

## **Teachers' Perceptions about Behavioral Problems, their Attitudes towards Students with Behavioral Problems and Techniques they Employ in Managing Behavioral Problems: The Case of Primary Schools in Addis Ababa**

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**Abstract:** Educating all learners, irrespective of their abilities and disabilities, and empowering schools of inclusive are the current philosophy of education. It is common to see students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBDs) in schools today. Educating students to their unique needs and abilities is challenging for most schools. It is believed that appropriate education significantly improves the academic and social functioning of students with EBDs. But in view of teachers' training in Ethiopia, which until recently, characterized by no course on Special Needs Education, it is difficult to say that teachers handle properly students with EBDs. The study, thus, examines teachers' attitudes toward and their perceptions about the magnitude of student behavioral problems. It also examines the desirable techniques teachers employ to handle the students. A 56-item rating scale was administered to 806 teachers who were selected using a multi-stage cluster sampling technique from 20 primary schools in Addis Ababa. The results indicate that, though teachers' perception of the magnitude of behavioral problem is not optimum, it is found to be more or less realistic. The study also shows that the attitude of most teachers towards students with behavioral problem is predominantly positive though it needs improvement. The study further reveals that most teachers use acceptable/desirable techniques to handle students' with behavioral problem although they also use negative reactive techniques including corporal punishment. The findings are compared and contrasted in relation to teacher training and current inclusive education move in Ethiopia.

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## Background

Education for all and schools for everyone, evolutions in the philosophical underpinnings and prescriptions about education over the recent years, have metamorphosed schools of diversity. Inclusive education, which is the prime mantra of current schools across the world, has thrust on schools today the responsibility of admitting and educating students with diverse abilities and disabilities and handling them according to their abilities and needs. Students with behavioral problems or students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBDs) are common in schools. Educating and supporting these students in general education classrooms are the true challenges of teachers today. Lane, 1999; Lane et al., 2001 indicate that the behavioral problems of the students are reduced when students are engaged in academic activities. If they are not handled properly, they likely are to be in emotional pain and isolation and may perhaps even engage in ever increasing antisocial activities (Smith, 2004). Ironically schools sometimes generate and maintain emotional behavioral problems in students (Kumar, 2011).

Many studies have shown that the scholastic performance of most students with EBDs is not as good as that of the general student population (Bower, 1981; Duncan et al, 1995; Reid et al, 2004). Studies show that these students generally earn lower grades, fail more courses, repeat in grades more often, and have difficulties in adjusting to adult life (Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003). All these imply the importance of educating students with EBDs in accordance with their specific needs and problems.

Kauffman & Landrum (2009) say that children and youth with EBDs do not often know how to make and keep friends which result into their social exclusion by their peers, adding fuel to their unpleasant existence in schools. If they succeed in making friends, it would be with 'deviant' peers (Farmer, 2000; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). As a result, these children are socially isolated and often engage in aggression and hostility. It is reasonable to infer that the alienation these children

experience, owing to their social rejection and/or social withdrawal, could prompt them to engage in additional behavioral problems that they use as coping strategies. However, if students with EBDs are educated and supported in accordance with their unique behavioral problems, they can improve academically and socially. Lack of support or inappropriate interventions can harm them including those who live and work with them.

Ethiopia has endorsed the principles of inclusive education and joined the inclusive education movement. Inclusive education explicitly demands that all learners, regardless of their abilities and disabilities, should be educated together in a regular schools nearly their home. Taking a learner from the regular classroom and placing her/him in a classroom special facility, according to the principles of inclusive education, is an option to be considered only when it becomes an absolute necessity. Students' safety and appropriate education could sometimes demand the placement of students with EBDs in special facilities, which has to be done at the last resort as appropriate (Crockett & Kauffman, 1999). Hence, educating and supporting the majority of students with EBDs is an unavoidable responsibility of today's teachers and schools. This is a challenging demand for teachers and schools as they are not prepared for this highly professional task. Given the challenge, one may be interested to know how well teachers in Ethiopian primary schools are carrying out their tasks. Ways in which teachers educate and support students with EBDs can be understood by examining back teachers' perception about their attitudes towards the students with EBDs.

