

The Reality Of Behavioral Problems In The Primary Cycle In The Province Of Laghouat

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Abstract:

The current study aimed to identify the reality of behavioral problems in the primary cycle in the province of Laghouat. The study also sought to determine the most severe behavioral problems among the following school behavioral problems: academic problems, theft, aggression, lying, problems related to classroom discipline, problems with property preservation, and problems with peer relationships. The study concluded that the overall average degree of behavioral problems among elementary school students in Laghouat province was 74, based on the results of the school behavioral problems scale adopted in this study. The scale correction method indicated a high level of behavioral problems. In addition, problems related to classroom discipline were the most severe, accounting for 19.05%, followed by other problems according to the following percentages: academic problems 16.22%, aggression problems 15.12%, lying problems 14.90%, property preservation problems 13.09%, peer relationship problems 11.47%, and theft problems 10.15%.

Keywords: School behavioral problems; Primary cycle.

I- Introduction:

Behavioral problems in schools have become a negative phenomenon that has spread in educational institutions, negatively affecting students' academic achievement. These problems also cause distress to teachers and parents, as their consequences are serious for individuals and society. School behavioral problems are considered one of the most common classroom problems faced by the educational system in all education cycles. Therefore, many primary, middle, and high school students experience psychological, social, behavioral, and academic problems which lead them to lack self-acceptance and struggle to get along with others, making them prone to failure and school dropout. Additionally, this also affects their parents and teachers to the point that they can only successfully address these issues with the assistance of a skilled professional.

School behavioral problems impact students in terms of their ability to benefit from lessons. They also diminish the efforts and effectiveness of teachers in carrying out their tasks. When attempting to address these negative behaviors, it can lead to feelings of failure, disappointment, and inadequacy. Furthermore, such classroom behavior disrupts the smooth flow of the educational process (Zidan & Shawakfa, 2007:58). Moreover, disruptive classroom behavior, as one of the school behavioral problems, creates a sense of concern among many teachers, particularly those with limited experience (Djaber, 1994:283).

The school behavioral problems are numerous and varied; the most important classification is the one by (Abdulaziz Al-Muayta and Mohammed Al-Jaghiman 2005). They addressed the following in their classification:

Behavioral School Problems and their Aspects for the Student in the School Environment: Maladjustment or academic compatibility issues, memory disorders, language disorders, nail-biting, lack of activity.

Behavioral Classroom Problems: Truancy, frequent absenteeism from school, morning tardiness to school, cheating in exams and school assignments, vandalizing school furniture, hitting peers and forcibly taking their belongings, theft, and dishonesty.

Educational Classroom Problems: Lack of motivation for studying, incorrect study habits, lack of class participation, weakness in following instructions, academic failure, and repetition.

Academic Classroom Problems: Not bringing necessary notebooks, books, and tools. Some students are late in completing school assignments or cheating on them, have poor academic performance, different perceptual styles among students, and difficulty in focusing and persevering. The psychological problems of learners can be categorized as follows: inattention or distractibility, daydreaming, excessive dependency, anxiety, fear, depression, self-harm, and shyness (Abdulaziz Al-Muayta et al., 2005:156). Woody classified these problems into three categories: mild behavioral disorders, which include children with behavioral disorders that can be assisted by the school teacher through counseling programs; moderate behavioral disorders, which include children facing problems that require specialized assistance and some counseling services; and severe behavioral disorders, which include children with emotional issues that require the services of a specialized assessment team (Hussein and Adib, 2008:32). Due to the importance of this topic, this study aims to identify and address these behavioral problems specifically in the primary cycle.

2- Study Questions:

This study aims to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of prevalence of behavioral problems in primary schools in the state of Laghouat?
- Which behavioral problems are the most severe among the following ones: (disciplinary problems, relationship problems, property

problems, academic problems, theft, lying, aggression), according to their prevalence in primary schools in the province of Laghouat?

3- Study Objectives:

This study aims to:

- Identify the prevalence of behavioral problems in primary schools in the province of Laghouat.
- Determine the ranking of the following behavioral problems: (disciplinary problems, relationship problems, property problems, academic problems, theft, lying, aggression) according to their prevalence in primary schools in the province of Laghouat.

