CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR-TRACKING APPS

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

"Instead of cracking out the cane like they used to, they're using this app to punish our children emotionally instead": Exploring Classroom Behaviour-Tracking Apps as Experienced by Parents of Children with SEND.

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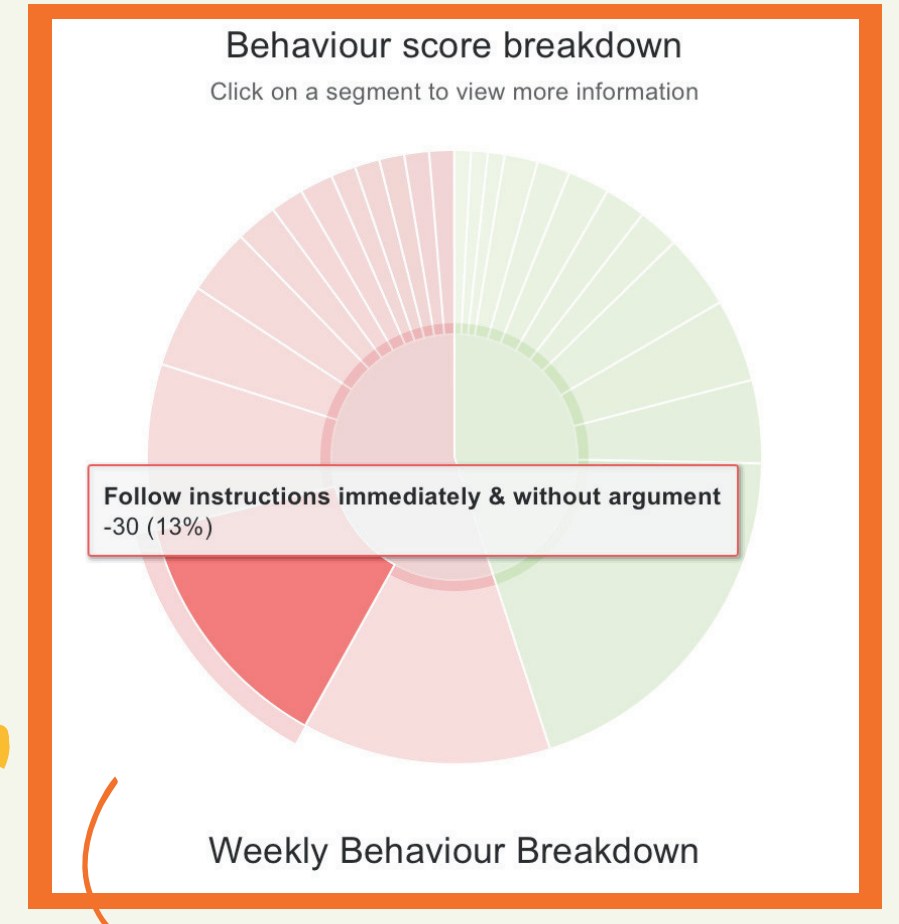Supervisor: Dr David Davies

Behaviour score breakdown
Click on a segment to view more information

Follow instructions immediately & without argument
-30 (13%)

Weekly Behaviour Breakdown

Image 1: Classcharts app

INTRODUCTION

- **Classroom behaviour-tracking technology** has been **problematised** among academics.
- The apps are used to **monitor and track** students as behaviour is broken down into categories and turned into **positive or negative points** (see image 1). Data is then shared between school staff, students and parents.

It has been suggested that using these apps could:
- **Promote controlling techniques of discipline, demanding compliance rather than an educational approach.**
- **Normalise surveillance**
- **Individualise behaviour** (Manolev *et al.*, 2019).
- Whilst **parental participation** can **undermine** the family as an informal site of **trust** fundamental to emerging self-control and a child's healthy development (Marx and Steeves, 2010).
- However, **empirical research is scarce,** and the technology continues to expand throughout many schools in the UK and globally.

OBJECTIVES

- Explore the experiences from parents of children with SEND.
- Address the limited empirical research and support theoretical concerns.
- Provide valuable insights for policy recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection: Semi-structured interviews conducted on Zoom.
- 4 parents of children with a range of SEND, such as Autism, ADHD, Dyspraxia, Hypermobility, and Dyslexia.
- All used a behaviour-tracking app with their secondary school-aged children.

Data Analysis: Qualitative thematic analysis.
- Open coding to identify themes.