There are view local studies conducted on the area of EBDs, which have focused in techniques that teachers use primary schools to handle or manage students' with behavioral problems. The local studies show that teachers' use disciplinary measures in handling students with EBDs, which are not recommended as they are punitive in their nature (Ayalew, 1996; Feleke, 2010; Merga, 2008; Seleshi, 2001). According to the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child; UN (1989), punitive measures do not have any scientific and legal bases. The country has accepted and signed

the convention prohibit punitive measures against children. But teachers still resort to punitive measures negative behaviours, there has been some changes over the last recent years as teachers started to use positive and proactive behavioural management in supporting students with EBDs in Ethiopian schools which needs investigation.

The researchers could not come across any local study that examined the magnitude of the problem of students with EBDs, and teachers' perceptions about and attitudes towards the students with EBDs. This study tries to fill in this gap contributing contextually relevant knowledge and research finding. Studies conducted elsewhere reported teachers' unrealistic and fragmented understanding of behavioral problems (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009) and predominantly negative attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in general schools (Agran et al, 2002; Soodak, et al, 1998). Further, positive teacher attitudes have been reported as predictors of favorable teaching practices (Avramidis et al, 2000; Harvey, 1992).

There is a positive development trend that may help teachers of Ethiopian schools accomplish their task better. The Ministry of Education (MoE) recently included a course on Special Needs Education in the curricula of all teachers' education programs. This course may help to familiarize candidates with pertinent issues on special needs and inclusive education. The course may thus help to raise the candidates' awareness and their understanding of special needs education and the needs of children with special needs including those with EBDs.

Despite this positive development and the authorization of inclusive education, the MoE has not accomplished much. As a result, the reality on the ground does not show much changes or progress. Firstly, schools are not well equipped with resources (Tirussew, 2005). Secondly, one cannot often find teachers trained in special needs education in every school.

Therefore, basic questions the need answers are: "how do teachers in Addis Ababa Primary Schools manage students with EBDs?" "How positive

and realistic are their attitudes towards and perceived magnitude of EBD in their schools? ” The complex and demanding task of teachers that accompanies the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools along with the limited progress made on the ground have initiated the researchers to seek answers to the above questions. It is believed that primary schools in Addis Ababa would create contexts to examine teachers' attitudes, perceptions and management of problems related to students with EBDs in the absence of adequate training in special needs education as well as in the absence of resources necessary to support children with EBDs and other disabilities.

### **Objectives**

Thus this study tries to:

- a) evaluate teachers' perception about the students with EBDs, the magnitude of students' with behavioral problems;
- b) assess teachers attitudes towards behavioral problems and that of students with behavioral problems and
- c) examine the desirability and appropriateness of the measures that teachers generally adopt to deal with students with behavioral problems.

The existing policy emerging from within the country and from international initiatives, mandate the schooling children in inclusive settings regardless of their level of ability (MoE, 2006, 1994). It is well known that children with EBDs form a significant portion of such student population. How are such students educated and handled in Ethiopian school? The landscape is neither impressive nor promising. The available evidence highlights that most of the techniques used by teachers and others in Ethiopian schools have no any scientific backing. Many of techniques needs by teachers, even, do not take into account the very basic rights of children.

It is high time that educating students with behavioral problem in Ethiopia has a right take-off. This could be done only if we know exactly what is being done in treating students with behavioral problem. What is being done has to be understood and analyzed against teachers' attitudes towards students with behavioral problem and the teachers' perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs. It is very vital to know what measures are generally used by teachers in their efforts to hand students with behavioral problem and see to what extent their handlings go with the empirically validated techniques and approaches. If it helped that the finding of such studies would help teachers to strengthen their ability to prevent and/or manage behavioral problems school students.

