

Original Paper

The Role of School Discipline from the Students' Point of View

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Received: September 13, 2022 Accepted: October 4, 2022 Online Published: October 14, 2022

doi:10.22158/wjer.v9n5p56

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjer.v9n5p56>

Abstract

Regarding the topic of discipline management in the educational practice, there are legitimate concerns and many pedagogical questions that need to be addressed, given that the attainment of discipline is a significant issue in schools. The main purpose of this research is to determine whether primary and secondary school students have comprehended the role of discipline and rules in school and, in particular, in educational practice. In addition, related issues are investigated, such as the student's undisciplined or problematic behavior, the causes of indiscipline phenomena, as well as, the pedagogical means available to the teacher for creating propitious conditions of communication and relationship with the students, which contribute to the effective management of both the educational process and the challenging matters related to the attainment of classroom discipline and in general, of school discipline. As it is indicated by the findings of this research, the responses of the students of primary and secondary school enlighten the questions addressed in the questionnaire. This paper concludes with the research outcomes.

Keywords

school discipline, educational practice, education

1. Introduction

In the context of a group or a society, the individuals that constitute it exert mutual interactions which, are neither unlimited nor coincidental. Both the kind of influences that individuals exert and receive and their conceptualization depends on the social contexts in which the action of the subjects is embedded, the characteristics that constitute each social context, and on the capacity in which individuals, each time, participate in the social interaction, which is performed in the context of a particular occasion. This means that pedagogical interaction, as a narrower concept, belongs to that

category of social interaction, which expresses itself under the context of pedagogical relations. A key feature of pedagogical interaction is the communication that takes place between the participants in school life through the use of symbols (verbal and non-verbal), which are semantically embedded in social reality. Since language is a vast system of symbols, it is, therefore, the foundation of communication. As a meaning-making process, communication encompasses mechanisms for encoding and decoding messages through symbols. These mechanisms present a complexity that is often not perceived by the participants in everyday interactions (Gotovos, 1985; Krüger, 1991; Konstantinou, 2015).

Within the process of organizing the educational practice, the institutionally certified teachers' pedagogical authority is specifically developed by the teaching methods, the assessment of student performance, and the maintenance and control of classroom discipline. That is, the teacher has the assigned responsibility, jurisdiction, and authority to organize, establish, supervise and enforce manners, discipline, rules, attitudes, practices, etc., regarding the student's participation in the pedagogical relationship. In other words, the teacher determines the procedures regarding teaching, education, assessment, the kind of discipline, and how the student participates in these procedures. However, it should be emphasized that the relationship between the subjects is somehow regulated in a binding way for each one of them through laws, rules, protocols, and assumptions. In any case, the methods and techniques of promoting discipline belong to the teacher by the institution. This means that his/her choices play a decisive role in educational practices, which, have an impact on the attitude and, in general, the behavior of the student, since the teacher, undoubtedly, acts as a role model for the student. Therefore, the way of addressing the issue of discipline in the classroom, in addition to its successful or unsuccessful achievement, has also an important role in the organization of pedagogical communication and relationship and, overall, in an efficient teaching and learning practice. There are several pedagogical questions to be addressed concerning the matter of discipline and its relation to the teacher's ability to organize pedagogical communication and relationship with the students in an effective way. The main purpose of this article is to provide answers to these questions and, most importantly, to find out whether primary and secondary school students have comprehended the role of discipline and rules within the educational process and school.

2. School, Teacher, and Discipline

From the introductory references, it is concluded that the issue of discipline is directly related to the way the teacher organizes pedagogical communication and, in particular, to the issues concerning the application of rules and, consequently, the management of "orderliness" along with the student's social behavior in school. This means that teacher-student educational communication shapes the terms of pedagogical interaction within the classroom and the school environment, in general. When it comes to the school reality, pedagogical interaction is constituted by all actions, discourses, and deeds, of students and teachers within the context of the pedagogical relationship. Therefore, the term

pedagogical interaction has a broad context, which includes everything that takes place during teaching and everything that happens outside the strict boundaries of teaching, such as morning assemblies, prayer, recess, field trips, etc. In other words, everything that occurs during school life (Gotovos, 1985; Konstantinou, 2015; Postic, 1995).

