

# Behavioral red flags in early childhood: strategies for prevention and intervention

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## Abstract

This study aimed to identify common behavioral red flags among young children in private early childhood schools in Camarines Norte and to propose appropriate interventions. Using a descriptive-comparative design with 52 respondents (teachers, administrators, and parents), it found that behaviors such as lack of empathy, teasing, and refusal to share were frequently observed. Environmental and social factors like high family conflict, lack of parental involvement, poor classroom management, and parental separation were identified as key contributors. While no significant differences were found in stakeholder perceptions, their focus varied depending on their roles. Common interventions included positive reinforcement and classroom behavior plans, while individualized support and expert collaboration were less utilized. Teachers highlighted challenges such as limited training and awareness of behavioral policies. In response, the researcher developed a Behavior Policy Handbook for Teachers and Parents to guide school stakeholders. The study recommends implementing social-emotional learning programs, regular teacher training, increased family engagement, and enhanced use of individualized interventions to improve behavioral outcomes in early childhood settings.

*Keywords:* Behavioral red flags, early childhood, prevention, intervention

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## 1. Introduction

Early childhood is a critical developmental period, characterized by rapid growth and the establishment of foundational social, emotional, and cognitive skills. During this stage, children exhibit a wide range of behaviors, some of which may signal potential challenges that could impact their future development. Recognizing behavior red flags early is essential for timely intervention and support, which can significantly alter a child's developmental trajectory (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019).

Behavior red flags signal potential issues like mental health concerns, substance abuse, or unhealthy relationships. Signs include mood swings, anger, withdrawal, manipulation, and dishonesty. In children, red flags may involve communication problems, social withdrawal, emotional regulation, or developmental delays (American Psychological Association, 2021; American Academy of Pediatrics, 2022). Addressing behavior red flags in children involves prevention and intervention. Prevention includes early education, parental workshops, and community programs on developmental milestones. Positive parenting practices, like consistent routines and reinforcement, create a secure environment (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2022). Family involvement, such as parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT), and collaboration between parents and educators are key to monitoring progress (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2017). In the Philippines, addressing behavioral red flags in early childhood requires culturally relevant prevention and intervention strategies. Parental education through workshops by community organizations and local governments helps parents recognize developmental signs and use positive parenting techniques. Information campaigns via local media and social platforms further raise awareness on early detection of behavioral concerns (Early Childhood Care and Development Council, 2022).

Studying behavioral red flags in early childhood, especially in the six private Early Childhood Schools in Camarines Norte, is crucial for early intervention and improving long-term outcomes. Recognizing these red flags allows tailored support, enhancing educational success and well-being. The study's focus on local cultural context ensures interventions are relevant and engaging for families and educators. Additionally, it promotes collaboration among educators, mental health professionals, and families, fostering inclusive environments that

support social- emotional and academic growth for all children.

Moreover, identifying these behavioral issues can lead to better resource allocation, ensuring that schools receive the necessary support, training, and materials to effectively address the identified needs of their students. Addressing these concerns early can have a significant long-term impact on children's development, leading to improved mental health outcomes, better social skills, and a higher likelihood of academic achievement, which ultimately benefits the wider community. Thus, this proposed study is essential for fostering a supportive educational environment that recognizes and addresses behavioral red flags, thereby improving the quality of education and development for children in private Early Childhood Schools in Camarines Norte.

This study aimed to determine the behavior red flags in early childhood basis in proposing an intervention to address the common behavioral red flags in young children in the private early childhood schools in Camarines Norte. Specifically, it answered the following questions: 1) What are the common behavior red flags in young children in the private Early Childhood Schools in Camarines Norte? 2) What are the perceived environmental and social factors that contribute to the emergence of behavior red flags in young children along home environment, educational setting, and peer relationships, and family dynamics? 3) Is there a significant difference on the perceived environmental and social factors when respondents are grouped as to parent, teacher, and administration? 4) What are the existing prevention and intervention strategies used in the private Early Childhood Schools in Camarines Norte to address the behavior red flags in young children? 5) What are the challenges encountered by the teachers in catering behavior red flags of these young children? 6) What intervention may be proposed to address the common behavioral red flags in young children in the private early childhood schools in Camarines Norte?

