PANTAO
The International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences
Volume 5, Issue 1
ISSN 3028-0877 | DOI 10.69651/2022PIJHSS

Positive reinforcement techniques and their effects on classroom behavior of students with emotional and behavioral disorders

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ABSTRACT

This study examined whether teachers' use of positive reinforcement techniques is significantly related to the classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in an inclusive school in Cebu City during School Year 2025–2026. A descriptive–correlational research design was employed. The respondents consisted of 30 special and general education teachers directly handling learners with EBD at Zapatera SPED Center. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers who had at least one identified learner with EBD, a minimum of one year of teaching experience, and prior training in behavior management. Data were gathered through a validated questionnaire measuring the extent of positive reinforcement

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DOI: http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0501817

Recommended citation:
Rufo, C., Tenerife-Cañete, J. J. L., Pinili, L. C., Añora, H. C., Añero, M. B., & Abelgas, L. J. (2026). Positive reinforcement techniques and their effects on classroom behavior of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Pantao (The International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences) 5 (1), 9116-9143. http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0501817

practices and students' classroom behavior. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean) and Pearson r were utilized. Findings revealed that teachers were generally professionally prepared and had relevant training. They demonstrated a high to very high level of positive reinforcement use, particularly in verbal praise and token systems. Students with EBD exhibited generally positive classroom behaviors, especially in social interaction and reduced disruptive behavior. However, no significant relationship was found between reinforcement use and overall classroom behavior. The study concludes that behavioral outcomes are influenced by multiple interacting factors beyond reinforcement frequency alone. It is recommended that teachers emphasize quality and consistency of reinforcement and adopt comprehensive, multi-tiered behavior support approaches.

Keywords: Positive reinforcement, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), inclusive education, classroom behavior, behavior management, teacher practices, descriptive correlational study, Special Education

Date Submitted: February 5, 2026
Date Accepted: February 11, 2026
Date Published: March 7, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive classrooms are increasingly expected to accommodate learners with diverse behavioral, emotional, and learning needs. Among these learners, students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) pose unique and complex challenges that demand responsive, evidence-based classroom management approaches. Their behavioral needs not only affect individual learning outcomes but also influence overall classroom climate, teacher effectiveness, and peer interactions.

Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) represent one of the most challenging populations in contemporary inclusive classrooms. These learners commonly display persistent patterns of aggression, defiance, withdrawal, inattention, or noncompliance that disrupt instructional flow and hinder both academic and social development. In many educational settings, particularly those characterized by large class sizes and limited resources, teachers often rely on traditional punitive responses such as reprimands, isolation, or suspension. However, recent research has consistently shown that punitive and exclusionary disciplinary practices are ineffective in producing sustained behavioral change and may intensify problem behaviors, reduce student engagement, and increase the risk of school exclusion (McIntosh et al., 2021; Lane et al., 2022). As inclusive education continues to expand worldwide, there is a growing need for classroom management strategies that are not only effective but also developmentally appropriate, humane, and responsive to the unique behavioral and emotional needs of students with EBD.

Behavioral theory and contemporary empirical research strongly support positive reinforcement as an effective alternative to punitive discipline. Rooted in behaviorist principles articulated by B. F. Skinner (1953), positive reinforcement posits that behaviors followed by favorable consequences are more likely to recur. Recent international studies continue to validate this principle in educational settings. Caldarella et al. (2023) found that increasing teachers' praise-to-reprimand ratios (PRR) significantly improved on-task behavior and reduced disruptive incidents among middle school students. Similarly, Royer et al. (2024), in a meta-analysis of behavior-specific praise (BSP) interventions, reported medium-to-large effect sizes on student engagement across diverse cultural contexts. Justus et al. (2023) further demonstrated that teacher self-monitoring of reinforcement practices resulted in measurable

improvements in classroom behavior, even in large and heterogeneous classes. At the systems level, School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), which are grounded in reinforcement principles, have been shown to improve school climate, safety, and discipline outcomes internationally (Kubiszewski et al., 2023; Karlberg et al., 2024; La Salle-Finley et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings establish positive reinforcement as a cornerstone of effective behavioral intervention.

In the Philippines, positive discipline has been institutionalized through Department of Education (DepEd) policy directives that promote restorative and non-punitive approaches to classroom management (DepEd, 2020). These policies align with global commitments to child-friendly and inclusive education. Despite this policy support, empirical research examining reinforcement-based interventions for students with diagnosed EBD remains limited. Existing local studies suggest that Filipino teachers frequently employ praise, token rewards, and group contingencies to manage disruptive behavior, particularly among learners with special education needs. Torregosa, Mendoza, and Relampagos (2024) reported that positive reinforcement was perceived as the most effective and culturally appropriate strategy in resource-constrained schools in the Visayas region. Similarly, Masongsong (2023) found that teachers with training in inclusive education observed higher levels of cooperation and reduced classroom conflict when reinforcement strategies were applied consistently. These findings indicate that reinforcement practices are already embedded in classroom routines, yet their implementation is largely intuitive rather than systematic.

Despite growing recognition of positive reinforcement in both global and local contexts, significant gaps persist in the literature. Internationally, many studies focus on broad categories of "behaviorally at-risk" students without isolating learners formally diagnosed with EBD, limiting understanding of how reinforcement uniquely affects this population (Royer et al., 2024). Locally, most Philippine studies remain descriptive or qualitative, offering valuable insights but lacking experimental or correlational designs capable of establishing causal relationships between reinforcement practices and observable behavioral outcomes (Torregosa et al., 2024). Moreover, few studies assess reinforcement fidelity such as the frequency of behavior-specific praise or praise-to-reprimand ratios which are critical indicators of effectiveness and consistency. Contextual variables such as class size, teacher workload, training opportunities, and resource availability are also rarely examined, despite their influence on implementation sustainability (Masongsong, 2023). These gaps result in limited empirical guidance for teachers on how to apply reinforcement systematically and equitably in inclusive classrooms.

Addressing these gaps is essential to strengthening inclusive education in the Philippine context. Students with EBD are particularly vulnerable to academic exclusion, negative peer interactions, and repeated disciplinary actions. Identifying practical, low-cost, and evidence-based reinforcement strategies can significantly enhance their classroom participation and behavioral outcomes. This study responds to the need for localized empirical evidence by examining the effects of positive reinforcement techniques on the classroom behavior of students with EBD, while also considering implementation consistency and contextual constraints. By quantifying reinforcement fidelity and its relationship to behavioral improvement, the study bridges the divide between global behavioral research and local classroom realities. The findings are expected to inform teacher training, guide school-level behavior support programs, and contribute to more supportive, positive, and inclusive learning environments for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the effects of positive reinforcement techniques on the classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in selected inclusive schools for the school year 2025 to 2026.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following quantitative research questions:

1. What are the demographic profiles of the teacher respondents in terms of age, gender, length of teaching service, highest educational attainment, and number of trainings or certifications related to behavioral management or reinforcement techniques?
2. What is the level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among teachers in terms of verbal response and recognition, tangible rewards and token systems, group or peer-based reinforcement, and privilege-based or activity reinforcement?
3. What is the level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in terms of attention and task engagement, compliance with classroom rules and instructions, social interaction and peer relationships, and reduction of disruptive or maladaptive behaviors?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the positive reinforcement techniques and the classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders?
5. Based on the findings, what behavioral reinforcement action plan can be proposed?