### **Method**

The study is a correlational research that aims to explore and/or describe ways in which students with behavioral problems are handled in primary schools in Addis Ababa. It also aims at describing the relationships of teachers' perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs, their attitudes towards EBDs and the desirability of the management techniques used by teachers to deal with the problems.

### **Sample**

Eight hundred and six teachers working in Addis Ababa primary schools were selected using multistage cluster sampling method. Addis Ababa city is divided into 10 sub-cities. For the purpose of this study, 10 sub-cities (40% representation) were selected using simple random sampling technique. There were 37 government primary schools in these four sub-cities. Of these, 20 (54%) were selected randomly taking into account the number of schools in each sub-city. All teachers in the 20 schools who were available during data collection were involved in the study. Totally, 806 teachers (386 male and 403 female, and 17 who did not specify their gender) were data sources for the study. The mean age of the teachers were 31.40 years (SD = 11.35).

### ***Instruments***

A 56- items rating scale of three subscales was developed for the data collection. The terms focused on assessing perceived magnitude of students with behavioral problem attitudes of teachers towards behavioral problems and students with behavioral problems and techniques that teachers used to manage and/or educate students with behavioral problems. Since the core of the inquiry targeted behavioral problems and to ensure that the respondents conceptualized rightly behavioral problems, an operational definition of behavioral problem was given in the letter addressed to the teachers.

Items in the questionnaire were divided into three categories. The first two categories had a Likert scale of a five-point which ranged from 'frequently' to 'never'. Responses of the teachers to each category were calculated to obtain total scores. Higher scores indicated realistic perceptions, positive attitudes and desirable techniques employed.

In the process of instrument development, firstly, an item pool was developed based on an exhaustive review of the literature. Consultations made teachers and experts in the area of Special Needs Education also helped to generate more items which had not been considered. The literature review and consultations made with teachers and experts together yielded 69 items. Secondly, each of the 69 items was scrutinized for distinctiveness and clarity. Redundant items were discarded while some items which lacked clarity were revised. Accordingly, 56 items of rating scales qualified for data collection. Each item was examined in terms of its culture fairness. Furthermore, the items were examined in terms of their appropriateness to assess each of the three constructs by two experts in the area of Special Needs Education. The experts were also asked to give their suggestions that helped in refining the items. The internal consistencies of the items in the three sub-scales were estimated using Cronbach's alpha: 0.65, 0.77 and 0.72. The latter two coefficients are generally acceptable for research purposes (George & Mallery, 2003). Although a coefficient of 0.65 was questionable, researchers thought the use of the sub-scale was

justifiable given the small number of items (only 10) it contained and the exploratory nature of the study.

The final draft of the questionnaire which held originally developed in English was then translated to Amharic by one of the researchers whose native language was Amharic. The Amharic versions along with the English version were given to two professionals in the field of Special Needs Education for their comments. In addition, the Amharic version of the questionnaire was given to five first year graduate students in the Department of Special Needs Education who had long experience of teaching in Ethiopian schools for further comments. Comments from the experts and the graduate students were duly incorporated in the final version of the questionnaire.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedure**

The instruments were administered individually to teachers which they were told to return the completed instruments within a week. Teachers were allowed to take the instruments with them and fill-in at appropriated times to them. It was **helped** that allowing teachers to fill-in the questionnaire would increase the reliability of their responses significantly.

Data collections were collected by three research assistants who had some educational background in special needs education, and received support of their respective school directors and unit leaders. With the consent of all involved, the survey pack (which contained a letter of cooperation assuring them of the confidentiality and research ethics to be followed, etc, a personal information sheet and the rating scales) was distributed to all the data sources. Though a week's duration of time was given to return the completed questionnaire, many teachers could not complete within the allotted time. However, in two weeks' time, almost all the teachers returned the completed instruments.

