Learners' Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers' Classroom Management Practices

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Abstract: Studies conducted on learners rarely focus their investigations on learner perceptions of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices. In response to the changing school environments, this study investigated learners' perceptions of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices. A survey design was adopted in which 550 grade 11 secondary school learners from eleven secondary schools in the Copperbelt Province in Zambia formed the sample. A Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect data which was analysed using SPSS and also through an iterative process. The study revealed that learners positively perceived pre-service teachers' classroom management practices. This is indicated by pre-service teachers' interest in learners' welfare, possessing good personal qualities, ability to handle learners' disruptive behaviours, ability to teach effectively, and ability to assess learners effectively. Using an independent samples t-test, it was concluded that there were no statistically significant gender differences in learners' perceptions of pre-service teachers' classroom management. Regardless of which institution pre-service teachers came from, learners had a positive impression of pre-service teachers in terms of learner discipline (60%), assessment of learners (66.3%), learner and pre-service-teacher relationship (64.7%), pre-service teachers' ability to teach (54%), interest in learner welfare (58.5%), pre-service teachers' personal characteristics (82.6%) and acceptance of pre-service teacher (46.9%).

Keywords: *Classroom management, perceptions, pre-service, teaching practice.*

Introduction

Despite the growing importance of effective classroom management practices in the context of changing school environments, there exists a significant gap in the literature regarding learner perceptions of pre-service teachers and their classroom management practices. While studies on teaching and learning are prevalent, limited attention has been directed towards exploring the perspectives of learners on pre-service teachers. Thus, the problem addressed through this study is failure to have firsthand information about classroom management practices of pre-service teachers from the learners. Instead of working with assumptions the learners are better placed to offer their views about pre-service teachers. It is true that teacher training institutions receive feedback from school administrators (Head-teachers and Heads of Departments) on various aspects of the pre-service teachers' stay in schools during school teaching practice (STP). However, learners rarely have, if any, such an opportunity to give their opinions on pre-service teachers' classroom management practices. This is despite learners being stakeholders of the STP activity. While school administrators can observe and monitor the pre-service teachers in different contexts occasionally, the learners have lived experiences with the pre-service teachers on a daily basis.

Classroom management is a skill acquired during teacher training. It refers to all those decisions teachers make to facilitate the learning process to provide learners with the maximum opportunity to learn (Krause et al., 2003). It is an essential technique that a lack of it awakens novice and experienced teachers alike to become dissatisfied with their

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teaching and inefficiency in maintaining learner discipline in their classes (Obi & Ezemba, 2019; Rancifer, 1993). Its absence is one of the leading causes of stress, job dissatisfaction and teacher attrition (Chang, 2009; Hoy & Weinstein, 2006; Walker, 2009).

Kwok (2019) states that one of the key competencies for teachers is classroom management. Classroom Management is defined as the activities to be completed in the classroom (Abdulrahman & Kara, 2022). Classroom management denotes procedures and routine actions used by teachers to maintain the classroom quiet and smooth (Magableh & Hawamdeh, 2007). Effective classroom management increases learners' participation in the lesson and motivates them to stay focused on class activities to prevent discipline problems, enhance instructional and learning time, and positively influence learners' social, physical and academic achievement (Wang et al., 1993). When learners disrupt the teaching and learning process due to perceived teachers' inability to create a conducive learning environment, problems may arise. Some factors that contribute to this disruption are learner indiscipline, poor assessment of learners, learners' failure to accept a teacher, poor teacher's personal qualities, poor interpersonal interactions, teachers' inability to manage time, ambiguous instructional methods and failure to deliver the content to the level of the learners (Ngwokabuenui, 2015; Onyinyechi & Wichendu, 2021). Classroom conflicts resulting from these factors have the potential to elude educational quality.

Therefore, teachers are critical in providing quality education (Marzano et al., 2003) and are responsible for ensuring that they realise quality teaching and learning environments (Hattie, 2009). Darling-Hammond (2000) and Fullan (2007) assert that there is a demand for teachers of high quality and one of the characteristics that define a quality teacher is effective teaching (Bakx et al., 2015). Teaching and learning flourish in environments that are well-organised and managed (Marzano et al., 2003), where learners feel safe and secure. When effectively utilized by teachers, classroom management has the potential to make a teacher realise the learners' needs and propel them to higher levels of academic performance because the two are positively correlated. A teacher with excellent classroom management abilities promotes positive and cordial teacher-learner interactions (Brophy, 2006).