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the descriptive component is utilized to identify and categorize the positive reinforcement techniques commonly employed by teachers in managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The correlational component examines the relationship between the consistency of reinforcement delivery and students' observable behavioral outcomes, such as attention, compliance, and peer interaction. This design is appropriate because the study does not intend to manipulate classroom conditions or impose experimental controls but instead seeks to analyze existing teacher practices and student behaviors in authentic educational settings.

Furthermore, the descriptive–correlational approach allows the researcher to gather measurable data, apply statistical analyses, and interpret patterns and trends in reinforcement practices and behavioral improvement among students with EBD. As emphasized by Ary et al. (2018), this design is particularly suitable for educational research where ethical and practical considerations limit experimental manipulation. Thus, the chosen research design aligns with the study's objective of generating empirical evidence on how the frequency, type, and consistency of positive reinforcement influence classroom behavior within inclusive learning environments.

The respondents of this study consisted of 30 special education (SPED) and general education teachers assigned at Zapatera SPED Center in Sikatuna, Cebu City who were directly involved in teaching or managing students diagnosed with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only teachers who met the specific qualifications relevant to the study were included. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which participants are deliberately selected based on specific characteristics and the purpose of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The selection criteria required that the teacher-respondents: (1) had at least one student officially identified with EBD under their supervision, (2) possessed a minimum of one year of teaching experience in an inclusive or special education setting, and (3) had prior exposure to or training in classroom behavior management or positive discipline practices. These criteria ensured that the

participants had sufficient experience and contextual understanding to provide reliable and meaningful data for the study. A total of 30 teacher-respondents participated in the research. Their demographic profiles, including age, gender, years of teaching experience, educational attainment, and professional training related to SPED or behavioral management, were gathered to provide essential background information for data analysis.

To determine the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents (age, gender, years of teaching experience, educational attainment, and training background), frequency counts and percentages were utilized.

To answer the first research problem regarding the level of use of positive reinforcement techniques, the weighted mean and standard deviation were computed for each domain (verbal praise, tangible rewards, group-based incentives, and privilege-based reinforcement) as well as for the overall scale. The same statistical measures were applied to determine the level of classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) across the domains of attention and task engagement, compliance with rules, peer interaction, and reduction of disruptive behavior. The results were interpreted using a four-point Likert scale with corresponding descriptive equivalents. Prior to full data analysis, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to establish the internal consistency reliability of the adapted instrument, yielding $\alpha = .91$ for the Positive Reinforcement Scale and $\alpha = .88$ for the Classroom Behavior Scale, both exceeding the acceptable threshold of .70. To determine the significant relationship between teachers' use of positive reinforcement techniques and students' classroom behavior, the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was employed. The level of significance was set at 0.05 alpha level to test the null hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile of the respondents

This section presented the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents who participated in the study. The profile variables include age, gender, length of teaching experience, highest educational attainment, and participation in training related to classroom behavior management or positive reinforcement techniques.

Age

This subsection showed the age distribution of the teacher-respondents involved in the study. The age profile is included to provide baseline information about the respondents' stage in their professional careers and to contextualize their classroom practices. Understanding the age composition of the respondents is important, as age may be associated with teaching experience, adaptability to instructional innovations, and the application of positive reinforcement strategies in managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

Table 2
Age of the Respondents

Age (in years)	f	%
above 55	1	3.33
46-55	6	20.00
36-45	9	30.00
26-35	14	46.67

Total	30	100.00

Table 2 presented the age distribution of the teacher-respondents. The data show that the majority of the respondents belonged to the 26–35 age group, comprising 46.67% (f = 14) of the total sample. This was followed by teachers aged 36–45, who accounted for 30.00% (f = 9), and those aged 46–55, representing 20.00% (f = 6). Only one respondent (3.33%) was above 55 years old. The results indicate that most of the teacher-respondents were young to mid-career educators, suggesting a workforce that is actively engaged in professional practice and likely adaptable to contemporary instructional and behavioral management approaches.

The predominance of teachers in the 26–35 and 36–45 age brackets has meaningful implications for the implementation of positive reinforcement strategies in inclusive classrooms. Research indicates that early- and mid-career teachers tend to demonstrate greater instructional flexibility and openness to adopting evidence-based behavioral practices. For instance, McIntosh et al. (2020) found that teachers' willingness to implement Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) was associated with perceptions of efficacy and professional learning exposure, factors often stronger among teachers in earlier career stages. Similarly, Collier-Meek et al. (2019) reported that sustained and consistent use of behavior-specific praise was more evident among teachers who actively engaged in recent professional development initiatives, which frequently include early- to mid-career educators.

Furthermore, contemporary teacher preparation programs increasingly emphasize inclusive education, culturally responsive classroom management, and positive discipline frameworks. A meta-analysis by Caldarella et al. (2020) confirmed that teacher training in praise-based interventions significantly increased praise-to-reprimand ratios and improved student behavioral outcomes across grade levels. In addition, Simonsen et al. (2019) highlighted that ongoing coaching and structured professional learning communities enhance teachers' consistent application of reinforcement strategies, particularly in inclusive and special education settings.

Based on the data, it can be concluded that the teacher-respondents were predominantly young to mid-career professionals, with nearly three-fourths aged between 26 and 45 years. This age composition reflects a teaching workforce that is potentially more adaptable, professionally engaged, and receptive to contemporary, evidence-based behavioral management strategies. Such a demographic profile supports the effective implementation of positive reinforcement techniques in inclusive classrooms and strengthens the validity of the study's findings on reinforcement practices and behavioral outcomes among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

Gender

This subsection presented the gender distribution of the teacher-respondents. Gender is examined to provide contextual background on the composition of the teaching workforce and to support a more nuanced interpretation of the study's findings. Differences in gender may influence teaching styles, communication approaches, and classroom management practices, including the use of positive reinforcement techniques in inclusive and special education settings.

Table 3
Gender of the Respondents

Gender	f	%
Male	5	16.67
Female	25	83.33
Total	30	100.00

Table 3 showed the gender distribution of the teacher-respondents. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents were female, comprising 83.33% (f = 25) of the total sample, while male teachers accounted for 16.67% (f = 5). This finding reflects a strong female predominance among teachers in special education and inclusive classroom settings. The distribution suggests that women continue to play a central role in the delivery of instruction and behavioral support services for learners with special needs, including students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

The majority of female teachers has meaningful implications for classroom management and the implementation of positive reinforcement strategies. Contemporary research suggests that female educators often demonstrate higher levels of relational engagement and emotionally supportive instructional practices. For example, OECD (2020), in its Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2018) Results Volume II, reported that female teachers consistently scored higher on measures of student support, classroom climate sensitivity, and relational teaching practices across participating countries. These relational approaches are closely aligned with the principles underlying positive reinforcement.

Also, Collie (2021) found that teachers who demonstrated higher levels of social–emotional competence and relational engagement were more likely to employ proactive and supportive classroom management strategies rather than punitive approaches. Although not exclusively gender-based, the study noted that female teachers reported stronger relational orientation in classroom interactions. In addition, Aldrup, Carstensen, Köller, and Klusmann (2020) showed that emotionally supportive teacher–student relationships significantly predicted improved student behavioral engagement and reduced disruptive behavior, factors central to effective reinforcement-based interventions.

