

Teachers' Strategies for Managing Disruptive Behaviour in Nepalese ELT Classrooms

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Abstract

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Disruptive classroom behaviour of students is one of the key concerns for instructors that may prominently disturb language instruction and learning procedures. Dealing with such behaviour in a language class is a challenging job for teachers to sustain in their classrooms. Their job is to identify acceptable ways to help pupils sustain the code. This paper aims to identify disruptive students' behaviour in the class and explore teacher strategies for managing such behaviour in English language teaching (ELT) classrooms in Nepal. I collected data through the narrative inquiry method. Four secondary school instructors were selected as the contributors for the study purposively. I used a semi-structured interview as the tool for data collection. This study revealed some typical disruptive behaviours such as ignoring classroom instructions, cheating, the use of mobile phones, and the mother tongue in English classes. This indicated that establishing behaviour expectations, providing instructions, and creating a learning-centered environment are practical strategies in handling this kind of behaviour.

Keywords: *classroom management, conducive teaching-learning environment, disruptive students, misbehaviour, teacher strategies*

Introduction

Disruptive Behaviour (DB) refers to behaviors that affect teaching and learning processes. When learners insist on chatting, screaming, insulting, bunking, and interrupting classes deliberately, teachers will feel discouraged about teaching. They will not be able to teach lessons effectively to learners nor assist them in acquiring knowledge. DB includes disrespecting others and making victims feel intimidated (Villafranca et al., 2017). Any inappropriate activity that might interfere with teaching and learning is considered DB since it affects not only the students who are exhibiting the behaviour but also the teachers and other pupils (Arden, 2020). DB may have a severe impact on the classroom

setting, as well as on educational practice. Classroom interruption is a major source of anxiety for instructors and institutional organizations worldwide. Due to classroom interruption, teachers are incapable of finishing the lesson they are meant to deliver in a certain class (Howard, 2013). It is, therefore, maintaining the assistance of students in classroom activities is very much vital to manage the behaviour. Schools must have a behaviour policy that outlines clear indications of incentives, penalties, and procedures for dealing with misbehaviour (Cohen et al., 2010).

A concise and clear code of behaviour, proper verbal and nonverbal admiration, good behaviour, appropriate rewards and incentives and punishment systems can minimize students' misbehaviours. DB breaks class norms and standards, degrades others, and is unharmonious with societal legal and social norms (Charles, 2008). English teachers teaching at secondary schools encounter their students' misbehaviour inside the classroom. Sometimes they give irrelevant and silly answers to the teacher's serious questions, and they also talk, hiding their faces. Disruptive behaviours are the main reasons why instructors become burned out and leave the profession (Woodcock & Reupert, 2017). Students' lack of discipline is a prevalent issue in schools. Many instructors worldwide abandon their jobs due to stress caused by student behaviour (Hong, 2012).

DB has been a big challenge for English teachers in Nepal. They face problems as their students do not pay attention to their studies, engage in unwanted behaviours, and become furious about trivial matters. Some novice instructors are reluctant to enter the teaching profession because they are afraid of having to deal with the disruptive behaviours of their students (Yusoff & Mansor, 2016). Teachers must be prepared with the requisite information and abilities to address disruptive behaviours successfully. This may be possible if they are aware of using proper strategies to manage disruptive behaviours.

Review of Literature

In this section, I deal with DB and class management, classroom behaviour issues with students, strategies for managing DB and research gaps related to it.

DB and Classroom Management

DB refers to any undesirable activity that prevents the smooth conduct of classroom processes through the hindrance of others from achieving their objectives. Such behaviours include lack of self-control, destructiveness, and actions that may pose danger to others and breach social conventions (Milone & Sesso, 2022). Research highlights that teachers structure class lessons, prepare the needed resources, and involve students in various activities for the control of classroom disruptions (Baumert, et al., 2010). DB affects the learners involved in the behaviour and other students as well as the teachers.

