Chinese Elementary School Teachers’ Perceptions of Students’ Classroom Behavior Problems

Caiyun Zhang, Ph. D.¹
Paul Caldarella, Ph.D.
Michael Richardson, M.S.
Ryan Shatzer, M.S.

¹Department of Psychology and Special Education, China National Institute for Educational Research, Beijing, China

Funding for this manuscript was provided in part by grant#BBA060013 from the Chinese National Educational Science Foundation.
• An ongoing relationship (12 years)
• Visits to China and the US
• Sharing research presentations
• Collaborating on publications and research
Presentation Overview

✓ Background
✓ Method
✓ Results
✓ Discussion
✓ Questions
Background
Teachers’ Perceptions of Misbehavior

• Studies over the past 20 years
  – Many different parts of the world
• Teachers’ perceptions can influence:
  – Responses to students
  – Confidence
Factors that Can Influence Perceptions

- Teachers’ experience
- Students’ grade level
- Student gender
- Demographic area
- Classroom setting
Teachers’ Perception Studies

• Most frequent and troublesome behavior:
  – West
    • Talking out of turn
  – China
    • Daydreaming
Teachers’ Perceptions in China

• Ding et al. (2008) proposed differences due to:
  – Students personalities
  – Class sizes
  – Teaching style
Teachers’ Perceptions in China

- Percentage of teachers that spend *too much time* on behavior problems:
  - West
    - 50%
  - China
    - 34%
- Ding et al.:
  - Differences possibly due to Confucian heritage emphasizing respect and social order
Current Study

• Limited research on Chinese teachers’ perceptions
  – Seek better understanding
  – Hope to help teachers resolve student misbehavior

• Compare findings of Ding et al. using:
  – Larger sample (527 vs 244)
  – Focus on elementary schools (grades 1-6 vs 1-12)
  – More provinces (5 vs 2)
  – New behavioral categories

• Examine influencing factors
  – Teacher experience, school quality, setting

• Explore beyond frequency/troublesome
  – *Negative Effects on Development*
  – *Difficult to Tolerate*
  – *Issues when Trying to Resolve*
Method

Phase I
Development of Problem Behavior Categories & Questionnaire

Phase II
Distribution of Questionnaire & Analysis
Phase I

- Behavioral Category Development
  - Interviewed 18 teachers
  - 10 categories were developed
  - Finalized by two expert teachers
- Questionnaire
  - Based on Wheldall and Merrett’s (1988)
  - Questions adapted to the Chinese context
  - Additional questions added
  - Pilot tested with 38 teachers
| Non-attention | Students can’t focus on the learning content, and have no idea what the teacher is teaching. They just sit there quietly and appear to be thinking about other things (day-dreaming). |
| Laughing at others | Students laugh at classmates when they are answering the questions or working on teachers’ assignments, saying things like “stupid.” They look down on others by using negative words, glaring disparagingly or speaking with tones of disdain. |
| Over-active | Students move around in their seats or don’t stay in their seats, often making noises that affect other students’ ability to listen to the class. They play with things on the desk or in the drawer. They move around in the classroom without permission. |
Talking out of turn

Students can’t listen to others; they interrupt teachers and other students with unrelated things to affect teaching negatively. They talk about unrelated topics to the class, to themselves, or to other students: for example, laughing or talking without permission.

Uncooperative

Students don’t join in the study group. They play by themselves and appear not to care about the group's performance, or make an effort at group work. They talk about a lot of things unrelated to their teamwork in the study group.
Students don’t bring school supplies and do their own thing in the class. They act slowly and can’t keep up with the teachers' requests. They can’t complete classroom learning tasks on time.

Students disturb others in various ways during the class, such as taking others’ things on the table, drawing on others’ books, pushing others constantly. They interfere with others’ learning and their ability to do homework.

Students are reluctant to comply with the class rules, unwilling to listen to the teachers' directions, and try to defend themselves unreasonably. They are unwilling to recognize and correct their mistakes. They like to criticize others and shirk their responsibilities.
Emotional disturbance

Students are unable to control their emotions, crying or quarrelling when frustrated or dissatisfied. They have conflicts with others in the class, attacking or fighting with others.

Withdrawal

Students appear to feel nervous in the class, seem afraid of speaking, seldom take the initiative to raise their hands to answer questions. They often sit quietly by themselves, don’t join in the activities in the class, and rarely discuss with others. They seldom communicate with the teachers.
Questionnaire items

1. Do you think you have spent **too much time** dealing with students' behavior problems in your class?
2. Assuming a 40-minute class, **how long do you spend** on students' behavior problems?
3. What is the **most frequent** behavior problem in your class?
4. What is the **most troublesome** behavior problem in your class?
5. What classroom behavior problem do you think has the **most negative effects** on students' development?
6. What is the behavior problem you can **hardly tolerate** in your class?
7. **How many** students usually have behavior problems in your class? How many are boys? How many are girls?
8. Are the **boys’ or girls’** behavior problems more troublesome in your class?
9. Have you had **trouble resolving** students’ behavior problems in the past?
10. What are the **most difficult issues** for you in resolving students’ behavior problems?
Phase II: Survey Administration

- **Participants**
  - 527 teachers

- **Setting**
  - 27 schools
  - 5 provinces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>&lt; 30</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 50</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years teaching</td>
<td>≤ 5</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 20</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class setting</td>
<td>Homeroom</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic area</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School quality</td>
<td>Key</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beijing 17.0 Million
Shandong 93.7 Million
Shanxi 34.1 Million
Henan 99.2 Million
Hubei 60.3 Million
Phase II

