



RESEARCH PAPER

Overcrowded Classroom Management Strategies used by Teachers and their Challenges at Primary School Level in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the strategies that primary school teachers implement in overcrowded classroom to sustain student's behavior. Eighteen primary school teachers of Lahore participated as study's sample. The research design was interpretivism where participants views were collected through interviews. The participants were selected through purposive sampling technique and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview design and questions were self-made using literature reviews and expert reviews as framework for interview question themes. The findings of the study suggested various aspects of management, infrastructure, pedagogical challenges and policy are prevalent within the problem of overcrowdedness in Pakistani context. The study implies that at policy level school education department needs to survey individual conditions related to infrastructure, staff shortage, school building, location and size. Alongwith this school governance models need to improve for improving classroom conditions for teachers and students alike.

Introduction

Growing global society's acknowledgment of limited and confined opportunities for learning is a breach of basic human rights, and it serves as a justification for the network's prohibition from important association in its economic, political, and social life (Cavallaro & Brewer, 2008). One of the world's key educational goals in 2015 is to give basic education to all people.

Students achieve better when the teacher can always provide balanced instruction and attention. When the size of the class expands, it becomes difficult for the teacher to perform successfully and to properly comprehend the students' needs. As a result, a great deal of time is spent on dealing with disputes management and behavioral issues. Despite the expertise, even the finest instructors find it challenging to manage an overcrowded classroom.

Unfortunately, having a big number of kids in class has become the new norm especially in developing countries at lower levels of education. This issue has not been adequately addressed, but schools and teachers must devise realistic strategies for making the best of a terrible situation.

"Overcrowded classroom as the research conducted in Pakistan demonstrated that teaching was not sustainable and practicable in overcrowded classrooms, most instructors were presented with several challenges such as arranging, commanding, discipline, and assessment," (Khan & Iqbal ,2012).

Overcrowded classrooms (OCC) have consequences for the achievement of instructional goals, according to a study conducted in Africa by Ijaiya (1999). OCC has an impact on student and teacher relationships, as well as the proficiency and volume of teaching and learning. Unfortunately, OCC are also a part of Pakistan's tutoring, and they will continue to be an essential component soon.

Overcrowding was a problem in Pakistani schools around the country due to the high population density of the city. Students in one session ranged in age from 60 to 100. As a result, it's difficult to analyse how compelling it is to instruct and ensure that the learning process continues behind one teacher's back. Each student is distinctive in comparison to others and requires special treatment from his or her teacher. Students have a variety of demands at different levels, so there is more than one teacher beneath them. Instructors in overcrowded study halls are unable to comprehend students' needs and provide suitable instruction. Because teachers are unprepared to manage adequate variety, it may become increasingly difficult for a teacher to adapt to it in an overburdened classroom. Thus, this study was aimed to provide information to teachers and organizations on a variety of overcrowding classroom management issues and solutions.

Literature Review

The literature review sets the stage for the research problem and studies on teachers who work in overcrowded classrooms and the challenges they face.

The purpose of Classroom Management, according to Dreikurs, Grunwald & Pepper (1998), is to consider and meet the developmental requirements of students. This goal can be met by providing a pleasant learning environment, engaging visuals, soothing sounds, and adequate ventilation. According to Feldman (1998), a classroom is a place where pupils feel at ease and comfortable. The classroom's surroundings should be tidy and clean. There should be mutual respect and a non-threatening environment. Classroom management that is built on engaging methods is created by effective teachers.

The Classroom Organization and Management System (Oliver, Wehby, et al. 2011) is an example of a standardized classroom management system. COMP stands for "creating effective learning environments" and is a professional development sequence. The following are the primary components of COMP (Oliver, Wehby, et al. 2011):

- (1) Sorting out the classroom

- (2) Planning and instructing principles and methods
- (3) Managing understudy work and improving understudy responsibility
- (4) Maintaining excellent behavior among understudies
- (5) Timing and structure
- (6) Getting your bearings and maintaining your energy

A significant body of research also indicates how classroom organization and behavioral executive's abilities interact to influence instructors' decision to pursue teaching careers (Ingersoll and Smith 2003). Instructors frequently express concern about a lack of effective plans to deal with understudy behavior that is particularly problematic (Browsers & Tomic, 2000). Teachers who struggle with classroom discipline and behavior control are typically unproductive in the classroom, and they frequently report high levels of stress and burnout symptoms (Oliver and Reschly 2007).