Studies have indicated that learners' perceptions of their teachers' classroom management practices is associated with motivation, social processes and achievement (Bong, 2005; Huges et al., 2008; Lau & Nie, 2008; Patrick et al., 2007). In fact, effective class management is the bedrock upon which pro-social and cooperative behaviours thrive, resulting in warm and supportive relationships and communities, ensuring preventative strategies that automatically reduce disruptive behaviours. A study of 907 learners from elementary and secondary schools in Slovenia revealed that secondary school teachers were more interested in achieving educational goals at the expense of forming suitable class climates. In contrast, teachers at elementary school level displayed evidence of quality classroom management (Kalin et al., 2017). In terms of managing learners' behaviour in the classroom, Fricke et al. (2012) found that elementary school learners described the preventive behaviour of their science teachers significantly more positively correlated than students from secondary school. These findings challenge secondary school pre-service teachers.

Teacher training institutions are mandated to teach pre-service teachers classroom management skills for them to appreciate models, techniques and strategies dealing with preventing disruptive learner behaviours (Davis, 1990). Classroom management is a competence that all stakeholders in education, including learners, are concerned about. Despite efforts that institutions have put in place to equip pre-service teachers with classroom management competence. Adams et al. (2022) indicate that most pre-service teachers struggle with this competence, especially during their teaching practice and has led to learners protesting against some pre-service teachers who display an inability to manage the classroom environment. Learners' perceptions concerning what goes on in the class with pre-service teachers need due attention as a way of promoting a conducive learning environment. Although learners are central participants in classroom interactions, few studies consider learner perceptions of their pre-service teachers' classroom management practices (Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). A relatively large amount of knowledge on good teaching and classroom management has often been provided by researchers and policy-makers to the exclusion of learners (Bakx et al., 2015). Telli et al. (2008) agree that learner perceptions of good teaching and classroom management practices would provide interesting perspectives about the quality of pre-service teachers.

Learners' feedback on pre-service teachers is important both for the schools and teacher training institutions in that information obtained can be used to align the training of teachers according to the current needs of schools. The practice of how pre-service teachers deal with their classes in terms of discipline is an important area of concern because failure to implement effective management procedures may result into indiscipline. Therefore, this study investigated the perceptions of grade 11 secondary school learners from the Copperbelt Province in Zambia regarding the classroom management practices of pre-service teachers.

The following research questions and hypotheses were addressed:

1. How do learners come to know their pre-service teacher?

2. What are learners' perceptions of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices?

3. Are there statistically significant differences by gender in learners' perceptions of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices?

4. Do learners accept student teachers in their classrooms?

Hypotheses

1. H0: There is no statistically significant difference by gender in learners' perception of pre-service teachers' classroom control.

2. H1: There is a statistically significant difference by gender in learners' perception of pre-service teachers' classroom control.

Methodology

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey questionnaire was prepared and validated through a pilot study in one school before it was administered. After testing the instrument, permission to gather data was sought from the respective school administrators. In each school, a teacher was responsible for organizing the learners, distributing the questionnaires and collecting the filled-in questionnaires from the learners. Learners were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous.

Sample and Data Collection

A sample of 550 learners consisting of 222 (40.4%) males and 328 (59.6%) females from eleven secondary schools in six districts of the Copperbelt Province in Zambia informed the study. Sampled schools consisted of seven co-educational schools, one boys' school and three girls' schools as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Participants by School and Gender

Secondary school	Male f (%)	Female f (%)	Totals f (%)
School A	46 (8.4)	0(0)	46 (8.4)
School B	0 (0)	50(9.1)	50(9.1)
School C	22 (4.0)	27(4.9)	49(8.9)
School D	0 (0)	32(5.8)	32(5.8)
School E	15 (2.7)	12(2.2)	27(4.9)
School F	17 (3.1)	10(1.8)	27(4.9)
School G	49 (8.9)	44(8.0)	93(16.9)
School H	30 (5.5)	29(5.3)	59(10.7)
School I	17 (3.1)	38(6.9)	55(10.0)
School J	26 (4.7)	33(6.0)	59(10.7)
School K	0 (0)	53(9.6)	53(9.6)
Total	222(40.4)	328(59.6)	550(100.0)

The questionnaire comprised two sections. Section A was structured for participants' demographic descriptive data such as gender, school, level of education, and learners' first lesson with a pre-service teacher. Section B consisted of a five-point Likert scale and ranged from Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (DA), Neutral (N), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). The questionnaire items covered seven categories of learner discipline, assessment of learners, learner and pre-service teacher relationship, pre-service teachers' ability to teach, pre-service teachers' interest in learner welfare, pre-service teachers' personal characteristics and acceptance of a pre-service teacher.