The data were then entered into the SPSS software by a clerk acquired with quantitative analysis. Then, one of the researchers checked and edited the data for accuracy. Finally, independent sample t-test, Pearson r, ANOVA and Tukey HSD post hoc pair wise comparison were employed in analyzing the data. In testing the significance of the results, alpha was set at .05 level in advance.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics and Relationships among Variables

The descriptive statistics and the inter-correlations among the variables are presented in Table 1. It was hoped that the closer the mean scores toward the maximum possible scores of all the three variables; that is, 50 in the case of perception about magnitude, 95 for attitudes toward EBDs and students with behavioral problem, and 76 for the desirability of management techniques would reveal more realistic, positive and desirable trends.

**Table 1: Means (and SDs) and Inter-correlations of the Study Variables**

| Variable                                 | N   | Mean  | SD    | 2    | 3      | 4       |
|------------------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|--------|---------|
| 1. Perceived Magnitude                   | 755 | 40.42 | 5.98  | 0.06 | -0.10* | -0.22** |
| 2. Attitudes                             | 731 | 73.38 | 8.57  | —    | 0.35** | 0.003   |
| 3. Desirability of Management Techniques | 655 | 59.98 | 5.70  | —    | —      | 0.06    |
| 4. Age                                   | 760 | 31.40 | 11.35 | —    | —      | —       |

\* p < .05 \*\* p < .01

Of the six correlation coefficients computed, three yielded significant associations. In particular, the strongest relationship was observed between attitude toward students with EBD and the desirability of management techniques. That is, the more favorable teachers' attitudes, the more desirable techniques used by the teachers to manage EBDs.

### **Differences among Teachers' Perception, Management and Attitudes**

The sample teachers were grouped accordingly gender, training they received in SNE and their educational level in order to examine possible group differences in perception of the magnitude of EBD, their attitudes towards EBD and their perceptions about the desirability of the management techniques employed by teacher. The results are presented in the following sections.

#### **Gender Differences**

There was no statistically significant mean difference between male ( $M = 40.77$ ,  $SD = 5.73$ ) and female ( $M = 40.06$ ,  $SD = 6.17$ ) teachers on the perceived magnitude of EBDs [ $t(740) = 1.61$ ,  $p > .05$ ]. Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference on the attitudes subscale [ $t(716) = -0.93$ ,  $p > .05$ ] between males ( $M = 73.06$ ,  $SD = 9.02$ ) and females ( $M = 73.65$ ,  $SD = 8.05$ ). That is, male and female teachers had similar perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs and attitudes towards EBDs and students with EBDs. But with regard to the desirability of the management techniques used by teachers to handle EBDs, there was a significant mean difference [ $t(631) = -4.90$ ,  $p < .01$ ] between male ( $M = 58.90$ ,  $SD = 6.04$ ) and female ( $M = 61.07$ ,  $SD = 5.14$ ) teachers. The calculated means indicates that female teachers used desirable techniques than their males in managing students with EBDs.

#### **Differences due to Training in SNE**

The study further explored differences of perceptions of the magnitude of EBDs, attitudes and the techniques used to handle students with behavior who received SNE training and those who had not received. Analysis of the data using independent samples t-test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between teachers who had received SNE training in ( $M = 40.70$ ,  $SD = 5.85$ ) and those who haven't received SNE training ( $M = 40.24$ ,  $SD = 6.06$ ) with regard to their perception about the magnitude of

EBDs ( $t(708) = -0.99, p > .05$ ). But a significant mean difference was observed [ $t(686) = 2.26, p < .05$ ] between teachers who had received SNE training ( $M = 74.02, SD = 8.70$ ) and those who had not ( $M = 72.51, SD = 8.26$ ) in the case of attitudes towards EBD's and students with EBDs. The findings show that teachers who had received SNE training had more positive attitudes toward students with EBDs than those who had not received SNE training. However, the finding show that there was no significant difference ( $t(617) = 0.13, p > .05$ ) between teachers who had received SNE training ( $M = 59.94, SD = 5.67$ ) and those who had not ( $M = 60.00, SD = 5.58$ ) with regarding to the desirability of the management techniques employed.