The classroom management methods applied globally include building positive relationships between teachers and pupils, sticking to a routine, setting penalties for misbehaviour, and proper conduct instruction (Fecser, 2015). In addition to this, physical management within classrooms, including classroom management, plays an equally significant part in reduction undesirable behaviour (Popescu, 2014). Furthermore, classroom management in places like the Netherlands and Indonesia takes into consideration the need of socialization for pupils, through adaptation of the content of the lessons, using non-verbal communication, reporting to disciplinarians, and discussing the issue openly

(Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Adiguzel & Culha, 2016; Sadik, 2017). However, research still shows that DB is relatively under-explored even in places like Nepal, where Budha (2012) emphasizes lesson planning and appropriate use of instructional material.

Classroom Behaviour Issues with Students

The DB exhibited by learners include talking loudly, being late for class, interrupting the lessons, inattention, using mobile devices improperly, and not engaging in class because of lack of motivation (Shrestha, 2016; Karki, 2017; Debreli & Ishanova, 2019). Factors that cause disruptions inside the classroom setting include being bored, learning problems, attention-seeking acts, tiredness, and effects of media (Jati, 2019). Disruptions in class will negatively affect effective delivery of the teaching process. According to recent findings from Nepal and Indonesia, the level of preparedness, willingness, and skill among students affects their behaviour considerably. Those who have high willingness manage to complete tasks on time and have good peer relationships, whereas unprepared students display poor creativity and DB (Khadka & Poudel, 2022). Different kinds of disruptive behaviours were also noted by Umar & Khair (2022) in an EFL class in Indonesia; these included unnecessary talking, wandering around, daydreaming, and cheating.

Strategies for Managing Disruptive Behaviours in the Classroom

The use of effective classroom management techniques is imperative in the reduction of DB. This includes formulation of rules, assignment of responsibilities, active involvement of learners in activities and imposing penalties for violations. Baral and Khadka (2021), Manning and Bucher (2003), Corzo and Contreras (2011), Labaree (2004), Putman (2009), and Zuckerman (2007) emphasized the importance of these strategies in reducing disruptions within class settings. In the context of Nepal, Baral and Khadka (2021) found that well-formulated rules together with the imposition of penalties on behaviours contribute to minimizing disruption.

Teachers should endeavor to balance between instuctor talking time and learner talking time. The seating arrangement in class together with classroom organization is a technique that contributes to the reduction of disruptions. Wangdi and Namgyel (2022) reported that deliberate sitting interventions in Thai classrooms minimize disruptions. From the above discussion, it is evident that disruptive behaviours present significant challenges in the educational sector.

Based on previously reviewed research conducted by researchers in the field of disruptive students' behaviour, only a limited number of studies have focused on English language teachers' strategies for managing DB. They were unable to address secondary instructors' strategies to deal with disruptive behaviours in their pupils. There is still a shortage of research that explores how L2 teachers may control students' behaviours that depart from the estimated norms in the classroom. Less emphasis has been dedicated to how teachers deal with these behaviours of students. To the best of my knowledge, few studies have been conducted in this situation. This study aims to identify and report the research gap by exploring how teachers identify DB and the strategies they use for managing ELT classes. This study aims to answer the following research questions.

- a. How do secondary English language teachers identify disruptive students' behaviour in the classroom?
- b. How do they manage their students' DB in the classroom?

Methods

A narrative research design was used to study the phenomenon of disruptive students' behaviour as well as to examine the methods that teachers apply to deal with this kind of behaviour. Narrative inquiry could be regarded as an adequate research method for the study since it allows studying participants' views on certain phenomena as well as their own experiences with the help of interpretative work carried out by the researcher (Barkhuizen, 2022). In this context, the choice of the research design fits the purpose of the study due to the fact that it helps to analyze the described phenomenon and the ways of addressing it with regard to their temporal and contextual nature. Narrative inquiry provides opportunities for the analysis of the studied phenomena in sociocultural context and for understanding teachers' thoughts and teaching practices (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Teachers' narratives are particularly valuable in understanding how they construct meaning and develop their professional identities within specific educational contexts. The use of teachers' narratives is especially crucial in exploring how they make meaning and construct professional identities in particular educational settings (Barkhuizen, 2019). A few selected participants were four secondary-level English language teachers (male and female), who taught Grades 11 and 12 in four distinct community schools in Nepal. Purposive sampling was applied because of the need to locate those individuals who have some knowledge and experience regarding the topic under investigation. The four selected participants named Sanju, Seela, Govinda, and Suman (pseudonyms) were all experienced in dealing with disruptive classroom behaviours, having taught for more than two years.