4- Study importance:

The significance of this study lies in the following points:

- Highlighting school behavioral problems for educators, education stakeholders, teachers, and parents in order to focus on them and find therapeutic solutions. Neglecting these problems hinders the educational process and negatively affects students' academic achievement.
- Directing researchers' attention to this type of prevalent problems specifically in the primary education cycle, which are mostly classroom-related issues. This study aims to investigate, research, and diagnose these problems in order to find therapeutic solutions that can help mitigate or alleviate them.

5- Study delimitations: This study is delimited by the following:

Spatial delimitations: Primary schools in Laghouat province.

People delimitation: A sample of primary school students from some schools in the city of Laghouat.

Time delimitations: This study was conducted during the academic year 2022/2023.

6- Previous Studies: There have been numerous studies on behavioral problems conducted in various settings, including some specifically focused on the primary cycle, which are relevant to the current study. Here are a few examples:

(Wei (2003) conducted a study aiming to identify the manifestations of negative behavior from the perspective of a sample of 146 teachers. The results showed that the most prevalent forms of negative behavior among students were verbal aggression, insults, yelling at others, destructive and disruptive behaviors, and theft and property damage. These forms of behavioral problems were found to be relatively high among students.

(Al-Maraziq 2004) conducted a study identifying behavioral problems among 582 eighth, ninth, and tenth-grade students. The results indicated that academic problems ranked first among the identified problems and were more prevalent among male students than females.

(Cooper 2004) conducted a study aiming to determine the significant manifestations of negative behavioral problems and identify the influential factors contributing to the emergence of these problems among elementary school students. The results revealed that one of the significant forms of negative behavior was speaking loudly and interrupting the teacher. However, the overall prevalence of these behavioral manifestations was low (Al-Redaan, 2017, pp. 125-126).

The study (Al-Khalifi, 1994) was conducted in Qatar to identify behavioral problems among primary school children. The research sample consisted of 462 male and female students from the primary cycle. The study found that behavioral problems increase with academic progress and age. It also showed that males have more problems than females, and academically struggling students have more problems than high-achieving students.

Additionally, a study (Shephard, 1996) on the prevalence of behavioral problems among students at "Bakank Hampshire " School in Britain as perceived by teachers. The results indicated that severe behavioral problems were more prevalent among males than females, including mischief, disruption of order, and a lack of respect for school rules and regulations.

Furthermore, (Al-Barghouthi, 2001) conducted a study in Jordan to identify the reasons for students' lack of discipline within the classroom. The research revealed a correlation between academic achievement and discipline, indicating that higher

academic achievement is associated with better discipline. Factors contributing to students' lack of discipline included relatives in the classroom, a desire to mock the teacher, and seeking approval from peers within the classroom (Nazmi, 1996, pp. 350-352).

The study by (Al-Sahel, 2001) aimed to determine the prevalence and types of children's problems among primary school students. The research sample consisted of 520 male and female teachers from all primary schools in Kuwait. The study used a checklist of children's problems as a research tool. The findings revealed widespread children's problems in the primary cycle. The most prevalent problems were excessive movement, crying easily, daydreaming, forgetfulness, neglecting school assignments, insulting others, hitting children, lacking cooperation with teachers, lying, and damaging school property.

Another study by (Al-Zahrani et al., 2001) aimed to identify the common behavioral problems among primary school children from the perspective of school principals, teachers, and counselors. A scientific tool was developed to measure behavioral problems among primary school children. According to school principals and teachers, the study results showed that excessive motor activity was the most frequently reported problem. On the other hand, the problem of a child's inability to stay in one place for a long time received high ratings from the counselors' perspective (Al-Jabali, 2009, pp. 318-319).

The study conducted by (Al-Redaan, 2017) aimed to identify the prevalence of behavioral problems among primary school students in Kuwait from the teachers' perspective. The study found moderate behavioral problems, with males exhibiting more behavioral problems than females.

Another study by (Jameel, 1999) aimed to identify the behavioral problems of students in primary schools in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, from the teachers' perspective. The study sample consisted of 412 teachers. The study's results indicated that the behavioral problems, as perceived by the teachers, included rushing to play at the expense of studying, inattentiveness, avoiding homework, academic underachievement, and neglecting

schoolwork. These problems were reported to be of moderate severity.

