

## Behavioral Problems, Empathy and Emotion Regulation in School and Madrassa Students

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### Abstract

The behavioral problems are increasing day by day among students acquiring any sort of education. Hence, the study was done to identify behavioral problems in school and madrassa students. A random sampling technique was used for data collection. The sample was comprised of 140 participants, ranging from 14 to 17 years of age, including 70 girls and 70 boys. Child behavior checklist (CBCL), interpersonal reactivity index (IRI) and cognitive emotion regulation scale (CERS) were used for the data collection. Different statistical analyses were conducted to analyze the data. The results of the study showed that the students going to madrassa ( $M=65.64$ ,  $SD=31.69$ ) have more behavioral problems as compared to students going to school ( $M=22.47$ ,  $SD=6.94$ ). Moreover, the behavioral problems were found more in boys ( $M=56.88$ ,  $SD=39.38$ ) as compared to the girls ( $M=31.10$ ,  $SD=10.63$ ). Furthermore, Regression analysis showed that behavioral problems was significantly predicted by empathy ( $\beta=-.61$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and emotion regulation ( $\beta=.72$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The present study will be helpful for the parents, educational administration and counselor to identify and manage behavioral problems in students seeking education.

**Keywords:** *behavioral problems, empathy, emotion regulation, school students and madrassa students*

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### Introduction and Literature Review

The behavior of school-aged children is an essential indicator of adaptation in the development; conversely, not all students are successful and may present externalizing or internalizing behavioral problems, articulated within the family or school frameworks. The alarming rise in the number of student having insufficient consideration from mental health professionals for managing their mental health problems remain under consideration. Researches showed that the behavioral problems in the children are developed, maintained and worsened by many psycho-social factors such as psycho-pathology of parents, parental acceptance or rejection, familial discord, and socioeconomic status (Kern, 2015).

McLeod and Kaiser (2004) stated that the behavioral problems can have many symptoms which include: disobedient behaviors, carelessness, disinterest in daily activities, poor emotion expression, low self-esteem or overconfidence, self-injury or harming others. Beside these problems there are many more symptoms of behavioral problems in children such as internalizing (defiant) or externalizing (aggression) problems. Behavioral problems are often

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expressed in many different ways in girls and boys. As boys, may get in fight, harm or steal while girls may lie or break things at home (Sheldrick et al., 2011).

Despite of this, many students seeking knowledge are thoughtful and become perceptive about other's feelings. These positive behaviors are more than the absence of problems represents skills to deal with them. The concept of empathy is conceptualized and used in many different ways. Although there are many definitions of empathy, but there is general consensus on some points that are its components. Its components include two components first is: an affective reaction to others reaction. That is actually sharing or empathizing with others. Second component is the cognitive capacity. It is basically supposed the point of view of other people. The most basic explanation of Empathy considered it as the interaction between two individuals. The interaction has a specific quality that is one experience the feeling of the other one (Decety & Jackson, 2006).

Human life considered as connected with many emotions that are linked through different conditions. These conditions and cognitive processes help the individuals to regulate their feelings and emotions. Along with it, it also helps them to not hyper in these emotional conditions. Consequently, There are two types of cognitive processes, which are unconscious (i.e. projections & denial) and a conscious (self-blame, blaming others, rumination and catastrophizing). Furthermore, coping strategies are those tactics and procedures that aid in alarming situations. There are two types of coping procedures one is problem focused that is directly dealing with the stressful situation and second is emotion-focused that control the emotions connected to the stressors. Problem-focused coping is considered as more functional than emotion focused coping because it directly focuses on the stressor (Garnefski et al., 2001).

Schools are among prominent institutions in the Pakistan. There are two categories of school such as government schools and private schools. The government schools come under the direct control of local, state or national government, and the private school don't come under the control of government. Madrassa is an Arabic word that is used for any type of religious school (of any religion). Madrassa's literal meaning is a place where learning/teaching done. Madrassas are simply schools, and as with schools anywhere in the world, they may have different affiliation and curriculum. An Islamic school enrolled a hifz course; that is memorization of Holy Qur'an and different religious course. While other courses are like Nazra (just reading Qur'an) and Tafsir (reading only Quranic interpretation) are also included (Fazal, 2012).

Miller et al. (2013) conducted a study on child empathy. The study aimed to investigate relation between positive and negative parenting style and conduct problems in children. Regression analyses showed that the child ADHD symptoms were connected to child conduct problems. The results showed that child's empathy moderately relates with parenting style and behavioral problems. It was found that mother's praise was negatively related to the child conduct problems. The results indicated that different types of parenting behavior may be beneficial to children depending on empathy. Researches point out that absence of empathy may move a person toward aggression, violent and antisocial behavior.

