



## ***OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS AT YEMENI BASIC SCHOOLS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES***

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### ***Abstract***

*The purpose of this study is to recognize the causes of overcrowding in primary schools in the north of Yemen, from the viewpoint of Yemeni teachers. The researcher took a qualitative approach. An online semi-structured interview was used for collecting the data. This research was conducted on teachers from Yemen's various primary schools. They were questioned about overcrowding in classrooms and the factors that contribute to it. Findings revealed that lacking infrastructure such as classrooms is one of the causes of such overcrowding. Other causes are having only one school in some areas and not having enough teaching staff.*

**Keywords:** *Primary Education, Overcrowded Classrooms, Teachers*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is the cornerstone of every nation's growth and the key to its prosperity, particularly primary education, which is critical because it serves as the basis for all levels of education. According to Ajayi and Adeosun, (2004), education cannot be an excellent tool for national growth if primary education is not well-managed to achieve its objectives. As a result, paying close attention to the educational atmosphere is critical to producing educated, competent generations capable of contributing to society's overall and long-term growth. As a result, at all levels of education, especially at the primary level, facilities are critical. Classrooms, hostel accommodation, labs, furniture, leisure equipment, and other facilities were listed by Babatunde, (2015). In addition, according to Ogundipe, (2003), infrastructural amenities such as schools, libraries, labs, a play area, and a school farm garden must be of adequate standard and quantity.

Due to community and individual participation in education, the number of pupils in primary schools has increased dramatically in Yemen, especially in the north. according to Ministerial Resolution No. (648) released by the Ministry of Education on the issuance of the School Regulating Bylaw, the overall recommended learner-educator ratio for Yemen primary schools is 40:1 and for secondary schools is 35:1. Educators in some schools, on the

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other hand, do have to teach overcrowded classrooms. In certain schools, overcrowding is a frequent occurrence. This provides a hurdle in the classroom teaching and learning process, as well as the accomplishment of instructional goals.

As learners in the same environment reach a required number, the class is supposed to be defined as overcrowded, which can further obstruct teaching and learning processes (Siddiqui, 2018). According to Matshipi et al., (2017), the size of the classroom and how well it is fitted, as well as the teacher's efficiency, are all factors that contribute to overcrowding. According to the New York Independent Office (2010), an overcrowded classroom is one in which the enrolment exceeds the capacity by 2.5%. An overcrowded classroom, according to Buchanan & Rogers, (1990), is one with 80 or more students. When it comes to public schools in South Africa, the learner-to-teacher ratio is 30:1. Shirley, (2017) supports the idea by stating that a school is considered overcrowded if the student body reaches its carrying capacity by 5%. Shirley, (2017) further claims that overcrowding occurs when a school's enrollment exceeds the carrying capacity or the infrastructure available to accommodate the number of students and teachers. The term "over enrolment" is often used to describe overcrowding of classrooms Shirley, (2017). This is due to overcrowding, which occurs when a school accepts or enrolls more students than it can handle (Statistics, 1999).

Overcrowding in classrooms is not just an issue in Yemen, according to several reports. Many educators around the world find themselves employed in overcrowded primary school classrooms Mulryan-Kyne, (2010). Ojonubah, (2015) stated that overcrowding is one of Nigeria's educational difficulties. He also mentioned that Overcrowding in Nigerian classrooms was caused by a lack of public awareness about education and the government's deregulation of elementary and secondary education without the resources to match the dramatic increase in class size. Educators who teach in overcrowded classrooms would undoubtedly face more difficulties than those who teach in smaller classrooms. One of the main issues impacting poor learning outcomes in rural schools is overcrowding in the classroom (Nakabugo et al., 2006). Overcrowded classrooms with more than 40 students tend to be anonymous, meaning that students are mostly attended to as a group rather than as individuals, and individual focus is normally challenging (Nakabugo et al., 2006). Nearly 205 students are crammed into one classroom in one of the Eastern Cape's schools. They sit

shoulder to shoulder in a stuffy classroom of five students sharing a desk that is intended to seat two (Savides, 2016).

