

Challenging Behavior: A Literature Review

Mohd Zuri Ghani^{1*}

¹Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia,
56100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Corresponding author: zuri@uptm.edu.my

Received 30 September 2024, Revised 20 October 2024, Accepted 31 October 2024, Published 30 November 2024

ABSTRACT

Challenging behavior in educational settings presents significant concerns for teachers and students alike, impacting the learning environment and overall educational experience. This literature review examines the definitions and contexts of challenging behavior, identifying it as any conduct that disrupts learning or poses risks to students and their peers. The review highlights the multifaceted nature of challenging behaviors, often associated with conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), and various psychological and environmental factors. Effective management strategies are crucial for educators to foster a safe and productive classroom atmosphere. The review discusses the importance of early identification and intervention, emphasizing the role of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) and token economy systems in promoting prosocial behaviors. It concludes that while challenging behaviors can be altered through targeted approaches, collaboration among educators, students, and families is essential to mitigate these issues and enhance student well-being and academic success.

Keywords: *Challenging behavior, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)*

How to Cite:

Ghani, M. Z. (2024). Challenging Behaviors: A Literature Review. *Jurnal Evolusi*, 5(2), 83–88.
<https://doi.org/10.61688/jev.v5i3.343>

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia.

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

INTRODUCTION

Challenging behavior is a frequent issue raised by teachers in schools. Although it may sometimes seem insignificant, it actually has a significant impact on students exhibiting such behavior. If not addressed early, challenging behavior can escalate into aggressive outbursts, causing disruptions in learning and creating various problems when it occurs frequently.

Handling challenging behavior is crucial for teachers and educators because all students have the right to education. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that students can learn in a safe and peaceful environment. Barbara et al. (2012) stated that challenging behavior can cause stress for students, peers, teachers, staff, and families.

Teachers' competency in managing challenging behavior positively affects the effectiveness of school activities, especially during classroom teaching and learning sessions. Behavior management strategies are a core part of the teaching process, helping build positive behaviors among students to ensure smoother teaching and learning outcomes..

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Challenging Behavior

The term "challenging behavior" has been defined by various researchers to help educators identify unacceptable behaviors among students (Emerson, 2001). Emerson emphasized that challenging behavior is a label for unacceptable behavior, not a diagnosis or a special education condition, though it may accompany conditions like Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Challenging behavior refers to any behavior that disrupts a child's learning or normal development, poses a danger to the child, others, or surrounding adults, puts the child at risk of social problems or academic failure (MacFarlane, 2007). The definition of challenging behavior also depends on the context and how teachers perceive it (Hill & Hawk, 2000).

Walker, Ramsey, and Gresham (2004) described challenging behavior as 'antisocial behavior' that ranges from hostility to minor irritations. This emphasizes the opposite of prosocial behavior, which involves cooperation, positivity, and socially acceptable actions.

Sugai & Horner (2002a) define challenging behavior as any systematic action that disrupts education and a school's safe environment. Galloway et al. (1982) describe it as a combination of behaviors that cause disturbances.

Who Are the Students with Challenging Behavior?

Challenging behavior is often linked to students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), ADD, Autism, or brain injuries that make it difficult to function in the classroom. Students outside these categories are fewer in number. Managing such students poses challenges to teachers, impacting learning sessions (Chaplain, 2003).

Baker (2011) noted that students with challenging behavior often involve psychological, biological, social, and environmental factors. It can be linked to autism spectrum disorders (ASD), ADHD, mental health issues, genetic, or organic disorders. Physical disorders, especially those causing pain, may also result in challenging behavior (Mencap, 2012).

In Church's (2003) study, the term "antisocial" was used to describe students exhibiting challenging behavior. Many of these students also struggle with learning difficulties (Balson, 1992; Rogers, 1998; Chaplain, 2003).