According to N. Groddeck and C. Wulf (as cited in Gotovos, 1985), interpersonal communication does not always have a strictly instrumental nature. Under this concept, it is not limited only to the transmission of information, but it is also characterized by a teleological or telological feature, in the sense that communication is aimed at achieving specific tasks. In particular, the pedagogical communication between the teacher and the students, which takes place through the educational process, is only a tool for the achievement of the teaching or the pedagogical objectives of the school. The reason is that pedagogical communication: a) has specific kinds of goals to which is oriented, b) the organization of the goals is carried out with specified orientations, and c) there is an organized effort to reach these goals. After all, the student goes to school to learn. Through his/her out-of-school socialization, especially his/her family socialization, the student already has a background of information and knowledge. However, in school, the student broadens his cognitive resources to a large extent, as he is confronted with specialized knowledge, the exclusivity of which is almost entirely monopolized, at least until now, by the school. In the framework of addressing the pedagogical communication and, in particular, the organization of the educational process, the application of the rules and, therefore, the discipline, as an integral part of ensuring the conditions for conducting the teaching process, are, undoubtedly, included. First of all, the concept of discipline has, over time, acquired positive and negative connotations depending on the ideological context of each era. It is a concept that can be detected from the earliest years of social coexistence to modern social reality. The term “discipline” is used today, connoting different meanings, since it is a very broad and general term and this often leads to misinterpretations and misunderstandings. In other words, sometimes it is used in terms of military discipline, other times in terms of compliance with the rules of social life, and on other occasions, it is identified with power.

By the term “discipline”, in Pedagogics, we do not, usually, mean the excessive use of the teacher’s authority in a way that ensures the blind obedience and absolute compliance of the students with his or her will. This form of discipline, mainly, characterizes the military organization, through which the aim is to form a solid and homogeneous group. While, the purpose of school discipline has different features and takes into account other pedagogical parameters such as age, talents, interests, abilities, and, in general, the individual characteristics of each student, focusing on the ultimate goal of developing self-discipline (Kapsalis, 1989; Kyridis, 1999; Wragg, 2003).

According to Durkheim (as cited in. 6, p.14), discipline “constitutes that tool through the use of which both the normalization of the behavior of societies and the instillation of the basic norms of social behavior, social values, and ethics are ensured”. Nevertheless, school discipline, as a concept, process, and practice, did not always have this very same connotation. At all times, the concept of school

discipline reflected the dominant social concepts, moral and spiritual values of its time, as well as the values of the social system in which it was applied. It is a fact that the maintenance of discipline is a fundamental issue of school life and it concerns all participants of the educational process, namely pupils, teachers, other faculty and staff, as well as parents. For most people, or otherwise, for public opinion, student discipline is a primary concern of the teacher and the school, in general, and is included in the educational objectives (Konstantinou, 2015; Kyridis, 1999; Sachos, 2020).

Thus, in accordance with the prevailing perceptions of the nature of childhood and the ways of addressing and dealing with students and their problems, discipline in school has been conceptualized, over time, by using different definitions, and therefore, disciplinary problems have been administered in several different ways. Typically, disciplinary problems arise when meeting a student's needs or aspirations contradicts the current school reality. These conflicts may be momentary or persistent and result in the disruption of the student's willingness or may even affect his or her ability to participate in the educational process and in the classroom group, which usually leads to antisocial actions. From a psychological point of view, depending on whether a behavior will provoke the disapproval or approval of the teacher, the student will reproduce it, in order to benefit from the approval itself, or, on the contrary, will avoid it, in order to avoid the negative consequences (Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2018; Duet, 1992; Sachos, 2020).

The disadvantage concerning the case of disciplinary problems is that understanding does not precede treatment. However, it is a common perception that the school discipline concept is associated with the disturbance of the balance of communication and consequently with the interpersonal relations between the student and the teacher. In this sense, by "discipline" we mean the effort to ensure those conditions that contribute to the uninterrupted conduct of the educational process and, consequently, to the achievement of the school's pedagogical objectives. Only legitimate forms of behavior are embodied in these conditions (Konstantinou, 2015, p. 235).