### Differences due to Educational Level

Teachers were categorized into three groups based on their level of education: teaching certificate, diploma and BA/BSc degree holders. The mean scores of the three groups are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Differences between Teachers according to their Educational Level**

| Variable                              | Teachers' Level of Education |       |      |         |       |      |               |       |      |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|------|---------|-------|------|---------------|-------|------|
|                                       | Teaching Certificate         |       |      | Diploma |       |      | BA/BSc Degree |       |      |
|                                       | N                            | Mean  | SD   | N       | Mean  | SD   | N             | Mean  | SD   |
| Perceived Magnitude                   | 170                          | 38.41 | 6.20 | 522     | 41.05 | 5.82 | 46            | 41.20 | 5.44 |
| Attitudes                             | 168                          | 73.82 | 8.41 | 505     | 73.10 | 8.71 | 41            | 74.98 | 7.52 |
| Desirability of Management Techniques | 145                          | 61.26 | 5.22 | 461     | 59.63 | 5.78 | 35            | 58.66 | 6.26 |

The ANOVA results have yielded that there are statistically differences between two groups of the three, who differed significantly in their perception about the magnitude of EBDs [ $F(2, 735) = 13.37, p < .01$ ] and the desirability of the management techniques [ $F(2, 638) = 5.51, p < .01$ ] they employed. Further, comparison of the three groups using Tukey HSD procedure has

yielded statistically significant mean difference of certificate and diploma, and BA/BSc holders with regard to perception of magnitude of EBD ( $p < .01$  in each case) though there was no difference between diploma and BA/BSc degree holder teachers. That is, teachers who held diplomas and degrees held more realistic perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs in schools than teachers who had certificates.

With regard to the desirability of the management techniques teachers employed showed certificate holders significantly differed from teachers and BA/BSc degree holders ( $p < .05$  in each case). Teachers with certificates reported that they had employed more desirable and empirically validated techniques in managing students with EBDs of than teachers who held diplomas and degrees. But, there is no statistically significant mean difference emerged diploma and degree holders.

Unlike the results for the two variables, the three groups of teachers were not significantly different in their attitudes [ $F(2, 711) = 1.19, p > .05$ ]. This means that despite differences in their educational level, teachers in the three groups had similar attitudes toward students with EBDs.

## **Discussion**

### **Teachers' Perceptions about the Magnitude of EBDs**

While considering the possible score range; that is, 10 to 50, as a continuum with the lowest score denoting the least realistic perceptions of the magnitude of EBDs and the highest score indicative of the most realistic perceptions, it can be interpreted that the teachers' perceptions lean toward favorable direction. Teachers' mean score falls exactly on the mid-point between the median which is 30 and the maximum possible score. This is an encouraging result as more realistic perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs are expected to trigger more favorable teacher initiatives to support students with EBDs. Indeed, a realistic perception about any concern, EBDs of students' being the case here, at any given point in time is the backbone

of any realistic intervention effort. If teachers in Addis Ababa primary schools are expected to be more scientific and pragmatic in their efforts to help students with EBDs based on this finding, it appears justifiable. However, a closer scrutiny of the result emerges apparent as there is a significant gap between the obtained mean score and the maximum possible score which is, of course, the optimum score.

