

## **Challenges of Teaching Children with Opposition Defiant Disorder in Some Primary Schools in Makurdi Benue State**

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### **Abstract**

The study investigated the challenges of teaching children with Opposition Defiant Disorder (ODD) in some selected schools in Makurdi metropolis. The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design. All the 41 teachers in the selected primary schools were studied. Data were collected using the Oppositional Defiant Disorder Questionnaire (ODDQ). Hypotheses for the study were tested using the t-test statistics. The study found no significant difference between mean response of male and female teachers on the behaviours that pupils with ODD exhibit during classroom activities. Similarly, no significant difference was found between the mean response of male and female teachers on the challenges of teaching pupils with ODD. Also, the study found no significant difference between mean response of male and female teachers on the management skills that can help the teachers in teaching pupils with ODD without obstruction during class activities. It was concluded that pupils with ODD exhibit similar negative behaviours during classroom activities with mean responses ranging from 3.59 to 4.54. Teaching pupils with ODD leaves the teachers with series of challenges and these can be addressed through the management skills identified. It was recommended that parents, guardians, and family members should increase positive parenting such as providing supportive and consistent supervision and discipline as it can help to reduce inappropriate and disruptive behaviours; and that those teachers should be given more special training through courses and workshops in the area to have enough knowledge about ODD and in areas of effective behaviour management skills and cognitive behavioural interventions.

**Key words:** Opposition defiant disorder, Challenges, Teaching, Behaviours, Management skills

### **Introduction**

In their academic endeavours, students with behaviour difficulties encounter not only academic challenges, but also social and psychological challenges.

There are number of behaviour problems such as conduct disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder among others, which school children exhibit in the classroom, but this

research specifically centered on Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD).

Oppositional Defiant Disorder is a form of anger, hot-tempered mood, confrontation or deviant behaviour, or nastiness which last for at least six months as evidenced by at least few symptoms exhibited during interaction with an individual who is not a blood relative (American Psychological Association, 2013). Oppositional Defiant Disorder manifest through loss of temper, disobedience to rules, sluggish, stubbornness, argues extremely, resentful, easily annoyed, ungovernable, unteachable, desire to harm, vindictive and disturbing. Such individuals are often older than five years (Kyevea, Ireri, & Menecha, 2021). It is a childhood behaviour disorder which portrays the child as troublesome, always opposing adults, engages in repeated arguments and exhibit hostile and disruptive behaviour towards peers and adults alike.

There is no clear-cut cause of ODD. However, Urie Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory in 1977 which focuses on human growth and considers all of the factors that affect it, indicates that the quality and context of people's lives is seen through developmental stages that take place within the context of complex interrelated systems. Bronfenbrenner realized that larger societal issues influence human interaction, and that knowing these influences is crucial for understanding an individual. This may be linked to ODD because the children's interactions with the system in their environment cause them to behave abnormally (Kyevea et al., 2021). ODD is caused by a lack of consistency between the child

and his or her environment, both immediate and extended.

According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, published in 1977, the majority of learning is achieved through people's perceptions and reflections on their experiences. They learn through imitating the actions of others around them. As a result, youngsters learn by watching and mimicking the actions of others. According to this theory, the negative symptoms of ODD are taught attitudes. They mimic the negative reinforcement strategies utilized by parents and others in positions of control. Negative reinforcement encourages a child's ODD behaviour. This is because these behaviours help the youngster to acquire what he or she wants: parental or other people's attention and reactions. The study was anchored on the social learning theory and ecological systems theory.

Majority of experts believe that a combination of biological, psychological, and social risks factors plays a role in the development of the disorder (Burke, Loeber, & Birmaher, 2002). On the basis of biological variables, children and adolescents are more likely to acquire ODD if they have a parent who has had a history of ADHD, ODD, or conduct disorder (CD); a parent with a mental disorder (such as depression or bipolar disorder); a parent who drinks or uses drugs; a brain chemical imbalance; impairment in the portion of the brain responsible for logic, judgment, and impulse control; a woman who smokes while pregnant; exposure to toxins; poor nutrition (Burke, Loeber, & Birmaher, 2002).

Psychological factors that play a role in the development of ODD include a poor relationship with one or more

parent; a neglectful or absent parent; a difficulty or inability to form social relationships or process social cues. Social factors include poverty; a chaotic environment; abuse; neglect; a lack of supervision; un-involved parents; inconsistent discipline; family instability such as divorce (Burke, Loeber, & Birmaher, 2002).