Analyzing of Data

In preparation for data analysis, collected data was organised, coded, and entered in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 to generate frequencies and percentages. An iterative process, going back and forth between the data and sensitizing concepts, was applied in the analysis (Bowen, 2006). Characteristics were selected and connected to the seven pre-service teacher categories under study. For example, all characteristics referring to assessment of learners or pre-service teachers' personal characteristics were grouped. Further, gender differences in learners' perception of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices were determined using an independent t-test.

Findings

Regarding learners' identification of teachers, respondents were asked to answer statements about how they identified their teacher as a pre-service teacher using the following options: *through another teacher, worked it out, pre-service teacher told them, and I did not know*.

Table 2 provides learners' responses to the question.

Table 2. Learners' Identification of Student Teachers

How learners knew that the person teaching them was a pre-service teacher	Male		Female		Total	
	frequency	percent	frequency	percent	frequency	percent
Pre-service teacher told me	65	11.8	117	21.3	182	33.1
Another Teacher	80	14.5	97	17.6	177	32.2
Worked it out	57	10.4	105	19.1	162	29.5
I did not know	20	3.6	9	1.6	29	5.3
Totals	222	40.4	328	59.6	550	100.0

Results in Table 2 reveal that most pre-service teachers introduced themselves to the class they were assigned (33.1%). Thus, the current class teacher was not available to introduce the pre-service teacher that is assigned to their class. This number was not very different from participants who mentioned that the pre-service teacher was introduced to them by another teacher (32.2%). However, some participants didn't even know that they were being taught by a pre-service teacher. These results suggest that pre-service teachers introduce themselves to the class assigned to them or another teacher introduces them to the class.

Pre-service teachers' classroom management practices

Table 3 shows the distribution of percentages concerning learner perceptions of pre-service-teachers' classroom management practices.

Table 3. Learner Perceptions of Student-Teachers' Classroom Management (Discipline)

	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Did learner behaviour deteriorate when taught by pre-service teachers	196	35.6	134	24.4	101	18.4	63	11.5	56	10.2
Did learners get away with poor behaviour with pre-service teachers	149	27.1	151	27.5	98	17.8	86	15.6	66	12.0
Did pre-service teachers have good control of class	64	11.6	88	16.0	139	25.3	151	27.5	108	19.6

Generally, results indicate that most pre-service teachers had good class management practices. Specifically, Table 3 reveals that learner behaviour did not deteriorate when the class was taught by a pre-service teacher. As shown in the table, 60% of the learners indicated that the behaviour did not worsen and only 21.7% said it worsened. The results further show that pre-service teachers managed to handle the class management issues in class. This is confirmed by a high percentage (54.6%) of participants disagreeing to the statement that learners got away with poor behaviour in class when taught by pre-service teachers. As suggested by the results of the last statement in Table 3, pre-service teachers had good control of their classes.

Assessment of Learners

Participants were asked to provide their perception regarding pre-service teachers' assessment of learners. Table 4 below provides a summary of the results.

Table 4. Learners' Perception Regarding Pre-Service Teachers' Assessment of Learners.

Statements	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Pre-service teacher gave interesting and relevant homework	36	6.5	40	7.3	106	19.3	206	37.5	162	29.5
Pre-service teacher gave interesting and relevant classwork	31	5.6	38	6.9	117	21.3	215	39.1	149	27.1
Pre-service teacher were efficient in marking	34	6.2	42	7.6	109	19.8	191	34.7	174	31.6
Pre-service teacher marked fairly	32	5.8	28	5.1	70	12.7	187	34.0	233	42.4
Pre-service teacher gave high marks	190	34.5	144	26.2	121	22.0	55	10.0	40	7.3

Results from Table 4 reveal that pre-service teachers were effective in assessing learners during the time they taught them. For example, the table shows that pre-service teachers gave homework that was useful and relevant. This is confirmed by the high percentage of participants who agreed (67.0%) that pre-service teachers gave useful and relevant homework. Similarly, even the classwork pre-service teachers gave to their classes was perceived to be useful and relevant by the learners (66.2%).

Learners' Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers' Ability to Teach

Learners were asked to indicate their perceptions about pre-service teachers' ability to teach in terms of knowledge of subject content, learners' understanding of content, and whether learners would prefer to be taught by the pre-service teacher again. Table 5 below gives a summary of the results.

