



Coercive Power Scenarios in the Classes Taught by Student Teachers

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Context of our paper:

Introduction to the research project

This paper is a part of a more complex project.

- The aim is to describe how power is negotiated, used, and perceived by student teachers and their students at the level of lower secondary schools (ISCED 2A).
- Field research based on mixed methods design:
 - video recording and participant observation of the student teachers and their students during instruction,
 - in-depth interviews with student teachers and their diaries,
 - students questionnaires on perceived student teacher's power.
 - students' and student teachers' questionnaire (*Teacher Power Use Scale*)

Aim of the paper

- To describe how **coercive power** is negotiated, used, and perceived
 - by student teachers,
 - and their students,
 - in Czech lower secondary classes (ISCED 2A).



Teacher's power

- Power is an ability of a person to influence opinions, values, and behaviour of others.
(McCroskey, 2006)
- Power negotiation and its use is an inherent part of the education process.
(McCroskey & Richmond, 1983; Šed'ová, 2011)
- Setting up the power relationship determines the degree of realisation of didactic aims.
Regulative discourse is dominant in the classroom and contains didactic discourse.
(Bernstein, 1996)
- If power relationships are not clearly established in the classroom there is no benefit from the teacher's knowledge of their field, no matter how vast it can be.
(Šalamounová & Švaříček, 2012)

Typology of teacher's power

- In our study we use the most influential, traditional typology of power as a relational phenomenon by French and Raven (1959).
- It distinguishes teacher's power in relation to a (by students perceived) principle on which it is based on:
 - coercive,
 - reward,
 - legitimate,
 - referent,
 - expert power.

Coercive power

- based on student`s expectations that he/she will be punished by the teacher if he/she does not conform to the (student) teacher`s influence attempt.

(French & Raven, 1959)



MMD design – qualitative part

- In our mixed methods research design the qualitative part is based on an ethnographic research design.
- Data about power negotiation processes were collected via direct (field notes) and indirect (video-recordings) observation
- and the data about student teacher`s perception of power via deep semi-structured interviews and their reflective diaries.

MMD design – quantitative part

- is based on a survey and focuses on student`s perception of student teacher`s power.
- Aims at validisation of the French and Raven theory (1959) in a broader context
 - we focus on younger learners (i.e. lower secondary students),
 - Czech sociocultural conditions of power in the classes
 - student teacher`s power (i.e. beginning teachers) instead of teacher`s power.
- We adapted one of the latest and most used instruments measuring perceived power of teacher
 - *Teacher Power Use Scale* (TPUS; Schrodt, Witt, & Turman, 2007).

Research sample

- 8 student teachers
- 8 classes, 7 schools
- 48 lessons
- 130 students (questionnaires)
- School subjects:
 - Civics, History, Czech Literature



Research findings

Coercive power scenarios

- Qualitative data uncovered the structure of the coercive power bases within student teachers` practice.
 - According to the intensity of the coercive power use, we describe strengthening and weakening coercive power structures within the classroom, which we named scenarios.
 - Finally their consequences within classroom settings are interpreted.

Strengthening coercive power scenario

nonverbal
coercive power



verbal
coercive power

indirect coercive power
(focus on class)



direct coercive power
(focus on student)

Strengthening coercive power scenario

8th grade, Civics

Student teacher (T) and students talking about emotions

T: Uhm, brilliant. (1) What does cross your mind if I say word emotions? What would you associate if I say emotions? My emotions.

P: Associate...

T: ((*Waiting for answer*)) indirect nonverbal coercive power

T: Are you sleeping today? Are you not going to cooperate with me? ((*Smiling*)) indirect verbal coercive power

T: OK. What about you? ((*looking on a student*)). What crosses your mind? direct verbal coercive power

T: (2) ((*Point the finger at a pupil in the second table near the door.*)) direct nonverbal coercive power

T: How do you feel right now? direct verbal coercive power

P: Horrible.

U: Sorry? direct verbal coercive power

P: Horrible.