## 2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative method using a descriptive-comparative research design. Descriptive methods were used to identify common behavioral red flags, assess environmental and social factors, and document existing intervention strategies and challenges. Comparative methods, specifically the Kruskal-Wallis H test, were utilized to determine significant differences in perceptions among parents, teachers, and administrators.

The respondents of this study were 20 early childhood teachers, 26 parents and six school administrators of early childhood schools in the locale of the study. The researcher utilized the adopted the parent-completed version of Pediatric Symptoms Checklist (PSC) wherein data were interpreted and analyzed with the assistance of medical professional. Along perceived environmental and social factors that contribute to the emergence of behavior red flags in young children- weighted mean was employed. Kruskal-Wallis H test was employed to determine if significant difference exists on the perceived environmental and social factors when respondents are grouped as to parent, teacher, and administration. Frequency count was used for existing prevention and intervention strategies and challenges encountered by the teachers in catering behavior red flags of these young children.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Common behavior red flags in young children in the private early childhood schools

Table 1 highlights the common behavioral red flags among young children in private Early Childhood Schools in Camarines Norte, revealing patterns of concern across attention, emotional, and social domains. Symptoms such as frequent daydreaming, trouble concentrating, hyperactivity, and being easily distracted suggest attentional challenges linked to ADHD. Emotional issues like hopelessness, excessive worry, and persistent sadness indicate possible early signs of anxiety or depression. Social red flags such as lack of empathy, teasing, refusal to share, and not following rules point to poor impulse control and emerging conduct issues. The consistent occurrence of these behaviors across multiple children signals deeper developmental concerns, not just isolated behavioral problems. In response, school administrators engaged parents and recommended early screening and assessment with specialists.

Table 1. Common behavior red flags in young children in the private early childhood schools

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Fidgety, unable to sit still	1.69	S
2. Daydreams too much	2.69	O
3. Distracted easily	1.69	S
4. Has trouble concentrating	2.69	O
5. Acts as if driven by a motor	2.69	O
6. Feels sad, unhappy	2.15	S
7. Feels hopeless	2.69	O
8. Is down on self	2.15	S
9. Worries a lot	2.69	O
10. Seems to be having less fun	2.15	S
11. Fights with other children	1.69	S
12. Does not listen to rules	2.69	O
13. Does not understand other people's feelings	2.77	O
14. Teases others	2.77	O
15. Blames others for his/her troubles	1.23	N
16. Takes things that do not belong to him/her	2.15	S
17. Refuses to share	2.77	O
Overall Weighted Mean	2.32	S
Rating Scale	Descriptive Interpretation	
2.34 - 3.00	Often	(O)
1.67- 2.33	Sometimes	(S)
1.00- 1.66	Never	(N)

These findings underscore the need for early identification and intervention to support children's learning, emotional well-being, and social development, echoing the recommendations of Steed and Stein (2023) for timely behavioral support in early childhood settings.

### 3.2. Perceived Environmental Factors and Social Factors in terms of Home Environment

Home Environment. Table 2 presents the perceived environmental factors related to the home environment, showing that teachers rated its impact as moderately significant (mean = 3.08), while school administrators (4.19) and parents (3.96) saw it as highly significant. The top concerns across all groups were high family conflict, lack of parental involvement, and economic instability. Family conflict and parental disengagement were rated as very highly significant by administrators and parents, highlighting their strong impact on children's emotional and academic outcomes. Economic instability also emerged as a major concern, especially among administrators.