Moreover, the individual who lacks in empathy may fail to understand the others point of view and fails to appreciate other people for something goods. Hartati and Izzaty (2020) conducted a study on the empathic on the prosocial behavior. It is very positive related to development of social responsibility and social behavior. The prosocial behavior is very important for all. The results declared that there was a great effect of social support on the empathy of the young adolescents. Furthermore, Kamal and Ghani (2014) also conducted a study on emotional intelligence and akhlak among Muslim adolescents. Findings showed that akhlak was found a significant positive predictor of emotional intelligence among students.

### **Rationale of the Study**

The study aimed to find out the psychosocial factors involve in development of behavioral problems in Madrassa and School children. This study aimed to determine the influence of education on behavioral problems, empathy and emotion regulation in Madrassa and School students. No previous researches have been done yet regarding this particular area of investigation on school and Madrassa in Pakistan.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To analyze the influence of behavioral problems on the emotional regulation and empathy in students of school and madrassa.
2. To determine the difference in behavioral problems in madrassa and school children on the base of gender.
3. To examine the effect of education on behavioral problems, empathy and emotional regulation in school and madrassa students.

### **Hypotheses of the study**

1. There is significant relationship among education system, behavioral problems, empathy and emotion regulation.
2. Behavioral problems in school and madrassa students significantly predicted by empathy and emotion regulation.
3. There is a significant gender difference in behavioral problems, empathy and emotion regulation in school and madrassa students on the base of gender.
4. The education system had a significant effect on the behavioral problems of the students.
5. Father's education and mother's education had a significant effect on the behavioral problems of students.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

It is quantitative research, in which a cross-section research design was used to compare the students from schools and madrassa on behavioral problems, empathy and emotion regulation.

### **Sample**

Sample of the study has consisted of 140 participants with the distribution of 70 schools and 70 Madrassa students. The age range of the students was 14-17 years. Random sampling technique was used for the collection of data. The school students were taken from different school of Chiniot and Lahore and madrassa students were taken from different small madrassas usually near mosque of Chiniot and Lahore. There were some limitations in data collections because of Covid-19 restrictions.

**Inclusion criteria:** The participants were taken from age range of 14- 17years, from different schools and madrassas.

**Exclusion criteria:** The participants of age above than 17 and below than 14 were not included in the study from both school and madrassa. The participants that were not interested to take part in the study were excluded from the study.

### **Instruments**

Standardized instruments were used to measure for the study.

**Children behavior checklist (Achenbach et al., 2001):** Child behavior checklist (CBCL) is part of the Achenbach System of assessment. The child behavior checklist was used in study. CBCL is used with children with age range of 6 to 18 years. It consists of 112 items that are scored on a three-point Likert type scale. In this study, Urdu translated version of this scale was used. The internal consistency of the scale was .71 to .95 and alpha reliability was .76 to .83. There are three forms of the scale; one is for parents, one for the teacher and one for the child.

**Interpersonal reactivity index (Davis, 1980):** For assessing empathy, Interpersonal Reactivity Index was used. IRI consists of 28 items. It is a multidimensional approach. It is used to assess empathy, as it elaborates in a better way both the cognitive and affective dimension of the empathy. It is a self-report measure. It is a reliable and valid measure. All four subscales were reliable ranging from 0.61 to 0.81 (Davis, 1980) and internal consistency coefficient ranges from 0.68 to 0.79

**Cognitive emotion regulation questionnaire (Butt et al., 2013):** The questionnaire was originally developed by Garnefski et al. (2001) to measure adaptive and maladaptive coping styles. The Urdu-translated version of the scale was used that is done by Butt et al. (2013). It consists of 36 items. It is reliable and valid measure. Its internal consistency was between 0.68 and .86 and test-retest correlations ranges between 0.48 and 0.65.

### Ethical Considerations

The assessment tools were used after permission of authors via e-mail. The nature and aim of study were explained to participants before conducting research. Participants were given right to leave or withdraw from the research at any time. Moreover, participants were also ensured that information will be held confidential and not be shared with anyone else unless it is necessary.

## Results

**Table 1**

*Pearson's Product Moment Correlation in Education System, Behavioral Problems, Empathy, and Emotion Regulation (N=140)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	M	SD
1 ES	-	.70**	-.90**	-.92**	1.5	.05
2 BP		-	-.78**	-.76**	43.9	31.43
3 EM			-	.87**	86.74	12.47
4 ER				-	124.41	21.30

\*\* correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed), (ES) = Education system, (BP) = Behavioral problems, (EM) = Empathy, (ER) = Emotion regulation scores.