In the context of learners with behavioral challenges, Santiago-Rosario, Wehby, and Kern (2021) emphasized that teacher warmth, responsiveness, and consistent positive feedback were associated with improved behavioral regulation among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). These findings reinforce the importance of relational and supportive teaching practices in managing EBD. Given that positive reinforcement depends heavily on encouragement, constructive feedback, and sustained teacher–student interaction, the predominance of female teachers in the sample suggests a professional environment conducive to the effective implementation of reinforcement-based behavioral supports.

Based on the outcomes, it can be concluded that the teaching workforce involved in the study was predominantly female. This gender distribution aligns with national and international trends in special and inclusive education and supports the effective use of positive reinforcement techniques in managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. The strong representation of female teachers may contribute positively to the consistent application of supportive, non-punitive classroom management strategies.

Highest educational attainment

This subsection presented the highest educational attainment of the teacher-respondents involved in the study. Educational attainment is included to provide background information on the respondents' academic preparation and professional qualifications. Since the level of formal education attained by the teachers is important, as it may influence their knowledge of inclusive education principles, classroom management strategies, and the effective use of positive reinforcement techniques in managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

Table 4
Highest Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational Attainment	f	%
With Doctorate Units	1	3.33
Master's Graduate	7	23.33
With Master's Units	18	60.00
Bachelor's Degree	4	13.33
Total	30	100.00

Table 4 illustrated the highest educational attainment of the teacher-respondents. The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents had pursued graduate education, with 60.00% (f = 18) having master's units and 23.33% (f = 7) being master's degree holders. Only one respondent (3.33%) had doctoral units, while 13.33% (f = 4) held a bachelor's degree as their highest educational qualification. Overall, the data indicate that most of the teacher-respondents had advanced their professional preparation beyond the undergraduate level, reflecting a strong inclination toward continuing professional and academic development.

The high proportion of teachers with graduate-level education suggests a workforce with stronger theoretical grounding and professional competence in addressing diverse learner needs. Recent large-scale research supports the link between advanced preparation and improved instructional quality. For example, Kini and Podolsky (2021) reported that teachers' depth of preparation and advanced professional learning are positively associated with instructional effectiveness and classroom management capacity, particularly in complex learning environments. Graduate preparation often includes coursework in learner variability, assessment, and behavioral intervention planning, all of which strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

In the field of special education, Brownell, Benedict, Bettini, and Lauterbach (2021) emphasized that advanced preparation enhances SPED teachers' ability to implement high-leverage practices, including systematic reinforcement, data-based decision-making, and individualized behavioral supports. Their work highlights that postgraduate training contributes to stronger instructional adaptation and behavior management competence.

Similarly, Kraft and Papay (2020) found that sustained professional learning and advanced training significantly improve teachers' classroom practice and implementation consistency over time. Teachers with higher levels of preparation demonstrated greater fidelity in applying structured behavioral supports and proactive classroom management strategies.

Collectively, these studies suggest that the majority of the teacher-respondents possessed graduate-level academic preparation, with most having completed or pursued master's studies. This level of educational attainment reflects a professionally prepared teaching force capable of engaging with inclusive education practices and evidence-based behavioral interventions. Such academic preparation strengthens the effective use of positive reinforcement strategies and supports the study's findings on classroom behavior management among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

Number of years in teaching

This subsection displayed the distribution of the teacher-respondents according to their number of years in teaching. The length of teaching experience is included to provide background information on the respondents' professional exposure and level of classroom familiarity. Recognizing teachers' years of experience is important, as it may influence their classroom management skills, confidence in handling behavioral challenges, and consistency

in applying positive reinforcement techniques when managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

Table 5
Respondents' number of years in teaching

Number of years in teaching	f	%
16 and above	6	20.00
11-15	7	23.33
6-10	9	30.00
1-5	8	26.67
Total	30	100.00

Table 5 presented the distribution of the teacher-respondents according to their number of years in teaching. The data indicate that the largest group of respondents had 6–10 years of teaching experience, comprising 30.00% (f = 9). This was followed by those with 1–5 years of experience at 26.67% (f = 8) and 11–15 years of experience at 23.33% (f = 7). Teachers with 16 years and above accounted for 20.00% (f = 6) of the respondents. Overall, the findings suggest that the respondents represented a balanced mix of early-career, mid-career, and veteran teachers, providing varied professional perspectives on classroom management and the use of positive reinforcement.

The presence of a substantial number of teachers with mid-level teaching experience suggests a workforce that has developed instructional competence while remaining receptive to professional growth and refinement. Empirical research supports the role of teaching experience in strengthening classroom practice. For example, Kini and Podolsky (2020) demonstrated that teachers' effectiveness improves significantly during the first decade of teaching, particularly in classroom management and instructional organization, before stabilizing at higher levels of competence. This trajectory suggests that mid-career teachers often reach a stage of consolidated instructional confidence.

In addition, Papay and Kraft (2020) found that teacher performance continues to improve in supportive professional environments, with experienced teachers demonstrating stronger adaptability and consistency in implementing structured practices. Their longitudinal findings indicate that accumulated classroom exposure enhances teachers' capacity to refine instructional and behavioral strategies over time.

Within inclusive and special education contexts, Fauth et al. (2021) reported that teacher experience is positively associated with classroom management quality and student behavioral engagement. Teachers with greater professional longevity were better able to maintain structured classroom environments and regulate instructional flow skills essential for managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

As shown in the findings, it can be concluded that the teacher-respondents possessed diverse levels of teaching experience, with a concentration in the early to mid-career range. This distribution reflects a teaching workforce that combines adaptability, developing expertise, and seasoned practice. Such a profile supports the effective application of positive reinforcement strategies and strengthens the study's findings on classroom behavior management among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

Number of trainings or certifications related to behavioral management or reinforcement techniques

This subsection presented the number of trainings or certifications attended by the teacher-respondents related to behavioral management or positive reinforcement techniques. This variable is included to provide background information on the respondents' professional development and exposure to evidence-based behavior support strategies.

Table 6
Number of trainings or certifications related to behavioral management or reinforcement techniques

Number of trainings	f	%
5 or more	21	70.00
3-4	3	10.00
1-2	6	20.00
Total	30	100.00

Table 6 illustrated the number of trainings or certifications attended by the teacher-respondents related to behavioral management or reinforcement techniques. The results indicate that a substantial majority of the respondents, 70.00% (f = 21), had attended five or more trainings. Meanwhile, 20.00% (f = 6) reported participation in one to two trainings, and 10.00% (f = 3) had attended three to four trainings. These findings suggest that most of the teacher-respondents had extensive exposure to professional development activities focused on behavioral management and reinforcement strategies.

The high level of training participation among the respondents suggests a strong professional foundation for implementing reinforcement-based classroom practices. Contemporary research consistently shows that sustained professional development improves teachers' behavioral intervention skills and implementation fidelity. For example, Stormont, Reinke, and Herman (2021) found that ongoing coaching and behavior-focused professional learning significantly increased teachers' use of proactive classroom management strategies and improved consistency in behavior support implementation.

Likewise, Gregory, Ruzek, Hafen, Mikami, Allen, and Pianta (2022) reported that teachers who participated in structured professional development targeting classroom interactions demonstrated stronger emotional support and more effective behavior regulation practices, leading to improved student engagement. Their findings emphasize that repeated training enhances teachers' ability to integrate reinforcement strategies into daily instruction.