By this particular definition, it is determined that discipline is a prerequisite for the conducting of learning and, more generally, the educational process and, at the same time, a tool that ensures the accomplishment of the teaching and pedagogical objectives of the school. Discipline, as a process and practice, is, therefore, inextricably linked to the explicit and implicit rules applied in the school. This implies that in this case both the way the teacher organizes the educational process and, by extension, the pedagogical communication and relationship with the student, as well as, the way he or she establishes and/or applies the rules in the school, play a decisive role.

In other words, the teacher's ability is not only "tested" in matters of teaching, but also in matters of pedagogical behavior and, in particular, in matters of educational practice, through which he or she promotes messages of emancipation or manipulation of the student. This means that discipline is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve pedagogical purposes, including the self-discipline of the learner. For this purpose, the teacher uses implicit and explicit rules as a basis and tool through which he or she tries to ensure discipline (Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2018; Morgan, 2012; Sachos, 2020;

Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1969).

Although, in practice, it turns out that attaining discipline is not an easy task and for this reason, the teacher resorts to other means that “validate” the student’s compliance or not with the rules. Such means and methods are perceived as penalties or, otherwise, punishment, for the teacher to achieve the “compliance” of the pupil. This also explains the rationale for the imposition of punishment, which means that, since there are rules in the school, there will inevitably be sanctions (punishments). In other words, through this interpretation, the triad of “rule-breach-penalty” is created, which means that the one who breaks the rule should also reckon with the imposition of a penalty. With this practice, the school, on the one hand, tries to impose “order” and on the other hand tries to educate the student to follow the rules-laws, i.e., legitimacy, in order to avoid the negative consequences of not applying them (ibid.).

Therefore, from a pedagogical point of view, the problem that the school is expected to solve is the following: the rules should have such an origin and content that the imposition of punishments has to be based on the particularities of each student along with respect to his/her personality and, undoubtedly, it should not lead to the abolition of the student’s autonomy and critical ability, but instead, to his/her enhancement. Within the classroom framework, the student ought to recognize that he/she is co-responsible for the existence of rules which ensure his/her participation in the educational process within a context of mutual respect, self-discipline, and mutual understanding. Thus, the student will understand more convincingly the role of rules and his/her co-responsibility for the uninterrupted progress of the educational process (ibid.).

Relevant research indicates that discipline became, in many cases, an end in itself for the process of education in school. In other words, it was an indispensable complement to the educational practice, but at the same time, it was also a means for the unobstructed conducting of teaching. However, the progress of pedagogical science and the most recent socio-political and cultural developments have given the educational process new pedagogical orientations, which recognize and upgrade the role and personality of the student, both in terms of his formal position in the school and the recognition to his/her personal freedoms (Kyridis, 1999; Sachos, 2020; Winkel, 1983).

3. Causes of Indiscipline

It is a fact that during the educational process, students are confronted with various discipline problems, which teachers are expected to deal with effectively, in order to carry out their educational tasks as efficiently as possible. However, these problems interfere with the teaching process either by distracting the teacher from his/her work or by causing fuss and disruption in the classroom and, of course, by distracting the students. Thus, the teacher has to restore the necessary quietness for the promotion of educational activities in the classroom in order to be able to continue his/her work. The efficiency with which the teacher addresses disciplinary difficulties is also a criterion for evaluating his/her competence and quality. On this point, there are significant differences between teachers. In the

same classroom, one teacher may succeed and one may not. Or the teacher himself or herself is sometimes more effective in one classroom than in another. Explaining this fact is complicated because it is difficult to be able to control all the factors involved, regardless of their reference to the student, the teacher, the classroom, or the school environment (Kapsalis, 1989; Kyridis, 1999; Konstantinou, 2015; Sachos, 2020).

