspective on influencing factors for discipline management.

Statement	SD	D	SAg	A	SA
The key to the quality of class discipline lies in the head teacher's class and whether the level of management is in place	3	6	8	21 (43.7%)	10 (20.8%)
Class time and course difficulty have a significant impact on classroom discipline laws	2	1	10 (20.8%)	24 (50.0%)	11 (22.9%)
Classroom discipline has an important impact on the teacher-student relationship and the law	1	0	4	25 (52%)	18 (37.5%)
School management attitudes have a big impact on classroom discipline	1	0	4	29 (60.4%)	14 (29.1%)

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; SAg=Slightly Agree; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree.

School environment

Teachers' perceptions of the school environment's support for discipline management were largely positive, as detailed in *Table 4*. A significant majority of teachers (93.7%) reported that the school maintains a strong stance on classroom discipline and effectively addresses serious disciplinary infractions promptly. Furthermore, teachers

felt well-supported, with 91.6% indicating that class teachers' disciplinary actions were supported by the head teacher, and 85.3% receiving parental support. A positive school environment is critical for student learning outcomes, with student discipline and motivation directly correlating with academic achievement (Wati et al., 2021; Senjaya et al., 2020). Given the vital role of consistent discipline, schools must expand their focus beyond the curriculum to optimize educational environmental factors both inside and outside the classroom. This includes refining teaching methods, improving classroom atmosphere, and, critically, consistently monitoring and communicating student discipline to students and parents. Direct educator involvement is essential for cultivating this improved discipline. Taufiqurrahman and Nabilah (2023) posit that discipline, rather than being a constraint, serves as a pathway to liberation. From this perspective, a student who demonstrates discipline in their studies is, in essence, preparing for future freedom. This is because such discipline fosters success, which in turn emancipates individuals from hardship and adversity.

Table 4. Teachers' perception of school environment for discipline management.

Statement	SD	D	SAG	A	SA
The school has a strong attitude towards classroom discipline and can deal with serious violations of discipline promptly and effectively.	1	0	2	24 (50.0%)	21 (43.7%)
The parents are very supportive of classroom discipline management	1	0	6	20 (41.6%)	21 (43.7%)
The head teacher is very supportive in dealing with students' discipline violations	1	0	3	21 (43.7%)	23 (47.9%)

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; SAG=Slightly Agree; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree.

Teachers' improvement strategies

Table 5 details the strategies teachers employ for classroom discipline management. A strong majority of teachers (85.3%) reported utilizing various strategies, and most (91.6%) actively collaborate and exchange ideas with other teachers. Despite these efforts, a notable proportion (81.2%) acknowledged that their abilities in this area require further improvement. Furthermore, teachers demonstrated a commitment to reflective practice, with 85.8% indicating they regularly review their previous actions and 85.4% seeking students' opinions for improvements. Zamayla and Labitad (2025) explain that teachers' confidence in their ability to deliver interactive, systematic, and organized classroom instruction is reflected in their capacity to foster active student participation and positive behavioral outcomes. This often leads to students consistently adhering to classroom expectations and rules. Ultimately, effective classroom management practices are instrumental in shaping student behavior. In addition, teachers should have a positive personality, high social intelligence, and strong motivation to change for the better (Yusoff and Mansor, 2016).

Table 5. Teachers' strategies for classroom discipline management.

Statement	SD	D	SAG	A	SA
Implement various methods for maintaining classroom discipline	1	0	6	20 (41.6%)	21 (43.7%)
Work with and exchange ideas with other teachers	1	0	3	23 (47.9%)	21 (43.7%)
Needs to further improve	1	1	7	19 (39.6%)	20 (41.6%)
Reviewing the previous action	1	0	1	22 (45.8%)	24 (50.0%)
Ask students opinions	1	1	5	24 (50.0%)	17 (35.4%)

Note: SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; SAg=Slightly Agree; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree.

Conclusion

This research underscores the nuanced landscape of classroom discipline within private educational institutions, revealing a high level of awareness and proactive engagement from teachers. Our findings highlight several key factors that influence classroom discipline, notably the pervasive perception among teachers of strong, supportive structures for discipline management within their school environments. This positive reinforcement, in turn, empowers teachers to implement a diverse array of effective strategies for maintaining classroom order. The unique demographic and environmental disparities between public and private schools significantly shape parental expectations regarding school quality, encompassing both service provision and academic outcomes. These expectations invariably influence the perception of discipline issues, ranging from an anticipation of their complete absence to an acknowledgment of the necessity for their effective management. This variation is often rooted in family background and pre-existing school reputations. Building upon these insights, future research endeavors could fruitfully explore several promising avenues. Comparative studies of discipline strategies between public and private schools could illuminate differential effectiveness. Investigating the impact of parental expectations on teacher discipline practices would offer a deeper understanding of this influential dynamic. A longitudinal study on the efficacy of various discipline interventions could provide valuable evidence-based insights. Furthermore, examining teacher training and professional development needs specifically related to discipline management, the role of school culture and leadership in fostering effective discipline, and incorporating student perspectives on discipline and their learning environment would significantly enrich our understanding. Such comprehensive investigations are crucial for developing best practices that can inform and empower both teachers and school administrators in diverse educational contexts.

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Conflict of interest

The results of this study are not used for promotional purposes.

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