Table 5. Learners Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers' Ability to Teach

	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Student teacher knew subject content	44	8.0	51	9.3	151	27.5	164	29.8	140	25.5
Understood the subject well when taught by pre-service teacher	48	8.7	67	12.2	138	25.1	167	30.4	130	23.6
I would love to be taught by pre-service teacher again	106	19.3	87	15.8	95	17.3	143	26.0	119	21.6

Table 5 generally shows that pre-service teachers reflected the ability to teach. The learners had positive perceptions on pre-service teachers' ability to teach. As shown in the table, most learners (55.3%) had a perception that pre-service teachers knew the subject content. Similarly, 54.0% had a perception that they understood the subject well when taught by pre-service teachers. Since pre-service teachers had ability to teach well, learners expressed that they would be happy to be taught by a pre-service teacher again (47.6%).

Acceptance of Pre-Service Teachers

Respondents were also asked to indicate their perceptions regarding their acceptance of a pre-service teacher. The three items in this questionnaire were "the institution where the pre-service teacher comes from influencing my accepting him/her as my teacher, being comfortable to be taught by the pre-service teacher, always felt happy and in safe hands during lessons, and pre-service teacher was accepted by the whole class". Table 6 displays the distribution of responses.

Table 6. Learners' Acceptance of Pre-Service Teacher

	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The institution where the pre-service teacher comes from has an influence on my accepting him/her as my teacher	107	19.5	142	25.8	113	20.5	120	21.8	68	12.4
I am comfortable being taught by a pre-service teacher	64	11.6	92	16.7	136	24.7	152	27.6	106	19.3
I always felt happy and in safe hands during lessons taught by the pre-service teacher	67	12.2	84	15.3	150	27.3	144	26.2	105	19.1
The pre-service teacher in my class was accepted by the whole class	93	16.9	96	17.5	151	27.5	114	20.7	96	17.5

Generally, results in Table 6 reveal that pre-service teachers were accepted by learners. The learners also expressed that they would comfortable to be taught by pre-service teachers. Learners' acceptance of pre-service teachers did not depend on the institution the pre-service teachers came from (45.3%). However, 34.2% of the learners accepted pre-service teachers based on the institution they came from, suggesting that pre-service teachers from some institutions were not easily accepted by learners. Further, learners were comfortable (46.9%) and happy (45.9%) to be taught by pre-service teachers.

Pre-Service Teachers' Personal Characteristics

Concerning the pre-service teachers' personal characteristics of punctuality, smartness, and excellent behaviour in and out of class, respondents' distribution of responses by percentages are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Pre-Service Teachers' Personal Characteristics

	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Pre-service teacher punctual for lessons	27	4.9	36	6.5	82	14.9	190	34.5	215	39.1
Pre-service teacher always appeared smart	29	5.3	47	8.5	102	18.5	183	33.3	189	34.4
Pre-service teacher behaviour was excellent	41	7.5	42	7.6	152	27.6	181	32.9	134	24.4
Pre-service teacher outside class behaviour was excellent	60	10.9	57	10.4	193	35.1	161	29.3	79	14.4

Table 7 generally shows that the professional conduct of pre-service teachers was good. As shown in the table, 82.6% indicated that pre-service teachers were always punctual for class. However, 14.9% were neutral on the issue of pre-service teachers' punctuality for lessons. On whether pre-service teachers appeared smart each time they were in class 67.7% of the respondents saw them as being smart, while 13.8% of them disagreed that they were smart. On whether the behaviour of pre-service teachers in class was excellent, the table indicated that 15.1% of the respondents disagreed. In comparison, 57.3% of them agreed that their behaviour in class was excellent. However, with their behaviour outside the class 21.3% and 43.7% disagreed and agreed that they displayed excellent behaviour.

Pre-Service Teacher-Learner Relationship

Learners were asked to give their perception regarding their relationship with pre-service teachers. Table 8 below gives the questions that the learners were responding to and a summary of the Likert scale responses.

Table 8. Pre-Service Teacher-Learner Relationship

	strongly disagree		disagree		neutral		agree		strongly agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Relationship between pre-service teacher and class was excellent	52	9.5	74	13.5	169	30.7	151	27.5	104	18.9
Pre-service teacher favoured boys more than girls in class	274	49.8	127	23.1	110	20.0	21	3.8	18	3.3
Pre-service teacher favoured girls more than boys in class	249	45.3	108	19.6	129	23.5	29	5.3	35	6.4
Pre-service teacher treated boys and girls fairly in class	49	8.9	42	7.6	103	18.7	124	22.5	232	42.2

Table 8 shows that pre-service teachers had a positive pre-service teacher-pupil relationship. Most learners disagreed that pre-service teachers in their class favoured boys (64.9%) or girls (72.9%). Similarly, 64.7% of the learners said pre-service teachers treated all learners fairly.