Classroom management serves two goals, according to Doyle (1986). The initial goal of classroom management is to create a peaceful and tranquil environment in the classroom so that students can engage in meaningful learning. The second goal is that classroom management contributes to the social and moral growth of students, i.e., it aims to develop students academically as well as socially.

One of the main reasons why teachers are dissatisfied with their jobs is because of classroom behavior issues (Lewis, 2008). According to Friedman (2006), the main source of frustration for instructors is the inability to form adequate relationships with their students, which can lead to burnout. Some instructors depart because they believe they are unable to live up to the principles that drew them to the teaching profession in the first place.

"The effective use of time is a vital variable that aids in the achievement of learning objectives for the learner and makes the classroom experience delightful," says Joyce McLeod. To be used effectively, a top-notch planning framework must exist. Accessible, effective supplies and places where students may work alone, in groups, and with you abound in the classroom essentials.

There are a few key points to consider:

- Be adaptable enough that students can quickly and efficiently rearrange the furniture to force an exceptional activity
- Allow space for students to pass, store, and set up stuff
- Promote versatility and adaptation
- Provide the most extreme individual area for each student

Instructors should be mindful of the challenges that arise when many understudies are crammed into a single lesson. Many years of research on classroom thickness clearly reveals that overcrowding affects understudy and perform by

creating unhappiness and a scary vibe, as well as reducing consideration and attention (Weinstein 1979).

Different institutions recognize different definitions of overcrowded classrooms in different conditions. When describing the overcrowded classroom and its impact, it is critical to consider how various critics see the concept of an overcrowded classroom. Even though much has been written on overcrowding in the classroom, there are no universal definitions or "overcrowding" explanations. When the researcher was surveying the texts, she came across the term "big class," and later discovered that the terms "overcrowded schools" and "large classes" are interchangeable.

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2014), the teacher-to-student ratio in South Africa must be increased; they discovered a 30.4:1 ratio. According to DBE (2014), when the teacher-student ratio is too high, this can cause overcrowding in study rooms.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) defines an overcrowded classroom as one in which the number of understudies exceeds the capacity of the classroom. Significant classes, according to Buchanan & Rogers (1990), include those with at least 80 understudies.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) defines an overcrowded classroom as one in which the number of understudies exceeds the capacity of the classroom. Significant classes, according to Buchanan and Rogers (1990), include those with at least 80 understudies. In addition, Hussain, Ahmad, and Hakim (2017) defined an overcrowded classroom as one with 30 or more students. According to Ready et al. (2004), NCES considers schools with a capacity of 6 percent to 25% above capacity to be overcrowded in the United States. At the same hand, Enerson (1997) recognizes that having 100 or more students in a class can be considered overcrowding.

According to Matus (1999), OCC is a classroom with many kids that are socially and economically different from one another and have unique needs. Varied countries have different definitions and descriptions of OCC. Overcrowded classrooms, according to the United States of America's International Development, are those with more than 40 students per class. Overcrowded classrooms are defined by one of the research done in Pakistan as an issue that happens when teachers and students learning may have been hampered owing to the huge number of pupils per class, resulting in both teachers and students being strained. Overcrowded classrooms, according to the New York Independent Budget Office (2010), are those that have 2.5 percent of their enrolment potential exceeded.

Overcrowding has, unfortunately, piqued the interest of experts and decision-makers in the last two decades. Most trainers and learners deal with this issue on a regular basis and are affected by it. It is characterized as a school with a greater student enrolment rate than its available accommodation.

The NCES reduced the interpretation for overcrowding in 1999 by using the formula below:

$X = (\text{capacity and space for permanent training buildings}) / (\text{total student enrollment}) - (\text{capacity of permanent instructional buildings and space})$ (Parsad, Lewis et al. 2001)

The algorithm above can be used to calculate percentage overcrowding. "When the ratio was greater than 5% and positive, the enrollment exceeded the capacity of the building, and the school was termed overcrowded (or over-enrolled)" (Parsad, Lewis et al. 2001).

Blake (1954 in Sitkei:1968) found 35 investigations that supported small classes, 18 investigations that were agreeable to enormous classes, and 32 investigations that were unsure in demonstrating the overall points of interest of either little or huge classes in his review of a selected number of class size investigations in basic and auxiliary schools. A percentage of 5 to 1 was discovered for small courses when Blake conducted a further analysis using increasingly rigorous standards for consideration. In this way, 16 (72%) of the 22 investigations supported small classes, 3 (14%) supported gigantic classes, and 3 (14%) were viewed as ambiguous.