Semi-structured interviews served as an appropriate method of data collection as the participants could talk freely about their experiences without researcher's intervention (Denzin, 2019). As it was mentioned above, the participants' accounts are important when one needs to find out what happened to them. That is why semi-structured interviews were especially helpful for acquiring this kind of data. Each participant participated in two interviews of 10–20 minutes long carried out in Nepali. Data collection took around two hours in total. This long period contributed to fostering rapport and making it possible to collect richer data.

Since participants were more comfortable expressing themselves in their mother tongue, which is Nepali, the validity of data improved. Hence, transcribing interviews was done in Nepali language to keep the original meaning of the data as it is (Yunus et al., 2022). All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of participants, using a mobile phone. All these audios were listened to many times before being translated into English. To maintain the quality of translations, peer check was performed. Collection of data was done till the saturation point was reached. After that, data analysis took place thematically. In thematic analysis of qualitative data, firstly familiarising oneself with the data, coding the data, searching for patterns within the data, reviewing and refining the themes, and finally identifying and naming the themes was done (Clarke & Braun, 2021).

An inductive approach was adopted for data analysis, and it centred on the perception that teachers have about DB and how they modify their strategies for managing it in classroom instruction. Ethical issues were well taken care of during the research process. All participants who participated in the study were briefed beforehand and consented voluntarily before participating. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of data collected, all participants were allocated pseudonyms. This study generated stories on the strategies that teachers use to control DB, which included setting rules in the classroom

and dealing with disruptive students.

Results

This section contains two broad themes: Identifying disruptive students' behaviour and the strategies that the teachers used in managing their DB. The results and discussions have been analyzed and interpreted as follows.

Identifying Disruptive Students' Behaviour

Identifying DB in students is essential to maintaining a conducive and effective learning environment. Without identifying these behaviours early, it is difficult to address them with appropriate strategies. Regarding students' DB, Suman stated:

Disruptive students of my class sit on the rear benches, respond silently, do not attend class regularly, do not do homework, talk with friends in their mother tongue, cheat in exams, use cell phones, sometimes fight with friends in class, turn back, look outside through the window, whistle in class and laugh.

From this perspective, the classroom culture in Nepal regarding ELT could be seen as one in which the disruptive practices are defined from the teacher-centered perspective, whereby obedience equates to learning. In this way, such actions as speaking Nepali, sitting at the back of the class, and use of cellphones can be considered more than mere distractions, and may actually be symbolic acts of disobedience against the norms of an institution that emphasizes the use of English, attention, and participation.

The emphasis on examination-driven education also means that disengagement will be seen as avoidance behaviour through such means as absenteeism, cheating, and the non-completion of homework tasks. Rather than being a pedagogical failure or poor instruction on the part of teachers, disruptive practices tend to be considered the individual choice of a particular learner. Overall, the narrative reveals a classroom culture shaped by tension between English-only pedagogical norms and multilingual realities, uneven student engagement, strong teacher-centered authority structures, and a tendency to interpret disengagement as behavioural rather than pedagogical misalignment (Rachel & Daniel, 2012).

Govinda asserted, "Disruptive students arrive late in the class, leave the class early, gossip in the class, do not submit assignments in time, disobedient to the teachers, insincere at their work, irregular and do not wear uniforms in the schools," The kinds of disruptive behaviours exhibited by students may be generally categorized into three different but interconnected types. Academic disengagement describes actions of withdrawal from academic participation such as late attendance, tardiness, non-compliance with deadlines, failure to concentrate, and lack of effort. On the other hand, active disruption is characterized by off-task or social disruption behaviour that may include interrupting class discussions and gossiping, making noise, and diverting their classmates away from any learning-related activity. Lastly, norm defiance includes such actions as not following instructions from the teacher, getting up and leaving the class without permission, and disregarding uniform regulations.

Regarding this, Seela narrated a similar story to Govinda: "Disruptive pupils usually stare out the windows, duplicate other students' assignments, play games and watch TikTok, chat about matters unrelated to the classes, move from bench to bench, yell, laugh inappropriately, and bother other

people." Disruptive students often gaze out windows, copy others' work, play games, watch TikTok, chat about unrelated topics, change seats frequently, yell, laugh at inappropriate times, and disturb others. Her view is supported by Karki (2017). He found that classroom bullying, making unnecessary noises and unwanted activities, reluctance to participate in classroom activities, creating disturbances, and ignoring the teachers are some common disruptive behaviours.