The 10 items which measured teachers' perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs looked into their perceptions about the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the magnitude of EBDs. On both dimensions, teachers had unrealistic perceptions on few vital items. For example, the majority of teachers reported that the number of students who engaged in behavioral problem in their classes as well as schools was insignificant which is difficult to accept compared to the prevalence estimation available in Ethiopia and elsewhere. Further, a sizeable portion of the respondents did not have the understanding that students with EBDs have significant impairments in their social and academic performances. These findings underscore the importance of bridging the gap between the mean score of teacher perceptions and the optimum score. Fragmented and unrealistic understandings about behavioral problem have been well documented in literature (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009). Teachers' knowledge of behavioral problem, which would influence their perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs among Addis Ababa primary school teachers, have been found to be fairly good (Kumar & Seleshi, 2010). It is also imperative to note that the depth of the items in this sub-scale was kept at a foundational level considering the nature of teacher training in Ethiopia. On such a measure, any discrepancy between the optimum and actual score has to be carefully interpreted and dealt with. Hence, it can be well argued, that though the teachers predominantly reported realistic perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs in schools, there remains a need to strengthen their perceptions so as to make their intervention efforts more empirical and pragmatic.

Analysis based on teachers' demographic characteristics yielded some surprising as well as expected results. Teachers who had received training in

SNE (60.8%) did not differ significantly in their perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs than teachers who reported that they had not received training (39.2%). This indeed is a perplexing result as training on SNE is expected to enrich knowledge of trainees on EBDs leading to enhanced knowledge of the cause, course and consequences of EBDs. This further leads to more realistic perceptions about the magnitude. The result here compels one to be skeptical about the contents and delivery of SNE teacher training since it has not shown a significant contribution to teachers' perception about the magnitude of EBDs. Studies show that SNE training in Ethiopia which is not exerting an accelerating role in teachers' expectations about the academic achievement and social behavior of students with regard to the case of students with EBDs (Fiseha & Kumar, in press) which this study has confirmed. A close scrutiny of the adequacy of SNE training and an effective way of amending its contents and delivery is warranted.

Teachers' qualification contributes to teachers' perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs, though a definite trend fails to emerge. Qualified teachers, diploma and degree holders, have more realistic perceptions than less qualified teachers certificate holders. It is reasonable to argue that when one climbs higher on the ladder of education, there is an opportunity of a higher level of exposure to knowledge, falling even outside of one's area of study results. This additional knowledge on EBDs can further enhance highly qualified teachers' perceptions about the magnitude. It may be noted, however, that teachers with diploma and BA/BSc degrees perceived the magnitude more or less with the same degree of realism. Here the difference in the level of education appears not contributing to teachers' perceptions.

Though it is weak, the negative correlation between teachers' perception about the magnitude of EBDs and the desirability of the techniques that they employ to manage EBDs of students is quite contrary to common expectations. It is expected that the more realistic the perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs are the more desirable and empirically founded are the management techniques employed. Though this result does not signal pressing the panic button considering the weak magnitude of the association

between the two variables, it is worth pondering further into it. Whether more realistic expectations negatively correlate with teachers' attitudes towards EBDs and students who engage in them, which in turn play a role in the negative correlation with the desirability of techniques, was a question emerged in this context. But perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs does not significantly relate to teachers' attitudes toward EBDs and students with EBDs, ruling out such an assumption.

The non-significant relations between teachers' perceptions and attitudes is another puzzling revelation as it is naturally expected that a better appreciation of the magnitude of problem behavior would result in enhanced positive attitudes toward students with EBDs. Further inquiries with more suitable designs can only solve these puzzles. The age of teachers also associates negatively with their perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs. That is, younger teachers have more realistic perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs. Many factors may be contributing to this: younger teachers may be more academically qualified, they would have received improvised teacher trainings and they may be exposed to mass media with enhanced quality and quantity of knowledge related to EBDs also. All these, among others, may have collectively or in various combinations, contributed to their more realistic perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs. Only future researches would definitely solve this confusion. The probability that teachers who are older as having more experience in teaching and encountering students with EBDs may have more realistic perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs appears not true.