Understanding Challenging Behavior

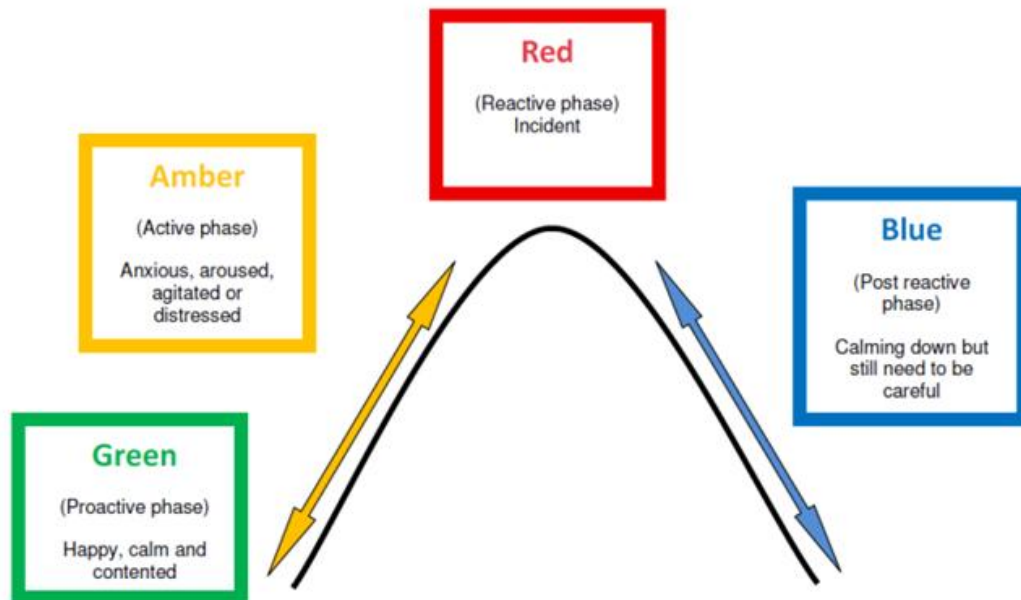
Generally, challenging behavior refers to difficulties or behavioral issues shown by children or adults with disabilities. These behaviors include hitting, kicking, biting, destroying property (e.g., tearing clothes, breaking windows, throwing objects), and self-harm, such as head-banging or eating inedible objects. Such behaviors also endanger others or significantly affect the quality of life of those around them.

Managing challenging behavior in the classroom is a problem faced by many teachers (Emerson, 2001). Teachers need to understand the context of such behaviors to manage them effectively. According to Weinstein (2002), students respond positively to well-organized classrooms led by enthusiastic teachers who understand their students and use flexible teaching methods. Teachers who are deeply interested in their students' well-being are more likely to manage challenging behaviors effectively.

Stages of Behavior

Challenging behavior often does not occur suddenly but progresses through stages, as shown in the 'stimulation curve' diagram below.

Figure 1
Behavioral stages curve



(sumber: www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk)

Red - Active Phase

At this stage, the individual begins to feel anxious and may challenge you in several ways. Immediate action is required to support the individual in returning to the green phase to prevent further escalation.

Yellow – Active Amber Phase

The individual shows sign of anxiety or frustration. Early intervention is needed to prevent the behavior from worsening.

Blue – Post-reactive Phase

The incident is over, and the individual begins to calm down. However, there's still a risk of another escalation, so caution is necessary.

Green – Proactive Phase

The individual is calm and relaxed. Efforts should focus on keeping the individual in this state. Identifying these stages helps ensure that individuals with challenging behaviors have their daily needs met.

Reducing Challenging Behavior

Weinstein (2002) argued that there is no specific formula for managing challenging behavior. Positive relationships between teachers and students are key to creating a safe classroom environment. Teachers who foster mutual respect and trust with their students tend to manage challenging behaviors more effectively.

Teachers are responsible for creating a conducive physical classroom environment (Syed Ismail & Ahmad Subki, 2010). An overcrowded classroom can lead to discomfort and disciplinary problems (Mok Soon Sang, 2011). By organizing appropriate activities and consistently monitoring students, teachers can minimize unexpected events and reduce challenging behavior (Choong Lean Keow, 2009).

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is an effective approach for addressing challenging behaviors, developed in the 1980s from Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) (Dunlap et al., 2008). PBS emphasizes the individual's rights and the factors contributing to challenging behavior, ultimately improving quality of life for affected individuals.

Token economy reward systems can also reduce challenging behaviors by reinforcing positive actions. Such systems provide students with clear goals and rewards, motivating them to focus on appropriate behavior.

