

# Lecturers' Perception of Classroom Management: An Empirical Study of Higher Learning Institutions in Malaysia

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## Abstract

The classroom is a learning environment where active interactions and meaningful learning occur between learners and knowledge providers. The teachers and the learners have a unique relationship and this relationship is highly determined by their backgrounds and experiences. Teachers have the responsibility to manage the classroom with the aim of providing quality teaching and enhance the students' learning experiences. Classroom management can be categorized into three major components namely, 1) content management, 2) conduct management and 3) covenant management. In addition to these three components, time management is another element that is used to evaluate classroom management effectiveness. The objective of this study is to investigate lecturers' perception of classroom management and the challenges faced. This empirical study compares classroom management practices of two higher learning institutions in Malaysia. One is a government institution and the other is a private university. The data was analyzed based on statistical analysis using mean comparison using the "t" test to identify the regression weight of perceptions in the teaching staff between the private and the government higher learning institutions. The findings of this study revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of understanding of the four classroom management factors.

**Keywords:** Classroom management, Content management, Conduct management, Covenant management, Time management and quality of teaching and learning

## 1. Introduction

The Higher Learning Institutions (HLI) deem teachers to be architects who will shape the future of students. It all begins in a small place in the school known as a classroom. Classrooms are a learning environment for teachers and students. One of the main objectives of a HLI teacher is to impart useful knowledge to his/her students in order to enhance their physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual elements. Effective classroom management helps the HLI teacher conduct smooth teaching and learning activities. According to Doyle (1986), the classroom is a unique unit where the teacher and the students interact for the purpose of teaching and learning to take place. Evertson & Weinstein (2006,p.4) defined classroom management as the actions teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning. Therefore, the HLI teacher has to create an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning in the classroom which promotes both academic and social-emotional learning.

A classroom is a workplace whereby teaching and learning activities take place between teachers and students. According to Goh (2005), teachers have to plan their lessons, decide the learning objectives and conduct lessons in the classroom based on the students' needs and abilities. In order to achieve the learning objectives, teachers have to create a classroom environment, interact with the students, monitor their progress and evaluate their achievements. Teachers, especially Malaysian HLI teachers face the up-hill task to educate students from various races, cultures and religions.

Besides that, different languages and socioeconomic status also challenges these teachers to be more productive and creative while conducting teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

Doyle (1986) has identified two major tasks that teachers have to shoulder while managing the classroom. The two major tasks are: 1) to facilitate learning among students, and 2) to establish order within the classroom so that learning can take place. The two major tasks are interdependent and promote the teaching and learning process by promoting orderliness and an environment conducive to engaging students to actively participate in learning activities in the classroom. As stated by Emmer and Stough (2001), a good classroom manager is able to prevent undesirable classroom behaviour and thereby foster desirable behavior.

## **2. Literature Review on Classroom Management factors**

An effective teaching and learning process requires quality classroom management. Although various researchers (Charles & Senter, 2005; Goh, 2005; Manning & Bucher, 2013; Marzano, 2009; Myint, Lourdusamy, Quek, & Angela 2005) have published articles on classroom management, this researcher is impressed with Froyen, & Iverson's (1999) analysis which is related to the three main components of classroom management, i.e., content management, conduct management, and covenant management. The fourth main component they mentioned is time management.

According to Froyen & Iverson (1999), content management is related to teachers managing the space, materials, equipment, and the movement of people and lessons that make up a curriculum or program of studies. The authors further elaborated that content management does not refer to skills unique to teaching a particular subject but rather to those skills that cut across subjects and activities. Kounin (Froyen & Iverson, 1999) places a special emphasis on instructional management skills, sequencing and integrating additional instructional activities, and dealing with instruction-related discipline problems.