• Procedure
  – Principal approval and teacher consent
  – Distributed surveys during teachers’ meeting (approximately 20 minutes)
  – 95.8% return rate
  – Researchers provided teachers with training after survey and teachers’ meeting
Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics
- Spearman’s rank order correlation
- Chi-squared
  - Analyzing 10 categories
- T-test
  - Teacher experience, class setting and school quality
- ANOVA
  - Grade levels
Results
Descriptive Statistics

• Do you think you spend too much time dealing with students' behavior problems in class?
  – Yes: 44.6% (compared to 34% reported by Ding et al.)
• Time spent and number of behavior problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Spent and Number of Behavior Problems</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minutes Spent on Behavior Problems (40-minute class)</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Class Time Spent on Behavior Problems</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Students that Typically have Behavior Problems</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Students that Typically have Behavior Problems</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive Statistics

- Are the boys’ or girls’ behaviors more troublesome?
  - Frequency and Percent:
    | Boys   | Girls |
    |--------|-------|
    | 475    | 33    |
    | 93.5%  | 6.5%  |

- Have you had trouble resolving students’ behavior problems in the past?
  - Yes: 86%

- What are the most difficult issues in resolving students’ behavior problems?
  - Frequency and Percent:
    | Issue                                           | Frequency | Percent |
    |------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
    | Cannot find an effective solution              | 240       | 45.5%   |
    | Parents don’t collaborate                      | 154       | 29.2%   |
    | Lack of training and instruction               | 133       | 25.0%   |
    | Do not understand the student’s feelings       | 91        | 17.3%   |
## Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequent</th>
<th>Troublesome</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Tolerate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-attention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking out of turn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-active</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not following the task</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncooperative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughing at others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-compliance</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional disturbance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequent behavior problem tends to be the most troublesome \( (r_s = 0.87, p<.01) \)
Teacher Experience

• Experienced teachers reported “withdrawn” as more
  – Troublesome ($\chi^2 = 24.12, p < .001$)
  – Negatively affecting students’ development ($\chi^2 = 8.31, p < .05$)

• Less experienced and non-expert teachers reported
  – Not being able to find effective solutions ($\chi^2 = 14.46, p < .01$)
Teacher Experience and Time Spent

How long do you spend on students’ behavior problems?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 Years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ Years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F (3,515) = 4.59, p < .01, Tukey HSD 0-5/6-10 Years > 20+ Years
Linear Trend: F (1,515) = 12.25, p < .01
Homeroom Teachers

• Reported more frequent:
  – Non-attention ($\chi^2 = 4.22, p < .05$)
  – Not following the task ($\chi^2 = 4.16, p < .05$)

• But less frequent:
  – Over-active ($\chi^2 = 4.33, p < .05$)
  – Talking out of turn ($\chi^2 = 7.57, p < .01$)

• Also reported:
  – Higher percentage of their class as typically having behavior problems ($t(498) = 1.99, p < .05$)
  – But reported spending less time on behavior problems ($t(515) = 2.37, p < .05$)
Lower Grade Level Teachers

• Reported “over-active” as more:
  – Frequent, troublesome, negatively affecting students’ development, and difficult to tolerate

• Reported “talking out of turn” as:
  – Less troublesome ($\chi^2 = 8.02, p < .05$)
  – But more negatively affecting students’ development ($\chi^2 = 7.07, p < .05$)
Upper Grade Level Teachers

• Reported:
  – Emotional disturbance as more troublesome
  – Spending less time on behavior problems
  – A lower percentage of their class as typically having behavior problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Minutes spent on behavior problems</th>
<th>% of class with behavior problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Grades (1-2)</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Grades (3-4)</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Grades (5-6)</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>3.40*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001
School Quality and Area

- Rural schools = 10% key
- Urban schools = 60% key
- Both urban schools and key reported a lower percentage of students with behavior problems

\[ t(499) = 4.72, p < .001 \]
\[ t(494) = 2.15, p < .05 \]
Discussion
Non-attention

• Non-attention the most frequent and troublesome behavior problem similar to daydreaming in Ding et al. (2008)

• Differs from talking out of turn which is common in the West
  – Average class size 50, much larger than in the West
  – Lecture format might be more feasible for larger classes, but might lead to more non-attention and less talking out
  – Chinese students may be less likely to give teachers negative feedback and instead may simply not attend to instruction

• Chinese teachers could benefit from strategies to improve student attention
Tolerate and Development

• New items about behavior problems
  – Difficult to tolerate: Laughing at others
  – Negative effect on student development: Non-attention and Uncooperative
Contributing Factors

- Teacher experience
- Class setting
- Grade level
- School Quality
- Geographic area
Limitations & Future Research

- True cross-cultural study
- Qualitative data and observational research
- Longitudinal study
Conclusion

- Confirm the finding of Ding et al. with:
  - Non-attention or daydreaming
- Other factors affecting teachers’ perceptions
  - Teacher experience, school quality, setting
- Explored beyond frequency/troublesome
  - Development and tolerate
References


http://education.byu.edu/pbsi/

Paul Caldarella Ph.D.    paul_caldarella@byu.edu
Caiyun Zhang Ph.D.      zcy619@vip.sina.com

Questions
生活幸福 恭喜发财