EXPERIENCES & FEELINGS

worry shocking illogical powerlessness meltdowns sick detrimental suffer nightmare tearful harmful scared unhealthy escape distorted crazy damaging horrible pervasive upsetting surreal abnormal sad unfairness punishment assumptions frustrating suffering negative detachment defeat irresponsible bizarre stress forced annoying worried angry frustrated upset ridiculous unfair
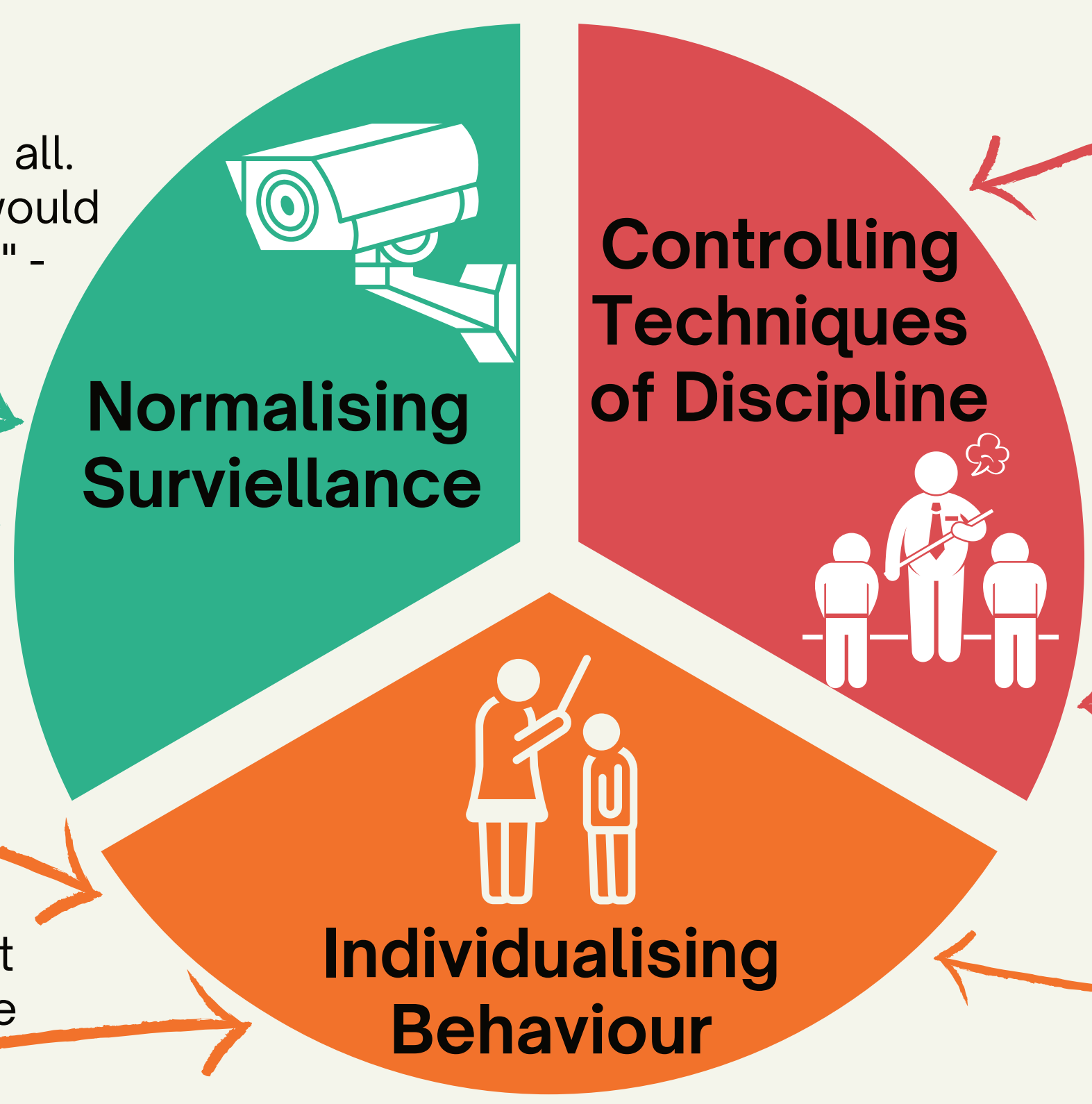
KEY FINDINGS

"I honestly would like not to engage with it at all. So first, daily...It's a push, pull type of thing. I would like to ignore it, but it sends emails anyway." - *Parent*

"I check it every time I check my phone" - *Parent*

"They give him negatives for making stupid noises. He has vocal ticks. He can't help it." - *Parent*

"So they punish him the most when he's suffering the most, and actually, if you look at the minus points, it's like he's punished for the symptoms." - *Parent*

Normalising Surviellance

Controlling Techniques of Discipline

Individualising Behaviour

"They replace a teaching moment with a **punishment**." – *Parent*

"The behaviour is chatting, so many negatives. I don't think he chats a lot, but he has no chance to reset anything. It's just **reinforcing** rather than stopping the behaviour." - *Parent*

"It's constant red. It's not healthy. What does it accomplish apart from stressing everyone out?" - *Parent*

"My daughter is Autistic and has ADHD. Without support, she can't concentrate for longer than 10 minutes, and she gets negatives for something beyond her control." - *Parent*

CONCLUSION

- Despite this very small sample, I have **genuine concerns** like others (e.g. Manolev *et al.,* 2019) that these apps do **promote and normalise surveillance,** with the findings of this study highlighting the consequences.
- Parents become **agents of surveillance**, causing extra worry and stress in addition to being a parent to a child with SEND.
- The apps provide a platform that **individualises behaviours** and fosters a **hostile and toxic learning environment.** Where students face **intense monitoring and tracking** that ignores the wider structural and contextual barriers in learning.
- The implications could lead to students viewing themself and their learning experience through data based on behaviour.
- Rather than compliance, students **resist** this mode of discipline as **behaviour is reinforced.**

WHAT NEXT?

- Rigorous **future empirical research** is needed to explore further the experiences of **students, parents, and teachers** to examine how this technology is understood and used.
- **Interdisciplinary research** - drawing on social-psycho experts to examine impacts on social-emotional well-being.
- This work should **centre the voices** and experiences of **students**, with a focus on **intersectionality**.
- **Findings** should be made **available to all stakeholders**, ensuring the careful and **informed practice** of behaviour-tracking apps in schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

References:
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- Manolev, J., Sullivan, A. and Slee, R. (2019) 'The datafication of discipline: ClassDojo, surveillance and a performative classroom culture', Journal of educational media: the journal of the Educational Television Association, 44(1), pp. 36–51. doi:10.1080/17439884.2018.1558237.