According to a similar report by Gideon (2014), class sizes in many schools in Kenya are abnormally large, with classes of up to 200 students, and that excellent teaching and learning are likely to be hampered. In Senegal, normal class sizes are between 50 and 60 students per classroom, with understudies crammed together, making classrooms unattainable for those students with orthopedic imparities, and overburdened. And overcrowding has a negative impact on both teachers and researchers, as instructors are unable to teach and researchers are unable to understand what the guides are truly saying.

Material and Methods

The major aim of this study was to investigate the strategies, issues, and challenges experienced by teachers to keep students' behavior in overcrowded classrooms under control. Overcrowding is the most serious problem in today's classroom for both teachers and students. Another area of attention was to investigate the causes of this problem, as well as the obstacles that a teacher faces in a crowded classroom when it comes to student academics. The study was qualitative in nature and the researcher used the subjective methodology, this methodology, according to Berg (2011), is typically used to investigate frames of mind and views on specific situations. Teachers were also able to openly share their thoughts and feelings regarding teaching at OCC using this method. Data was collected through interpretive paradigm using interview questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted. A total of 18 teachers of primary school from different school in Lahore were approached through purposive sampling technique and explicit consent to participate in the study.

Data Collection Tool

The researcher used questionnaire as interview guide to take interviews from the participants which includes first section as demographic variables and the second section includes interview questions. The researcher developed the questionnaire and interview guide for primary teachers using literature review as framework and

expert opinion for review of the tool. There were seven main questions and 28 sub questions to explore the strategies which teachers follow to teach overcrowded classrooms.

Data Analysis

The information was gathered from both male and female primary school instructors from a variety of Lahore schools. All the study's participants were questioned to gather demographic and personal information about their qualifications and experience year. The researcher herself took notes and documented the responses. The researcher evaluated the data by typing the interviews in the form of clear and detailed transcriptions of each participant to learn about the methods employed by teachers to maintain student behavior in overcrowded classrooms. The perspectives of primary teachers were also examined and themes were developed using Braun & Clark (2006) thematic analysis framework. Because the information was gathered through interviews, it was examined utilizing qualitative data approaches such as taking notes, coding, and extracting themes with NVIVO.

Findings and Discussion

The following section provided information on the demographics of primary teachers who participated in the this study and major themes emerged related to primary teachers experiences and challenges faced while dealing with overcrowded classrooms in Pakistani primary schools.

Table 1
Demographic information of interviewees

Participants	Gender	Experience	Education	Grade	Age
1	Female	4 years	MPhil. Applied Linguistics	4-5	35-50
2	Female	4 years		1	44
3	Female	6 years	MPhil	3	50-100
4	Female	2 years	B.Ed.	1-4	35- 40
5	Female	1 years	MPhil	4-5	50
6	Female	10 months	MS Applied Linguistics	1-3	35
7	Male	1 year	BS Mathematics	Nursery	45
8	Female	5 years	B.Ed. hons	5	30
9	Female	2 years	MA English	3	40
10	Female	1 year	MSc	3	45
11	Female	2 years	MSc chemistry	4	40 - 50
12	Female	3 years	MS Linguistics	1- 4	30
13	Female	7 years	MPhil education	1	77
14	Female	1.5 years	Master's in Education	PG	32- 35

15	Male	5 years	MS, M.Ed.	Primary	30-70
16	Female	2 years	B.Ed. Hons	1	43
17	Female	3 years	MPhil Education	3	35 - 40
18	Female	1 year	B.Ed. Hons	4 -5	40 - 50

Teachers' responses on managing students' behavior in overcrowded classroom were collected through semi-structured interviews. The following table provides a summary of question themes and participants views.

Table 2
Interview themes and subthemes emerged from qualitative data

Themes of interview questions	Sub-Themes emerged from participant data
Theme One: Teachers perspective on Classroom management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom management style • Definition of classroom management • Discipline philosophy • Importance of effective management
Theme Two: Teachers' perspective on Overcrowded Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of Overcrowded Classroom • Reasons of Overcrowded Classroom • Teachers' experience
Theme Three: Challenges and strategies to deal with overcrowdedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of classroom management • Perspective on disrespectful behavior • Perspective on motivation • Perspective on individual differences • Challenges of overcrowded classroom • Importance of assessment and feedback • Student- Teacher relationship • Most severe discipline or behavior issue • Teachers teaching and overcrowded classroom • View's regarding timing
Themes Four: Reasons of overcrowded classrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School management • Insufficient classroom size • School administrations lack of attention • Education as a business and no quality • Over population • Lack of facilities • Lack of staff
Theme Five: Suggestions to improve Overcrowded Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations by primary school teachers

Data analysis and findings

The data was analysed using Braun & Clark (2006) thematic analysis framework using six phases. The following five major themes appeared from primary teachers interviews when asked about the classroom management issues and challenge faced by the teachers while dealing with overcrowded classrooms.