Table 1 showed that there is a significant correlation in education system, behavioral problems, empathy and emotion regulation in school and madrassa students. The results indicated that student of Madrassa have more behavioral problems as compares to school students. The results showed a highly significant, negative and strong relationship between education system and empathy ( $r = -.90, p < .01$ ) and in education system and emotion regulation ( $r = -.92^{**}, p < .01$ ).

**Table 2**

*Stepwise Regression Analysis for Demographics, Empathy and Emotion Regulation as predictor of Behavioral Problems of Students(N=140)*

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	B	SE(B)	$\beta$
EM	-1.99	.13	-.78	-1.89	.11	-.74	-1.71	.12	-.67	-1.69	.12	.60	-1.74	.12	-.68
GE				-19.84	2.88	-.32	-20.33	2.79	-.32	-19.24	2.81	-.39	-18.68	2.79	-.29
ER							3.04	.92	.16	3.13	2.55	.93	2.68	.92	.14
ME										-3.63	1.80	-.09	-4.46	1.82	-.12
FE													3.57	1.74	.09
R <sup>2</sup>			.61			.72			.73			.74			.74
F			220.36			170.91			126.09			97.73			80.88
R <sup>2</sup>			.61			.09			.02			.01			.01

Note: EM= Empathy, GE=Gender, ER= Emotion Regulation, ME= Mother's Education, FE= Father's Education, CI= Confidence Interval, LL= Lower Limit, UP=Upper Limit, B= Unstandardized Coefficient,  $\beta$ = Standardized Coefficient.

Table 2 showed stepwise regression analysis to test the prediction of behavioral problem by demographics, empathy and emotion regulation. The result generated four models. The model one consists of one factor i.e. empathy, which is found a predictor of the behavioral problems of the students in both school and madrassa ( $\beta$ =-.61,  $p$ <.01). Model 2<sup>nd</sup> indicated that gender is a significant predictor of the behavioral problems ( $\beta$ =-.72,  $p$ <.01). Model 3<sup>rd</sup> results indicate that the emotion regulation is a significant predictor of behavioral problems in students ( $\beta$ =.73,  $p$ <.01). Model 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> results indicate that the mother's education and father education are significant predictors of behavioral problems in students.

**Table 3**

*Independent sample t-test between Boys and Girls for Behavioral Problems, Empathy and Emotion Regulation in Students (N=140)*

Variable	Boys	Girls	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	( <i>n</i> = 70)	( <i>n</i> = 70)			LL	UL	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )					
Behavioral problems	56.88(39.38)	31.10(10.63)	5.28	.01	16.13	35.42	0.89
Empathy	85.03(14.13)	88.46(10.36)	-1.64	.50	-7.57	.71	.25
Emotion regulation	123.73(22.31)	125.10(20.35)	-.39	.70	-8.51	5.76	.06

Note: *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, CI = Class Interval, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit, \*\* $p$ <.01

Table 3 indicates an independent sample t-test comparing the behavioral problems of students in different education systems; School, Madrassa. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in behavioral problems of the students belonging to school ( $M$ =22.47,  $SD$ = 6.94) and madrassa ( $M$ =65.64,  $SD$ =31.69). That showed that behavioral problems in madrassa students are more as compared to school students.

**Table 4**

*Independent sample t-test between School and Madrassa students for Behavioral Problems (N=140)*

Variables	School (N=70)	Madrassa (N=70)	t	p	95%CI		Cohen's d
	M(SD)	M(SD)			LL	UL	
Behavioral Problems	22.47(6.94)	65.64(31.69)	-11.13	.01	-50.83	-35.49	1.88

*Note: M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, CI= Class Interval, LL= Lower Limit, UL= Upper Limit, \*\*p<.00*

Table 4 indicates an independent sample t-test comparing the behavioral problems of students in different education systems; School, Madrassa. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in behavioral problems of the students belonging to school (M=22.47, SD= 6.94) and madrassa (M=65.64, SD=31.69). That showed that behavioral problems in madrassa students are more as compared to school students.

**Table 5**

*Descriptive of One-Way Analysis of Variance on Mother's education, Father's education of School and Madrassa Students (N=140)*

Variables	SS	Df	MS	F	p
Father's education					
Between Groups	44.81	55	.81	1.35	.10
Within Groups	50.10	83	.70		
Total	94.92	138			
Mother's education					
Between Groups	50.33	55	.91	1.76	.01
Within Groups	42.97	83	.51		
Total	93.30	138			

*Note: SS= Sum of square, df= Degree of freedom, MS= Mean square, p<.05*

Table 5 shows the mean difference between different categories of mother's education and father's education as dependent variables and behavioral problems as independent variable. The results indicate that the behavioral problems are significantly affected by mother's education and father's education does not significantly affect the behavioral problems in students.