Discipline and punishment, therefore, hold a critical and inevitable role in the educational process and, more generally, in school life. From the perspective of educational systems, Lebovici argues that “an excessively strict school leads students to pathological behaviors of failure and aggression, while, on the contrary, a complete lack of discipline in a school can be particularly harmful to students, as we will have phenomena of personality instability, insecurity and inability to adhere” (as cited in Duet, 1992, pp. 52-53).

Relevant research findings have indicated that the causes of disciplinary problems are many and diverse. A number of these are related to the teacher, classmates, the school, and the broader social environment of the child. While some of these are attempted to be eliminated by organized education, others are beyond the influence of the school. Thus, regarding the teacher, the search for undisciplined or problematic behavior is mainly limited to the personality and the child’s ability to adapt to the school environment. Categorizing the data of relevant studies, it is found that the main factors which the causes of undisciplined behavior should be investigated are the following (Anagnostopoulou, 2008; Djigic & Stojiljkovic, 2011; Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2018; Morgan, 2012; Sachos, 2020; Winkel, 1983):

A. Micro-level (inter-school factors):

- School reality (school functioning conditions, inadequate material and technical infrastructure, lack of teachers and books, increased teacher-student ratio, etc.).
- Personality and professional competence of the teacher (inadequate pedagogical and teaching capacity, authoritarianism, lack of pedagogical evaluation, inappropriate behavior towards students, etc.).
- The organization of the educational process (type of teaching and socialization, type of discipline, inadequacy and inconsistency in the exercise of the educational work, standardized learning process, failure to involve students in the learning process, failure to address students’ needs, and interests, etc.).
- Personality characteristics of the student (psychological or other problems, learning difficulties, attention-seeking, the tendency to self-expression and interest, etc.).

B. Macro-level (Out-of-school factors):

- Socio-economic family status and intra-family climate (domestic conflicts, divorce, loss of a loved one, abuse, moving house, financial problems, birth of another child, etc.).
- Socio-cultural and political-economic reality (e.g., pandemic conditions, economic crisis, etc.).

4. Creating a Conducive School Environment

As a concluding remark, it should be stressed at this point that the role of the teacher is crucial in terms of the organization of the educational process in the classroom and the school, in general. This implies that he or she should contribute to the formation of a “pedagogical-psychological climate”, as indicated by the necessary existence of the following parameters, which are based on converging views of Pedagogical Science, as a result of, mainly, relevant research findings (Anagnostopoulou, 2008; Chaniotakis, 2011; Chatzichristou, 2005; Djigic & Stojiljkovic, 2011; Hentig, 1988; Kasotaksi & Flouris, 2005; Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2021; Morgan, 2012; Papandreou, 2002; Sachos, 2020; Trilianos, 2004, Whitaker, 2013):

- ✓ Respects the needs, interests, and, in general, the individual characteristics of the student.
- ✓ Expresses actively his/her confidence in students and develops a relationship of trust with them.
- ✓ Supports students emotionally and stimulates their interests.
- ✓ Expresses high expectations for the students.
- ✓ Chooses student-centered approaches for organizing the educational process.
- ✓ Provides direct feedback to the students.
- ✓ Creates a family environment in the classroom.
- ✓ Encourages interpersonal communication and cooperation.
- ✓ Rewards success.
- ✓ Establishes clear rules of behavior, mainly as a product of co-determination with the students, which helps to set boundaries for the student’s behavior.
- ✓ Reinforces the student’s responsibility and autonomy.
- ✓ Dedicates listening time to the student.
- ✓ The teacher is characterized by self-control, fairness, a sense of equity, reliability, consistency, gentleness, and patience.
- ✓ Avoids stigmatizing and insulting the student.
- ✓ Ultimately, he/she is the teacher who respects the student’s personality and, above all, serves the student’s learning, educational, and pedagogical interests, as well as the needs and promotion of society.

In relevant studies, the following parameters are mentioned as significant factors for the avoidance-prevention or change of the student’s undisciplined behavior, several of which are part of the positive pedagogical climate that the teacher is required to create along with the organization of the educational practice:

- The search for the causes and the identification of incentives and diversity in students.
- The promotion of communication, cooperation, and mutual understanding.
- The provision of opportunities for non-popular students.
- The cultivation of social, interpersonal, and emotional skills in students.
- The acquisition of problem-solving strategies.