The study by (Abu Shihab, 1985) aimed to survey behavioral problems in primary schools in Jordan and examine the relationship between these problems, gender, educational stage, and educational region. The study sample included 236 teachers and schools. The results showed significant behavioral problems among students, such as the inability to concentrate for a long time during explanations, turning back and talking to peers, excessive movement, provocative statements that anger the teacher, and damaging personal belongings such as notebooks, books, and pens. However, the appearance of aggressive behavior was reported to be low.

7- Study terms:

School Behavioral Problems:

School behavioral problems are defined as behavior that teachers perceive as undesirable, find difficult to address, disrupt their work, and represent non-compliant behavior from the student's perspective. (Mansour et al., 2002: 91). Another definition of school behavioral problems is that inappropriate behaviors exhibited by a child that causes annoyance and anxiety to those around them affect their self-esteem and relationships with others. This behavior tends to be stable and frequently appears in similar situations. Children or teachers can only address these problems with specialists in therapy and psychological counseling. (Nabil, 2013: 17). Another definition characterizes it as unacceptable behavior performed by an individual to satisfy their need for belongingness and a sense of worth. (Al-Hariri & Ben Rajab, 2008: 15). Besides, (Yahya 2013) defined behavioral problems as a form of non-adaptive behavior that arises from an individual due to a disturbance in the learning process, often in the form of reinforcing non-adaptive behavior and not reinforcing adaptive behavior.

In this study, school behavioral problems are operationally defined as the overall degree perceived by teachers based on the Behavioral Problems Scale developed by Dr. Adel Abdullah Mohammed, Professor of Special Education and

Head of the Department of Mental Health at the Faculty of Education, Zagazig University, Cairo.

Primary Cycle: It is a stage of compulsory basic education that starts from the first year of primary education until the fifth year.

Research Methodology:

The researcher used a descriptive survey methodology, which aims to determine the current status of the phenomenon. This methodology relies on observing and interpreting what exists, and it is not limited to collecting and tabulating data but goes beyond that to include some interpretation of this data and expressing the study's results using statistical methods. (Obaidat et al., 2003). In this study, it is manifested through the identification of behavioral problems among primary cycle students.

9- Study Sample:

The study sample consisted of 407 students (283 male and 124 female) enrolled in the primary cycle, who were randomly selected from schools in Laghouat province. The focus was on students who had behavioral problems, as noted by their teachers.

10- Study Tool: School Behavioral Problems Checklist from the Teacher's Perspective

- **Scale Developer:** Dr. Adel Abdullah Mohammed, Professor of Special Education and Head of the Department of Mental Health at the Faculty of Education, Zagazig University, Cairo.

- Scale Description:

The primary purpose of this checklist is to identify the extent of behavioral problems displayed by children, especially those in the primary cycle, within the classroom or school environment, as reflected in their scores. It can be used in guidance and counseling programs, school services, or various interventions. This helps prevent potential behavioral disorders by addressing the problems early on. The checklist consists of 60 items representing common problems among children of this age group. Each item is accompanied by three choices: "Yes," "Sometimes," and "No." These choices are assigned scores of 2, 1, and 0, respectively. The child's total score on the checklist, as determined by the teacher, indicates

the overall degree of behavioral problems. The total score ranges from 0 to 120, with higher scores indicating a higher level of behavioral problems and vice versa.

Scale Correction:

The scores obtained by the student range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 120. Therefore, there are different levels of school behavioral problems based on the total score:

- Below Average Level of School Behavioral Problems: If the score ranges from 42 to 50.
- Average Level of School Behavioral Problems: If the score ranges from 51 to 59.
- Above Average Level of School Behavioral Problems: If the score ranges from 60 to 68.
- High Level of School Behavioral Problems: If the score ranges from 69 to 77.
- Very High Level of School Behavioral Problems: If the score is 78 or higher.

- Psychometric Properties of the Scale:

Scale Reliability: The reliability of the scale was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and reached a value of 0.82. Additionally, the split-half method was employed, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.76.

Scale Validity: The scale's validity was calculated using the content validity method and expert validity, as well as criterion validity, where the Social Interactions Scale for Children developed by Adel Abdullah was used as a criterion. Then, the scale designer calculated the value of (r) between the scores of the sample individuals (n=45) in the two tests, which was (-0.67), and by calculating the statistical significance of the calculated values, it became clear that they were all significant at the 0.01 level. On the other hand, it became clear from the results of the Factorial validity after orthogonal rotation that there are seven factors on which the scale items are saturated. The items of each dimension were grouped to form an independent subscale that facilitates its application by the teacher.