Likewise, Myers, Simonsen, and Sugai (2020) examined professional learning within Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) frameworks and found that continuous training combined with performance feedback significantly improved teachers' accuracy and sustainability in applying positive reinforcement and preventative behavior strategies.

Based on the findings, it can be determined that the majority of the teacher-respondents had extensive training or certification experience related to behavioral management and reinforcement techniques. This level of professional preparation reflects a teaching workforce that is well-equipped to implement evidence-based, non-punitive behavior strategies. Such preparation strengthens the credibility of the study's findings and supports the effective use of positive reinforcement in promoting positive classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.

Level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among teachers

This subpart presented the level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among the teacher-respondents in managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The data were obtained from the teachers' responses to the survey questionnaire, which measured the frequency of their use of various reinforcement practices, including verbal reinforcement, tangible rewards, group-based incentives, and privilege-based reinforcement.

The findings are presented and analyzed using descriptive statistical measures to provide an understanding of how consistently these strategies are applied in classroom settings. The results of this section serve as a basis for determining prevailing reinforcement practices and for examining their relationship with the classroom behavior of students with EBD.

Verbal response and recognition

This section displayed how frequently teachers used verbal reinforcement practices particularly behavior-specific praise and verbal recognition in managing learners, including those with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The results describe the consistency of teachers' verbal reinforcement as a key classroom strategy that can strengthen appropriate behavior and support engagement.

Table 7
Level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among teachers in terms of verbal response and recognition

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I give behavior-specific praise to learners.	4.57	0.50	Very High
2	I acknowledge learners' effort, not only correct answers.	4.27	0.45	Very High
3	I provide immediate verbal recognition after desirable behavior.	4.47	0.51	Very High
4	I use a positive and encouraging tone when correcting mistakes.	4.47	0.51	Very High
5	I publicly recognize good behavior when appropriate.	4.30	0.47	Very High
6	I provide private verbal recognition when needed.	4.53	0.51	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.43		
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.49	Very High

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Very High; 3.41-4.20-High; 2.61-3.40-Moderate; 1.81-2.60-Low; 1.00-1.80-Very Low

Table 7 shows a Very High level of use of verbal response and recognition among teachers, with an Aggregate Weighted Mean of 4.43 and an Aggregate SD of 0.49. This indicates that teachers consistently and frequently applied verbal reinforcement practices, and responses were generally clustered toward agreement, showing a stable pattern across respondents.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was behavior-specific praise (WM = 4.57), followed closely by private verbal recognition (WM = 4.53). These findings indicate that teachers were not merely providing general approval but were delivering targeted, descriptive

feedback and using discreet acknowledgment when appropriate—both recognized as core components of effective reinforcement practice.

The very high ratings suggest that verbal reinforcement is being utilized as a primary classroom management strategy. Contemporary empirical research supports this interpretation. For instance, Brophy (2020) emphasized that behavior-specific praise strengthens clarity of expectations and increases students' on-task behavior more effectively than general praise. Likewise, Floress et al. (2021) found that higher rates of behavior-specific praise were significantly associated with increased academic engagement and decreased disruptive behavior in elementary classrooms.

Recent intervention research further confirms the impact of structured praise practices. Simonsen, Freeman, and Myers (2022) reported that systematic increases in behavior-specific praise, particularly when paired with performance feedback, resulted in measurable improvements in student behavioral engagement. In addition, Sutherland, Conroy, and Vo (2023) demonstrated that teacher self-monitoring of praise delivery enhanced implementation consistency and led to sustained reductions in disruptive behavior among students with behavioral challenges.

The low standard deviation observed in this study suggests consistency in verbal reinforcement practices across respondents. This aligns with current implementation research indicating that consistent and monitored use of behavior-specific praise contributes to stable improvements in classroom climate and student behavioral regulation. Collectively, these findings reinforce the view that behavior-specific praise represents a practical, high-leverage strategy for supporting students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

Tangible rewards and token systems

This subsection illustrated the level of use of tangible rewards and token systems as positive reinforcement techniques among the teacher-respondents. It focuses on how frequently teachers utilize material incentives, token or point systems, and clearly defined reward criteria to reinforce desirable behaviors among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in classroom settings.

Table 8
Level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among teachers in terms of tangible rewards and token systems

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I provide tangible rewards to reinforce positive behavior.	4.23	0.43	Very High
2	I use a token or point system exchangeable for rewards.	4.30	0.70	Very High
3	I clearly explain the criteria for earning rewards or tokens.	4.47	0.51	Very High
4	I distribute rewards consistently based on set criteria.	4.50	0.51	Very High
5	I gradually fade tangible rewards while maintaining verbal praise.	4.43	0.50	Very High
6	I keep simple records to ensure fairness in reward distribution.	4.67	0.48	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.43		Very High

Aggregate Standard Deviation	0.52

Table 8 presented the level of use of tangible rewards and token systems as positive reinforcement techniques among teachers. The findings indicate a Very High level of utilization, with an aggregate weighted mean of 4.43 and an aggregate standard deviation of 0.52, suggesting that teachers consistently applied these strategies and demonstrated relatively uniform responses.

All indicators received very high ratings, with the highest mean observed for keeping simple records to ensure fairness in reward distribution (WM = 4.67). This was followed by consistent distribution of rewards based on set criteria (WM = 4.50) and clear explanation of reward criteria (WM = 4.47). These results suggest that teachers not only used tangible rewards and token systems frequently, but also implemented them in an organized, transparent, and systematic manner key characteristics of effective reinforcement practices.

The consistent and structured use of tangible rewards and token systems suggests that teachers recognize the effectiveness of concrete reinforcement in shaping and sustaining appropriate behavior, particularly among learners with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). Recent empirical research supports the effectiveness of token economies when implemented with clear behavioral expectations and systematic monitoring. For instance, Soares, Harrison, Vannest, and Parker (2021) found that token reinforcement systems significantly increased on-task behavior and reduced disruptive conduct when reinforcement criteria were explicitly defined and consistently applied.

Moreover, evidence indicates that the gradual fading of tangible reinforcers while maintaining social reinforcement enhances long-term behavioral maintenance. Gage, Lewis, and Stichter (2022) reported that behavior support programs that systematically transitioned from material rewards to verbal and relational reinforcement promoted sustained behavioral gains and reduced dependency on external incentives.

The importance of fairness and predictability in reinforcement systems has also been documented. Ennis, Jolivette, and Swoszowski (2020) demonstrated that students are more responsive to behavior support systems perceived as equitable and transparent, particularly in inclusive and special education settings. Their findings highlight that consistent implementation fosters trust and strengthens classroom climate.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the teachers' structured use of tangible rewards and token systems reflects strong alignment with contemporary evidence-based behavior management practices. The combination of explicit reinforcement criteria, consistent application, and gradual fading supports both immediate behavioral improvement and long-term self-regulation among students with EBD.