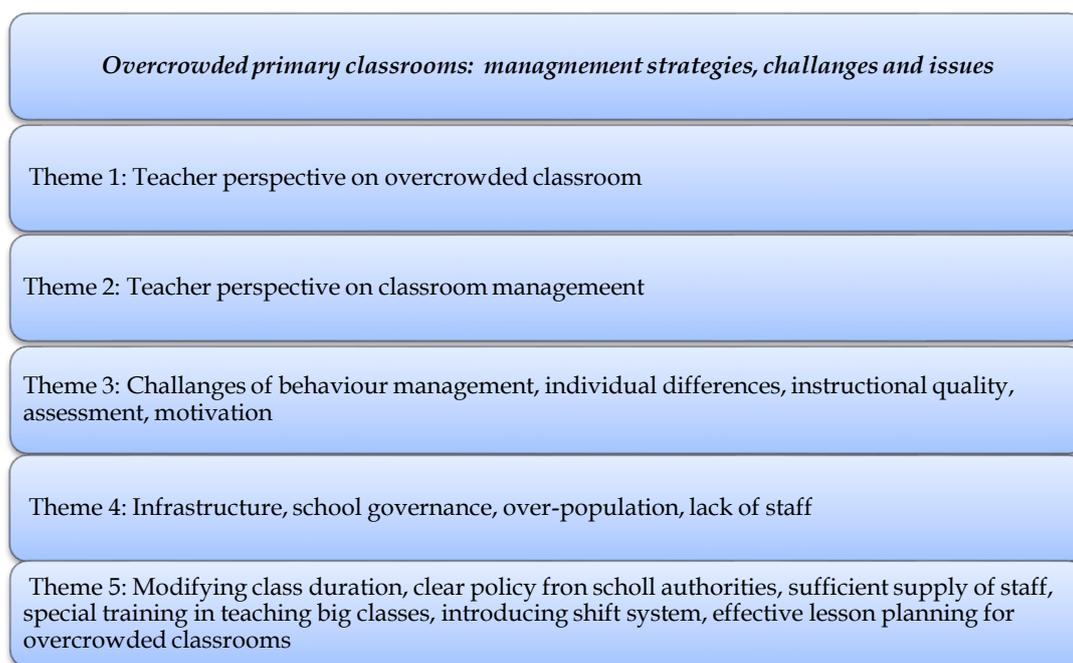


Figure 1: Major themes of overcrowded classroom management strategies, issues and challenges of primary teachers

The excerpts from primary teachers interviews are presented in detail in below section .

Theme 1 & 2: Teachers’ perspective of classroom management and overcrowded classroom

The theme teacher’s perspective on classroom management represents the various perspectives of teachers on classroom management and conception of overcrowdedness. The particular theme consist of one main theme and three sub-themes i.e. classroom management, definition of classroom management and discipline philosophy. Sometime teachers teaching may also affect as she can’t teach well in large classes. One of the interviewee states that classroom management is vast term but planning is the core of classroom management. She said that there is a direct relationship among the effective learning and the effective planning. According to her if the teacher plan his/her task before the classroom then the minor issues of the classroom can be resolved easily.

“Classroom management according to my perspective is a very broad term which include all the things like how a teacher have to manage his/her instruction in classroom and what he/she have to do before entering into the classroom like his/her lesson planning, how much prepared is he from home, it all starts with the teachers home, all these things are included in make classroom management effective. In addition, there are many other things like how a teacher have to teach in the classroom, how to managing the classroom, how to manage the time, as he have to taught the kids as well with managing discipline or a teacher have to cater with the uncertain situations and all this depend upon the planning so I can say that planning is the other name of classroom management. (R 17)”

One of the Interviewee define that overcrowded classroom are those classrooms where there are less resources to accomplish the requirement of the class, therefore, such classrooms may not be handled by a single teacher and create problems for the teacher in managing and teaching. The response of participant is given below:

“As the term itself suggests a classroom with a strength that cannot be handled by one person for a particular time period. It is also where the resources are insufficient to fulfill the learning requirements of the strength (R3).”