Goh (2005) elaborates that a teacher has to play the role of a classroom manager and facilitate the learning process of his/her students. The teacher has to provide a positive learning environment to ensure that learning is taking place in the classroom. A teacher has to be competent in knowledge and skills. In short, content management refers to the ability of teachers to create a learning environment whereby students will feel comfortable to receive and share the knowledge gained from the teachers or instructors during the tutorial, lecture, workshop or seminar. Emmer & Stough (2001) stated that good classroom managers choose management styles that match their instructional goals, classroom activities, and students' characteristics.

Conduct management refers to the set of procedural skills that teachers employ in their attempt to address and resolve discipline problems in the classroom (Froyen & Iverson, 1999). The authors also stressed that conduct management is essential to the creation of a foundation for "an orderly, task-oriented approach to teaching and learning" (p. 217), thus leading to granting students greater independence and autonomy through socialization. It is crucial for instructors to address this discipline problem as it creates disturbance for teaching and learning. According to Jones (2006) a number of studies provide similar findings that the classroom disturbances are the biggest threat to a new teacher, and new teachers feel unprepared to deal with them.

Some of the conduct management components which are also identified as best teaching practices are; acknowledging responsible behavior, correcting irresponsible and inappropriate behavior, ignoring, proximity control, gentle verbal reprimands, delaying, preferential seating, time-owed, time-out, notification of parents/guardians, written behavioral contracts, setting limits outside the classroom, and reinforcement systems.

Covenant management is the third main component in classroom management. According to Froyen & Iverson (1999), covenant management "focuses on the classroom group as a social system that has its own features and teachers have to take into account when managing interpersonal relationships in the classroom" (p.181). The role of interpersonal relationship in classroom management is a crucial component as indicated by researchers Wubbels, Brekelmans, den Brok & Van Tartwijk (2006) who have conducted research in the Netherlands. The roles played by teacher and student of the HLI classroom can create an environment conducive to the teaching and learning process. Establishing a warm and caring environment can create a classroom which is a friendly, pleasant and encouraging place for students to socialize and learn efficiently.

Quality of HLI teaching and learning is defined by teacher effectiveness and student achievement under the auspices of building strong interpersonal skills. In this light, constructive teacher-student relationships are essential to ensuring a positive school/classroom atmosphere. Classroom management discipline problems can be dealt with either on an individual basis (between teacher and student) or by group problem solving (class meetings). As mutual trust builds up between teacher and students, the latter are gradually released from teacher supervision by becoming more individually

responsible. This is how both “educators and students become co-participants in the teaching-learning process, striving to make the most of themselves and their collective experience” (Froyen & Iverson, 1999, p.256).

The fourth main component in classroom management is time management and it has a great impact on HLI teachers’ efficiency in their teaching process. Even students efficiency in learning is influenced by time management. Time management is about working actively to create efficiency and effectiveness in a way that makes the targeted results more likely to be achieved. The targeted results or success does not just happen but is determined by the individual’s work habits. Effective time management is a core skill that enables us to perform a current job and enhance our career prospects with greater efficiency (Forsyth, 2007).

Time management refers to a range of skills, tools or techniques used to accomplish specific tasks, projects or goals. It comprises activities such as planning, allocating, setting goals, delegating, monitoring, organizing, scheduling and prioritizing which are relevant to the teaching and learning process in classroom settings (Khan, Khan, & Majoka, 2011). Some of the strategies used in classroom settings include making a daily schedule to manage classroom activities, setting goals for learning activities, prioritizing student activities, setting time limit for students to complete their task or assignments and adhering to activities stated in the respective unit program calendar.

### **3. Importance of Classroom Management in Higher Institution**

Classroom management has been a primary concern of HLI teachers whereby they are given the responsibility to deliver knowledge to their students. Effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom. In contrast, a well-managed classroom provides an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish (Marzano, 2009). Brophy & Evertson (1976) also stressed that classroom management skills are of primary importance in determining teaching success. A HLI teacher who is grossly inadequate in classroom management skills is probably not going to accomplish much.