Group or peer-based reinforcement

This subsection displayed the level of use of group or peer-based reinforcement as a positive reinforcement technique among the teacher-respondents. It focuses on how frequently teachers employ class-wide rewards, group incentives, and peer recognition to encourage cooperation, positive peer influence, and appropriate classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

Table 9
Level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among teachers in terms of group or peer-based reinforcement

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I use group rewards when the class meets a goal.	4.47	0.51	Very High
2	I recognize teams or groups for cooperation.	4.40	0.50	Very High
3	I encourage learners to praise peers' positive behavior.	4.20	0.41	High
4	I apply class-wide reinforcement systems.	4.23	0.43	Very High
5	I reward cooperative group performance.	4.23	0.43	Very High
6	I reinforce positive peer influence during activities.	4.27	0.45	Very High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.30		
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.45	Very High

Table 9 depicted the level of use of group or peer-based reinforcement techniques among teachers. The results show an overall Very High level of utilization, with an aggregate weighted mean of 4.30 and an aggregate standard deviation of 0.45, indicating consistent application across respondents.

Most indicators were rated Very High, particularly the use of group rewards when the class meets a goal (WM = 4.47) and recognition of teams or groups for cooperation (WM = 4.40). These findings suggest that teachers frequently employ collective reinforcement strategies to promote cooperation and shared responsibility. The item encouraging learners to praise peers' positive behavior received a High rating (WM = 4.20), indicating that peer-to-peer recognition was used often, though slightly less consistently than teacher-led group rewards. Overall, the data reflect strong teacher engagement in class-wide and peer-mediated reinforcement practices.

The very high utilization of group or peer-based reinforcement suggests that teachers recognize the power of social contingencies in shaping classroom behavior. Contemporary research confirms that group-oriented reinforcement systems can effectively improve engagement and reduce disruptive behavior when implemented systematically. For example, Flower, McKenna, and Bunuan (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of the Good Behavior Game and related group-contingency interventions and found significant reductions in disruptive behavior and increases in academic engagement across elementary classrooms.

Correspondingly, Wills et al. (2020) reported that interdependent group contingencies improved collective responsibility and peer accountability, particularly in inclusive classrooms serving students with behavioral challenges. Their findings emphasize that structured peer reinforcement strengthens classroom norms and promotes cooperative behavior.

In addition, Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk, and Doolaard (2020) demonstrated that classroom management strategies incorporating cooperative structures and shared behavioral goals significantly enhanced classroom climate and student social adjustment. Their review underscores that group-based reinforcement contributes not only to behavior regulation but also to a stronger sense of belonging—an important protective factor for learners with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

These findings suggest that teachers are effectively leveraging peer influence and collective accountability to reinforce appropriate behavior. The consistent application of class-wide rewards, team recognition, and cooperative incentives reflects alignment with evidence-based group contingency practices that promote both behavioral improvement and positive classroom climate.

Privilege-based or activity reinforcement

This component illustrated the level of use of privilege-based or activity reinforcement as a positive reinforcement technique among the teacher-respondents. It focuses on how frequently teachers grant privileges, preferred activities, or additional free time to encourage appropriate behavior and sustained engagement among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD).

Table 10
Level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among teachers in terms of privilege-based or activity reinforcement

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I allow learners to earn extra activity or free time.	3.70	0.53	High
2	I grant classroom privileges as reinforcement.	3.83	0.38	High
3	I allow learners to choose preferred activities as rewards.	2.97	0.41	Moderate
4	I provide access to special materials or areas as rewards.	3.57	0.86	High
5	I use activity-based incentives instead of material rewards.	3.50	0.78	High
6	I restore privileges once expected behavior improves.	3.50	0.51	High
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.51		High
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.58	

Table 10 presented the level of use of privilege-based or activity reinforcement among teachers. The results indicate an overall High level of utilization, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.51 and an aggregate standard deviation of 0.58, suggesting generally consistent application with moderate variability across practices.

Most indicators were rated High, including granting classroom privileges (WM = 3.83), allowing extra activity or free time (WM = 3.70), providing access to special materials or areas (WM = 3.57), using activity-based incentives instead of material rewards (WM = 3.50), and restoring privileges once behavior improves (WM = 3.50). In contrast, allowing learners to choose preferred activities as rewards received a Moderate rating (WM = 2.97), indicating that student choice was used less frequently than other privilege-based strategies. Overall, the findings suggest that teachers regularly employ privilege- and activity-oriented incentives, though opportunities for learner choice are comparatively less emphasized.

The high utilization of privilege-based reinforcement suggests that teachers favor non-material incentives that can be seamlessly integrated into daily classroom routines. Contemporary research supports the effectiveness of activity-based and privilege-oriented reinforcers in promoting sustained engagement while minimizing reliance on tangible rewards. For example, Dawson, Jimenez, and Leko (2021) found that access to preferred classroom activities functioned as a powerful reinforcer for increasing task persistence and reducing disruptive behaviors among students with behavioral challenges. Their findings emphasize that

structured access to meaningful privileges can serve as an effective alternative to material incentives.

The moderate use of student-selected activities indicates potential to further strengthen autonomy-supportive practices. Autonomy-supportive reinforcement has been linked to increased intrinsic motivation and behavioral ownership. Vasquez, Kumm, and Keller (2020) demonstrated that incorporating student choice within classroom reinforcement systems significantly improved compliance and academic engagement, particularly among learners with emotional and behavioral needs. Their results highlight the motivational benefits of allowing students to select preferred reinforcers.

Furthermore, the practice of restoring privileges contingent upon behavioral improvement aligns with research emphasizing structured, transparent reinforcement systems. Common, Lane, and Oakes (2022) reported that clearly defined contingency-based privilege systems enhanced students' perceptions of fairness and promoted self-regulation in inclusive settings. When privileges were temporarily withdrawn and systematically restored following goal attainment, students demonstrated improved behavioral consistency and reduced oppositional behavior.

Taken together, these findings indicate that teachers demonstrated a high and generally consistent use of privilege-based reinforcement strategies. Although learner choice was less frequently incorporated, the structured use of activity incentives and contingent privilege restoration reflects alignment with evidence-based, non-material reinforcement practices. Strengthening autonomy-supportive components may further enhance the effectiveness of these strategies in managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) within inclusive classrooms.

Summary on the level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among teachers

This section provided a summary of the findings on the level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among the teacher-respondents. It synthesizes the results across the four reinforcement domains verbal response and recognition, tangible rewards and token systems, group or peer-based reinforcement, and privilege-based or activity reinforcement, to present an overall picture of teachers' reinforcement practices in managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The summary highlights prevailing patterns and serves as a basis for interpreting how consistently positive reinforcement strategies are applied in inclusive classroom settings.

Table 11
Summary on the level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among teachers

Components	WM	SD	Verbal Description
Verbal response and recognition	4.43	0.49	Very High
Tangible rewards and token systems	4.43	0.52	Very High
Group or peer-based reinforcement	4.30	0.45	Very High
Privilege-based or activity reinforcement	3.51	0.58	High
Grand Mean	4.17		High
Grand Standard Deviation		0.51	

Table 11 illustrated the summary of the level of use of positive reinforcement techniques among teachers. The results show that verbal response and recognition and tangible rewards and token systems both obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.43, interpreted as

Very High, indicating that these strategies were most frequently and consistently applied. Group or peer-based reinforcement also registered a Very High level of use with a weighted mean of 4.30, reflecting strong utilization of class-wide and cooperative reinforcement practices.

In contrast, privilege-based or activity reinforcement obtained a weighted mean of 3.51, interpreted as High, indicating that while these strategies were commonly applied, they were used less frequently than verbal, tangible, or group-based reinforcement. The grand mean of 4.17 (High) reflects a generally strong and consistent implementation of positive reinforcement techniques in managing students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The relatively low grand standard deviation (SD = 0.51) indicates minimal variation in responses, suggesting stable reinforcement practices across teachers.