Table 2. Perceived Environmental and Social Factors that Contribute to the Emergence of Behavior Red Flags in Young Children

Indicators	Teachers		School Admin		Parents	
	WM	Int.	WM	Int.	WM	Int.
1. Parental neglect	3.23	MS	4.00	HS	3.69	HS
2. Economic instability	3.00	MS	4.33	VHS	3.69	HS
3. Lack of routine or structure	3.04	MS	4.00	HS	4.00	HS
4. Parental substance abuse	2.77	MS	4.17	HS	3.85	HS
5. High levels of family conflict	3.04	MS	4.50	VHS	4.38	VHS
6. Parental mental health issues	3.31	MS	4.00	HS	3.69	HS
7. Poor parent-child communication	3.00	MS	4.00	HS	4.08	HS
8. Absence of parental involvement in education	3.23	MS	4.50	VHS	4.27	VHS
Overall Weighted Mean	3.08	MS	4.19	HS	3.96	HS
Rating Scale:	Descriptive Interpretation:					
4.20 – 5.00	Very Highly Significant (VHS)					
3.40 – 4.19	Highly Significant (HS)					
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Significant (MS)					
1.80 – 2.59	Slightly Significant (SS)					
1.00 – 1.79	Not At All Significant (NAS)					

These stressors were linked to behavioral issues such as anxiety, attention problems, and low academic performance. In contrast, teachers rated parental substance abuse, poor communication, and economic instability as moderately significant, possibly due to less visibility in school settings. The findings

underscore the critical influence of home conditions on child behavior and development, emphasizing the need for holistic interventions that involve families, provide mental health support, and address socio-economic challenges.

### 3.3. Perceived Environmental Factors and Social Factors in terms of Home Environment

**Educational Setting.** Table 3 presents the perceived environmental factors in the educational setting, with poor classroom management and lack of individualized attention emerging as the top concerns among teachers, school administrators, and parents. School administrators rated both factors as *Highly Significant* (mean = 3.50), while parents (3.12) and teachers (2.69) considered poor classroom management *Moderately Significant*. Similarly, lack of individualized attention was rated lower by teachers and parents but still reflected a shared concern.

Table 3. Perceived Environmental Factors and Social Factors in terms of Educational Setting

Indicators	Teachers		School Admin		Parents	
	WM	Int.	WM	Int.	WM	Int.
1. Overcrowded classrooms	1.85	SS	2.50	SS	2.04	SS
2. Poor classroom management	2.69	MS	3.50	HS	3.12	MS
3. Lack of individualized attention	2.35	SS	3.50	HS	2.15	SS
4. Inconsistent discipline strategies	2.04	SS	2.50	SS	2.00	SS
5. Teacher-student ratio is too high	1.85	SS	2.67	MS	2.00	SS
6. Bullying or negative peer interactions	2.15	SS	3.00	MS	2.19	SS
7. Lack of teacher training on behavior management	1.96	SS	3.33	MS	2.00	SS
8. Lack of resources (e.g., toys, educational materials)	2.04	SS	2.67	MS	2.00	SS
Overall Weighted Mean	2.12	SS	2.96	MS	2.19	SS
<i>Rating Scale</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretation</i>					
4.20 - 5.00	Very Highly Significant (VHS)					
3.40 - 4.19	Highly Significant (HS)					
2.60 - 3.39	Moderately Significant (MS)					
1.80 - 2.59	Slightly Significant (SS)					
1.00 - 1.79	Not At All Significant (NAS)					

These findings suggest gaps in classroom management strategies and instructional approaches, which may hinder effective learning and behavioral development. Administrators' higher ratings may reflect a broader awareness of systemic challenges such as large class sizes, diverse student needs, and limited teacher support. Research supports this concern, with studies emphasizing the shift toward more student-centered, autonomy-supportive strategies that promote positive behavior, engagement, and learning outcomes (Cambay et al., 2024; Karasova and Nehyba, 2023).

