**WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, CAN BEHAVIOUR SPECIFIC PRAISE HAVE ON THE CLASSROOM CLIMATE WITHIN A SECONDARY CLASSROOM?**

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**Background**

Classroom management is the foundation for successful teaching with teachers having to ensure that learners are engaged in learning, build positive relationships with learners, and effectively manage disruptive behaviours. Secondary teachers can find it more difficult to develop positive relationships with learners than their primary colleagues to the high number of learners they teach for a limited period of time (Riley, 2009). Learners have faced unprecedented challenges over the last few years due to the disruption which COVID-19 has had on learners’ attainment and development of their social skills (Education Endowment Foundation, 2022). For learners to recover from this, teachers must develop positive relationships with learners which support their emotional, mental, and social needs within safe environments (The British Psychological Society, 2021). As disruptive behaviour within schools has long provided a challenge for teachers, literature has identified praise as a strategy which can improve learner-teacher relationships providing a safe environment for all learners (Gable et al, 2009). Behaviour specific praise (BSP) is a simple classroom strategy which supports appropriate classroom behaviours by identifying effort and engagement which can increase academic and social experiences (Simonsen et al, 2008). However, this strategy is not utilised within secondary classrooms (Floress et al, 2015).

**Aim**

The aim of this enquiry was to evaluate the impact, if any of BSP on the classroom climate within a secondary classroom in a deprived area of Glasgow.

**Method**

This enquiry was formed using a mixed-method approach. The intervention took place within two inclusive S3 Administration and IT classes with twelve girls and eight boys between 14 and 15 years old. The author used an online questionnaire (Microsoft Form), focus groups and a critically reflective teacher practice journal to gather both learner and teacher perceptions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of the intervention within secondary classrooms.

**Results**

The results highlighted various perceptions on the impact of BSP within the secondary classroom as well as identifying potential improvements to the strategy. The results of this enquiry suggest that the use of BSP within a secondary classroom resulted in more learners gaining more positive attention and praise from their teacher than they would have previously received resulting in a more positive and supportive classroom atmosphere. The author noted within the teacher journal that there was less low-level disruptive behaviour within the classroom with limited time being wasted addressing these incidents which allowed for a quick and effective method of keeping learners on-task. The strategy positively impacted on the teacher-learner relationship however unlike within the literature did not significantly impact on peer relationships within the classroom. The intervention alone was not enough to change learners’ attitude towards their work. Discussions within the focus groups and comments made within the online questionnaires indicate that to impact upon all learners’ attitudes towards classwork the strategy would need to be adapted and provide feedback on their work. Learners identified that the strategy without any alterations would be age appropriate to be introduced into Broad General Education (BGE) classes but would need adapted as learners transition into Senior Phase (SP) using feedback on classwork instead of behaviour.

**Conclusions**

The use of praise has been advocated in literature and educational policy. This enquiry analysed the impact in which BSP had within two secondary classrooms using both learner and teacher perceptions. It highlighted the positive impact in which BSP can have within BGE classrooms and identified adaptions and improvements which could be made to the strategy which could make it age appropriate to be used within SP classes.

**Recommendations**

The impact of praise within secondary schools is still relatively unknown and there is a significant gap in research. Further research should be carried out with the strategy implemented into different curriculum classes and year groups over more significant timeframes which would allow for a greater collection of learner and teacher perceptions which could validate the findings of the enquiry and substantiate the changes expressed by learners. Further training should be given to all secondary teachers to support the implementation of this into their classrooms and allow opportunities for sharing good practice.