ANTECEDENTS OF STUDENTS' DYSFUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOUR (SDB) WITHIN PAKISTANI HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Student Dysfunctional Behaviour (SDB) has become one of the major factors in poor educational service delivery within higher educational institutions. SDB within Pakistani higher educational institution is under-theorized research area. That's why this article explores antecedents that contribute to the SDB. Qualitative research design was utilized to develop in-depth understanding of the phenomena. Data was collected from public sector higher educational institution by conducting focused groups and semi-structured in-depth interviews. Data analysis suggests that behaviour of academic and non-academic staff and institutional policies shape the SDB. This study concludes that feeling of injustice is high among students that exhibit dysfunctional behaviour within higher educational context of Pakistan.

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Keywords: Student dysfunctional behaviour, Higher education, qualitative, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

The production of academic service is linked with student co-operation. Students' negative behaviour could hamper academic service production. It addition, it may be harmful for service delivery personals, i.e. faculty or academic support staff. However, researcher have not explored this phenomena in Pakistani higher educational context, thus policy makers lack sufficient evidence to tackle this issue. The objective of this research was to understand SDB. Furthermore, this study was set out to investigate antecedent of students' dysfunctional behaviour within Pakistani higher educational context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is reported that there are several factors responsible for SDB. A teacher's behaviour has been considered as one of the major contributors to student incivility. Bolkan and Goodboy (2013) conducted a study to understand which types of teachers' behaviour triggers student dissent, why students do not communicate their grievances to their teachers, how students cope with such situations and how the student dissent issue could be resolved in the American context. Their study sample consisted of 68 male and 115

female undergraduate university students, and the data identified nine major actions that some teachers demonstrate which trigger student dissent.

Furthermore, Bolkan and Goodboy (2013) report that despite the various forms of teachers' behaviour initiating student dissent, many students still did not display their dissent due to the following reasons: lack of efficacy, unapproachable teachers, concern about appropriateness, fear of retaliation, not considering worthy of their action, impression management, student's perception about fault, feeling too embarrassed to raise the issue, hoping for an automatic solution and self-efficacy. They also report what students do when they do not express their dissent due to any of the above reasons. In this case, the students could show a passive response, whereby they work hard to satisfy the tutor or do nothing with the hope that, as time goes by, somehow the issue will resolve automatically. Students also can share their dissent with friends, parents and classmates. Students could use the resistance approach, by which they retaliate in the classroom, or complain via the formal grievance procedure. Students could also show their views during the annual evaluation of their teachers' progress or, in extreme cases; the students can drop out of the course.

Similarly, Stork and Hartley (2009) articulate that the passive or aggressive uncivil behaviour of a teacher (Professor) could create negative behaviour among the students. In the first phase of their study, they developed items for their "student perceptions about professor behaviours" scale by conducting two focus groups of 16 students. They also conducted 14 post-focus group interviews to verify the items on the scale. In the second phase, data was gathered using their scale from students at the beginning and at the end of their course. The study found that a teacher's non-caring behaviour toward an individual student, not respecting student ideas and incompetence of the teacher are all major uncivil types of teacher behaviour. They suggest that a teacher's more positive social behaviour, both inside and outside the classroom, would create a more positive response from their students. In addition, the evaluation of the qualitative data revealed that both teachers and students stressed that the pedagogical and interpersonal skills of the teacher really does matter regarding classroom incivility. It was noted that both teachers and students believed that the administration's policies to tackle classroom incivilities were not effective.

In addition to faculty behaviour, larger class sizes and the uncaring behaviour of the mentor are also governing factors in initiating certain types of uncivil behaviour in students. Larger class sizes provide a conducive environment to enable students to display uncivil behaviour without easily being noticed (Cooper and Robinson, 2000). However, Meyers *et.al.*, (2006) concluded that there was no relationship between class size and student incivility, although it should be noted that Swinney *et.al.*, (2010) argue that

the mean class size of 37 in the study by Meyers *et.al.,* (2006) should not be considered as a large class.