The overall high level of reinforcement use aligns with contemporary research emphasizing that consistent positive reinforcement strengthens behavioral regulation and classroom structure. For example, Pas, Cash, O'Brennan, Debnam, and Bradshaw (2021) found that classrooms characterized by proactive and consistent reinforcement practices demonstrated improved behavioral engagement and reduced disruptive incidents, particularly among students with behavioral risks. Their findings underscore the value of predictable reinforcement systems in sustaining instructional continuity.

The strong reliance on verbal and tangible reinforcement also reflects the importance of immediacy in behavior support. Simonsen, Myers, and Briere (2021) reported that timely and behavior-specific reinforcement increases the likelihood of sustained behavior change by strengthening clear behavior–outcome associations. Immediate feedback was found to be especially critical for students requiring structured behavioral guidance.

The slightly lower utilization of privilege-based reinforcement may relate to practical classroom constraints. Conroy, Sutherland, Vo, and Marsh (2022) noted that while activity-based reinforcers are effective in promoting motivation and autonomy, teachers often implement them selectively due to time limitations and curricular pacing demands. Their study suggests that structured planning is required to integrate privilege-based incentives without disrupting instructional flow.

Overall, these findings indicate that teachers implemented reinforcement strategies in a balanced and systematic manner, emphasizing immediate feedback while incorporating structured systems and selective privilege-based approaches. The consistent application of these strategies reflects alignment with contemporary evidence-based, non-punitive classroom management practices that support positive behavioral outcomes among students with EBD.

Level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

This section highlighted the level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) as observed during classroom sessions. The data were gathered using a structured behavioral observation checklist that measured key behavioral domains, including attention and task engagement, compliance with classroom rules, peer interaction, and reduction of disruptive behaviors. The findings are presented and analyzed using descriptive statistical measures to provide an understanding of the behavioral patterns of students with EBD within inclusive classroom settings. The results of this section serve as a basis for examining how classroom behavior relates to the use of positive reinforcement techniques employed by teachers.

Attention and task engagement

This subsection presented the level of classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in terms of attention and task engagement.

Table 12 presents the level of classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in terms of attention and task engagement. The results indicate an overall "Good" level of behavior, as reflected in the aggregate weighted mean of 2.91 and an aggregate standard deviation of 0.60. This suggests that, on average, students with EBD were able to demonstrate functional levels of attentiveness and engagement during classroom activities, although consistency varied across situations.

Table 12
Level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in terms of attention and task engagement

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	The student sustains attention during classroom lessons.	3.03	0.67	Good
2	The student completes assigned tasks within the given time.	2.73	0.58	Good
3	The student remains focused despite classroom distractions.	2.63	0.56	Good
4	The student follows through on tasks once started.	2.73	0.52	Good
5	The student shows interest and participation in learning activities.	3.40	0.56	Good
6	The student requires minimal redirection to stay on task.	2.93	0.69	Good
Aggregate Weighted Mean		2.91		Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.60	

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Excellent; 3.41-4.20-Very Good; 2.61-3.40 Good; 1.81-2.60-Fair; 1.00-1.80-Poor

Among the indicators, the highest mean was recorded for showing interest and participation in learning activities (WM = 3.40), suggesting that students were generally willing to engage when lessons were meaningful or motivating. Indicators related to sustaining attention, task completion, and following through on tasks were also rated as Good, implying that students were able to remain engaged for reasonable periods, though not at an optimal level. The need for redirection to stay on task (WM = 2.93) further indicates that while engagement was present, students still required regular instructional support and behavioral guidance. Overall, the findings reflect moderate yet functional engagement patterns characteristic of learners with EBD in inclusive classroom environments.

The observed "Good" level of attention and task engagement suggests that students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are capable of participating meaningfully in classroom instruction when appropriate supports are consistently implemented. Contemporary research affirms that engagement among learners with behavioral difficulties improves in structured and supportive environments. For instance, Wehby, Kern, and Lane (2020) reported

that students with EBD demonstrated increased task persistence and reduced off-task behavior when exposed to classrooms characterized by predictable routines and proactive reinforcement systems.

Equally, Owens, Evans, and Himawan (2021) found that pairing instruction with immediate, specific feedback significantly enhanced engagement and sustained attention among students with behavioral and attentional challenges. Their findings underscore the importance of timely reinforcement in strengthening focus and academic participation.

Moreover, Gilmour and Wehby (2022) observed that students with EBD typically exhibit moderate baseline engagement levels that can be substantially improved through structured behavioral supports rather than exclusionary or punitive practices. Their study emphasized that supportive instructional strategies such as clear expectations and consistent positive feedback promote gradual improvements in attentiveness and classroom participation.

These findings suggest that while students with EBD may not consistently demonstrate very high levels of attentiveness, they respond positively to classroom environments that reinforce effort, provide structure, and emphasize supportive teacher–student interactions. Strengthening these conditions may further enhance sustained engagement and reduce the need for corrective interventions.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders exhibited a good level of attention and task engagement. Although some variability in focus was present, students demonstrated meaningful participation in classroom activities, reinforcing the importance of structured, reinforcement-based classroom practices in supporting academic involvement.

Compliance with classroom rules and instructions

This subsection presented the level of classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in terms of attention and task engagement. It focuses on how consistently students sustain attention, complete assigned tasks, remain focused during instruction, and actively participate in learning activities. Examining this domain provides insight into students' ability to engage with classroom instruction and maintain task-related behavior within inclusive learning environments.

Table 13 shown the level of classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in terms of compliance with classroom rules and instructions. The findings reveal an overall "Good" level of compliance, as indicated by the aggregate weighted mean of 2.90 and an aggregate standard deviation of 0.65.

Table 13
Level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in terms of compliance with classroom rules and instructions

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	The student follows classroom rules consistently.	3.00	0.74	Good
2	The student responds appropriately to teacher instructions.	2.67	0.71	Good
3	The student complies with classroom routines and procedures.	2.70	0.65	Good

4	The student follows directions without repeated reminders.	2.60	0.72	Fair
5	The student accepts corrective feedback without resistance.	3.10	0.55	Good
6	The student demonstrates self-control when corrected.	3.33	0.55	Good
Aggregate Weighted Mean		2.90		Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.65	

This suggests that students with EBD were generally able to follow classroom expectations and respond to instructional demands, although consistency varied across specific behaviors.

Among the pointers, the highest mean was observed in demonstrating self-control when corrected (WM = 3.33) and accepting corrective feedback without resistance (WM = 3.10), indicating that students were relatively receptive to guidance and redirection. Indicators related to following classroom rules, responding to teacher instructions, and complying with routines were all rated as Good, reflecting functional levels of rule adherence. However, following directions without repeated reminders (WM = 2.60) was rated as Fair, suggesting that students still required frequent prompts and reinforcement to sustain compliance. Overall, the results reflect moderate but stable compliance patterns typical of learners with EBD in inclusive classroom settings.

The generally good level of compliance indicates that students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are capable of adhering to classroom rules when expectations are clearly structured and consistently reinforced. Contemporary scholarship supports the importance of predictability and explicit instruction in promoting rule-following behavior. For example, Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, and Sugai (2020) emphasized that clearly defined routines and proactive classroom management practices significantly increase student compliance and reduce disruptive behavior, particularly among learners with behavioral challenges.