Pre-Service Teachers' Interest in Learners' Welfare

The next category in the questionnaire focused on learners' perceptions of pre-service teachers' interest in learners' welfare, whose results are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Pre-Service Teachers' Interest in Learners' Welfare

	disagree								agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Pre-service teacher gave enough help during challenges	52	9.5	84	15.3	92	16.7	169	30.7	153	27.8
Pre-service teacher knew my name after a few lessons	76	13.8	67	12.2	62	11.3	181	32.9	164	29.8
Pre-service teacher never knew my name	219	39.8	161	29.3	76	13.8	50	9.1	44	8.0

Table 9 generally shows that learners indicated that pre-service teachers showed interest in the welfare of learners. Results show that 58.5% of learners agreed that they found pre-service teachers helpful in solving their challenges. However, only 24.8% of the learners disagreed. Further, 62.7% agreed that pre-service teachers knew them by name just after few lessons. Only 17.1% agreed that pre-service teachers never knew their names.

Learners' Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers' Control of Classroom Behaviour by Gender

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if there was any gender difference in learners' perception of pre-service teachers' control of classroom behaviour by gender. The results are shown in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Gender Differences in Learners' Perception of Pre-Service Teachers' Classroom Management Practices

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Mean difference	sig
Men	222	3.38	1.29	1.58	548	.18	.115
Female	328	3.20	1.25				

Table 10 shows that male and female learners did not differ significantly on their perception of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices. Mean scores for male and female pre-service teachers were 3.38 (SD = 1.29) and 3.20 (SD = 1.25) respectively, t(548) = 1.58, p = .115. These results suggest no statistical difference in learners' perception of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices.

On the basis of the result of the likelihood ratio tests of the Multinomial Logistic Regression Model, Learner Discipline (LD), Pre-Service Teacher's Ability to Teach (PTAT), Pre-service Teacher Personal Characteristics (PTPC), and Pre-service Teacher's Interest in Learners' welfare (PTI) were found to be the most influential variables on learners' perception of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices. Using the conventional α=0.05 threshold, Learner Discipline (LD), Pre-Service Teacher's Ability to Teach (PTAT), Pre-service Teacher Personal Characteristics (PTPC), and Pre-service Teacher's Interest in Learners' welfare (PTI) are significant predictors in the model. The Learner-pre-service Teacher Relationship (LPTR) variable was "near significant" (*at* p=0.522).

This study used multinomial logistic regression analysis to identify the relationships between the dependent variable (Learner Acceptance (LA)) and independent variables (Learner Discipline (LD), Pre-service Teacher Assessment (PTA), Pre-Service Teacher's Ability to Teach (PTAT), Pre-service Teacher Personal Characteristics (PTPC), Learner - Pre-service Teacher Relationship (LPTR) and Pre-service Teacher's Interest in Learners' welfare (PTI).

Multinomial Logistic Regression Model

Usually, regression analysis is used in social sciences when there are two dependent variable categories, multinomial logistic regression is employed when dependent variables involve three or more categories. This explains the correlation between the dependent variable and the independent variable when their values are obtained with rating scales (Hosmer et al., 2013; Washington et al., 2003). In this study, multinomial logistic regression analysis was used to identify the relationships between the dependent variable (Learner Acceptance (LA)) and independent variables (Learner Discipline (LD), Pre-service Teacher Assessment (PTA), Pre-Service Teacher's Ability to Teach (PTAT), Pre-service Teacher Personal Characteristics (PTPC), Learner - Pre-service Teacher Relationship (LPTR) and Pre-service Teacher's Interest in Learners' welfare (PTI)). The study used the multinomial logistic regression model of the form:

$$f(k,i) = \beta_{0,k} + \beta_{1,k}x_{1,i} + \beta_{2,k}x_{2,i} + \cdots + \beta_{M,k}x_{M,i}$$

Where β_k is a regression coefficient associated with the *m*th explanatory variable and the *k*th outcome. The multinomial logistic regression model used is generally effective where the dependent variable is composed of a polytomous category having multiple choices (Aldrich & Nelson, 1984; Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000).

The "Model Fitting Information" contains a Likelihood Ratio Chi-square Test, which compares the full model (that is, the model containing all the predictors) to the null or intercept only model (that is, a model with no predictors). Statistical significance of the Chi-square test indicates that the full model represents a significant improvement in fit over the null model.