### **Teachers' Attitudes toward EBDs and Students with EBDs**

Results of the study show that most teachers have predominantly positive attitudes toward students with EBDs. Though some studies indicate that teachers have negative attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools (Agran, Alper, & Wehmeyer, 2002; Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998), the findings of this report indicated favorable attitude as the median of score range is 57 with mean score of

73.38. Though this result is encouraging, the significant gap between teachers' mean score and the optimum or the maximum possible score signals a careful examination and conceptualization of the relative position of teachers' attitudes.

The main problem that negatively affects teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards students with EBDs is they believe that behavioral problems are God's punishment. Such a belief puts the blame on the child and his/her parents, and this disability or disorder becomes source of shame for the family. An attempt was made to investigate this issue to which 81.2% of the 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' that behavioral problems are basically had in their nature. Only 4.8% of the teachers reported their agreement with the statement, and 14% did not decide. In principle, 100% agreement on this issue has no scientific ground as teachers have belief systems. The fact that 14% is the teachers could not decide show some concerns as there are considerable portions of teachers who teachers do not have a solid knowledge about the cause of the problem and thus can easily be influenced by other colleagues or persons and develop negative attitudes towards children with EBDs.

Another interesting finding worth mentioning at is that the attitude difference between teachers who received SNE training in those who did not. More specifically, the former group appeared to have significantly more favorable attitudes towards students with EBDs than the latter group. Although the SNE training had more likely focused on general areas of SNE than students' behavioral problem, it helped teachers to develop positive attitudes. However, SNE training given had no impact on the teachers' perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs. This implies that training teachers helps teachers to develop positive attitudes towards students with EBDs. Positive attitudes, in turn, help teachers to use more desirable techniques in managing and teaching students with EBDs (cf., Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Harvey, 1992).

The study shows that gender, age and the level of education of teachers do not affect teachers' attitudes towards students with EBDs. While gender and age are not expected to have influences on attitudes, the level of education that teachers have, including knowledge of students with EBDs, usually influences teachers' attitude.

Another important finding of the study is the correlation between attitudes and the use of management techniques, which moderate ( $r = .35$ ) and statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ). This implies that teachers who had positive attitudes towards students with EBDs used more desirable techniques of management than those who had unfavorable attitudes. This agrees with the findings of other researches (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Harvey, 1992).

### **Desirability of Management Techniques Employed by Teachers**

Results of the study show that teachers used desirable techniques in handling student with EBDs which indicates positive trends. Teachers' mean score of 59.95 indicates that on average teachers employed techniques empirically validated techniques. Though teachers' mean score is above median (47.5), it is also significantly below the optimum or maximum possible score, which necessitated a closer analysis of the very specific techniques that teachers used. Result of the analysis shows that the majority of teachers employed well founded, proactive behavioral management techniques such as intimating students in the school environments and classrooms, standardizing responses to students across the entire class, rewarding desirable behavior, providing direct instructions for both social and academic skills, modifying the environmental conditions that foster deviant behavior, etc. This finding is not in agreement with the reports of the earlier studies conducted in Ethiopia (Ayalew, 1996; Merga, 2008; Seleshi, 2001). According to the study, report of these researchers, teachers in Ethiopian schools predominantly used punitive and employed techniques that had negative impacts on students with EBDs, which, in fact, has elements of truth as there are teachers who still use reactive and

inappropriate techniques in managing students with EBDs such as various forms of corporal punishment: forcing students to kneel down on the floor, scolding and shouting at students, making students stand up in the class, expelling students out from the classroom, suspending students from schools, etc.