Significant volume of research (Charles & Senter, 2005; Goh, 2005; Manning & Bucher, 2013; Marzano, e.g., 2009; Myint, et al., 2005) has been done on classroom management in the field of education. The need of empirical research in classroom management was demonstrated in various areas, for instance, Snyder et al. (2011) indicated that research is still needed that investigates the influence of the duration of classroom management training and its effectiveness. On a different note, empirical research by Dicke, Elling, Schmeck & Leuther (2015) revealed participating in classroom management training has been effective in preventing beginner teachers from experiencing the symptoms of “reality shock”. Thus, research in classroom management is becoming an important area of research for many academicians in teaching and learning. However, very little research has been carried out on classroom management among lecturers in higher learning institutions.

Students in higher learning institutions are adult learners. As adult learners they have the potential to be self-directed. They are able to utilize their life and work experiences as vital resources in their learning process. For teachers in HLI it is crucial to understand the concept of classroom management and adult learning andragogy in order to maintain a high level of enthusiasm and motivation of teaching and learning. According to Smith (1997) a lecturer must constantly recreate the process of instruction and be prepared and equipped, to impart knowledge in a variety of ways, so that individual learners learning process is achieved. HLI teachers and/or instructors are encouraged to develop lesson plans which take into consideration the factors that influence the content, conduct, covenant, and time management for an effective learning process. For this process to take place, the HLI teachers must first do a reflective study on their teaching methods, and whether they engage the four component of classroom management. On the basis of this earlier research and since the teaching approach varies between private and government institutions, this current study would explore the perceptions of lecturers on classroom management between these two higher learning institutions.

The remaining sections of this paper discuss the research methodology followed by a discussion of the data analysis and in the final section, the together with a conclusion is provided.

### **4. Research Methodology**

The theoretical framework of this study as shown in Figure 1 regarding effectiveness of classroom management is based on ‘*Behaviour Model*’. Bull & Solity (1993) asserted that the behaviour model focuses on the classroom and its events as an environment which is designed to help students to learn. This model illustrates the environment comprises three components which are physical, social and educational. These three components can be substituted by the components identified by this researcher i.e. content management, conduct management and covenant management. The fourth component, i.e. time management includes a discussion of the educational component

whereby the teachers have to plan and manage their lessons based on the time allocated for the subjects taught in the classroom.