### Discussion

The study showed that there is significant relationship among behavioral problems, empathy and emotion regulation. The study showed that school students have more empathy and are better able to regulate their emotions as compared to madrassa students. A study conducted by Hidayah and Prasetya (2019) confirmed that hypothesis and showed that school promote empathy and emotion regulation in students and there are fewer behavioral problems in school students. Thus, it is concluded that madrassa students have more behavioral problems.

Behavioral problems are significantly predicted by empathy and emotion regulation in school and madrassa students. The findings of the study showed that the behavioral problems can be significantly predicted by empathy and emotion regulation. Wills et al. (2006) supported the results showed that the emotion regulation in children led to less problematic behavior and promote pro-social behavior in them. The prosocial behavior in children leads to empathetic nature of children.

There was a significant difference found in behavioral problems in school and madrassa students on the base of gender. These problems occur more in boys as compared to girls. A study conducted by Syed et al. (2009) supported the results and showed that behavioral problems are more in boys as compared to the girls. Girls were found to be more sympathetic and empathetic. While, boys considered to be less empathetic (Ahmad et al., 2009). Moreover, there is a significant gender difference in empathy in school and madrassa students. The statistical analysis showed that there is no significant difference in the empathy of school and madrassa students on the base of gender. That's means that gender has no influence on the level of empathy in students (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003). A study conducted by Warden and Mackinnon (2003) supported the results, that study indicated that prosocial children were more empathic. That means that empathy has nothing to do with gender, it was found to be associated with prosocial behaviors. So, students who have less behavioral problems will be more empathetic in nature.

Furthermore, there was a significant gender difference found in emotion regulation between school and madrassa students. While, the statistically analysis in the study showed that there is no significant difference of emotion regulation on the base of gender is students. The hypothesis was rejected. A study conducted by Wills (2006) showed that regulation of emotion led to less problematic behavior and promote pro-social behavior in children in general. That means that means that emotion regulation is more linked to behavioral problems as compared to gender. So, it is concluded that empathy and emotion regulation is connected to behavioral problems in students. The students who are empathetic will be better able to regulate their emotions.

The education system had a significant effect on the behavioral problems of the students. The statistical analysis verified the hypothesis and showed that madrassas students have more behavioral problems as compared to students in schools. A study conducted by Iqbal (2015) support the results and stated that the students of schools had the high level of the moral development that led to less behavioral problems in them as comparison to the madrassa students. That's means that students from school have fewer behavioral problems as compared to the madrassa students.

Moreover, mother's education and father's education had a significant effect on the behavioral problems of students. The results showed that the mother's education had an influence on the occurrence of behavioral problems in the students. While, father's education was found non-significant with the behavioral problems of students. A study was conducted by Adhikari et al. (2015) supported these findings that mother's education is directly linked to the behavioral problems of the students. That's means that children of educated mothers will have fewer behavioral problems while less educated mothers have children with more behavioral problems. So, mother's education was found to be an important factor in describing behavioral problems in the students.

### **Conclusion**

The current study was conducted to explore the relationship between behavioral problems, empathy and emotion regulation in school and madrassa students. Different

statistical analyses like t-test test, person product moment correlation, regression analysis and one way analysis of variance was used to analyze the data. The result of the study showed that the students belonging to madrassa have more behavioral problems as compared to students in school. The results further showed that behavioral problems are more in boys as compared to the girls. It was found that behavioral problems were significantly predicted by empathy and emotion regulation in school and madrassa students. Furthermore, the results indicated that mother's education is significantly related to the behavioral problem in children as compared to father's education.

### Limitations of the Study

The present study was conducted on the sample size of 140 students from school and madrassa from Lahore and Chiniot. As the sample size is small so it is difficult to generalize the results. The present study was done on the urban population so these results generalize the results to the rural population. The students were difficult to approach because of the pandemic situation. The quarantine situation made it difficult to approach students.

### Implications and Recommendations

The present study has implications for the school and madrassa administration. The present study guides the parents, school and madrassa administration and counselor about the relation of behavioral problems, empathy and emotion regulation in students. Knowledge about different behavioral problems in students and how it affects them in wide range can be examined by educating the parents and teachers. Behavioral problems of the students should be identified at school and madrassa. Different activities should be planned in schools and madrassa to improve students' conduct. The present study will be helpful for the future researchers to explore the relationship of behavioral problem, empathy and emotion regulation.

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