Furthermore, research highlights the role of respectful and supportive corrective feedback in strengthening compliance. Reinke, Herman, and Stormont (2020) found that calm, behavior-specific correction paired with positive reinforcement increased students' responsiveness to teacher directions and reduced oppositional responses in elementary classrooms. Their findings underscore that corrective strategies are most effective when embedded within positive teacher–student interactions.

The lower rating for independent compliance without reminders suggests the need for continued scaffolded support. Gage, Grasley-Boy, and MacSuga-Gage (2021) reported that students with EBD often require repeated prompts and systematic reinforcement to internalize behavioral expectations, especially in dynamic classroom environments. Their study noted that gradual fading of prompts combined with consistent reinforcement promotes long-term self-regulation.

Overall, these findings suggest that while students with EBD demonstrated a good level of compliance, sustained independence in rule-following may require ongoing structured guidance. Consistent expectations, supportive feedback, and reinforcement-based strategies remain essential for maintaining compliance and promoting stable classroom behavior.

Social interaction and peer relationships

This subsection revealed the level of classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in terms of social interaction and peer relationships. It focuses on how students interact with classmates, cooperate during group activities, show respect and empathy, and engage in positive peer relationships. Examining this domain provides insight into students' social functioning and their ability to build and maintain appropriate peer connections within inclusive classroom settings.

Table 14 showed the level of classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in terms of social interaction and peer relationships. The findings reveal an overall Very Good level of social behavior, as indicated by the aggregate weighted mean of 3.77 and an aggregate standard deviation of 0.68. This suggests that, in general, students with EBD were able to engage positively with peers and participate constructively in social interactions within the classroom.

Table 14
Level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in terms of social interaction and peer relationships

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	The student interacts positively with classmates.	4.00	0.69	Very Good
2	The student cooperates during group or pair activities.	3.53	0.57	Very Good
3	The student shows respect toward peers.	4.17	0.65	Very Good
4	The student resolves conflicts with peers appropriately.	2.97	0.67	Good
5	The student demonstrates empathy toward others.	4.00	0.74	Very Good
6	The student is accepted by peers during social interactions.	3.97	0.76	Very Good
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.77		Very Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.68	

Most indicators were rated Very Good, particularly showing respect toward peers (WM = 4.17), interacting positively with classmates (WM = 4.00), demonstrating empathy (WM = 4.00), and being accepted by peers during social interactions (WM = 3.97). These results indicate that students were generally capable of forming positive peer relationships and exhibiting socially appropriate behaviors. However, resolving conflicts with peers appropriately (WM = 2.97) was rated Good, suggesting that while students could maintain positive interactions, managing interpersonal conflicts remained a relative challenge. Overall, the data reflect strong social engagement with specific areas requiring continued behavioral support.

The very good level of social interaction indicates that inclusive classroom environments can meaningfully support positive peer relationships among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) when structured supports are present. Recent empirical research affirms that cooperative learning structures and peer-mediated supports enhance social competence and reduce peer rejection among students with behavioral challenges. For instance, Garwood and Vernon-Feagans (2021) found that structured peer

engagement opportunities in inclusive classrooms significantly improved social acceptance and classroom belonging among students with behavioral risks.

Similarly, Gest and Rodkin (2021) reported that classrooms implementing organized peer interaction systems demonstrated stronger peer networks and reduced social isolation, particularly for students with externalizing behaviors. Their findings emphasize that structured peer environments foster positive social norms and increase opportunities for prosocial behavior.

The comparatively lower rating in conflict resolution suggests the need for explicit instruction in social problem-solving. Lane, Oakes, and Menzies (2020) documented that students with EBD benefit significantly from direct teaching of social-emotional competencies, including conflict management and emotional regulation, resulting in improved peer interactions and decreased relational aggression. Additionally, Nickerson, Aloe, and Werth (2022) reported that peer mediation and empathy-focused interventions contributed to healthier peer dynamics and reductions in social conflict within inclusive school settings.

These findings propose that while students with EBD are capable of establishing and maintaining positive peer relationships, sustained instruction in conflict resolution and emotional regulation can further strengthen social functioning.

Reduction of disruptive or maladaptive behaviors

This subsection presented the level of classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in terms of reduction of disruptive or maladaptive behaviors. It focuses on the extent to which students demonstrate decreased occurrences of disruptive actions such as verbal outbursts, aggression, and difficulty regulating emotions.

Table 15
Level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in terms of reduction of disruptive or maladaptive behaviors

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	The student shows reduced frequency of disruptive behaviors.	4.00	0.64	Very Good
2	The student refrains from verbal outbursts or inappropriate language.	4.43	0.68	Excellent
3	The student manages anger or frustration appropriately.	4.37	0.61	Excellent
4	The student avoids physical aggression toward others.	4.27	0.83	Excellent
5	The student follows class rules even during unstructured activities.	4.00	0.79	Very Good
6	The student demonstrates improved self-regulation over time.	4.10	0.62	Very Good
Aggregate Weighted Mean		4.20		Very Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation			0.70	

Table 15 illustrated the level of classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) in terms of the reduction of disruptive or maladaptive behaviors. The findings indicate an overall Very Good level of behavioral improvement, as reflected in

the aggregate weighted mean of 4.20 and an aggregate standard deviation of 0.70. This suggests that students demonstrated noticeable reductions in disruptive behaviors and showed improved behavioral regulation across classroom situations.

Among the indicators, the highest ratings were observed for refraining from verbal outbursts or inappropriate language (WM = 4.43) and managing anger or frustration appropriately (WM = 4.37), both interpreted as Excellent. Avoidance of physical aggression also received an Excellent rating (WM = 4.27), indicating strong progress in controlling overt disruptive actions. Indicators related to reduced frequency of disruptive behaviors, following rules during unstructured activities, and improved self-regulation over time were rated Very Good, suggesting that while behavioral improvement was evident, consistency across less structured contexts still required ongoing support. Overall, the results point to substantial positive behavioral gains among students with EBD.

The high level of reduction in disruptive behaviors indicates that students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) can achieve meaningful behavioral regulation when classroom environments emphasize structure, predictability, and reinforcement-based supports. Contemporary research affirms the effectiveness of proactive behavioral strategies in decreasing disruptive conduct. For example, Gage, Cook, and Reichow (2020) conducted a meta-analysis examining classroom-based interventions for students with EBD and found significant reductions in disruptive and aggressive behaviors when positive behavioral supports were implemented consistently with clear expectations.

The strong performance in anger and frustration management suggests progress in emotional regulation. Chafouleas, Koriakin, Roundfield, and Overstreet (2020) reported that school-based interventions targeting emotional regulation skills—when paired with positive teacher feedback—resulted in improved self-control and decreased emotional outbursts among students with behavioral challenges. Their findings highlight the role of reinforcement in strengthening adaptive coping strategies.

Improvements during unstructured activities further align with research emphasizing the importance of extending reinforcement practices beyond formal instruction. McDaniel, Bruhn, and Troughton (2022) found that proactive supervision and reinforcement during transitions and less structured classroom periods significantly reduced instances of problem behavior and maintained behavioral gains over time.

Collectively, these findings suggest that consistent reinforcement across both structured and unstructured contexts contributes to sustained behavioral improvement. Based on the results, it can be concluded that students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders demonstrated a very good level of reduction in disruptive behaviors. The observed decreases in verbal disruptions, aggression, and emotional dysregulation reflect meaningful behavioral progress, underscoring the effectiveness of reinforcement-based supports in promoting self-regulation and adaptive functioning.