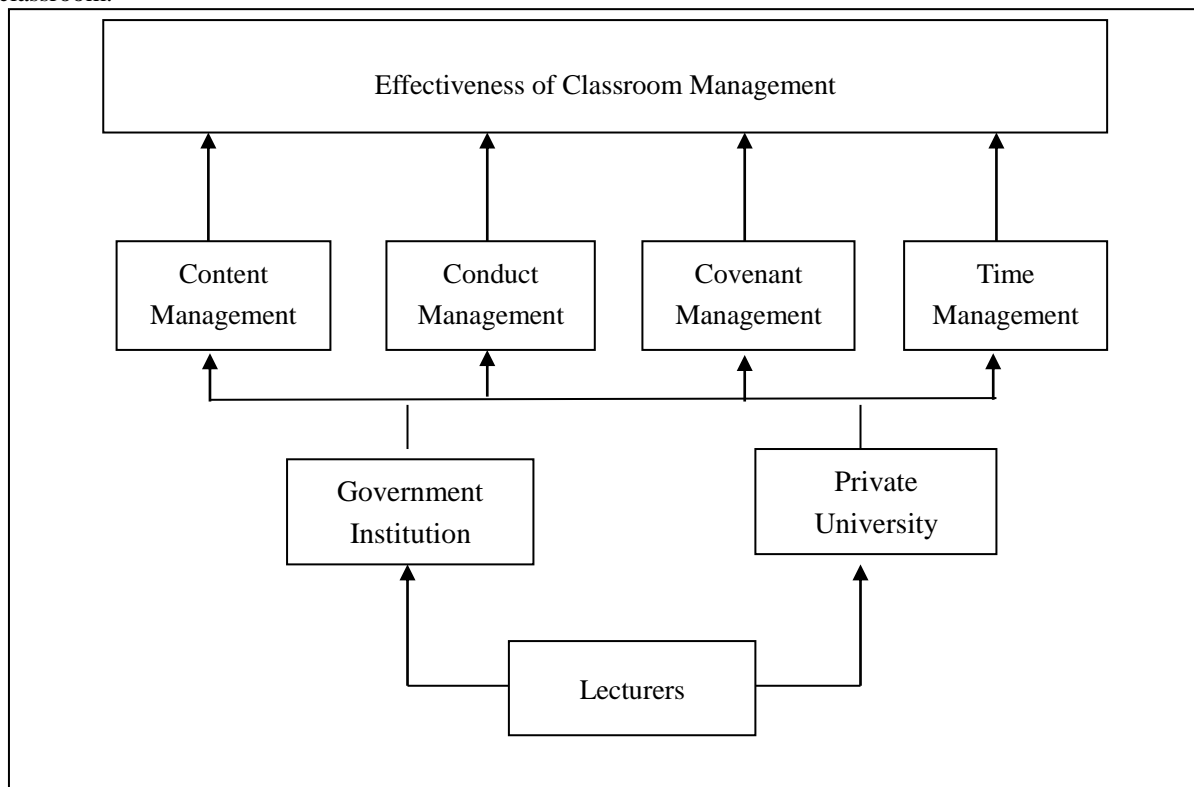


Figure 1. Theoretical framework for classroom management

On the basis of the discussion provided in the literature review of the four components of classroom management factors, the following is the research objective of this empirical study:

- i. To explore the perception of lecturers about the concept of classroom management in higher learning institutions.

In addition to the above core research objective, this empirical study attempts to determine the following two sub-objectives which are derived from the overall four factors of classroom management.

- ii. To determine the perception of lecturers about classroom management problems in higher learning institutions.
- iii. To identify the effects of classroom management on the quality of teaching and learning in higher learning institutions.

The above research objectives were tested using the following hypothesis

- $H_{o1}$  There is a significant difference on the perception of lecturers about classroom management between government institutions and private universities.
- $H_{o2}$  There is a significant difference on the perception of lecturers about classroom management problems between government institutions and private universities.
- $H_{o3}$  There is a significant difference of the effects of classroom management on the quality of teaching and learning between government institutions and private universities.

This research study empirically investigates the four components of the perception of classroom management in the context of both private and government higher learning institutions in Malaysia. These four variables are quantified using a test instrument comprising a set of questions adapted from past studies and literature reviews. This study adopted a quantitative survey method whereby the questionnaire was designed to examine the influence of the four research variables on classroom management perception. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire using the Cronbach's Alpha is presented in Table 4.

The survey questionnaire comprises the following segments:

- The Demographic variables testing the respondent's profiles which include gender, academic position, years of teaching experience, level of teaching and type of institution.
- A set of statements quantifies the following four classroom management variables related to the main objective of this study
  - Content Management
  - Conduct Management
  - Covenant Management
  - Time Management
- In addition to the above four variables, the study also investigates the following aspects on Teaching and Learning related to the sub-objective of this study:
  - Classroom Management Problems
  - Quality of Teaching and Learning on Classroom Management

The respondents recorded their answers using the Likert's Scale for all questions in the survey instrument. The target population of this study was academicians in both government and private higher learning institutions. This study targeted a sample size of 100 respondents consisting of 50 from both private and government institution respectively. Data was also collected using a research assistant.

## 5. Data Analysis

The data was collected from academicians holding the position of Tutors to Professor. In Malaysia, academic institutions follow a system whereby if the candidate completed a bachelor degree, then a tutor position will be offered. Any academician possessing a Masters and a PhD will be offered a senior lecturer or assistant professor (associate professor) position or perhaps as Professorship depending on their level of teaching and industry experience. Table 1 below provides the details of gender and academic position. The total sample size selected was 100 participants divided into 50 participants from Private and 50 from Public HLI. The participants were recruited on a voluntary basis and prior to the data collection the participants were given a brief explanation of the nature of the study. The participants were given the questionnaire and advised to return it to the research assistant after a period of one week. Follow-up was done consistently and the data collection achieved a 100% response rate from both types of institutions with no missing data.