Table 11. Model Fitting Information for the Learners' Perception Model

Model	Model Fitting Criteria			Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	AIC	BIC	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	3124.677	3215.185	3082.677			
Final	2776.163	3409.721	2482.163	600.514	126	.000

As seen from table 11, $\chi^2(126) = 600.514, p < 0.001$, indicating that the final model is a significant improvement in the fit over the null model. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which states that there was no difference between the model without explanatory variables and the model with explanatory variables. The existence of a relationship between the explanatory variables and the response variable was supported.

Table 12. Goodness-of-Fit for the Learners Perception Model

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	9773.018	11256	1.000
Deviance	2480.777	11256	1.000

The "Goodness of Fit" table contains the Deviance and Pearson Chi-square tests which are useful for determining whether a model exhibits a good fit to the data. Non-significant Chi-square test results are indicators that the model fits the data well. As seen from the table 12, both the Deviance and Pearson's Chi-square tests ($\chi^2(126) = 2480.777$ and $\chi^2(126) = 9773.018$ respectively) are non-significant, indicating a good fit of the data to the model.

Pseudo R-Square

Table 13. Pseudo R-Square for The Learners' Perception Model

Cox and Snell	Nigelkerke	McFadden
0.664	0.667	0.195

Pseudo R-Square values are treated as rough analogues to the R-Square value (or coefficient of variation) in Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). The larger the Pseudo R-Square statistic the better the fit. The results from table 13 above show that acceptable values were obtained for the Pseudo R-squared (Cox and Snell: 0.664 and Nagelkerke: 0.667). However, the McFadden (0.195) indicated a poor fit.

The Likelihood Ratio Tests

Table 14. Multinomial Logistic Regression of Learners' Perception Model

Effect	Model Fitting Criteria			Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	AIC of Reduced Model	BIC of Reduced Model	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept	3048.998	3592.047	2796.998	314.834	21	.000
LD	2768.265	3311.315	2516.265	34.102	21	.035
PTA	2762.806	3305.856	2510.806	28.643	21	.123
PTAT	2899.315	3442.364	2647.315	165.151	21	.000
PTPC	2772.888	3315.938	2520.888	38.725	21	.011
LPTR	2754.148	3297.197	2502.148	19.984	21	.522
PTI	2795.270	3338.320	2543.270	61.107	21	.000

The chi-square statistic is the difference in -2 log-likelihoods between the final model and a reduced model. The reduced model is formed by omitting an effect from the final model. The null hypothesis is that all parameters of that effect are 0.

These tests measure the overall contribution of each independent variable to the model. As seen from table 14, using the conventional $\alpha = 0.05$ threshold, Learner Discipline (LD), Pre-Service Teacher's Ability to Teach (PTAT), Pre-service Teacher Personal Characteristics (PTPC), and Pre-service Teacher's Interest in Learners' welfare (PTI) are significant predictors in the model. The Learner-Pre-service Teacher Relationship (LPTR) variable was "near significant" (at $p = 0.522$). On the basis of the result of the likelihood ratio tests of the *Multinomial Logistic Regression Model*, Learner Discipline (LD), Pre-Service Teacher's Ability to Teach (PTAT), Pre-service Teacher Personal Characteristics (PTPC), and Pre-service Teacher's Interest in Learners' welfare (PTI) have been found most influential variables on learners' perceptions of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices.

Discussion

The research questions of this study focused on learners' perceptions of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices, learners' perceptions of pre-service teachers' management of learners' classroom behaviour by gender, and learner acceptance of pre-service -teachers.

Learners' Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers' Classroom Management Practices

Teaching practice or teaching practicum is a critical component in teacher training. School authorities know when pre-service teachers would be in their schools. The authorities are in a position to put in place proper communication procedures for learners to know when pre-service teachers are in their school. This revelation shows that school management does not guide most pre-service teachers well. Usually, a teacher for the class that is assigned to the pre-service teacher introduces the new teacher to that class. The class teacher works closely with the pre-service teacher as a mentor and ensures that the pre-service teacher is given appropriate guidance. In this case, any mistakes from the pre-service teacher are quickly noticed and corrected by the class teacher.