Common student-related difficulties include chatting, not wearing a uniform, arriving late, failing to attend the final test, class irregularities, lingering outside the classroom, and excessive use of mobile devices. Disruptive students usually arrive late to school, interrupt others, eat in class, insult others, damage school property and do not follow the rules and policies of the school (Harmer, 2008). If teachers are cooperative and dynamic in their teaching techniques, they can manage the DB of their students in their classes.

Teachers' Strategies for Handling Disruptive Behaviours

Under this theme, four sub-themes have been analyzed and interpreted.

Establishing Classroom Behaviour Norms

Formulating rules and regulations at the beginning of an academic session reflects a proactive classroom management approach, as it focuses on preventing DB before it occurs. The research found that the majority of instructors establish classroom behaviour norms at the beginning of the session, which helps create clear expectations and reduces the likelihood of misconduct. Sanju reported :

I set the rules and regulations at the beginning of the new session, and make adjustments as needed. I also urge the students to draft classroom rules and regulations jointly and place them on the wall in front of the classroom.

This demonstrates a proactive strategy, as she not only establishes expectations early but also involves students in rule-making, which increases ownership and compliance. By co-constructing rules and displaying them visibly, she reinforces behavioural expectations as a preventive measure rather than responding after disruptions occur.

Similarly, Govinda's approach also aligns largely with proactive management, but with a stronger emphasis on student autonomy. She stated, "I give complete authority to students to set classroom rules, and they were held accountable for all effects and violations." Allowing students to create rules fosters self-regulation and shared responsibility, which are key features of proactive classroom management. However, the emphasis on accountability also introduces a reactive element, as consequences are enforced when rules are violated.

In contrast, Seela's practice reflects a more institutional and reactive approach. She mentioned, "My school makes the rules before the students are admitted, and they are asked to read and sign. When they violate the rules, I inform the administration about it." While the pre-established rules indicate some proactive planning at the school level, her classroom response to misbehaviour relies on reporting violations to administration, which is characteristic of reactive management. Instead of resolving behavioural issues within the classroom through preventative strategies, action is taken after misconduct occurs.

Overall, the findings suggest variation in how teachers balance proactive and reactive classroom management. While most instructors use proactive strategies such as early rule-setting and

student involvement to prevent disruption, others rely more heavily on reactive mechanisms such as administrative intervention when behavioural issues arise.

Paying more Attention to Disruptive Students

Disruptive behaviours of students harm teaching and learning activities. They not only ruin their educational careers but also disturb their friends, teachers and the school's real performance as well; therefore, they should be managed in time. Regarding this, Suman stated, "I pay close attention to disruptive students. I target my questions to the students who are about to lose concentration and possibly about to misbehave." He claimed that he asks disruptive students to sit at the front and ask questions, and they stop their misbehaviour. Seela asserted, "I regularly do case studies of troublesome students to reduce the challenges associated with them. I routinely conduct awareness seminars in which I demonstrate the negative effects of DB."

It was clear from Seela's life story that she regularly does case studies of troublesome students to reduce the challenges associated with such pupils. She routinely conducts awareness seminars in which she demonstrates the negative effects of DB.

Classroom Management

Classroom management is the instructor's strategy for handling troublesome students. It is significant to generate a helpful and conducive teaching-learning atmosphere. Students may exhibit DB due to a lack of love, care and a lack of interesting class (Vizard, 2009). Teachers, principal and parents can modify their behaviour by showing them love and care. Teachers, administrators, parents, and instructors may all work together to create a positive teaching-learning environment. When classroom activities are interesting and managed by understanding their feelings and interests by the teachers properly, they do not exhibit misbehaviour.

Suman reported, "I built a good rapport by visiting their homes, sharing their problems and showing friendly behaviour to develop a good learning environment. I also use appropriate problem-solving and cooperative strategies to engage them in learning." The expression reflected how he establishes a solid relationship with his students to create a positive learning atmosphere with proper problem-solving and supportive strategies to involve them in learning. This is consistent with Mahvar et al. (2018). They discovered that by using problem-solving and cooperative tactics, emphasizing mutual engagement with students, and using appropriate teaching methods depending on the scenario in the classroom, teachers can manage DB. Teachers, administrators, and parents may help students to modify their DB by showing them love and attention.