The respondents consisted of 40% Male and 60% Female. Among these respondents, only one candidate held a position as Associate Professor. 96% of respondents were Senior Lectures and Lecturers. The other 3% were tutors. Tutors were included as their contribution on research variables is crucial in the evaluation on perception of classroom management.

Table 1. Gender and Academic Position

	Frequency	Percent
Associate Professor	1	1.0
Senior Lecturer	23	23.0
Lecturer	73	73.0
Tutor	3	3.0
Total	100	100.0

	Frequency	Percent
Male	40	40.0
Female	60	60.0
Total	100	100.0

The graphical representation of Table 1 details presented in Figure 1 and 2.

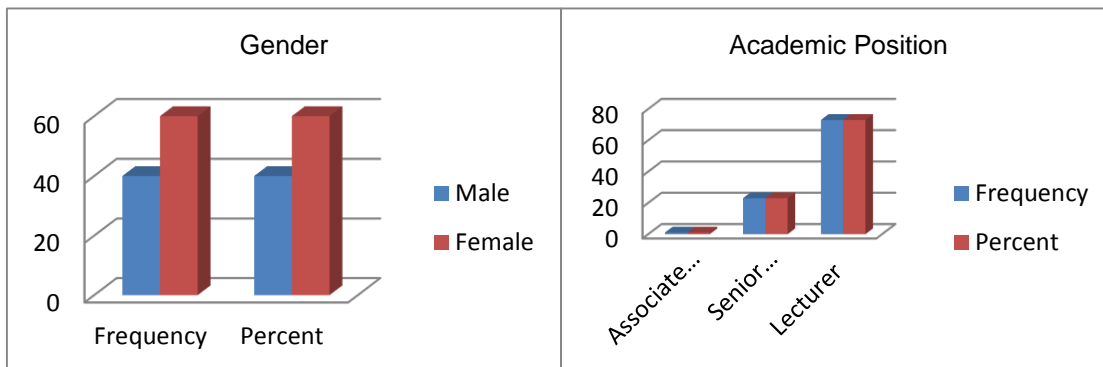


Figure 1. Gender

Figure 2. Academic Position

The respondents' working experience is shown in Table 2. The analysis revealed that 80% of respondents have more than 5 years of working experience, the other 20% less than 5 years. The majority of the respondent with more than 5 years academic experience provide validity of responses given due to their extensive work experience. As a result, this more experienced group clearly understand the concept of classroom management. This is reflected in the reliability of the analysis. In addition, the majority of the respondents are involved in teaching undergraduate students and only a small proportion are involved in postgraduate teaching.

Table 2. Teaching Experience and Level of Teaching

	Frequency	Percent
Postgraduate	10	10.0
Undergraduate	80	80.0
Diploma	10	10.0
Total	100	100.0

	Frequency	Percent
More Than 5 years	80	80.0
Less Than 5 years	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0

The graphical representation of these two items provided in Figure 3 and 4.