Based on their study, Hirschy and Braxton (2004) maintain that student classroom incivility is also harmful to the student community in general, hindering the academic and intellectual development of the students. They report that students who are frequently exposed to fellow students; incivility show less commitment to their institution, develop a sense of loneliness and a feeling of not being cared for by other students. Although they found some correlation regarding the class type and size on student incivility, they suggest that there is a need for further research to examine the effect of class size and institutional type on student civility.

Meyers (2009) argues that the caring behaviour of a teacher plays a vital role in the civil behaviour of their students, and that the size of the class becomes meaningless when a teacher adopts a caring approach towards their students. "Regardless of the size of the class, undergraduates use the information they have to form impressions about their instructors. They attend to observable immediacy behaviours, and then generalize this data to make inferences about professors' personalities and how much they care about students" (Meyers, 2009:207).

However, Meyers (2009) suggests that faculty members should know the difference between a caring relationship and friendship-type of relationship with students, as too much friendship-type behaviour can increase the possibility of student incivility.

Hawk and Lyons (2008) conducted a study to describe the caring and pedagogical phenomena seen in an academic context, utilizing a qualitative approach. Their initial data was gathered from a sample size of 226 students, from which 96 graduate students responded. They reported that the majority of the respondents stated that during their course they sometimes perceived that their teachers had "given up" on the students and their learning. Furthermore, these participants described the levels of severity when they observed that their teacher was not caring about them. Likewise, the faculty members did not respect the students' opinions, ideas or thoughts, nor did they appreciate or appraise any student inputs.

Hawk and Lyons (2008) categorized these faculty members' lack of appraisal and respect types of behaviours into mild severity, moderate severity and strong severity. In mild severity behaviour, the faculty member detaches him/herself from the class and students, whereas when displaying moderate severity behaviour, the faculty member does not put all of his/her efforts into the class, showing dissatisfaction through both verbal and non-verbal communication. When displaying strong severity behaviour, the faculty member begins to threaten students, fully neglecting the class or leaving the class in anger. Apart from class size and tutor behaviour, the

students' perceptions of justice will have an impact on their behaviour. Altmiller (2012) conducted a qualitative study to understand students' perceptions of incivility in nursing education, by conducting focus groups of female nursing students. The study suggests that students perceive that incivility within the institution is a direct result of the uncivil behaviour of its faculty members.

While Altmiller (2012) reported on students' perceptions of justice as an antecedent of SDB, Bartsch and Cobern (2003) reported that boredom may also be responsible for student negative behaviour. They explain that the teaching methods employed can be a major contributor to student boredom and lead to passive participation in class activities and decreased student motivation. Fallis and Opotow (2003:108) state that "for students, boring connotes a one-way, top-down, unengaged relationship with a teacher".

Besides boredom, advancement of modern technology and its ever-increasing usage has been shown to have a vital impact on student negative behaviour. Schuldt*et et.al.,* (2012) articulates that modern technology has invaded student academic life. They conducted an exploratory study to understand the usage of technology by students with reference to student incivility, by collecting data from 39 students. Their study found that students perceive the usage of such technology as a rude type of behaviour. The study further notes that some students frequently use such technology to disturb others, and this affects the performance of the group. Knepp (2012) also supports these findings, maintaining that the use of modern technology in the classroom makes students less attentive and less interested in academic engagement during the class.

In addition to technology, student orientation (that is to say students considering them as paying customers of the educational institution) is one of the driving factors contributing to student negative behaviour. Burke *et al.* (2013) state in their review that students who consider themselves as paying customers believe that they have a moral licence to exhibit negative behaviour. Similarly, McKay *et.al.,* (2008) claim on the basis of their study that as students are paying fees (indeed, sometimes very high fees), they feel that they are entitled to special treatment and can show negative behaviour whenever they want. Other researchers (for example, Gross and Hogler, 2005; Baker *et.al.*, 2008; Chowning and Campbell, 2009; Nordstrom *et.al.*, 2009) support this idea of consumerism and also consider it to be one of the leading causes of student negative behaviour, as it develops a false sense of entitlement among students, giving a feeling that they can demand what they do not deserve.