Students, instructors, principals, and parents may all work together to create a positive teaching-learning milieu. The ways a family acts and behaves at home have a direct impact on how a youngster will mimic perceived behaviour and later reflect similar behavioural patterns (Woolfolk, 2008). Successful teachers are those whose classes are lively, interesting and well managed with established class rules, avoidance of unnecessary ones and reviewing them frequently. In this regard, Govinda reported :

When my students do not follow the rules that were mutually formulated, I intervene in their seating arrangements, separate them and make them sit as required. I make the class quiet and create a situation for learning by understanding their feelings and interests. I show love and

value for their feelings.

Govinda's lived story suggested that if his pupils do not follow the collaboratively developed classroom rules, he responds being disruptive, intervening in their sitting arrangements, dividing them, and forcing them to sit where they are necessary. He values and appreciates their sentiments. The seating arrangement carried out by Govinda proves that although there may be similar guidelines in place, teacher power will always prevail. Through the seating arrangement, Govinda uses disciplinary power as per Michel Foucault's definition, where one uses space as a means to regulate interactions and behaviour. Although this practice promotes discipline, it may restrict the freedom of students. On the other hand, Govinda's caring nature depicts benevolent control (Vizard, 2009). Therefore, both personal experiences of participants and scholarly views indicate that disruption is minimized when teachers create engaging learning activities and show empathic concern for their students (Evertson & Weinstein, 2023).

Sanju stated, "I enter the class with full preparation and confidence to win the trust of my students. I reward and praise for appropriate behaviour instead of blaming and criticizing." It was clear from her expression that she was fully prepared and confident to gain the students' trust. So, instead of criticizing, she rewards and encourages the excellent behaviour of her students. The use of rewards and praise (Nene, 2013), effective feedback and helping students develop self-regulation (Woodcock & Reupert, 2017) can create a supportive teaching-learning environment.

Use of Student-friendly Teaching Strategies

Disruptive behaviours are the problems that occur recurrently due to the classroom procedures of the teachers. An uninteresting lesson or text may generate DB due to a lack of strict and reliable norms in the classroom, instructors' lengthy explanations child's impatience, and teachers' lack of confidence and competence in the material (Ur, 2009). Govinda asserted:

I talk about their behaviour in person and appreciate their good behaviour in front of the class.

I employ helpful rather than bullying techniques. I do not punish but rather try to understand their problems by discussing and employing helpful strategies.

He addresses their misbehaviour in person and commends them on their excellent behaviour in front of the class. To deal with disturbance, he prefers to discuss and employ helpful rather than bullying techniques. He's discovered that harsh techniques create hatred among pupils toward instructors; therefore, he employs supportive strategies such as instructing politely rather than harshly. He added, "I never give physical punishment to disruptive students, but rather I always talk with them when class is over." He does not give corporal punishment but rather employs helpful techniques such as talking with them in person after the class. Teachers were found to use supportive tactics for dealing with DB.

Historically, corporal punishment was a social norm within the Nepalese school context, justified by social norms according to which fear is supposed to induce obedience and better academic performance among learners (UNICEF, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2018). This norm is rooted in a hierarchical education culture, where a teacher has substantial power, and corporal punishment served as a component of the upbringing process (UNICEF, 2017). Nevertheless, today such a social norm is legally contested. Namely, as stated in the Children Act 2018, all kinds of physical and mental punishment in school are illegal as it is considered to be violence against children. Such behaviors are punishable under the law (Children Act 2018; Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment

of Children, 2020). This norm corresponds to international standards and child-rights frameworks and encourages dignified learning.