Oppositional Defiant Disorder affects approximately 3.3% of all children and adolescent with a life time prevalence of 12.6%. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In addition, issues related to ODD are usually severely impairing and co-occur with ADHD, anxiety disorders, mood related conditions (Martel et al, 2012). ODD-related issues have a significant impact on individuals' everyday functioning, as well as their interactions with peers, family members, and other caregivers, due to their disruptive nature and high comorbidity with other illnesses (Greene et al, 2002).

Externalizing behaviour difficulties and negative emotions are the two key symptom categories now utilized to diagnose ODD (Frick & Nigg, 2012). These symptoms of ODD are listed in the DSM-V that includes; arguing with authority figures or adults; actively defying or refusing to obey rules or requests from authority figures; wilfully annoying others; blaming others for their own mistakes or misbehaviours; prone to being touchy, irritable or easily losing temper; often being resentful, and spiteful or vindictive at least twice within the past six months (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

For ODD diagnosis to be considered, the presence of four or more symptoms is required for a period of six months. Symptoms must be frequent and

persistence that exceed similar behaviours in typical peers i.e., contribute to significant distress and impaired social, educational and occupational functioning. ODD is considered to be the most prevalent childhood psychiatric conditions in need of psychological services (Olfson et al, 2014).

The prevalence of ODD reported in clinical research differs greatly (1 percent to 11 percent). According to data from community sampling, the frequency in some communities could be as high as 15.6 percent (Munkvold et al., 2011). Because of the high rate of referral, studies of outpatient settings find a relatively high proportion of clinical presentations of ODD, ranging from 28 percent to 65 percent (Boylan et al; 2007). Based on age, gender, and contextual circumstances, there are significant variances in the presentation of ODD.

In terms of age, ODD symptoms are most common in preschool and later in adolescence. Oppositional Defiant Disorder is said to be influenced by a child's temperament, despite the fact that there are no established biological or genetic predictors for the disease (Loeber et al: 2009). Gender differences in ODD suggests that boys meet criteria more frequently than girls in the ratio 1.4: 1, in preschool and elementary school years (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). However, gender differences appear to disappear in adolescence and beyond (Munkvold, et al; 2011). Girls, on the other hand, appear to be at a higher risk of developing depression later in life as a result of ODD (Burke, et al; 2010), boys show a greater tendency in developing conduct disorder (Rowe, et al; 2010)

Environmental factors known to contribute to the emergence of ODD comprise of higher family conflict and parenting stress as well as other socio-economic variables (Lavigne, et al; 2012). According to Lavigne, et al (2012) proof has been shown to date suggest that ODD symptoms are most directly accounted for by families report of parenting stress and poorer family functioning.

These negative behaviours often affect the performance of such children in school. According to Landrum, Tankersley, and Kauffman, (2003) there are many children in school age that suffer from deferent behaviour disorders, which negatively affects their academic achievements, and relationships with their peers, teachers, or parents. Teachers are typically responsible for confronting and correcting these behaviours in the classroom in order to achieve the educational process's goals (Barela, Bernardino, Ana, Feliciano, & Averion, 2018). Teachers' gender roles, on the other hand, may have an impact on how they educate children. In terms of structure and rules, for example, male and female teachers may provide different learning and classroom environments (De Zeeuw *et al*, 2015). Female teachers, according to Abaoud (2016), are more likely than male teachers to implement intervention strategies aimed at improving students' academic achievement, which corresponds to the feminine instinct of care and warmth.

Mishar, Garg, & Desai (2014) in Indore city, asserted that the prevalence of ODD is 7.73% between primary school pupils. In Nigeria, Frank-Briggs and Alikor (2008) reported a prevalence of

15.82%. However, Akpan at al. (2020) found a prevalence of 9.8% among primary school children in Southern Nigeria. It is clear from this statistic that there is high percentage of ODD in primary school, because the effects of this disorder affect the people surrounding the pupils such as peers and teachers in the classroom. Therefore, the impact of this disorder on a pupil leads to academic obstacles. In Skoulos, and Georgiana (2007) study pointed out that, pupils of ODD have social disability, low academic efficiency, and their behavioural disorders are more than pupils without ODD. These pupils with ODD often interrupt their teachers while class is going on, bother their peer during studies, make noise in the classroom, they refuse to answer question asked by the teacher and they do not asked questions in the classroom

According to Boesky (2011), ODD children and teenagers refuse to obey rules or respond to adult commands. Children with ODD exhibit anger towards people for unclear reasons, ignore matters, annoy others, cannot monitor temper, devastate things, and demonstrate little honour for parents and teachers (Barkley & Benton, 2013). In middle elementary school, children with ODD experience not only academic but also social and psychological challenges in their scholastic endeavours.