Summary on the level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

This section presented a summary of the level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). It synthesizes the findings across the key behavioral domains' attention and task engagement, compliance with classroom rules and instructions, social interaction and peer relationships, and reduction of disruptive or maladaptive behaviors to provide an overall picture of students' behavioral functioning in inclusive classroom settings.

Table 16
Summary on the level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Components	WM	SD	Verbal Description
Attention and task engagement	2.91	0.60	Good
Compliance with classroom rules and instructions	2.90	0.65	Good
Social interaction and peer relationships	3.77	0.68	Very Good
Reduction of disruptive or maladaptive behaviors	4.20	0.70	Very Good
Grand Mean	3.45		Very Good
Grand Standard Deviation		0.66	

Table 16 displayed a summary of the level of classroom behavior among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) across four behavioral domains. The results reveal an overall Very Good level of classroom behavior, as reflected in the grand mean of 3.45 and a grand standard deviation of 0.66, indicating generally positive behavioral functioning with moderate variability among students.

Among the domains, reduction of disruptive or maladaptive behaviors obtained the highest weighted mean (WM = 4.20), interpreted as Very Good, suggesting that students demonstrated substantial improvement in managing disruptive actions and regulating their behavior. This was followed by social interaction and peer relationships with a Very Good rating (WM = 3.77), indicating positive peer engagement, cooperation, and social acceptance within the classroom.

In contrast, attention and task engagement (WM = 2.91) and compliance with classroom rules and instructions (WM = 2.90) were both interpreted as Good, suggesting that while students were generally attentive and compliant, these areas remained more variable and required continued instructional and behavioral support. Overall, the findings suggest that students with EBD showed stronger gains in social behavior and behavioral regulation than in sustained attention and independent compliance.

The overall very good level of classroom behavior suggests that students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are capable of demonstrating adaptive behavior when supported by structured and inclusive classroom environments. Contemporary research indicates that improvements among learners with EBD are often first observed in externally visible behaviors, such as reductions in disruptive conduct and improvements in peer interactions. For example, Garwood, Werts, and Vernon-Feagans (2020) found that students exposed to consistent, proactive behavioral supports showed earlier gains in observable conduct regulation and social functioning compared to sustained internal regulation skills.

The comparatively lower ratings in attention and compliance highlight the need for continued scaffolding and instructional supports. Reddy, Fabiano, and Dudek (2021) reported that students with EBD frequently require structured routines, explicit prompts, and ongoing reinforcement to maintain attention and follow directions consistently, particularly during academically demanding tasks. Their findings emphasize the importance of layered behavioral supports to strengthen attentional persistence.

Moreover, the strong performance in reducing maladaptive behaviors aligns with research demonstrating the effectiveness of non-punitive, reinforcement-based approaches. Stormont, Reinke, and Herman (2022) found that classrooms implementing clearly articulated behavioral expectations paired with consistent positive reinforcement experienced significant

reductions in disruptive behavior and improvements in emotional regulation among students with behavioral challenges.

Together, these findings suggest that while students with EBD demonstrated strong gains in observable behavior and social functioning, continued support for attentional control and independent compliance remains important. Reinforcing positive conduct while systematically strengthening attention and self-regulation may further enhance overall classroom functioning.

Test of relationship between the positive reinforcement techniques and the classroom behavior among students

This section illustrated the test of relationship between the positive reinforcement techniques employed by teachers and the classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). Using appropriate correlational statistical analysis, the data were examined to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the level of use of positive reinforcement strategies and students' classroom behavior across the identified behavioral domains. The results of this analysis provide empirical evidence on whether and how reinforcement practices are associated with observed behavioral outcomes, thereby addressing the core objective of the study.

Table 17
Test of relationship between the positive reinforcement techniques and the classroom behavior among students

Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Remarks
Positive Reinforcement Techniques and Classroom Behavior	-0.077	Negligible Negative	0.686	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

*significant at p<0.05 (two-tailed)

Table 17 presented the test of relationship between the level of use of positive reinforcement techniques and the classroom behavior of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The computed r-value of –0.077 indicates a negligible negative relationship between the two variables. The corresponding p-value of 0.686, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, led to the decision to not reject the null hypothesis. This result implies that there was no statistically significant relationship between teachers' reported use of positive reinforcement techniques and the overall classroom behavior of students with EBD in this study.

The negligible correlation suggests that variations in classroom behavior were not directly associated with differences in the level of reinforcement practices as measured. This may indicate that classroom behavior among students with EBD is influenced by multiple interacting factors beyond reinforcement alone, such as individual learner characteristics, classroom structure, consistency of implementation, and contextual conditions.

The absence of a significant relationship indicates that the frequency of positive reinforcement alone may not be sufficient to produce measurable behavioral change when examined at an aggregate level. Contemporary research emphasizes that implementation quality and contextual alignment are critical determinants of effectiveness. For example,

Bradshaw, Pas, Debnam, and Johnson (2020) found that positive behavioral interventions produced stronger student outcomes when implemented with high fidelity and embedded within comprehensive classroom management systems rather than applied as isolated strategies.

Similarly, Kern, George, and Wehby (2021) reported that behavioral outcomes among students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are influenced by multiple interacting variables, including instructional structure, teacher–student relationships, and individualized behavior plans. Their findings suggest that reinforcement strategies may exert indirect or cumulative effects that are not fully captured through simple correlational analysis.

In addition, McKenna, Flower, and Adamson (2022) highlighted the heterogeneity of students with EBD, noting that behavioral responsiveness to interventions varies according to severity, co-occurring needs, and environmental stability. Their review emphasized that multi-component support systems—combining reinforcement, explicit instruction, emotional support, and data-based decision-making yield more consistent and observable behavioral improvements.

Taken together, these studies suggest that while positive reinforcement remains an evidence-based practice, its effectiveness depends on fidelity, integration within broader behavioral frameworks, and responsiveness to individual learner profiles. Thus, the absence of a statistically significant relationship in this study underscores the need to examine implementation quality and complementary supports rather than frequency of reinforcement alone.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that although teachers consistently implement positive reinforcement strategies and demonstrate strong professional preparation, the effectiveness of reinforcement in influencing classroom behavior cannot be explained by frequency of use alone. While students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders generally display adaptive behaviors in inclusive settings, the absence of a significant relationship indicates that behavioral outcomes are shaped by more complex and interacting factors. These include the quality and fidelity of reinforcement delivery, individual learner characteristics, classroom structure, and broader support systems. Therefore, positive reinforcement remains essential but must be embedded within a comprehensive, well-coordinated behavioral support framework to produce sustained and measurable improvements in student behavior

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that schools formally adopt a comprehensive Positive Reinforcement–Based Behavior Support Framework that emphasizes quality, consistency, and fidelity of implementation rather than frequency alone. This framework should integrate structured classroom management systems, behavior-specific praise, reinforcement fading, individualized supports, and multi-tiered intervention approaches for learners with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. School administrators and the Department of Education are encouraged to institutionalize regular monitoring, coaching, and capacity-building programs to ensure sustained and high-quality implementation. Strengthening collaborative partnerships among teachers, specialists, and parents should likewise form part of the adopted framework to promote holistic and consistent behavioral support across settings.

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