Student attributes are one of the triggers of student negative behaviour. Myers *et.al.,* (2015) conducted a study to identify the antecedents of student ACB. Their study reveals that alongside instructors' attributes, students'

attributes (for example, multi-tasking or attention seeking) contribute towards ACB.

Considering all of the above evidence, it seems that institutional climate, students' perceptions of justice, behaviour of the faculty, class size, boredom, use of technology, consumer orientation and students' attributes are all antecedents of student incivility.

SDB IN THE CONTEXT OF PAKISTAN

Very little is known about SDB in the specific context of higher education in Pakistan. Only a handful of studies are available in the published research literature. Iqbal (2004) points out that the purpose of a university is to develop human resources with particular intellectual and professional capacities. Based on his study, he suggests that a university's administration should work towards the character building of their students. To achieve this, we need to have a clear understanding of the dynamics of dysfunctional behaviour, so that we have a clear picture to fully develop our understanding of these phenomena.

Munawar *et.al.,* (2014) conducted a study to ascertain the dynamics of cyber bullying within the context of higher education in Pakistan. The study sample consisted of 100 university students. Their report states that 77% of these students are regular users of 'Facebook', 89% owned a mobile telephone and 15% had 'Twitter' accounts. The study recognizes that the majority of these students use social networking sites to interact with family, friends and acquaintances, whereas only 3% interacted with 'stranger'. The study identifies the major types of cyber bullying (e.g., online humiliating post, computer text messages sent to harass, posting a picture without your permission, telephone call to harass). The study further highlights that immediate group fellows, peer group, known persons and unknown persons are the main sources of these bullying practices. They argue that cyber bullying may be directly affecting educational development, and causing emotional imbalance and psychological issues amongst students.

Similarly, Avais *et.al.,* (2014) conducted a study to understand cyber bullying in the context of the University of Sindh, in Jamshoro, Pakistan (UOSJP). Their study shows that the majority of the students are frequent users of internet services and that they are aware of cyber bullying. The study also reports that the majority of the participants have been victims of cyber bullying of various types at some time, such as hacking, impersonation, and/or receiving defamatory or hate messages. The study also recognizes that female students are more likely to be subjected to cyber bullying. Interestingly, they report that 30% of these victims stated that they knew the propagators responsible for their cyber bullying. Another study, conducted by Gulzar *et.al.,* (2012) to examine the causes of frustration among university students, collected data from 120 university students. They report

that although bullying is one of the contributors to student frustration, it does not have any significant value.

Kashif *et.al*., (2013) conducted a study to analyze negative behaviour among university students, using a mixed-method approach, by gathering data from 350 students, 50 faculty members and 45 parents of students at two public sector universities. The study reported that substance usage, cheating, harassment, bullying, property destruction and joyriding are major dimensions of student negative behaviour. However, their study investigated student anti-social behaviour in the context of student politics. The researchers included some photographs as evidence for student anti-social behaviour, but the authenticity of these pictures is questionable as it seems that the researchers used images obtained from social media to support the findings of their study.

In summary, if we look at all these studies, it can be seen that there have not been any detailed investigations carried out into SDB. Specifically, we do not know why students become involved in negative practices within the Pakistani higher education context. In addition, pervious research (for example, Avais *et.al.*, 2014; Munawar *et.al.*, 2014) conducted within the Pakistani higher education context have employed small surveys, limited methodological rigour and covered only limited dimensions of the phenomenon. That's why qualitative exploratory research methodology was adopted to understand phenomena.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To investigate and understand antecedents of student dysfunctional behaviours, this study focuses on student experience. Students were selected from University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan (UOSJP) purposively. University under investigation is second oldest university of Pakistan consists of fifty six departments. Data were collected through five focus groups and twenty semi- structured in-depth interviews from homogenous sample of the students of faculty of the commerce and Business administration at UOSJP. Furthermore, multi method made this study reliable. Focus group and semi-structured interviews were analyzed through hermeneutical phenomenological approach. Data was categorized in codes by repetitive reading of transcripts of focused groups and semi-structured in-depth interviews, then these codes were divided into supreme themes and sub themes through focused coding. Furthermore, relationship among super and sub themes were re-arranged via axial coding.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The data analysis has shown various causes that may lead a student to show dysfunctional behaviour. The majority of the study participants claim that SDB is the outcome of the dysfunctional behaviour of staff, faculty members and the institution. This dysfunctional behaviour is categorized