Conversely, overcrowded classrooms and high teacher-student ratios were rated as *Slightly Significant* across all groups. Teachers rated these concerns the lowest (1.85), followed by administrators and parents, suggesting that class sizes and staffing levels are currently manageable in the participating schools. However, existing literature (Abrokwah et al., 2022; Tilbe & Gai, 2024) stresses that even if not currently problematic, large class sizes and poor teacher-student ratios can negatively impact early learning by reducing individual attention and increasing behavioral issues. These findings underscore the importance of proactive planning and monitoring to ensure that class size and staffing remain optimal, especially as enrollment increases or teacher resources become strained. Continuous teacher training, support in classroom management, and the implementation of differentiated instruction are crucial to addressing these ongoing challenges and improving behavioral and academic outcomes in early childhood education.

### 3.4. Peer Relationship

**Peer Relationship.** Table 4 presents the perceived environmental and social factors related to peer relationships. The top concerns identified across all groups were the lack of social skills or difficulty making friends and the lack of conflict resolution skills. School administrators rated these as *Highly Significant* (means = 3.67 and 3.50), while teachers and parents considered them *Moderately Significant*. These findings highlight a common issue in early childhood: children struggling with peer interactions, which affects their emotional development, classroom behavior, and social adjustment.

Table 4. Perceived Environmental Factors and Social Factors in terms of Peer Relationship

Indicators	Teachers		School Admin			
	WM	Int.	WM	Int.	WM	Int.
1. Peer exclusion or isolation	2.50	MS	3.00	MS	3.00	MS
2. Peer bullying (physical or emotional)	2.35	SS	3.50	HS	3.31	MS
3. Difficulty in forming positive friendships	2.35	SS	3.50	HS	3.31	MS
4. Frequent arguments or fights with peers	2.65	MS	3.67	HS	2.77	MS
5. Inability to share or cooperate with others	2.69	MS	3.33	MS	3.38	MS
6. Lack of conflict resolution skills with peers	2.77	MS	3.50	HS	3.38	MS
7. Lack of social skills or difficulty making friends	2.81	MS	3.67	HS	3.38	MS
8. Peer pressure to engage in negative behaviors	1.85	SS	2.67	MS	2.00	SS
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>MS</b>
<i>Rating Scale</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretation</i>					
4.20 - 5.00	Very Highly Significant (VHS)					
3.40 - 4.19	Highly Significant (HS)					
2.60 - 3.39	Moderately Significant (MS)					
1.80 - 2.59	Slightly Significant (SS)					
1.00 - 1.79	Not At All Significant (NAS)					

Studies by Kucaba & Monks (2022) and Farina & Belacchi (2022) support these concerns, linking poor peer relationships to victimization, exclusion, and low emotional competence. This underscores the need for structured social-emotional learning (SEL) programs and teacher-led efforts to promote empathy, communication, and peer inclusion in early learning environments.

In contrast, peer pressure and peer bullying were rated as the least concerning factors. Peer pressure received the lowest ratings (1.85–2.67), and while school administrators rated bullying as *Highly Significant* (3.50), teachers (2.35) and parents (3.31) viewed it as only slightly to moderately concerning. However, Zhou et al. (2024) emphasize that bullying behaviors can begin in early childhood and are often overlooked, especially non-physical forms like exclusion or verbal aggression. These results suggest that while peer pressure may not yet be a major issue at this stage, bullying may be underrecognized and requires more attention through proactive monitoring and early intervention.

### 3.5. Family Dynamics

**Family Dynamics.** Table 5 presents the perceived environmental and social factors related to family dynamics, with parental separation and lack of family routines emerging as the most significant concerns. School administrators and parents rated parental separation as *Very Highly Significant* (means = 4.67 and 4.85), while teachers rated it *Moderately Significant* (3.08), indicating strong concern about its impact on children’s emotional well-being and academic engagement. Similarly, the lack of family routines was rated *Very Highly Significant* by administrators (4.67), *Highly Significant* by parents (3.46), and *Moderately Significant* by teachers (3.23). These findings reflect the importance of family stability and structured home environments in supporting children’s behavioral and learning readiness, aligning with previous studies linking disrupted home life to emotional stress and poor classroom behavior.