Distribution of Scale Items across

Dimensions: The scale consists of seven dimensions, as follows:

- Dimension One: Classroom-related problems. Items range from 1 to 8, with a total of 8 items.
- Dimension Two: Relationship problems with others. Items range from 9 to 15, with a total of 7 items.
- Dimension Three: Academic problems. Items range from 16 to 23, with a total of 8 items.
- Dimension Four: Stealing. Items range from 24 to 31, with a total of 8 items.
- Dimension Five: Lying. Items range from 32 to 40, with a total of 9 items.
- Dimension Six: Aggression. Items range from 41 to 50, with a total of 10 items.
- Dimension Seven: Problems with property preservation. Items range from 51 to 60, with a total of 10 items.

- Scale Instructions:

Writing information: School name, student's name, date of birth, gender, and grade. (Adel Abdullah Mohammed, 2009: 12-15).

Implementation and Correction Procedure of the Research Tool:

Contact was made with the teachers of the study sample (283 male students and 124 female students), who are the ones experiencing behavioral problems according to these teachers' observations. They were asked to fill out forms that included a list of behavioral problems based on their perspective and knowledge of these students.

Discussion and Interpretation of Study Results:

The following is a detailed presentation of the results obtained through the application of the research tool, along with an interpretation and discussion of the findings based on answering the research questions.

To answer the first question:

"What is the level of prevalence of behavioral problems in primary schools in the province of Laghouat?"

To answer this question, the mean score of the entire sample was calculated using the following method:

$$30118/407 = 74$$

Where:

30118: Total score of the sample in the behavioral problems scale.

407: Number of individuals in the study sample.

74: The overall mean score of the study sample.

Through the scale correction method, we find that the overall mean score of 74 indicates a high level of behavioral problems.

This result is consistent with a study conducted by **(Wei, 2003)**, which aimed to determine the manifestations of negative behavior from the perspective of a sample of 146 teachers. The results showed high levels of school behavioral problems. It also aligns with a study by **(Al-Sahel, 2001)**, which aimed to assess the prevalence and types of children's problems among primary school students in Kuwait. The study found a wide prevalence of children's problems in the primary cycle. Additionally, it agrees with a study by **(Abu Shihab, 1985)**, which aimed to survey behavioral problems in primary schools in Jordan and examine their correlation with gender, educational cycle, and educational district. The study sample consisted of 236 teachers and schools, and the results indicated high behavioral problems among students. However, this result aligns differently with a study by **(Cooper, 2004)**, which aimed to identify the significant manifestations of negative behavioral problems and determine the influential factors among primary school students. The study found that the overall mean for these behavioral manifestations was low.

This result also disagrees with a study conducted by **(Al-Redaan, 2017)**, which aimed to identify the level of prevalence of behavioral problems among primary school students in Kuwait from the perspective of teachers. The study found average levels of behavioral problems.

The high score of school behavioral problems can be attributed to several reasons, which can be interpreted according to the behavioral perspective, which views behavioral problems (behavioral disorders) as learned behaviors acquired by individuals from the environment in which they live. It considers that humans are products of their environment, including various stimuli and responses. These behaviors are related to various aspects of their social, psychological, and

biological lives, among others, and become part of their psychological entity. When individuals learn incorrect and deviant behaviors, they acquire them from their social environment through reinforcement, modeling, and the shaping and sequencing of inappropriate behaviors **(Al-Azza Said, 2002: 43)**.

Therefore, behaviorists agree on the importance of environmental conditions surrounding the learner and consider them a crucial factor in learning. They rely heavily on the role of the teacher in organizing the classroom and creating an environment that facilitates learning **(Radi Al-Waqfi, 2012, p. 229)**.

(Hamadah Wahdan 1991) emphasizes that it is important to note that children's problems primarily stem from unfavorable environmental conditions in which the child lives, as genetics play a limited role in creating these problems. These environmental conditions may be related to the family, school, or the community in which the child resides.

This is also confirmed by **(Eugenie Madanat 1992)**, as the cause of behavioral problems can be the teachers themselves, their teaching methods, mismatched goals with the learners' needs, lack of specific objectives, haphazard planning, ineffective presentation, insufficient teaching materials, inappropriate assessment, or inadequate feedback. All of these factors contribute to creating and exacerbating students' behavioral problems.