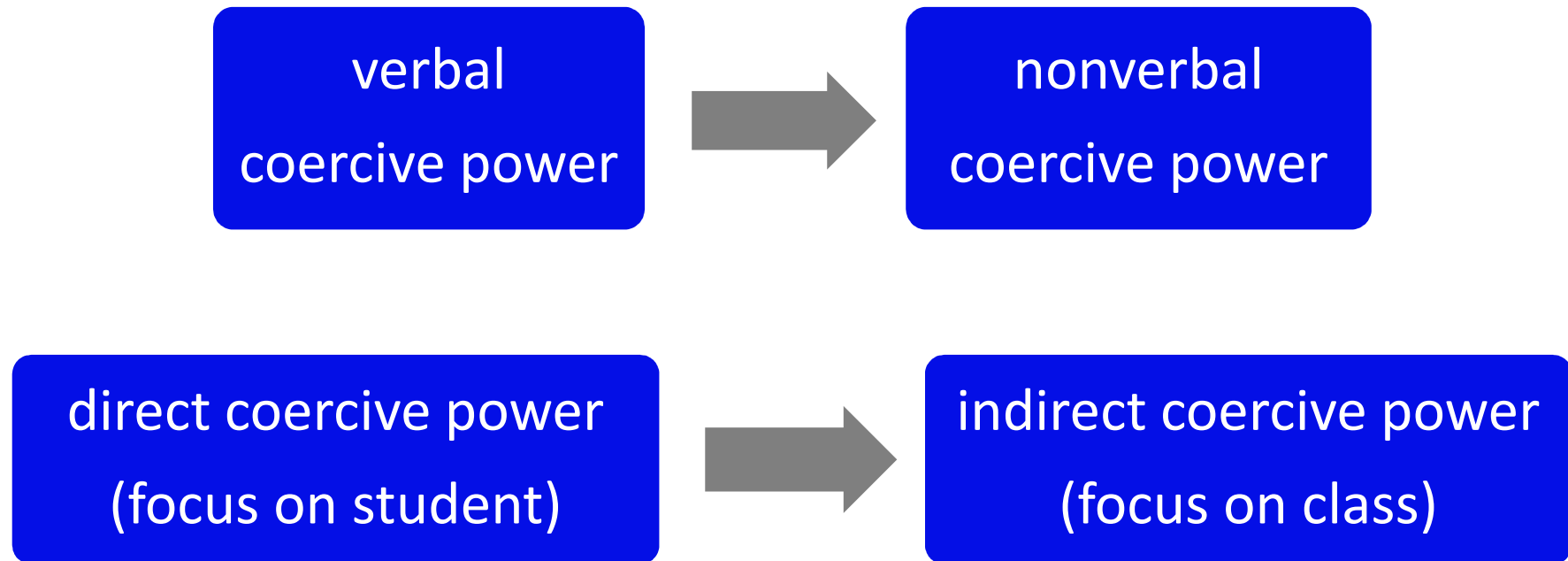
T: Horrible? direct verbal coercive power

T: OK. So please explain what emotions exactly are.

Strengthening coercive power scenario

- generates tension in the classroom which is perceived by both student teacher and students as well.
- As a result:
 - A different student can answer the student teacher's question than that one who was asked first and remains passive.
 - Student teacher perceives tension and is not able to strengthen power any more, so he/she stops asking the student and asks someone else.

Weakening coercive power scenario



Weakening coercive power scenario

8th grade, Civics

Student teacher (T) and students talking about picture of a boy kicking into girl's chair.