Learner Discipline

It is evident that one of the primary duties of pre-service teachers is to ensure that learners' behaviours do not worsen after taking over the class from a practicing teacher. The management of learner discipline does not come automatically. It demands a pre-service teacher's ability to be able to gain and maintain students' cooperation through the activities undertaken in the classroom (Osher et al., 2010). The results of this study agree with the findings of Fricke et al. (2012), that learners in both elementary and secondary schools had positive perceptions of their science teachers' preventive behaviour although elementary learners described the preventive behaviour of their science teachers significantly more positively than students from secondary school. In a study that critically examined classroom management, Obi and Ezemba (2019) concluded that order was achievable through the fair treatment of learners and holding them accountable for their actions.

Pre-service teachers had to learn and conduct management skills which they employed to address and resolve disciplinary challenges in the classroom (Froyen & Iverson, 1999). The results show that pre-service teachers possessed effective classroom management skills that enabled them to institute and implement a system of rules and procedures, and they were able to monitor so that undesired and unproductive behaviours were curtailed (Emmer et al., 2003). The current study confirms this where learners indicated that pre-service teachers had good control of the classes they taught. These pre-service teachers guaranteed appropriate classroom behaviour standards, creating clear expectations and a safe teaching and learning environment (Jones & Jones, 2012). Lazarides and Warner (2020) note that teachers with higher self-efficacy have greater classroom management skills.

Assessment of Learners

Assessment plays a very important role in the classroom management practices and mediates the interaction between teachers and learners. As a process undertaken by pre-service teachers and learners to gather information that is used to modify teaching and learning, assessment is useful in selecting, controlling and motivating learners to higher levels of achievement (Amua-Sekyi, 2016). In this current study, learners were requested to provide their perceptions of pre-service teachers' ability to assess learners effectively and formatively. This is important because this feedback was exploratory, provisional and aimed at prompting further engagement from the learners as part of an ongoing dialogue between and amongst learners and pre-service teachers (Attwood, 2009; Pryor & Crossouard, 2008). The process was initiated by the pre-service teacher providing appropriate assignments and culminated in learners producing and submitting the work and pre-service teachers marking and giving feedback to the learners. In their study, Oo et al. (2021) found that pre-service teachers' decision-making in the classroom was largely influenced by their beliefs of and values in using assessment strategies but, importantly, constrained by their supervising teachers. Although the current study suggests that pre-service teachers were objective and professional in assessing learners, the study of Oo et al. (2021) identified three factors that determine assessment decisions of pre-service teachers: pre-service teacher assessment knowledge, beliefs and values of using assessment, and supervising teachers, students' responses and classroom realities.

Pre-service Teacher-Learner Relationship

Research has shown that teachers who manage their classrooms effectively have a better teacher-student relationship and realise higher cognitive and affective outcomes for their pupils (Wubbels et al., 2006). Good relationships are created in classrooms when teachers do not show favouritism based on various socio-economic preferences like race, gender, family, tribal, social status or economic status. In classrooms where positive pre-service teacher and learner relationships thrive, as seen in this study, there is an increased learners' sense of safety and comfort (Jones & Jones, 2012). Further, Milliken (2019) agrees that classrooms with good teacher management show a correlation between learner engagement and high achievement. The results of this study are in tandem with the findings of several studies that indicate that the relationship between learners and teachers is a significant predictor of academic engagement and achievement and that

supportive learner-teacher relationships positively relate to social self-concept, school adjustment and grade (Baker, 2006; Cazden, 2001; O'Connor et al., 2011; Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2015; Skinner & Greene, 2008).

Pre-service Teachers' Ability to Teach

Effective teaching implies that a teacher maximises instructional time in the classroom to make the best use of it for the benefit of the learners rather than spending it on the nonessentials (Stronge et al., 2011). How a teacher manages the classroom during lessons depicts whether one can teach effectively or not. The ability to teach is even more critical for pre-service teachers to win the learners' trust and confidence. In her study of 96 pre-service teachers, Ramirez (2020) shows that pre-service teachers' perceived level of teaching skills in terms of classroom management was very high. It is this self-efficacy that influences the ability for greater classroom management (Lazarides & Warner, 2020) when teaching.

Successful teaching is a product of adequate preparation, good communication skills, a conducive environment and readiness to attend to individual as well as group needs of the class. Without good communication, no learner can understand what is being taught. Effective communication between the learners and pre-service teachers was present in their classrooms, leading to pre-service teachers' ability to create enabling, supportive and motivating environments for the learners. The current study affirms Obi and Ezemba's (2019) assertion that one way of inculcating discipline in the classroom is by teachers conscientiously preparing and teaching their lessons, being friendly, considerate and helping the students with their various challenges.