Students with such behavioural issues make teachers' efforts in the classroom tedious and ineffective (Jessor, 2013). As it impacts them and other students in the classroom, students with ODD display behaviour that hampers efficient teaching and learning. They find reading, writing, mathematics and concentration difficult. Some may

also have language delays and find talking about emotions difficult. Pupils or students with ODD can have trouble communicating, making friends and develop low self-esteem. These behaviours have an impact on both staff and children, and they have the potential to destroy well-established positive classroom settings (Gresham et al; 2002). Infantino and Little (2005) assert that these disruptive behaviours that students with ODD exhibit have direct effects on the student's academic performance and future outcomes. And this can lead to pupils or student acting out, exerting further stress on the teacher. Teachers who work with these pupils face increased stress, which has a direct impact on their mental health (Westling, Herzog, Cooper-Duff, Prohn, & Ray, 2006). Because of these behaviours exhibited by pupils with ODD in the classroom, teachers find it difficult to teach them, control and interact with them. Through interaction with some teachers in some of the primary schools while conducting another study, the researchers discovered that the teachers have some ODD pupils in their classes and decided to identify the challenges of teaching children with ODD in some selected schools in Makurdi metropolis in Benue State.

**Objectives of the study:** The major objective of this study was to identify the challenges of teaching children with opposition defiant disorder in some primary schools in Makurdi Benue state. Specifically, the study ascertained the;

1. behaviours that pupils with ODD exhibit during classroom activities;
2. the challenges faced in teaching pupils with ODD; and

3. the management skills that could help the teacher in teaching pupils with ODD.

### **Hypotheses**

Three null hypotheses were formulated for the study.

- H<sub>0</sub>1. There is no significant difference between mean response of male and female teachers on the behaviours that pupils with ODD exhibit during classroom activities
- H<sub>0</sub>2. There is no significant difference between the mean response of male and female teachers on the challenges of teaching pupils with ODD.
- H<sub>0</sub>3. There is no significant difference between mean response of male and female teachers on the management skills that can help the teachers teach pupils with ODD without obstruction during class activities.

### **Methodology**

*Research design:* The research design considered appropriate for this study was the cross-sectional survey research. The design involved the use of questionnaires to gather data.

*Participants:* Population of the study consists of 41 teachers in the three schools selected in Makurdi metropolis in Benue State. The selected schools are; Federal staff nursery and primary schools High-Level, Makurdi, Benue State University Staff School Km 5 Gboko road in Makurdi, and Nan-Tor nursery and primary school Gyado Villa in Makurdi. No further sampling was carried as the population was manageable.

*Instrument for data collection:* The instrument used for data gathering was Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Questionnaire (ODDQ). The instrument adopted a 5-point Likert scale with Strongly Agree SA-5Points, Agree A-4 points, Strongly Disagree SA-3points, and Disagree D-2 Points, Undecided-1point. The instrument was validated by three experts in Child development at Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi.

*Data Collection Techniques:* A total of 41 copies of the questionnaire were distributed by hand on the teachers by the researchers. All the copies of questionnaire administered were returned 100 percent.

*Informed consent:* The consent of the teachers were obtained using a form. The voluntary nature of participation and confidentiality of data were duly explained to them before they signed the form.

*Data and Statistical Analysis:* Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the three objectives of the

study. The hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistics. The acceptable mean level for the study is 3.0 and above. The analysis was carried out with the aid of SPSS version 21.

## Results

### The behaviours that pupils with ODD exhibit during classroom activities

Table 1 shows the respondents view on the behaviours exhibited by pupils with ODD during classroom activities. The mean responses shows that frequent temper tantrums had a mean of 4.54, often questioning rules with the mean of 4.37, followed by Excessive arguments with adults with the mean of 4.29. Others include actively refusing to comply with request and rules with the mean of 4.17, deliberately annoying and upsetting others with the mean of 4.20, and vindictiveness mean of 3.59 among others.