Another teacher said that according to her a congested classroom is seems as an overcrowded classroom as when the class size is not enough and students are unable to sit properly this make it difficult for a teacher to teach.

“I take overcrowded classroom as the class where there is a one teacher to deal with the students and there is a large number of students in the class and the class size is very small and it becomes congested. This is how I perceive the overcrowded classroom (R4).”

In one of the research conducted by Marzano, The effectiveness of teaching and learning can't occur in an inadequately managed classroom. On the off chance that students are scattered and ill bred, and no evident guidelines and strategies control behavior, disarray turns into the standard. In these circumstances, the both teachers and students endure (Robert J. Marzano, Jana S. Marzano and Debra J. Pickering, 2003).

Theme 3:: Teachers’ perspective about challenges and strategies of overcrowded classrooms

The theme challenges represent the various challenges that teachers’ face and various situations that teachers ‘experienced in an overcrowded classroom at primary level. Teachers said that in managing classroom control the noise of the students is very much difficult and uncontrollable. Therefore, it is the major hurdle for the teacher to teach and it creates a panic situation for the teachers.

“The biggest issue in such classrooms that teachers’ usually face is noise level. Such classrooms are very noisy and teacher couldn’t teach properly because not everyone is able to hear the teacher. Other challenges can be manageable but for me this is very much serious issue (R2).”

“In managing classroom the biggest challenge is to gain students’ attention and make them attentive, because in such classroom the situation is very troubling you silence one group of students’ in class and other start talking, sometimes when the number of students exceeded in the classrooms there is a space problem that don’t allow teachers to even move among the students in the class properly or have a look on the backbenchers. You cannot maintain proper check and balance on him. Much time is waste in maintaining discipline (R8).”

One interviewee believes that in such classroom a teacher forgets all of his knowledge and training because in practical life a teacher has to face many different challenges.

“Yes, it impacts a lot. To be honest in such classroom by the time you start forgetting all the teachers training and the things you have learn. You got confused in such classrooms as you never hear about that situation and didn’t read any enough information about that. The whole training ends outside the classroom. Whatever you have read, you can’t bring it to your class, in practice you can’t work with it. Then at the spot you take decisions regarding the situation (R12).”

Teachers shared their experiences regarding management strategy regarding behavior issues. They share their experience and state that on primary level kids were very innocent you can mold them according to you by giving some praises and rewards, by setting rules of the classroom hence they stop doing undisciplined activities.

“I’ll offer my student’s different praises as kids are very fond of it they love to get any praise from their teacher so they all settle down and start doing their work to get the praise. I change my strategies according to the situation or you can say according to the nature of the discipline problem (R1).”

“For maintaining discipline in my class what I did I already set some rules of my class if a student spread or throw garbage in the classroom then it’s the rule that he has to pick it up by their self. No one can help him. Si it helps me a lot because students think that if I spread the stench in in the classroom, I will have to clean otherwise teacher will not forgive me. At primary level students are very innocent they follow the rules and they have fear to get shattered in front of their teachers. So it can be managed (R4).”

To maintain kids' behavior in overcrowded classrooms, most respondents used a variety of educational methods and strategies, and they used varied solutions depending on the situation.

1. Most respondents agree that poor management has an impact on students' performance or learning.
2. Most respondents believe that in overcrowded classrooms, effective management approaches and strategies cannot be employed effectively, and so no learning can take place.
3. Dealing with uninterested children, maintaining discipline, inspiring students, dealing with individual differences, and managing time are all issues for many primary instructors when it comes to managing pupils in an overcrowded classroom.
4. Nearly half of the respondents believe that class size has a significant impact on students' learning.

Theme 4: Teachers’ perspective about reasons behind overcrowded classrooms

Most of the teachers clearly mentioned that rather population the biggest reason behind overcrowded classrooms is the fault of the school administration in private school and in government schools it is the fault of government. Interviewees share their experiences with such classrooms with hesitation. Most of the teachers

clearly state that it was very much difficult for them to deal with each and every students in an overcrowded classroom. At first they take it very difficult but with the passage of time when it became normal for them as it was added in their daily routine but this routine make them hectic, depressed and cause high blood pressure as well. Rather than explicitly saying things they took the recommendation section to state their point of view. It seemed they were afraid to openly evaluate and criticque the officials, school governance bodies. An overcrowded classroom it is very strenuous for the teachers to do so.