Teachers' confidence, enthusiasm, and self-esteem have all been seen to suffer as they teach overcrowded classes (Obanya et al., 1998). While many educators are capable of effectively managing a class of nearly any size, this will also come at the cost of the educators' well-being and the variety of learning opportunities available to students (Nakabugo et al. 2006). According to Savides (2016), one instructor said, "This class is too large." Others are making a racket in the back when you are teaching in the center. You must ensure that you have charge of the room, which is overcrowded to the point that you can't even distinguish the students by name due to a large number of students." Many classroom teachers believe they spend so much time planning and coordinating class tasks and not enough time addressing the needs of the students. According to national research undertaken in the United States, decreasing class size will effectively close the performance disparity between under-performing students and those who are performing at or above grade level (Piyaman et al., 2017). Long-term learning gains, which translate into steady academic success and reduced rates of teenage pregnancy and incarceration, are often accomplished by reducing class size (Piyaman et al., 2017).

Managing an overcrowded classroom is a significant challenge for many educators (Shah & Inamullah, 2012). An overcrowded classroom can obstruct the advancement of classroom teaching and learning practices. Overcrowding has a host of negative effects on student conduct (Shah & Inamullah, 2012; Marais, 2016). Educators devote most of their time to the classroom insisting that students pay attention and concentrate on classroom management practices to properly control students' activities. Any educator who is interested in a successful teaching and learning environment within the classroom would find that instructing a diverse audience is a difficult challenge (Philips, 2011). Overcrowded classrooms require educators to handle a student body that is more complex in terms of age, academic capacity, desire, and inspiration. This, on the other hand, adds to the difficulties faced by educators and places larger and different pressures on their skilled practice.

The majority of the issues with overcrowded classrooms are related to their negative impact on student success. According to a study published by the United States

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Department of Education (US), an increasing body of research shows that students in small classes make more educational improvements throughout the early grades than students in larger classes and that these improvements last throughout their elementary school (Piyaman et al., 2017). This demonstrates the importance of small classrooms when educating primary school students, as the majority of them would become disoriented in large groups. The number of students in a class will have an impact on the number of students who graduate, so it would be impossible for an instructor to engage with each student in an overcrowded classroom (Matshipi et al., 2017). It is simple to determine if the lessons are successful when the number is minimal.

The number of successful teaching strategies for overcrowded classrooms is often referred to as small. Educators who teach overcrowded classrooms are limited in their ability to use a range of instructional styles, such as higher-order interrogation and other active-learning techniques (Benbow et al., 2007). In overcrowded classrooms, educators can spend the majority of their time requesting students' attention or focusing on classroom management activities to properly control students' activities. The entire class, including the instructors, will be uneasy, and educators may want to teach while keeping an eye on the clock to escape the adverse atmosphere of an overcrowded classroom. With very few copies of textbooks available and the futility of assigning extra work that is not readily available to vast numbers of learners, a shortage of learner-teacher support material (LTSM) may be a challenge (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). In an overcrowded school, a lack of furniture becomes a challenge for educators to contend with. Overcrowding in the classroom has a negative influence on the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Overcrowding is a global epidemic that affects countries all over the world. Teachers who are in charge of overcrowding classrooms have difficulty enforcing discipline on their students. The students are prone to disrupting the class, and the teacher has a tough time bringing them to order. According to Matshipi et al., (2017), there are exceptions in situations when the instructor has a lot of experience teaching, but mastering such an overcrowded class is challenging. Owing to a shortage of space to walk through the school, the amount and efficiency of activity in the classroom are likely to suffer (Matshipi et al., 2017). Stealing, robbery, property loss, truancy, disobedience, aggression, anger toward authority, inability to make the grade and other types of student misbehavior are all popular in overcrowded

classrooms. Educators' welfare can be harmed as a result of dealing with any of these types of ill-disciplined conduct. From the viewpoint of Yemeni teachers, this study aims to recognize the causes of overcrowding in primary schools.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### *The Design of the Study*

The study was used in the descriptive qualitative method because the data collected don't contain numbers or total percentages.

### *Participants of the Study*

The participants of this study were Yemeni teachers who teach at primary schools located in different Yemeni areas. 4 Yemeni teachers were purposively selected to be interviewed to achieve the objectives of this study. They were all teachers who served many years in different Yemeni localities. They all had bachelor's degrees in different majors.

### *Data Collection*

Data collection was carried out by conducting an online semi-structured interview with four teachers who teach in primary schools. Those participants were questioned about overcrowding in class and the factors that contribute to it. The investigator used the interview to illustrate the importance of the participants' views of the fact. This interview enables the researcher to gain a better understanding of the investigated phenomenon. The interview was done in the Arabic Language then translated by the researcher to clarify and serve to achieve the goal of this study.