under the super-themes of injustice, communication-related factors, unprofessional behaviour and the misuse of authority.

Injustice: The first super-theme related to causes of SDB is injustice. The study participants claim that injustice by the staff, faculty members and institution compel students to show dysfunctional behaviour.

The first sub-theme is preference. The study participants reveal that the majority of the institute's staff believes in the philosophy of 'show me the person: I will show you the rule'. That is why it is a contributing factor to SDB. Yi and Gong (2008) reported that when a customer feels that he/she has not been treated fairly during a service encounter, they will show negative behaviour. In addition, Buttner (2004) states that unfair treatment from faculty members is the cause of bad student behaviour. It can thus be suggested that when students find that they are not treated fairly, they can show dysfunctional behaviour. Furthermore, Bolkan and Goodboy (2013) report that preference by a faculty member to a particular student is one of the leading contributing factors to student incivility within the higher education sector.

The second sub-theme of injustice-related causes of SDB is assigning high or low grades. The study participants claim that students who develop a good relationship with faculty members get higher marks than those who do not develop such a relationship. Yi and Gong (2008) discuss the role of procedural justice in the dysfunctional behaviour of customers. Procedural justice refers to whether a customer is fairly treated compared with the outcome of the service delivery encounter. It seems that students assume that they are not always rewarded according to their efforts.

The study participants claim that when they do not show submissive behaviour towards faculty members, or if they were to challenge the ideas of the teacher even in a respectful way, then the teacher does not like this freedom of expression and confident style, and assigns them low grades. These findings match with Bolkan and Goodboy (2013), who found that when teachers do not assign marks on merit, that develops negative behaviour amongst students. These findings further support the ideas of Clark and Springer, (2007), who report that faculty members who ignore or do not respect the opinions of students are responsible for student bad behaviour.

The third sub-theme is gender bias. The study participants claim that faculty members show preference to female students because of their gender. Altmiller (2021) reported that gender bias is a vital factor responsible for student negative behaviour in the context of student nurses. It seems that some students believe that female students are getting higher grades than boys simply due to their gender.

Communication-related Factors: The second super-theme related to causes of SDB is communication-related factors. The first sub-theme of this is poor communication skills. The study participants mention that communication skills play a significant role in the success of faculty members. When a teacher does not have good communication skills, it develops boredom among students, resulting in the students becoming involved in various activities to disturb the class, so as to pass the time. These results match those observed in earlier studies. Meyers *et.al.,* (2006) maintain that teachers who actively engage with students via discussion will decrease the incidence of student bad behaviour. These findings may help us to understand the effects of the soft skills of teachers on SDB.

The second sub-theme of this super-theme relates to fake claims. The study participants state that the university's administration often made false claims regarding the availability of various facilities on campus. The participants further argue that both faculty and staff members always claim that they keep merit as a top priority, but unfortunately they rarely seem to follow their commitments. Sayers *et.al.,* (2011) maintain that, in the business context, research has proved the relationship between psychological contract violation and employees' dysfunctional behaviour. However, Burke *et.al.,* (2013) maintain that there is insufficient evidence to establish a link between psychological contract violation and SDB. It may be concluded that my own findings might suggest that psychological contract violation contributes to SDB within the Pakistani higher education context, but that further research is needed to better establish this observation.