In contrast, sibling rivalry and cultural or generational differences in parenting were perceived as the least significant factors, rated Slightly to Moderately Significant across all groups. While not seen as major contributors to immediate classroom issues, studies suggest these dynamics can influence long-term behavior and consistency in discipline, particularly in extended or multi-generational households.

Table 5. Perceived Environmental Factors and Social Factors in terms of Family Dynamics

Indicators	Teachers		School Admin			
	WM	Int.	WM	Int.	WM	Int.
1. Separation of parents		3.08	MS	4.67	VHS	4.85
2. Family trauma or loss		3.08	MS	4.00	HS	4.00
3. Sibling rivalry or tension		1.85	SS	2.67	MS	2.00
4. Parental conflict or disagreement		2.88	MS	3.67	HS	3.88
5. Lack of family routines or structure		3.23	MS	4.67	VHS	3.46
6. Inconsistent discipline or family rules		2.69	MS	3.50	HS	3.35
7. Overprotective or overly controlling parenting		2.69	MS	3.50	HS	3.12
8. Cultural or generational differences in parenting		1.92	SS	2.33	SS	2.00
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>		<b>2.68</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>HS</b>	<b>3.33</b>
<i>Rating Scale</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretation</i>					
4.20 - 5.00	Very Highly Significant		(VHS)			
3.40 - 4.19	Highly Significant		(HS)			
2.60 - 3.39	Moderately Significant		(MS)			
1.80 - 2.59	Slightly Significant		(SS)			
1.00 - 1.79	Not At All Significant		(NAS)			

Overall, the findings emphasize that consistent parental involvement and daily routines play a crucial role in shaping children’s behavior, emotional regulation, and school performance, while seemingly minor family dynamics should still be monitored for their potential cumulative impact.

### 3.6. Difference on the Perceived Environmental and Social Contributory factors

Table 6 presented the difference on the perceived environmental and social contributory factors when respondents are grouped as to parent, teacher, and administration. The Kruskal- Wallis H-Test was used to determine if there were significant differences in the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators regarding environmental and social factors influencing behavioral red flags. Results in Table 6 show that all p-values, Home Environment (p = .354), Peer Relationship (p = .178), Educational Setting (p = .146), and Family Dynamics (p = .145) were above the 0.05 threshold, indicating no statistically significant differences among the groups.

Table 6. Test for Difference on the Perceived Environmental and Social Factors when Respondents are Grouped

Environmental and Social Factors	Respondents	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	p-value
Home Environment	Parent	27.52	2.077	.354
	Teacher	23.30		
	Administration	32.75		
Peer Relationship	Parent	29.42	3.450	.178
	Teacher	25.53		
	Administration	17.08		
Educational Setting	Parent	29.75	3.849	.146
	Teacher	25.10		
	Administration	17.08		
Family Dynamic	Parent	27.50	3.857	.145
	Teacher	28.58		
	Administration	15.25		

\*Not Significant (ns) if p-value > .05

This suggests a shared understanding across stakeholders on how these factors affect children's behavior. While administrators ranked home environment highest (mean rank = 32.75), parents prioritized peer relationships (29.42) and educational settings (29.75), and teachers emphasized family dynamics (25.58), these differences were not significant. The findings support a unified perspective in identifying behavioral concerns, which can strengthen collaboration in early intervention. This aligns with studies by Huang et al. (2024), Liu et al. (2022), and Tang (2024), emphasizing the critical role of family dynamics, parental involvement, and home-school relationships in supporting children's behavior and emotional development.

### 3.7. Existing Prevention and Intervention Strategies Used in the Private Early Childhood Schools

Table 7 presents the existing prevention and intervention strategies used in private Early Childhood Schools in Camarines Norte to address behavioral red flags. The most frequently used strategies are positive reinforcement and classroom behavior management plans (both with a frequency of 19), indicating a strong reliance on teacher-led, classroom-based interventions. These strategies are favored for being immediate, cost-effective, and effective in promoting desired behaviors and reducing disruptions. This aligns with studies by Ismail (2023) and Banat (2024), who emphasize the effectiveness of proactive, strengths-based approaches like praise, rewards, and structured behavioral expectations in enhancing student engagement and classroom climate.