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the behaviour’s pupils with ODD exhibit during classroom activities**  
N = 41

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark	t value	P-values
Frequent temper tantrums	4.54	0.84	Agreed		
Excessive arguments with adults	4.29	1.03	Agreed		
Actively refusing to comply with request and rules	4.17	1.24	Agreed	0.274	0.785
Often questioning rules	4.37	1.09	Agreed		
Deliberately annoying and upsetting others	4.20	1.08	Agreed		
Often touchy or annoyed by others	4.12	1.08	Agreed		
Blaming others for their mistakes	3.61	1.34	Agreed		
Frequent outbursts of anger and resentment	3.90	1.26	Agreed		
Spiteful attitude and revenge seeking	3.80	1.44	Agreed		
Aggressiveness	3.98	1.17	Agreed		
Vindictiveness	3.59	1.40	Agreed		

**Challenges of teaching pupils with ODD**

Table 2 shows that respondents agreed that the following are the challenges of teaching pupils with ODD. Bulling others during lessons in the classroom and making un-necessary noise during class lessons with the mean of 4.37 and 4.39 which are the highest. Followed by

going out of the classroom at will during class lessons and interrupting the teacher while lesson is going on with the mean of 4.12 each, inattentiveness and prefers be alone with the mean of 3.93 and 3.90 respectively, lack of problem-solving skills with the lowest mean of 3.37.

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the challenges of teaching pupils with ODD**

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks	t value	P values
Bulling other pupils during lessons in the classroom	4.37	0.89	Agreed		
Get upset by other pupils during class discussion	4.02	1.13	Agreed		
Go out of the classroom at will during class lessons	4.12	1.17	Agreed	0.333	0.741
Interrupt a teacher while class is going on	4.12	0.95	Agreed		
Make un-necessary noise during class lessons	4.39	0.83	Agreed		
Shout answers to other pupils during examination	3.66	1.22	Agreed		
Gets angry when question is asked during class lessons	3.68	1.23	Agreed		
Lack of problem-solving skills	3.37	1.24	Agreed		
Inattentiveness	3.93	1.13	Agreed		
Prefers to be alone during lessons	3.90	1.24	Agreed		
Easily distracted during class lessons	3.61	1.39	Agreed		

N = 41

**Management skills that help teachers in teaching pupils with ODD**

Table 3 shows the management skills that can help the teachers in teaching pupils with ODD. Result revealed that using reward system and using lots of praise had the highest response with the

mean of 4.54 and 4.51 respectively. Ignore the pupil’s disruptive behaviours and turn arguments into discussion with the mean of 3.85 and 4.34, avoid public reprimands with the mean of 4.02 and listening to the pupils before reacting with the lowest mean of 3.29.

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the management skills helpful to teachers in teaching Pupils with ODD**

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark	t value	P values
Use lots of praise	4.51	0.64	Agreed		
provide a warm and nurturing environment	4.24	0.80	Agreed	2.585	0.14
Use a reward system	4.54	0.78	Agreed		
Turn arguments into discussion	4.34	0.94	Agreed		
Give choices	4.37	0.83	Agreed		
Ignore the pupil's disruptive behaviours	3.85	0.94	Agreed		
Avoid intimidation	3.63	1.09	Agreed		
Avoid public reprimands	4.02	1.01	Agreed		
Avoid quick changes in normal routines	3.78	1.06	Agreed		
Avoid tasks that are beyond the pupil's ability	3.39	1.38	Agreed		
Listen to the pupil before reacting	3.29	1.40	Agreed		

N =41

### Discussion of findings

The major behaviour exhibited by pupils with ODD during classroom activities are frequent temper tantrums, often questioning followed by excessive arguments with adults and vindictiveness. Other behaviours exhibited include: actively refusing to comply with rules and request; deliberately annoying and upsetting others; aggressiveness; spiteful attitude and revenge-seeking. This agrees with what Burke et al. (2014) identified as behaviours exhibited during classroom activities by pupils with ODD which comprised of being touchy, or easily annoyed, angry, and resentful, loses temper, argues, defies, or refuses to comply with rules given, blame others, deliberately annoys, spiteful or vindictive. Also, children who are diagnosed with ODD exhibit a recurrent pattern of emotional and behavioural symptoms, including anger or irritable

mood, argumentative, defiant behaviours, and vindictiveness towards authority figures (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The study found no significant difference between mean response of male and female teachers on the behaviours that pupils with ODD exhibit during classroom activities.