Discussion

This study revealed how secondary school English language teachers identify disruptive behaviours of their students and employ different ways of reducing them. The results obtained indicated that students' disruptive behaviours comprise lack of interest, indifference, insincerity, misuse of mobile phones, irrelevant conversations, movement within the classroom, lateness, not wearing uniform, avoiding appearing at final exams, strange behavior, leaving the classroom, eating in classes, ridiculing fellow students, and bothering others. It should be mentioned that while most of the aforementioned disruptive behaviors correspond to those identified by Umar (2022), there are unique aspects characteristic of Nepalese secondary ELT context that may be connected to some peculiarities of classroom setting in Nepal. Firstly, students' misuse of mobile phones, absenteeism, and poor involvement in English language classes are probably related to limited access to learner-centered materials, large class size in public schools, and examination-based approach to teaching in Nepal. Secondly, some behavioral problems, such as walking away from the classroom and chatting informally, are likely to be more common in multilingual contexts when students frequently switch between English and other languages used in classes, thus affecting English lesson concentration. This background indicates that DB among Nepalese secondary school ELT classes is not only disciplinary but is also highly related to the structure and methodology used in the educational institution.

Mussa (2015) and Hesse et al. (2015) underscored that jointly established rules and previously stated norms contribute to seamless classroom governance and maintain discipline and respect, it is implied that the classroom's power dynamics remain stable and agreeable. Yet, an apparent paradox might arise regarding the actual realization of the notion of collective construction. Studies on decision-making within classrooms reveal that the process of rule construction can at times become merely formalized and, even if done in collaboration, may remain implicit. This leaves an important question unanswered by the two studies under review: whether accepted rules signify genuine student autonomy or compliance with teacher-imposed conditions.

Krebt (2017) brought another problem into play by drawing attention to an overemphasis on student talk time when some pupils can monopolize the conversation. Such a point casts doubt on the generally positive attitude toward participation inherent in participative management models. Even though encouraging students to participate in decision-making processes is seen as minimizing misbehaviour, Krebt (2017) emphasized that excessive student input can inadvertently create new disruptions, namely the imbalance in conversation and exclusion from peers. There is yet another conflict between the notions of freedom and control. As suggested by Mussa (2015) and Hesse et al. (2015), the existence of clear rules leads to dignity and discipline. Thus, some structure is considered good. However, Krebt (2017) implied that too much interaction without a particular structure might ruin classroom coherence. Therefore, it seems there is a paradox within the classroom management literature since student involvement in activities might either prevent or cause DB.

Boredom and demotivation can be underlying causes of DB since it opens up a completely new angle of discussion that is only indirectly reflected in the studies reviewed above. Even though most of the behavioural approaches imply that disruptive actions are related to improper participation, there

are motivational theories that consider instruction itself as an underlying reason for such problems. It does not seem that all those classroom strategies converge into a single approach. In fact, there is a tension between different methods that, when applied correctly, might both increase and decrease DB.

Conclusion and Implications

This study has identified disruptive students' behaviours and explored English language teachers' strategies to manage and mitigate disruptive behaviours in the classroom. The findings of the study show that pacing the room, telling lies, unreasonable talking, showing laziness, upsetting and disturbing peers and using excessive phones are common disruptive behaviours of the students. Some specific strategies that teachers use to manage and minimize disruptive behaviours are the construction of rules and regulations at the beginning of an academic session in the classroom, and classroom management by launching a conducive teaching-learning environment with equal opportunities to all without any harassment, bullying and punishment, praising their good behaviours in public and complaining about DB in private. By using such strategies, teachers can address students' unwanted behaviours most effectively and minimize them. It is important that the students should be able to control their behavior according to the set rules and regulations. It shows the importance of developing the abilities of self-regulation among the students through teacher education policies and programmes.

The findings of the study can contribute to the administrators and teacher educators in identifying appropriate strategies for efficiently dealing with and managing students' DB. The study may also prepare prospective teachers with useful insights and strategies needed to deal with DB. The results of the study are situational because of the limited number of participants, which consisted only of four community school teachers, and it can only be applied to them and not to institutional schools' students. The limitations of the research methodology include potential translation error, limited time for interviews, researcher role, and lack of diversity owing to the use of purposive sampling and small sample size. Moreover, strong contributing conclusions cannot be drawn from the study design, so, longitudinal data would be helpful in identifying teachers' strategies to manage troublesome schoolchildren's behaviours. Forthcoming studies could overcome these restrictions through the use of mixed methods. Thus, additional research in this field is needed to explore diverse causes of DB of university-level students in ELT classes and instructors' strategies through a bigger sample size and research area.

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