In contrast, individual counseling (13 responses) and collaboration with external child development experts (11 responses) were the least utilized strategies, suggesting limited access to specialized support services. This underutilization may stem from resource constraints or lack of formal partnerships.

Table 7. Existing Prevention and Intervention Strategies

Indicator	Frequency	Rank
1. Positive reinforcement techniques	19	1.5
2. Behavioral intervention plans	18	5.5
3. Parent engagement programs	18	5.5
4. Teacher training on behavioral management	18	5.5
5. Individual counseling or support services	13	9
6. Group activities to enhance social skills	18	5.5
7. Parent-teacher collaboration	18	5.5
8. Social-emotional learning programs	18	5.5
9. Classroom behavior management plans	19	1.5
10. Collaboration with external child development experts	11	10

However, research by Nguyen & Tran (2024) and Paccaud et al. (2021) highlights the importance of these approaches in addressing deeper emotional and behavioral issues. Despite their lower frequency, these findings suggest a multi-tiered approach is in place, combining both preventive and responsive strategies, but point to the need for increased access to individualized and expert support services for more comprehensive behavioral interventions.

**3.8. Challenges Encountered by the Teachers in Catering Behavioral Red Flags**

Table 8 highlights three major obstacles: lack of proper training in behavior management (21 respondents), limited awareness of behavioral policies (19), and insufficient resources (17). These issues reveal critical gaps in teacher preparation and institutional support. Many educators feel unprepared to manage complex student behaviors and often lack structured, evidence-based training such as PBIS, leading to inconsistent or punitive responses. Moreover, unclear disciplinary guidelines and inadequate resources further hinder effective intervention.

Less frequently reported but still significant were challenges like inconsistent administrative support and limited access to student background or mental health information (5 respondents each). Without strong leadership and informed context, teachers struggle to make confident decisions and provide appropriate support. Overall, the findings underscore a pressing need for improved professional development, clearer policies, and increased resource allocation to help teachers manage behavioral issues effectively and create a supportive learning environment.

Table 9. Challenges Encountered by the Teachers in Catering Behavior Red Flags

Indicators	Frequency	Rank
1. Lack of proper training or professional development in behavior management	21	1
2. Awareness on policies or guidelines	19	2
3. Insufficient resources (e.g., materials, staff)	17	3
4. Insufficient support from parents or guardians	15	4
5. Teachers face limited time for behavioral issues due to heavy academic responsibilities.	12	5
6. Teachers may avoid addressing serious behavior issues due to fear of backlash from parents, administrators, or colleagues.	10	6
7. High teacher-to-student ratios	8	7
8. Lack of collaboration with external professionals (e.g., counselors, psychologists)	6	8
9. Inconsistent administrative support can undermine Behavior policies and teacher efforts	5	9.5
10. Limited access to student background or mental health information hinders effective response to behavior issues.	5	9.5

*Proposed Intervention to Address the Common Behavioral Red Flags in Young Children in the Private Early Childhood Schools*

One of the primary outcomes of this study is the development of a Behavior Policy Handbook aimed at addressing common behavioral red flags among young children in private early childhood schools in Camarines Norte. This proposed intervention serves as a practical guide for teachers and parents, focusing on supporting children’s social-emotional development, managing classroom behavior, and fostering stronger school-home collaboration. The Handbook outlines key strategies, including the implementation of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), use of positive reinforcement, structured classroom routines, and trauma-informed practices. It also recommends teacher training, parent workshops, and referral systems for external child development experts. Aligned with Republic Act No. 10410 (Early Years Act) and Republic Act No. 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act), the intervention promotes early and collaborative support for young learners. The Handbook will be reviewed by the Schools Division Office before adoption, with further refinements to be made through consultative meetings with school administrators and officials.

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