CONCLUSION

Challenging behavior can be changed as it is learned, not inherited. However, changing ingrained behavior is not easy for teachers. It is crucial to address challenging behavior early. Collaboration among all parties is necessary to manage and mitigate challenging behavior at an early stage. In conclusion, managing challenging behavior in students is a critical aspect of teaching, as such behaviors can disrupt learning environments and negatively impact both students and educators. The article emphasizes the importance of early identification and intervention to prevent challenging behavior from escalating. Teachers play a vital role in creating a safe and supportive learning environment by building positive relationships with students and using effective behavior management strategies, such as Positive Behavior Support (PBS) and token economy systems. These strategies help maintain discipline while promoting prosocial behavior, ultimately ensuring a more conducive and productive classroom atmosphere. Effective behavior management not only enhances the learning experience but also supports the overall well-being of students, allowing them to succeed academically and socially..

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to UPTM for providing the resources and support necessary to complete this study. We would also like to thank all participants who contributed their time and insights to this research. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and peers who offered valuable feedback during the development of this manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 contributed to the conceptualization, research design, and writing of the original draft.

Author 2 was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results.

Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of UPTM and adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah Sani Yahaya. (2005). *Mengurus disiplin pelajar*. Pahang: PTS Profesional Publishing Sdn. Bhd.
- Adeli Awang Noh. (2002). *Kajian kesan masalah tingkah laku terhadap pencapaian matematik kanak-kanak berkeperluan khas* (Academic exercise). Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor.
- Balson, M. (1992). *Understanding classroom behaviour*. ACER.
- Chaplain, R. (2003). *Teaching without disruption in the secondary school*. Routledge.
- Church, J. (2003). The definition, diagnosis, and treatment of children and youth with severe behaviour difficulties. Retrieved from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=8878&indexid=7961&indexparentid=6871>
- Dunlap, G., Sailor, W., Horner, R., & Sugai, G. (2009). Overview and history of positive behavior support. In W. Sailor, G. Dunlap, G. Sugai, & R. Horner (Eds.), *Handbook of positive behavior support* (pp. 3-16). New York: Springer.
- Emerson, E. (2001). *Challenging behaviour: Analysis and intervention in people with learning disabilities* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Ericksen, S. C. (1978). The lecture. *Memo to the faculty* [Electronic version]. Ann Arbor: Center for Research on Teaching and Learning, University of Michigan.
- Fong, C. H. (2003). *Kesesuaian pengurusan tingkah laku terhadap kanak-kanak autisma di sebuah sekolah: Satu kajian kes* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Universiti Malaya.
- Goh, A. E., & Bambara, L. M. (2012). Individualized positive behavior support in school settings: A meta-analysis. *Remedial and Special Education*, 33(5), 271-286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932510383990>
- Hill, J., & Hawk, K. (2000). *Making a difference in the classroom: Effective teaching in low decile, multicultural schools*. Ministry of Education.
- MacFarlane, A. H. (2007). *Discipline, democracy, and diversity: Working with students with behavioural difficulties*. NZCER Press.
- McNaughton, S. (2002). *Meeting of minds*. Learning Media.
- Nor Anisa Musa. (2005). *Modifikasi tingkah laku melalui kemahiran asas guru dan guru sebagai kaunselor dan motivator dalam pembentukan tingkah laku kanak-kanak*. Universiti Malaya. Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/28238700/Modifikasi-Tingkah-Laku-Melalui-Kemahiran-Asas-Guru>
- Ross, S. W., Romer, N., & Horner, R. H. (2012). Teacher well-being and the implementation of school-wide positive behavior interventions and support. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 14(2), 118-128. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300711413820>
- Syed Ismail bin Syed Mustapa, & Ahmad Subki bin Miskon. (2010). *Buku guru dan cabaran semasa*. Penerbitan Multimedia Sdn. Bhd.
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2002a). The evolution of discipline practice: School-wide positive behavior supports. *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*, 24(1), 23-50.

Walker, H. M., Ramsey, E., & Gresham, F. M. (2004). *Antisocial behaviour in school: Evidenced-based practices* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson.

Watkins, C., & Wagner, P. (2000). *Improving school behaviour*. Paul Chapman.