- The provision of alternative patterns of behavior aiming at self-control.
- The determination of rational and fair consequences for undesirable behavior.
- Encouragement and systematic rewarding.
- Creating an organized classroom environment with student participation.
- Maintaining an undiminished interest in students.
- Reinforcement, verbal and non-verbal, of the desirable behavior and students' self-confidence.
- Providing support with clear directions.
- Engaging in creative activities.
- The promotion of positive patterns of behavior.
- Institutionalizing and implementing clear rules along with the students.
- Avoidance of students' stigmatization (ibid.).

5. Research Purpose and Methodology: Questionnaire

As mentioned in the introductory part, the main purpose of this research is to find out if the students of primary and secondary school have comprehended the role of discipline and rules within the educational process and, more generally, in school. In particular, the main questions, that the students were asked to answer, are the following: What is the role of discipline within the educational practice and the school? What is the relationship between rules and discipline? What are the causes of indiscipline? What school practice do students bring forward for formatting the rules? In what way should the teacher address indiscipline? Whether cultivating skills is necessary for discipline?

The questionnaire consists of fifteen (15) closed questions, which allow the student to rate his/her answers. The questionnaire was distributed during the first ten days of April 2022. One hundred and fifty-one (151) primary and secondary school students of Ioannina city participated in the survey by a random selection of the schools. Before its distribution to the students, a pilot run of the questionnaire was carried out with the participation of seven (7) secondary school students and seven (7) primary school students respectively, from which it was possible to determine the linguistic and meaning-conceptual understanding of the questions. The completion of the questionnaire, which lasted approximately fifteen (15) minutes, was carried out in the presence of the researchers, to clarify any questions of the students.

As outlined above, the present research was conducted at a local level and due to the specific sample, the generalizability of the results is subjected to certain limitations. However, the research and pedagogic value of the findings are quantifiable and recognizable, given that, through its findings, a specific trend regarding the purpose of the research emerges.

5.1 Statistical Testing: Validity and Reliability of Research

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, we used concepts, relevant considerations, and reflections on the theoretical part, as well as, all aspects of the concept of "discipline", associated with the main theories on the issue, relevant questionnaires, and findings of relevant research. Also, the pilot run of

the questionnaire served to strengthen this direction.

According to the statistical test, it is pointed out that, by coding the responses and applying the two-sided t-test for independent samples, it was observed that there is no statistically significant difference between the two sexes ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) in any of the responses. About the comparison of the opinions between primary and secondary school students, we noticed that there is a statistically significant difference ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) in only four (4) of the 15 questions, and this concerns one-sided differentiation of the opinions of primary school students from those of secondary school students. Specifically, a statistically significant difference ($p\text{-value}=0.035$) was found in question A2.1, "Discipline is necessary for the lesson to be carried out", where primary school students consider discipline more necessary for conducting the lessons than secondary school students. A statistically significant difference ($p\text{-value}<0.05$) was also detected in question A2.5, "Students are responsible for the lack of discipline", where primary school students consider, to a greater extent than secondary school students, that the students themselves are primarily responsible for the lack of discipline. In question A2.9, "I prefer the rules to be defined by the teacher", a statistically significant difference was also found ($p\text{-value}=0.017$). In this question, primary school students express, more strongly, the opinion that the rules should be defined by the teacher. Finally, in question A2.13, "Does it bother you when there is a disruption in the classroom and, in general, in your school?", a statistically significant difference was also found ($p\text{-value}=0.004$). In this question again, primary school students seem to be more bothered by the disruption than secondary school students.

An internal consistency check of the questionnaire measures was carried out and it was examined whether the questions show a high consistency or correlation, both with each other and with the object of our study. The internal consistency and reliability of the factors created were examined with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The Cronbach's alpha index was found in all questions greater than 0.6 (>0.60). This means that the results of the questionnaire examination are characterized by high reliability and consistency. Therefore, the questionnaire is reliable.