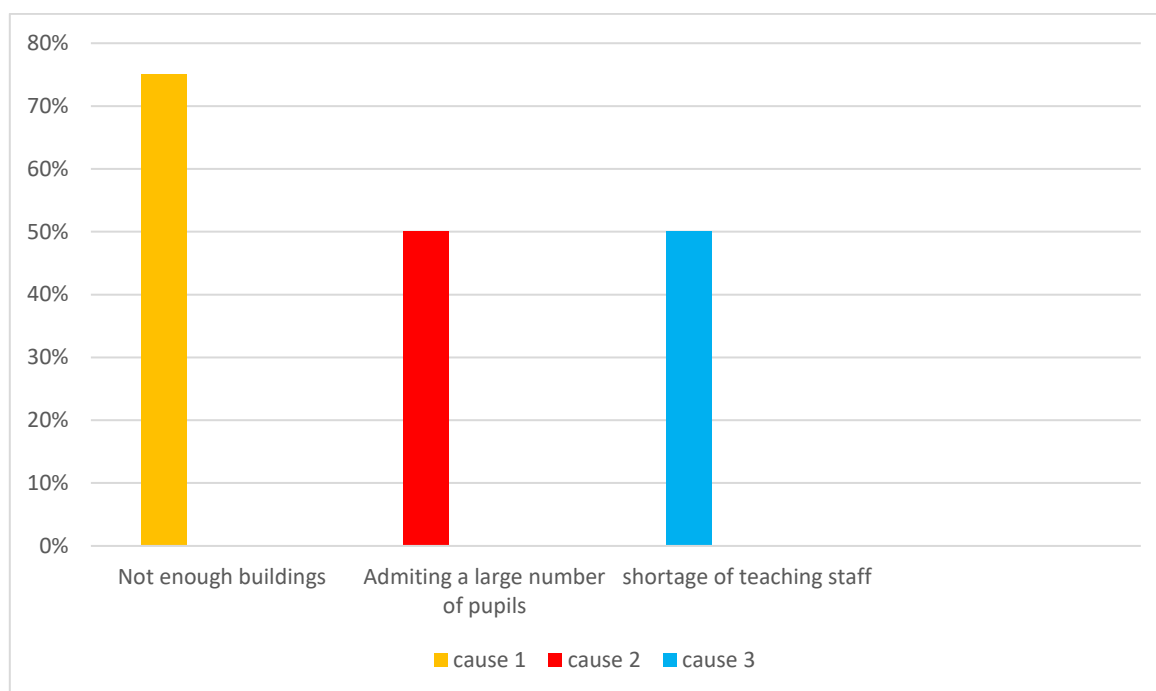
## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The collected data relating to the causes of the overcrowded classrooms in Yemeni basic schools were then analyzed. In this way, most (3) of the participants confirmed that the buildings of the schools are not big enough to accommodate all the enrolled students. However, participant (2) mentioned that although the building is big, the number of students is so huge. Some (2) participants also stated that some schools admit a large number of pupils because there are not any other schools in the surrounding areas. Whereas participant (4) added that some families are not able to send their kids to private schools because of poverty.

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As a result, they have to choose such crowded schools for teaching their kids because the education is free there. Besides, many (2) participants stated that the shortage of teaching staff is also one of the factors that cause overcrowding. While participant (3) declared that most of the teachers refuse to teach the students in the primary stage because it is tiring and needs a lot of effort.

The analysis of data given showed that there are many causes of overcrowded classes in Yemen basic schools. One of these causes is lacking infrastructure. That's to say, there are not enough classrooms that can accommodate the whole number of students. The other reason is that there is only one school that serves one community in some areas, and this is one of the important factors that lead to overcrowded classes in South Africa (Matshipi et al. 2017). Another reason is that there is not enough teaching staff. (Ijaiya, 1999 & Matshipi et al. 2017) asserted that the issues which are related to the shortage of teachers and classrooms are interwoven in a very complicated way and when they are combined with large pupil enrolment, it results in over-crowded classrooms.



**Figure 1.** Percentages of causes of overcrowded classrooms in Yemeni primary schools

## CONCLUSION

One of the most crucial challenges that Yemeni teachers face while teaching is the overcrowded classes and that is what has been proved through the interview conducted with some Yemeni educators from different areas of Yemen. The findings revealed that lacking infrastructure such as classrooms is one of the causes of such overcrowding. Other causes are having only one school in some areas, and not having enough teaching staff. Therefore, the researcher suggests that the Ministry of Education should construct more schools in areas with a high population. These buildings of schools should include a lot of classrooms to accommodate all the students who will get enrolled.

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