Pre-service Teachers' Interest in Learners' Welfare

Learners face a lot of challenges in the education process. Adams et al. (2022) argue that all teachers are responsible for the welfare of their learners. This suggests that teachers cannot remain aloof when handling their learners' physical, social, emotional and financial challenges. Fontana (1994) asserts that learners should be helped in a friendly and non-judgemental atmosphere to identify their real nature and problems and formulate solutions. The current study's result resonates with Sueb (2013) who found that pre-service teachers used a strategy of remembering learners' names to help them provide appropriate support to learners facing particular challenges. The study confirms the study by Byrne et al. (2022) that, generally, educators have a positive attitude and disposition to the well-being of their learners although the levels positivity and negativity differ by gender, which the current study does focus on.

Pre-service Teachers' Personal Characteristics

The role of a teacher's personal characteristics in classroom management cannot be overemphasised. These personal characteristics include honesty, loyalty, punctuality, cleanliness, dedication, and affection, among others. When exercised by pre-service teachers, they make them stand out as role models. Obi and Ezemba (2019) state that a teacher that dresses neatly, is friendly, considerate and helpful to learners when solving learners' problems makes the learners like the teacher and, in return, voluntarily submit to the teacher's control.

The results of learner perceptions of teacher characteristics in this study corroborate Obi and Ezemba's (2019) study where punctuality for lessons, nicely dressed and smartness were most favourable by learners in the classroom. Positive traits as determinants of success that are identified in this study are also emphasised by Abdulrahman et al. (2022).

Learners' Acceptance of Pre-Service Teacher

These results show that creating new relationships is time-consuming since it requires learners and pre-service teachers to adjust by identifying and appreciating each other's strengths and weaknesses. The fact that pre-service teachers take over classes from the serving teachers implies that learners must accept the change in the teaching styles, interpersonal interactions, assessment procedures, classroom rules and regulations and classroom management strategies. The results of the study showed that there was a certain level of acceptance and there was a variation with those that showed hesitancy in acceptance. This shows an area that needs attention at the school level through the schools' administration communication activities to the learners about pre-service teachers' presence. Additionally, the teacher training process should encourage and foster friendliness as an essential trait of pre-service teachers to facilitate the process of acceptance.

Learners Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers' Control of Classroom Behaviour by Gender

The males group (N = 222) was associated with class control perception mean, M = 3.38 (SD = 1.29). By comparison the females group (N = 233) had a class control perception mean M = 3.20 (SD = 1.25). To test the hypothesis that male learners were associated with a statistically different mean in their perception of pre-service teachers' control of the class, an independent t test was conducted. Male and female learners' distributions were sufficiently normal for conducting a t-test. Additionally, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested and satisfied via Levene's F (548, p = 061. The independent samples t-test shows no statistically significant difference in the means, t (548 = 1.58 p = .114).

Thus, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female learners in their perception of whether pre-service teachers effectively controlled classes.

The findings of this study align to the mainstream perspectives in the literature on classroom management practices.

Conclusion

This study revealed that learners had positive perceptions of pre-service teachers' classroom management practices of learner discipline, assessment, learner and pre-service teacher relationship, ability to teach, interest in learner welfare, and pre-service teachers' personal characteristics and acceptance of pre-service teacher. The results show that there was no statistically significant difference by gender in learners' perception of pre-service teachers' classroom control. Pre-service teachers were perceived as being interested in learners' welfare, possessed good personal qualities, could handle learner disruptive behaviours, assessed learning fairly and could teach effectively. Finally, although many learners accepted pre-service teachers as their teachers without considering which institution they came from, a good number of them did not, and others were undecided.

Recommendations

It is recommended that future studies should consider the lower grade levels (Grade 8 – 10) at secondary school level to understand classroom management. It is also recommended that future studies could consider investigating, firstly, the perceptions of learners from rural backgrounds to provide a comparative analysis of learners' views, and secondly, how the differences in learners' personality characteristics influence their acceptance of pre-service teachers.

Limitations

Although the study has provided insights into learners' perceptions of pre-service teachers, the sample size is too small to make a significant recommendation to policy issues. Another limitation is that the study was cross-sectional and does not account for the changing perceptions among learners. Lastly, the study only focused on grade 11 learners.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Nkhata and Banda: Conceptualised and developed the theory. Designed the data collection protocols and analysis procedures. Interpreted the work. Sought ethical clearance and were in charge of the overall direction and planning, including funding. Simpande: Analysed data and edited/reviewed the paper. Provided critical revision of the manuscript. Zulu: Prepared the data and performed the statistical analysis. Jumbe: Conceptualised the study and contributed to sample preparation. Musonda: Involved in data analysis and revision of the manuscript.

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