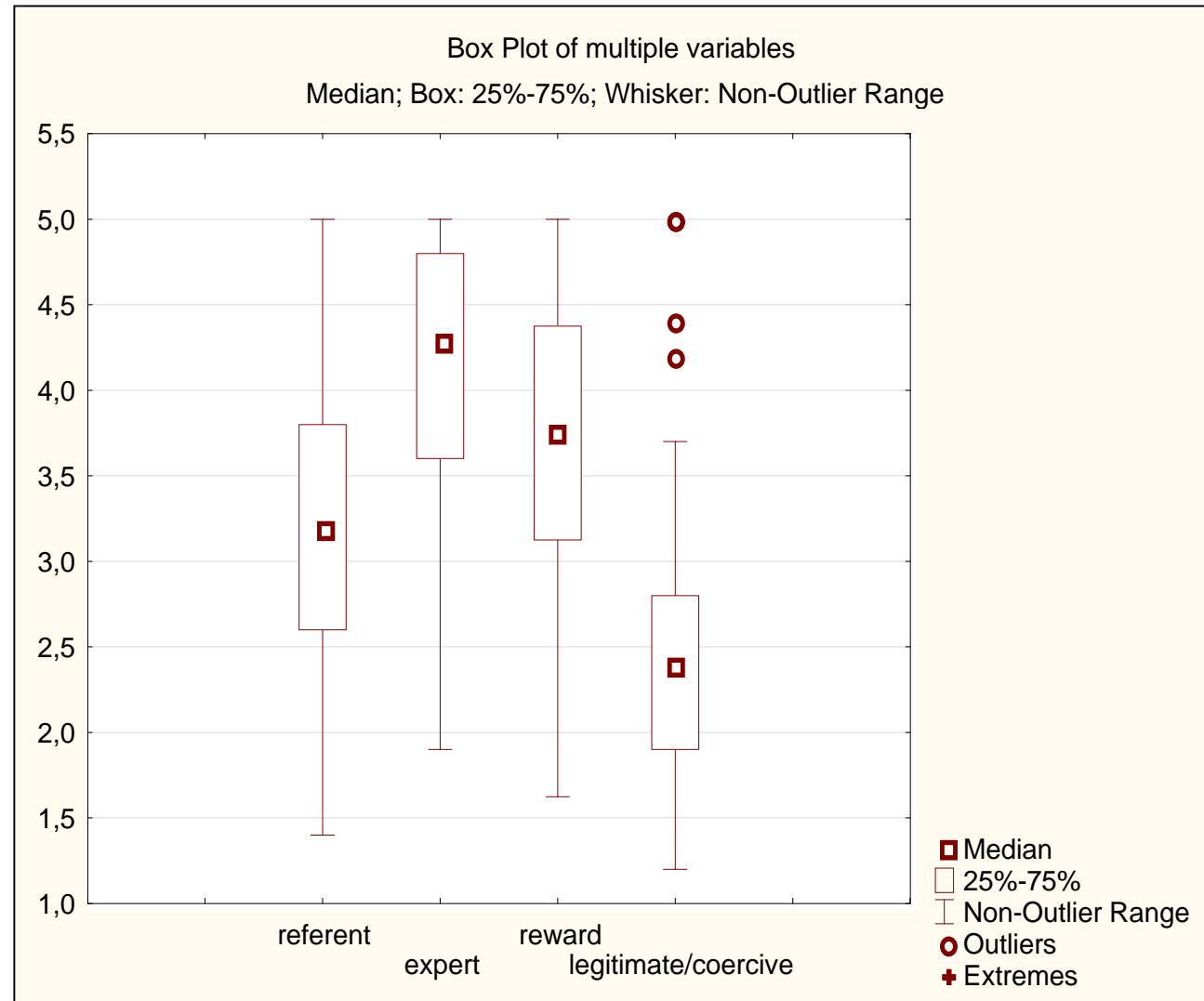
- **P:** If someone kicks to someone else's chair, he is becoming aggressive.
- *((Two girls are talking together and laughing))*
- **T:** Who is becoming aggressive? **direct verbal coercive power**
- **P:** The girl.
- **T:** And person who kicks her chair is not being aggressive? **direct verbal coercive power**
- **P:** Obviously not *((Laughing))*
- *((Girls are laughing.))*
- **T:** So, anybody has a different opinion? (.) For this situation? (3) Do you think that the only aggressive person is a girl sitting on the chair? **indirect verbal coercive power**
- **Girls:** Yes!
- **T:** OK (1) aaa (2) Let's go back to exercise number 2