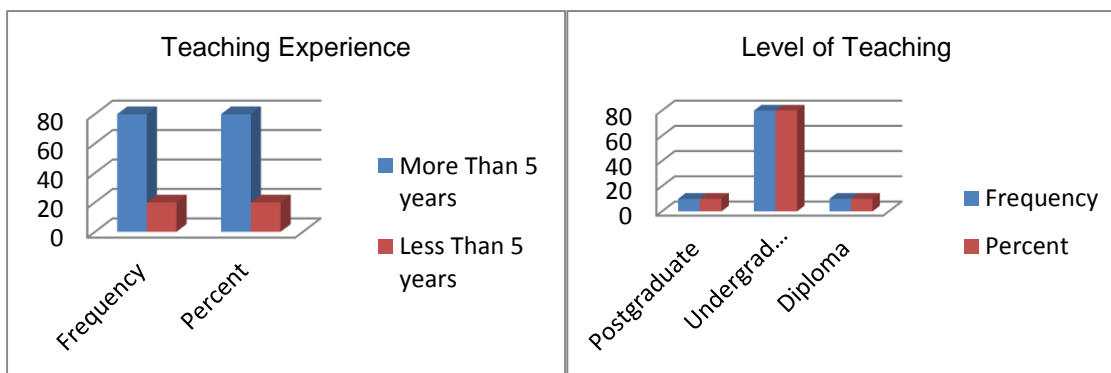


Figure 3. Teaching Experience

Figure 4. Level of Teaching

As mentioned above, the total respondents for this empirical study was 100 HLI teachers as shown in Table 3 below. To reflect accurately the analysis, an equal number of respondents were divided equally between those teaching at private universities and government institutions. The private universities were selected from a few Universities operating in West Malaysia and the Institute of Teacher Education, represented the government institution. To maintain the confidentiality of the respondents, institutions' are classified either as PU or ITE.

Table 3. Teaching Institutions

Teaching Institutions	Frequency	Percent
Private University (PU)	50	50.0
Institute of Teacher Education (ITE)	50	50.0
Total	100	100.0

### 5.1 Data Validity and Reliability

Each research hypothesis in the survey questionnaire using the test instrument, was examined for reliability and validity (Collis & Hussey, 1995). Reliability reflects the stability and consistency of an instrument in measuring the concept (Page & Meyer, 2000; Sekaran, 1992, 2003). Cronbach's Alpha was used for this study to assess the reliability of each measure. The literature and empirical investigation highlights the fact that the higher the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, the better the reliability of the measurement instrument. Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) suggested 0.70 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient level. As indicated by Nunnally, the research variables of all test instruments recorded above 0.70 indicate that the survey instrument has internal consistency reliability. The Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of each research variable are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability Statistics

		Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
PCM	CTM	.762	5
	CDM	.792	5
	CVM	.746	5
	TMG	.784	5
CMP		.901	10
QTL		.838	10

*PCM – Perception on Classroom Management, CTM- Content Management, CDM- Conduct Management, CVM- Covenant Management ,TMG- Time Management, CMP – Classroom Management Problems, QTL – Quality of Teaching and Learning on Classroom Management.*

### 5.2 Data Analysis of Classroom Management Factors

The mean value of the main research objective consisting of four components of classroom managements is shown in Table 5 and the corresponding value of t-test together with the Mean difference is provided in Table 6.

Table 5. Perceptions

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CTM	PU	50	6.480	0.677	0.096
	ITE	50	6.560	0.577	0.082
CDM	PU	50	6.220	0.790	0.112
	ITE	50	6.400	0.670	0.095
CVM	PU	50	6.440	0.611	0.086
	ITE	50	6.540	0.542	0.077
TMG	PU	50	6.600	0.639	0.090
	ITE	50	6.460	0.646	0.091

CTM- Content Management, CDM- Conduct Management, CVM- Covenant Management ,TMG- Time Management, PU- Private University and ITE Institute of Teacher Education

Table 6. t-test for Equality of Means

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
CTM	-0.636	98	0.526	-0.080
CDM	-1.229	98	0.222	-0.180
CVM	-0.865	98	0.389	-0.100
TMG	1.090	98	0.278	0.140

CTM- Content Management, CDM- Conduct Management, CVM- Covenant Management and TMG- Time Management

The mean value of the sub-objectives that is Classroom Management problems and Teaching Quality are provided in Table 7 and Table 8, respectively. The “t” test value together with the mean difference are provided in their respective tables.

Table 7. Problems

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Private University	50	3.820	0.482	0.068
Institute of Teacher Education	50	3.720	0.607	0.086

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
	0.912	98	0.364	0.100

Table 8. Teaching Quality

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Private University	50	4.820	0.388	0.055
Institute of Teacher Education	50	4.760	0.476	0.067

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
	0.690	98	0.492	0.060

The values of the Mean difference provided in the above tables of the main research objective and sub-research objectives are discussed in detail in the following section. The discussion highlights the four classroom management factors, problems and teaching quality provided in relation to whether the research hypothesis is rejected or accepted.