“It is very challenging for me as children are very careless and they didn’t pay attention to their studies at all because they do not want to study. The first thing is to motivate the students and this is very much difficult because no one is willing to study and making sure that every student in a class is getting motivated is impossible in overcrowded classroom. As I know kids of primary level love to hear the story so I try to motivate them by telling the stories, deliver the lecture in a story way so the students listen carefully but this strategy didn’t work so..... (R4).”

Theme 5: Teachers’ perspective about suggestions to improve the situation of overcrowded classrooms

The participants suggest some strategies to cope with the issue of overcrowded classrooms here are some direct quotes from their suggestions

The suggestions are given below:

“I would recommend that in such school time should have to be exceeded so the teachers can perform well and effectively (R1).”

“Provide teachers training to deal with such classrooms (R3).”

“Admit the students in the school according to your facilities so you can facilitate the students accordingly (R6).”

“Improve the infrastructure of the school (R2).”

“As they are studying in the school by giving fee’s they are not there on the name of Allah so you’re treating them like that as fill the class with the students likes the hens in their box. In such classroom no learning will happens. Give as much effective environment to your students it won’t reliable (R7).”

If you have a helper teacher with you then it would be easy to tackle with such classrooms (R18).”

“Teachers training should be mandatory when they get the job as when I was appointed no training was given by the government. In my teaching course we taught to handle only 20 to 25 students in a class and all the stories that we learned are for 20 to 25 students. I don’t even think in my imagination about the 77 or 80 students per class moreover the students of primary class who don’t have a single issue they have hundred problems. So, I would recommend there must be a teacher training program before their induction (R14).”

“There must be a policy regarding more space in such classroom or school management has to make sections of it. Or another thing is this if the space issue is not being compensated then

makes the shifts in the school the morning and evening one. It will help the kids a lot. It has two benefits as one is the this the students can be split in two shifts make classrooms more spacious and other benefit of this is that the students who live in the slung and did their job in the morning that is why cannot go to the school this will allow those students to study. Government should have to take this issue seriously (R11)."

"There must be policies who met the standard of 25 to 30 students per class, because, more than 30 students in class create problems for the teachers (R13)."

Conclusion

Although it is difficult for primary school instructors to cope with such classrooms and maintain student conduct, the research indicated that they did their hardest to manage them using a range of strategies. Some of the respondents stated that rather than snubbing and insulting their students in front of the class, they motivate their students by giving them examples, or by rewarding them, and they try their hardest to engage the students in the class by grabbing their attention on the lesson, which was consistent with one of the literatures stating that making content relevant to real life can increase student motivation (Palmer 2007).

Many questions were asked of the participants about how to manage overcrowded classrooms and the challenges they experience in them. The study found that primary school teachers in overcrowded classrooms faced a variety of management challenges, including time management, maintaining discipline, dealing with individual differences, motivating students, bunking, and lesson planning, among others, which was consistent with some of the literature pointing to issues such as workplace stress (Holmes, 2003), workload, time management, classroom management, content and curriculum knowledge (Jarvis & Algozzine, 2006). (Kellough, 2005).

In response to a question concerning their understanding of overcrowded classrooms, each participant provides their own definition. "A classroom is overcrowded when there are more students than its space," claimed most of the teachers. Other participants provide the number to comprehend the overcrowding in the classroom. "When there are more than 30 children in a classroom, it is overcrowded," they feel. According to Hussain, Ahmad, and Hakim (2017), an overcrowded classroom is one in which 30 or more pupils are enrolled. According to Ready et al. (2004), NCES considers schools with a capacity of 6 percent to 25% above capacity to be overcrowded in the United States.

Some elementary teachers in overcrowded classrooms have stated that in order to preserve discipline, they build pleasant or friendly relationships with their kids, which prevent them from misbehaving. They just motivate and push their students to stop misbehaving and begin focusing on their studies. The sad reality in Pakistan is that professors do not pay attention to their students. They attempt to grasp kids in their hands and appear strict, as if the students are locked in their seats.

Overcrowding in classrooms can be caused by a variety of factors, including overcrowding, poverty, school administration, and so on. According to the findings, the biggest flaw is in the school administration. Most of the participants stated that school administration, in their opinion, is ineffective.

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