Schools often neglect to nurture the students' mental, psychological, and social characteristics, disregarding individual differences in preparedness, abilities, inclinations, and orientations. They fail to consider the changes in their psychological development at each growth stage. During these periods, some students may experience psychological problems and changes that lead to anxiety and depression. Some students also exhibit shyness or fear of confrontation or suffer from psychological disorders due to family problems or personal issues **(Salim Ouda, 1996: 26)**.

In our current reality, we observe that these negative behaviors are further reinforced due to a lack of intervention, both from parents and educators, and the community, which no longer

intervenes to modify students' behaviors. This exacerbates and spreads these behaviors in a way that troubles everyone.

To answer the second question, which is stated as follows:

What is the ranking of the following behavioral problems (system problems, relationship problems, property problems, academic problems, theft, lying, aggression) according to their prevalence in primary schools in the province of Laghouat? The percentage ratios of the problem grades were calculated based on the seven dimensions of behavioral problems. The order is as follows:

- System-related problems within the classroom (19.05%)
- Academic problems (16.22%)
- Lying problem (14.90%)
- Aggression problem (15.12%)
- Property preservation problems (13.09%)
- Relationship problems with peers (11.47%)
- Theft problem (10.15%)

Hence, we find that system-related problems within the classroom ranked first in terms of prevalence among primary school students.

This result is consistent with a study conducted by (Al-Barghouthi, 2001) in Jordan, which aimed to identify the reasons for student discipline problems within the classroom. The study found a correlation between academic achievement and discipline, as higher academic performance was associated with higher discipline chances. It also aligns with a study (Al-Khalifi, 1994) conducted in Qatar aimed to identify behavioral problems among elementary school children. The study concluded that behavioral problems increase with academic progression and age, showing that academically delayed students have more behavioral problems than academically advanced students. Additionally, it is consistent with a study by (Al-Maraziq 2004), which aimed to identify behavioral problems among eighth-, ninth, and tenth-grade students in a sample of 582 students. The results indicated that academic problems ranked first.

The system-related problems within the classroom rank highest in percentage, and this result is

confirmed by many studies. In a study conducted by (Abu Shihab, 1985), the results showed that there were significant behavioral problems among students, including the inability to concentrate for long periods during explanations, turning around and talking to classmates, excessive movement, saying things that provoke the teacher's anger, and damaging personal belongings such as notebooks, books, and pens. The student's preoccupation with negative behaviors signifies a lack of focus on the lesson, leading to a gradual decline in academic achievement, eventually placing the student in the category of academically delayed students. This finding is also affirmed by a study conducted by (Al-Barghouthi, 2001), which found a correlation between academic achievement and discipline. The study indicated that the higher the student's discipline within the classroom, the higher their academic achievement. Discipline implies focusing and paying attention to the lesson and everything related to it.

13- Conclusion:

The study results can be summarized as follows:

- The overall mean of school behavioral problems among primary school students in Laghouat is high based on the results of the behavioral problems scale adopted in this study.
- System-related problems within the classroom are the most prevalent among the following behavioral problems (system problems, relationship problems, property problems, academic problems, theft, lying, aggression) among primary school students in Laghouat.

Based on the high level of behavioral problems, especially those related to the system within the classroom, it is recommended to propose some recommendations, including:

- Intensifying counseling sessions for students at all levels by school counselors.
- Parents should focus on their children's proper upbringing and education, accompany and monitor them during their studies, and provide a suitable environment, whether at home or school. A positive environment free from negative

stimuli significantly builds a healthy personality.

- Educators should understand how to interact with students, considering their age stage and being aware of proper teaching methods. Continuous training related to their profession is necessary to enable them to behave well and deal effectively with behavioral problems within the classroom.
- School administration should be aware of and concerned about the behavioral aspect of students within the school and the classroom through follow-up and coordination with parents and educators to adequately address cases with behavioral problems.
- It is necessary to have specialists in school psychology in primary schools to closely monitor behavioral problems, diagnose them, and provide appropriate treatment methods in collaboration with parents and educators.
- Organizing meetings, seminars, and study days on behavioral problems in the school environment, led by specialized university professors in psychology, in coordination with the education sector.

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