## 6. Results Discussion and Conclusions

As shown in Table 5, the three characteristics of classroom management recorded a higher mean value for government institutions than for private universities. The fourth component of classroom management, characteristics of Time management, indicated the t-value of the mean difference is 0.140. For this classroom characteristic, the mean value as shown in Table 5 is higher for private universities in comparison to the teacher training institution. As the analysis results revealed in Table 6, the mean difference between the private and government institutions for Content Management is 0.080, Conduct Management is 0.180, and Covenant Management is 0.100.

The analysis presented in Table 5 and 6, concluded that there is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers about three characteristics of classroom management between the private and government institutions. Thus all three hypotheses are rejected as shown in the Table below:



Table 9. Acceptance and Rejection of Research Hypothesis

Research Hypothesis	Acceptance and Rejection
H <sub>01</sub> There is a significant difference on the perception of lecturers about classroom management between government institution and private university.	Reject
H <sub>02</sub> There is a significant difference on the perception of lecturers about classroom management <i>problems</i> between government institution and private university.	Reject
H <sub>03</sub> There is a significant difference on the effects of classroom management on the <i>quality</i> of teaching and learning between government institution and private university.	Reject

This indicates that the teachers from both institutions have a clear understanding of the four factors of classroom management. The teachers of both institutions are competent in terms of subject knowledge and skills. They also manage other aspect of content management as highlighted in the literature. With regards to the conduct management, the teachers of both institutions address and resolve discipline problems in the classroom and exercise best teaching practices, for instance correcting irresponsible and inappropriate, destructive behavior and exercise reinforcement systems. In terms of covenant management, the teachers of both HLIs are managing interpersonal relationships appropriately in the classroom. This is crucial in order to provide a conducive learning and teaching environment for smooth knowledge transformation between the theory and practical. The learning environment is to encourage students to socialize and provides opportunities for efficient learning and with less assessment stress.

Regarding the final characteristic of classroom management, Time management, the analysis indicates there is no significant difference. This means that teachers in both types of institutions of higher learning are efficient in their teaching process in relation to time management. This promotes greater efficiency of achieving the target results set on teaching and learning.

There is also no significant difference on the effects of classroom management on the Quality of teaching and learning as well as the problem in classroom management. The findings revealed that the mean value difference for classroom management on the Quality of teaching and learning was 0.060 and the problem in classroom management is 0.100 (refer to Table 7 and 8). Since the p-value is not below 0.05, the hypothesis on both the quality and problem is rejected (refer to Table 9) whereby there is no significant difference between the Quality and Problem characteristic in both private and government higher learning institutions. As far as the Quality variable is concerned, the teachers of both types of institutions exercise a high level of teaching such as providing relevant learning materials, encouraging students to participate in problem solving activities and inculcating higher order thinking. On the other hand, with regards to classroom management problems, the teachers of both types of institutions are taking due care and concern on any issues relating to classroom management problems. This includes the submission of assignments on time, monitoring their attendance, etc.

In summary, the findings clearly show that lecturers in both types of institutions are concerned about classroom management and contribute towards an effective teaching and learning process. Classroom management is an important aspect that teachers/lecturers need to master in order to create a good teaching and learning environment. The main purpose of teaching for teachers/lecturers in the classroom is to impart knowledge to their students without any interruptions. Lecturers/teachers should be able to acquire good understanding in classroom management strategies especially the content management, conduct management, and covenant management that is supported by time management. Education is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge. Education develops the skill of reasoning and judgment along with the knowledge of society. It prepares an individual intellectually for a mature life. In order to impart knowledge to students, teachers have to manage the factors contributing to effective classroom management. The analysis of this study concludes that teachers at both the private and government higher learning institutions acquire sufficient knowledge regarding these four classroom management factors for an effective teaching and learning process to occur.

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