The widespread use of negative and reactive techniques by teachers in handling students with EBDs has been well documented elsewhere in the world (Angellar, Stephen & Ottilia, 2011). As these techniques can invariably cause physical and/or psychological pains and teachers are often advised to restrain themselves from using them. The behavioral analysis made show the majority of the teachers did not resort to nonviolently punishing techniques in managing student with behavioral problem, as teachers' mean score falls above the median which implies that they used several proactive techniques. However, there is a significant gap between the optimum score and the observed mean which shows that teachers used various reactive and negative measures in managing students with EBDs. It is known that once teachers are trained in using more positive and proactive techniques, their use of reactive and negative techniques would decline, which narrows the gap between the optimum score and the mean. These findings, in general show the importance of training teachers in suing more proactive and positive behavioral management techniques. Such training builds teachers' confidence of helping students with EBDs without resorting to negative management techniques.

With regard to the use of management techniques, one important findings of this study is the statistically significant difference between male and female teachers. According to this study, female teachers used more desirable techniques in managing students with EBDs than male teachers, which might be attributed to responsibility that women have in child rearing and the close relationship that women usually have with children in Ethiopian context. Traditionally, women in Ethiopia do not go to school/work but they are expected to taking care of children at homes and doing household chores. The frequency contacts that women have with children at homes

may help female teachers better off male teachers in handling students with EBDs in schools.

Another interesting finding of this study is that teachers who had received SNE training and those had not did not differ in employing desirable management techniques, which implies that the SNE training that the teachers had received contributed neither positively nor negatively in helping teachers to select more appropriate and desirable techniques to manage students with EBDs. However, it is quite natural to expect that teachers who receive SNE training are more likely be more scientific, empirical and pragmatic in managing students with EBDs than teachers who have no SNE training. This finding agreed with Semachew's (2009) observation which shows that contents of SNE training highly lack practical components that show teachers ways of dealing students with special needs. This shows the need to examine the contents of SNE training and the need to correct its shortcomings.

The finding that teachers who held certificates employ more desirable techniques than teachers who held diplomas and degrees might indicate the contribution of general teacher education in supporting students with EBDs. Many behavior management techniques are incorporated in general classroom management methods making ingredients of general teacher training in Ethiopia. If this inputs helped certificate holder teachers to employ more desirable techniques in managing students with EBDs, it would be necessary to train teachers accordingly. Further, giving paintings teachers on SNE with adequate components on ways managing behavioral problems would help teachers to give appropriate support to students with EBDs.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Though teachers are aware of the magnitude of EBDs in schools there is a need to optimize their perceptions. Teachers' attitudes of teachers towards EBDs and students with behavioral problems is predominantly positive, though it is necessary to help teachers to modify their attitude further so that

they could for effectively educate and support students with EBDs. Teachers use desirable techniques in handling students with behavioral problems though a significant number of teachers still use negative and punitive methods including corporal punishment. Positive attitudes of teachers toward EBDs are positively associated with the desirable techniques they use to deal with behavioral problems. Training given on SNE positively influences their attitudes, though SNE training does not have impacts on teachers' perception about the magnitude of EBDs and the desirable techniques they use. Female teachers use more desirable techniques than male teachers in managing students with EBDs. Level of education influences teachers' perceptions about the magnitude of EBDs and the desirable but not on their attitudes.

Findings of the study have major implications for teacher training, in general, and SNE teacher education, in particular. Teachers are aware of the magnitude of EBDs and have positive attitudes towards students with EBDs, though they need improvements. There are some teachers who use punitive and negative behavior management methods in handling students with behavioral problems though majority of the teachers use desirable techniques. This implies the need to give teachers to use proactive and positive techniques in handling students with EBDs, which can be achieved by giving effective and efficient SNE training to the teachers. The existing SNE training in Ethiopia does not bring a quality change in teachers' awareness about the magnitude of EBDs and the techniques they adopt in managing students with behavioral problems, which needs for a thorough examination of the contents, delivery, practicality, etc. of the SNE teacher training further. It is necessary to revise the existing general teacher education and the SNE teacher training in line with the modern inclusive education philosophy and perspectives, which should invariably include behavior management techniques, in order to empower teachers to cope up with demanding task of educating students with behavioral problem in inclusive classrooms.

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