Weakening coercive power scenario

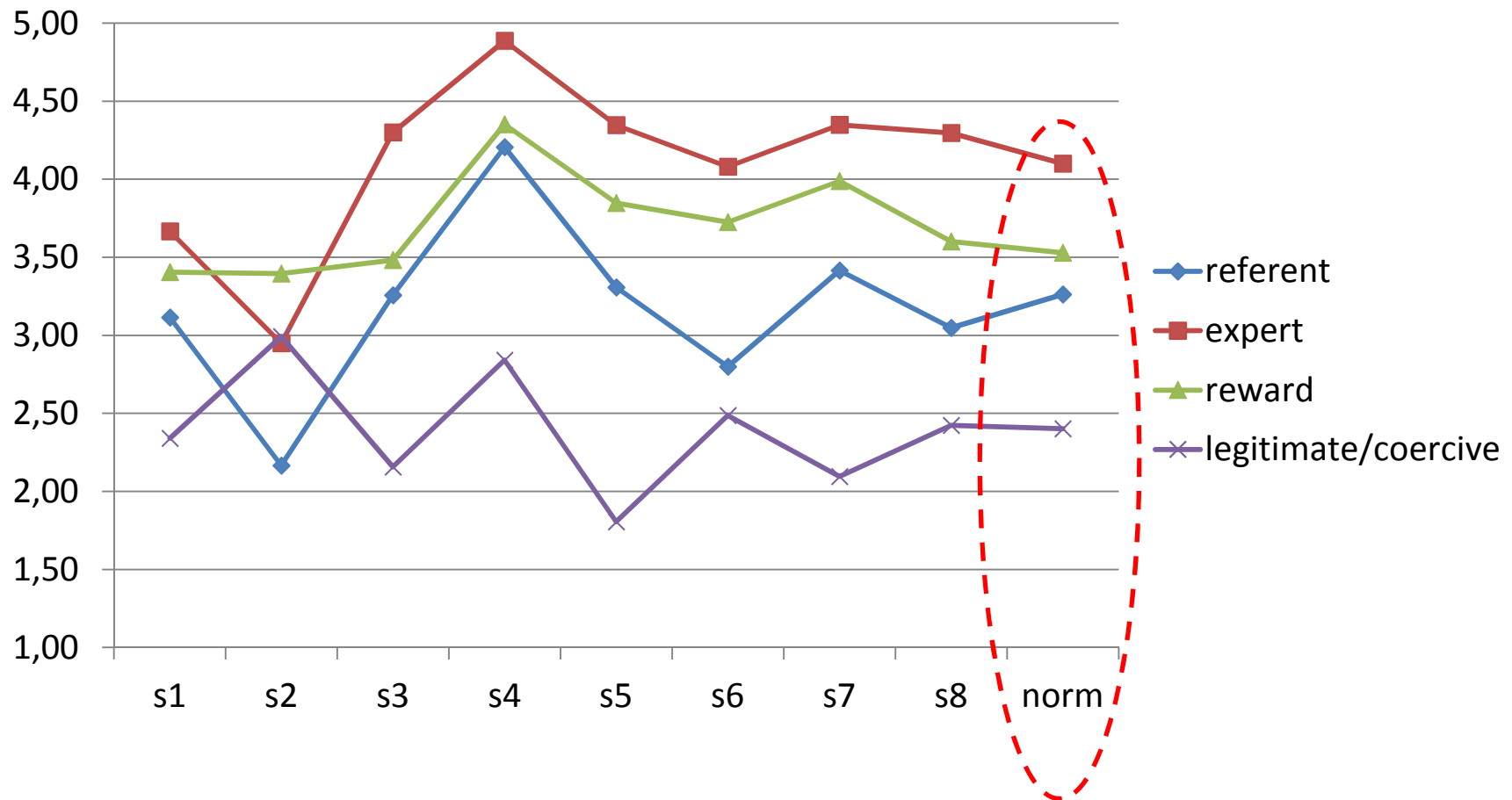
- Students get power over the student teacher but student teacher doesn't lose power at all, while he/she is still in the position of dominant power relationship.
- Student teacher can use power to change the topic or task within the class.
- Student teacher can resign himself/herself to didactic goals.
- Students power is performed as provocation.
(E.g. by consciously providing incorrect answers.)

Quantitative findings: Comparison of power bases

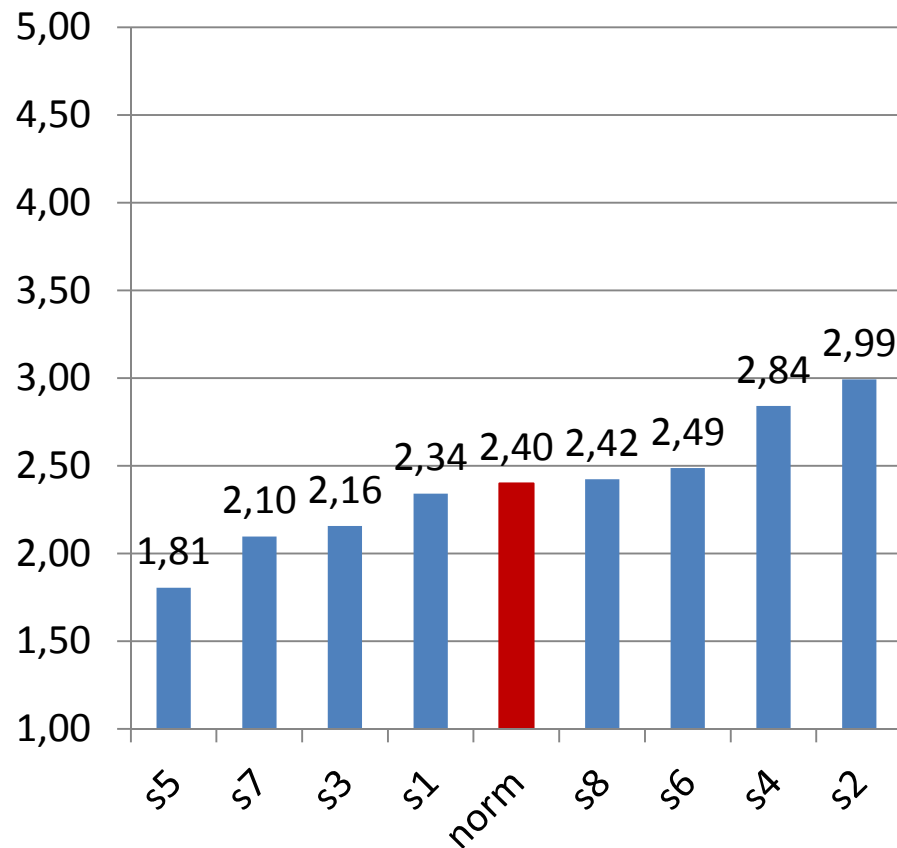
Legitimate/coercive power base is at least used by the 8 student teachers as perceived by their students