The challenges faced by teachers in teaching pupils with ODD are the same. These challenges are bullying other pupils during lesson in the classroom and making un-necessary noise during class lesson with the mean 4.37 and 4.39 respectively, followed by going out of the classroom at will during class lessons, and interrupting their teacher while class is on with the mean of 4.12 each, lack of problem-solving skills with the mean of 3.37. other challenges faced by teachers while teaching pupils during class discussion, inattentiveness, gets angry when question is asked during class lessons, shout answers to other

pupils during examinations, easily distracted during class lesson among others. This agrees with Fite et al. (2014) that children with high level of ODD symptoms are more likely to experience physical and relational forms of victimization as well as to engage in bullying behaviour. Students with such behavioural issues make teachers' efforts in the classroom tedious and ineffective (Jessor, 2013). The behaviour of such students obstructs efficient teaching and learning since it impacts them and other students in the classroom. Also, there are many students in school age suffering from ODD, which negatively affects students' academic achievements and relationships with their peers, teachers or parents (Landrum et al., 2003). It was found that there was no significant difference between the mean response of male and female teachers on the challenges of teaching pupils with ODD. In finding solutions to the challenges similar approaches in the management of the students in the classroom could be adopted and shared among the teachers.

The management skills that can help teachers in teaching pupils with ODD includes using lots of praise and using a reward system, provide a warm and nurturing environment, turn arguments in to discussion, give choices, avoid public reprimands, avoid quick changes in normal routines, avoid task that are beyond the pupil's ability, listen to the pupil before reacting, among others. Teachers are typically responsible for dealing with disruptive behaviour and addressing it in the classroom in order to achieve the educational process's objectives (Barela et al., 2018). The effects of ODD emphasize the important role of teachers to use appropriate management skills to deal with oppositional

behaviour to improve social and anger control skills (Fraser & Wray, 2008). These management skills are needed by teachers when there is noise in the classroom as well as ODD pupils bordering their peer group or interrupt a teacher while class is going on. These management skills are significant to develop pupils' behaviour and academic achievements.

According to Salend and Sylvestre (2015), some of these management skills that can assist teachers during class work with their pupils includes allow a student to choose one between two options, because it helps a pupil to pick an appropriate place, avoid speaking when pupils' status is oppositional, and talk softly to him or her at appropriate time (Pierangelo, & George, 2008). Improve self-confidence of pupils by encouraging and emphasizing every good work that they do, Train them to become relax, comfortable and flexible especially when their requirements have not been implemented. Applying behavioural management skills effectively requires understanding the features of ODD pupils which is one of the teaching challenges demands or tasks (Salend & Sylvestre, 2015). Undiyaundeye (2018) also ascertain that meeting pupils needs especially for students who have disability in inclusive classroom as teacher should modify lessons and activities to fit their abilities. Todras (2008) agrees that teachers have skills to control misbehaviours. According to Briesch, et al. (2012), mainstream teachers cite a number of reasons for classroom difficulties with these pupils, the most frequent one being defiance. Other behavioural concerns include inappropriate physical behaviour, aggression, social problems,

abusive language, destruction of classroom property, extended tantrums and self-harm behaviours (Briesch, et al; 2012).

The study found no significant difference between mean response of male and female teachers on the management skills that can help the teachers in teaching pupils with ODD without obstruction during class activities. This implies that the management skills can be applied by all the teachers. This is contrary to Abaoud (2016), who found that female teachers are more likely than male teachers to implement intervention strategies aimed at improving students' academic achievement.

### **Conclusion**

Oppositional Defiant Disorder is one of the groups of behavioural disorders that comprised of different patterns of disobedience, hostile, and defiant behaviour directed towards authority figures. Pupils with ODD often rebel, are stubborn, argue with adults, and refuse to obey instructions. They have anger outbursts and have a hard time controlling their temper. However, it is typically the job of teachers to confront these behaviours and handle them in the school setting in order to achieve the educational process's goals. Therefore, the study established some management skills that the teachers can use, while teaching pupils with ODD which can enhanced their learning, and curb most of their disruptive behaviours during class activities to enhance optimal educational status.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. Families and parents should increase positive parenting practices such as providing supportive and consistent supervision and discipline to help reduce inappropriate and disruptive behaviours.
2. Teachers, especially general education instructors require more training courses and workshops in this field to gain sufficient knowledge about ODD. They should be trained on effective behaviour management skills and cognitive behavioural interventions that focus on coping skills and emotion regulation training.
3. Government should establish parent-management training programs and family therapy to teach parents and other family members how to manage the child's behaviour. Parents, family members, and other caregivers should be taught techniques in positive reinforcement and ways to discipline more effectively.
4. Home Economists especially those who specialized in child development or child psychology, should set up programs on cognitive problem-solving skills training for teachers to equip them to help the pupils with ODD reduce inappropriate behaviours by teaching them positive ways of responding to stressful situations and how to see situations and respond appropriately. Also, they should include social skills programs to teach the pupils how to relate more positively with their peers and ways to improve their school work as

these therapies are more successful when conducted in a natural environment such as at school or in a social group.

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