The third sub-theme is no or delayed feedback. The study participants claim that whenever they ask for any feedback or counseling from staff or faculty members, they usually ignore their requests. This finding is consistent with the study by Altmiller (2012) which identifies not providing sufficient feedback or ignoring students' requests as factors contributing to SDB. Boice (1996) also found that if the teacher does not show a positive response to a student's request, this could be a major factor for student anger. The findings thus suggest that some staff and faculty members are not providing proper guidelines to their students, and hence this is a driving factor in SDB within the context of higher education in Pakistan.

The fourth sub-theme concerns rude behaviour. The study participants cite various incidents where faculty members and staff showed students rude behaviour. Furthermore, the students stated that this rude behaviour is a trigger for SDB. This further supports the findings of Bolkan and Goodboy (2013), which identify rude behaviour by a faculty member as an antecedent of SDB**.**

The fifth sub-theme of this super-theme is self-praise. The study participants claim that faculty members and staff always demonstrate self-

praise in spite of them doing their official job. In a recent study, Ketchen and Buckley (2010) term such behaviour by a person as being a 'workplace diva', who often works less than his/her co-workers. However, at University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan (UOSJP), staff or faculty members always attempt to impress others by their academic record and previous performance. A possible explanation for this might be that when staff or faculty members indulge in self-praise rather than focusing on their job description, this inclines students to display negative behaviour. For example, one respondent stated that one non-academic staff member always claims that he is the backbone of the institution. However, that person is never able to provide timely services to the students.

Unprofessional Behaviour: The third super-theme of factors influencing SDB is unprofessional behaviour.

The first sub-theme is no customer orientation. The study participants claim that in this era of global competition, universities treat their students as customers. In addition, universities also give weight to students' opinions and suggestions. However, in the context of UOSJP, staff and faculty member have no or very little customer orientation. Nordstrom *et.al.,* (2009) state that present-day students believe themselves to be customers, with teachers and other staff members as frontline employees in the service delivery process. The students thus justify their dysfunctional behaviour on the basis of consumer orientation. However, in this study, we could not find that the students were demanding any illegitimate provision of service, but simply demanding genuine services and facilities.

The second sub-theme of this super-theme relates to untrained staff and faculty members. The study participants report that newly-appointed teachers and staff had not been properly trained. Due to this they cannot perform their jobs efficiently and thus become a cause of SDB. Mattila *et.al*., (2003) report that, in the context of the hotel industry, if at check-in a customer is not handled by the staff efficiently, this will lead to dissatisfaction and the customer will show his/her annoyance. Similarly, Wren and Bedeian (1994) discuss observing the soldiering behaviour of employees, whereby employees deliberately slow down the pace of work. Other researchers (for example, Hawk and Lyons, 2008; Bolkan and Goodboy, 2013) have identified the inefficient working styles of faculty members as antecedents of student negative behaviour. However, neither of these studies concluded that these inefficient styles are due to a lack of training. One possible explanation for this might be that, because of these inefficient working styles and delaying tactics, students have shown dysfunctional behaviour and, in addition, it may be postulated that these inefficient working styles might well in fact be due to a lack of staff training.

The third sub-theme discusses the issue of long mobile chats by faculty members and staff. The study participants note that staff and faculty members waste their time by chatting on their mobiles rather than serving the student community. The over-usage of mobile phones has developed anger among UOSJP students. Martin *et.al.,* (2010) term such workers as 'time bandits'. Klotz and Buckley (2013) note that within a modern organization, due to the availability of mobile phones, employees can now easily make contact with other people during official working hours. They explain that nowadays the husband and wife both have a job, so they have less time to communicate with each other or with their children, and this is why they use a mobile phone during office hours. However, further research is needed to investigate the antecedents of such behaviour by UOSJP staff and faculty members in order to come to more definite conclusions.

The fourth sub-theme is the failure of UOSJP to develop a sense of ownership amongst its students. The study participants claim that the UOSJP administration, including faculty members, have failed to develop any sense of ownership among the students, which is why some do not consider the university as their home and become involved in SDB. Twenge (2014) found narcissism as contributing to the bad behaviour of students, being a self-centred behaviour in which students do not feel any attachment to their institution. One possible explanation for this might be that when students do not feel any attachment to the institution, the possibility of being involved in dysfunctional behaviour increases.