Power bases of 8 student teachers and norm



Legitimate/coercive power base among 8 student teachers



Student	Valid N	Mean	Median	SD
s2	12	2,99	2,95	0,38
s4	17	2,84	2,80	1,25
s6	15	2,49	2,55	0,47
s8	23	2,42	2,40	0,51
Norm	1685	2,40	2,35	0,63
s1	21	2,34	2,40	0,52
s3	7	2,16	2,00	0,62
s7	19	2,10	2,16	0,56
s5	15	1,81	1,90	0,40

Items of legitimate/coercive power base	Study	Norm	Differ.
L11: This teacher emphasizes that we have to obey at school.	3,66	3,89	-0,23
L05: This teacher says that teachers have to be obeyed.	3,29	3,33	-0,05
L50: This teacher thinks that students have to obey because a teacher is an authority.	3,23	3,35	-0,12
L39: This teacher suggests that what she wants is also supported by our teacher, headmaster or school rules.	3,04	3,12	-0,08
L17: I obey this teacher because our teacher has told me to do so.	2,88	2,73	0,15
C06: When I do not hand in my homework to this teacher, I feel really bad.	2,83	2,67	0,16
C25: When I misbehave in the class of this teacher, she tells it to our teacher.	2,80	2,56	0,24
C34: When I do not work as this teacher wants, she tells our teacher about it.	2,66	2,43	0,23
L14: This teacher has a reserved approach to me.	2,62	2,41	0,21
L37: This teacher obviously shows that a teacher is something more than a student.	2,61	2,61	0,00
C35: When I do not do in the class what this teacher wants, she looks at me angrily.	2,34	2,59	-0,25
L07: This teacher is persuaded that she can decide about everything when she is a teacher.	2,31	2,38	-0,07
L44: When this teacher does not like my behaviour, she cannot do anything about it because she is not a proper teacher yet.	2,20	2,19	0,01
L22: This teacher says that it does not matter if I do not like something in the class.	2,18	2,29	-0,11
C47: When I do not have my materials for the class, this teacher is upset.	2,18	2,38	-0,21
C29: When I do not follow this teacher's instructions, she punishes me.	2,17	2,57	-0,40
C33: When I hand in my homework late, she behaves in such a way it makes me feel bad.	2,17	2,30	-0,13
C16: Although I criticize the rules, this teacher does whatever she wants anyway.	2,16	2,36	-0,20
L09: When this teacher does not like my behaviour, she cannot do anything about it anyway because she does not belong to our school.	2,14	2,20	-0,06
L42: This teacher says things like: "I end the lesson, not you."	2,01	2,03	-0,02
C26: This teacher is angry with me when I express myself in the class that I do not agree with what she is saying.	1,94	2,03	-0,10
C46: This teacher ignores me as a punishment when I do not work as she wants.	1,90	2,02	-0,13
C18: When I do not work in the class as well as the teacher imagines, she embarrasses me...	1,39	1,44	-0,04

Discussion

- Weak perceived coercive power of student teachers may be caused by a special condition during their practice (mentor, who sets power relationship within the classroom, videorecording of behaviour...).
- In our research, coercive power is not understood only in negative terms (see Schrod, Witt, & Turman, 2007). Exclusive two mentioned extremes (strengthening and weakening power scenario) it can also create constructive learning environment (Lewis, 2001).
- Between these extremes, there are forms of coercive power which do not lead to strengthening or weakening scenario.
- Constructive coercive power can regulate students learning while destructive coercive power (e.g. sarcasm, yelling at students, strict punishments) can cause negative emotions in students, anxiety and fear (Mainhard, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2011).
- Coercive power is neutral itself, it can be fulfilled by positive or negative content.

Conclusions

- Presented coercive power scenarios overlap and do not represent reality exactly.
- Finding these power scenarios uncovers a specific classroom situation for student teachers and beginning teachers and can be beneficial for pregradual teacher education.
 - These power scenarios represent situations which are typical for beginning student teachers.
- The importance of this research lies in urgent need of nowadays teachers to meet classroom management requirements that are expected from them and helps prevent leaving their job.

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