The fifth sub-theme concerns the failure by the university to punish dysfunctional students. The data analysis shows that dysfunctional behaviour by students is rarely punished by the university using their legal means. McKay *et.al.,* (2008) have shown, in the Canadian academic context, that 49% of faculty members do not report dysfunctional behaviour to the authorities, because they believe that the administration will not take any action against the students. A possible explanation for this might be that when students are not punished for their dysfunctional behaviour, other students consider this to be a license for their own bad behaviour.

The sixth sub-theme of this super-theme refers to the long duration of classes. The findings of this study show that the long duration of classes plays a vital role in the initiation of dysfunctional behaviour. The study participants said that such long, boring and without-a-break classes make them tired and demotivated, which leads them to show dysfunctional behaviour. These findings are in agreement with Mann and Robinson (2009), who report that 59% of the students they surveyed consider their lectures to be boring. A possible explanation for this might be that due to the long duration of classes, students cannot concentrate properly on the lectures and become involved in dysfunctional behaviour to reduce the boredom.

Misuse of Authority: The fourth super-theme of factors influencing SDB is the misuse of authority. The first sub-theme was threatening the students. In this context, UOSJP faculty members and staff have powerful positions due to their official roles. The study participants claim that some staff and faculty members, on various occasions, had threatened them or other students. Teachers have warned the students that if they do not show submissive behaviour to them, they should prepare to 'face the music'. Such an attitude from faculty members creates anger among students. These results are consistent with the views of Clark and Springer (2007), who state that threatening students is a non-immediate behaviour which increases the distance between faculty members and students, who are then more likely to display dysfunctional behaviour.

The second sub-theme concerning the misuse of authority refers to discouraging students. The study participants claim that some faculty members will discourage their participation within a class. They further explain that faculty members have used their position in the past to discourage student participation. Instead, they should be encouraging students, so that they do better. Bolkan and Goodboy (2013) term this discouragement as a severe behaviour whereby teachers do not respect the opinions of their students. It seems that students feel that faculty members are not giving sufficient weight to their ideas and as a result they are showing a negative reaction to this.

The third sub-theme is that of negative reactions. The study participants report that on many occasions some faculty and staff members have deliberately given a disadvantage to certain students by awarding them low grades. In addition, some staff members were not providing the required facilities to the students. Altmiller (2012) claims that faculty members are role models for the students, and if they use oppression against students then naturally the students will learn this same behaviour from their teachers or staff and show dysfunctional behaviour towards them at some point.

The fourth sub-theme relates to criticizing the students. The study participants identified that the criticizing of students by faculty members is a deriving factor in SDB. These findings match those of Hawk and Lyons (2008), who state that when faculty members do not care about students and display dissatisfaction with the performance of the students, then this inclines the students themselves to show negative behaviour. Our findings show that, in the context of UOSJP, some faculty members do indeed criticize students and term them as being lazy or incompetent. This develops anger amongst the students and they are, as a result, more prone to displaying dysfunctional behaviour.

CONCLUSION

There is little published data on SDB and there is a dearth of research concerning theoretical understanding of the phenomena within the Pakistani higher education context in particular.. Data analysis indicated that students apply their input (in the shape of money and fees) with the aim to acquire a quality education, appropriate academic services and proper accommodation facilities. In addition, students put their efforts into the assignments and via examination activities in order to achieve good grades.

This study has identified various types of behaviour by staff and faculty members, as well as the institution, as triggers to SDB. It seems that UOSJP staff and faculty members are not properly trained for their jobs. This information should be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at developing key skills amongst staff and faculty members so they can properly perform their respective roles. It would be good if UOSJP initiates mandatory induction training and various on-the-job training programmes for staff and faculty members. Harris and Sass (2011) found that teacher training is directly linked to the academic achievement of students should be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at developing key skills amongst staff and faculty members so they can properly perform their respective roles.

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