6. Overview of Research Findings

6.1 Demographics

The participation of primary school students is equivalent to the percentage of 37.75% ($N=57$) and of the secondary school students to the percentage of 62.25% ($N=94$). However, the participation of boys and girls is almost equal, i.e., 50.23% ($N=76$) for girls and 49.67% for boys ($N=75$) (see Figures 1 and 2).

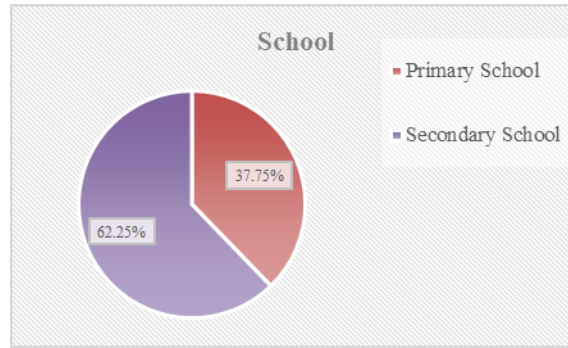


Figure 1. Primary-Secondary Schools' Participation

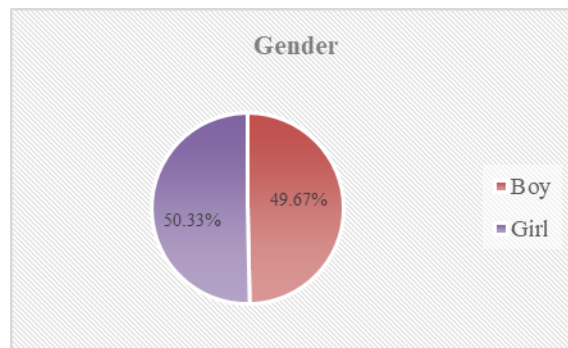


Figure 2. Students' Gender

6.2 Students' Views on the Concept of Discipline

From figure A1 it is clear that the students, with a vast majority, and, specifically, with a percentage of 83.44% (N=126) share the same -correct opinion about the concept of discipline. On the contrary, and with a percentage of 16.56% (N=25), the students have different opinions on the subject.

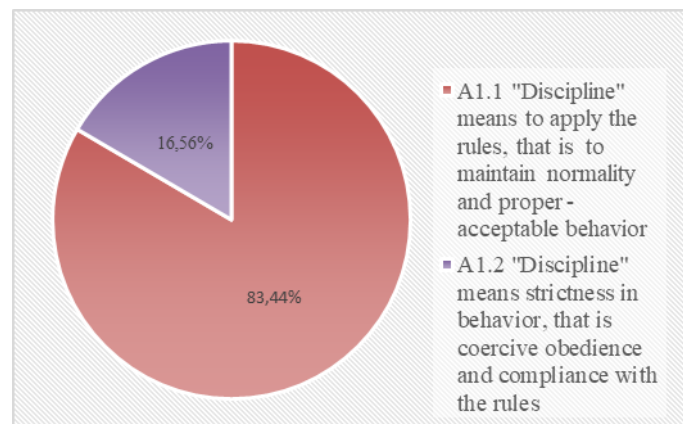


Figure 3. Students' Views on the Concept of Discipline

6.3 Students' Views on the Necessity of Discipline

Regarding the question about how the students consider the necessity of discipline for conducting the lesson, the answers highlight the fact that discipline is necessary. Specifically, the highest percentage of 41.06% (N=61) received the answer “A lot” followed by the answer “Very much” with a percentage of 27.15% (N=41). The answer “Enough” received a rate of 26.49% (N=40). Very low were the responses “A little”, with 4.64% (N=7), and “Not at all” with only 0.66% (N=1). As mentioned in a previous part, in this question there was a statistically significant difference (p -value=0.035) between the students of the primary school and the secondary school (rating “very much” and “a lot”, 73.69% and 64.89% respectively). Specifically, primary school students consider discipline to be more necessary for conducting the lesson than secondary school students.

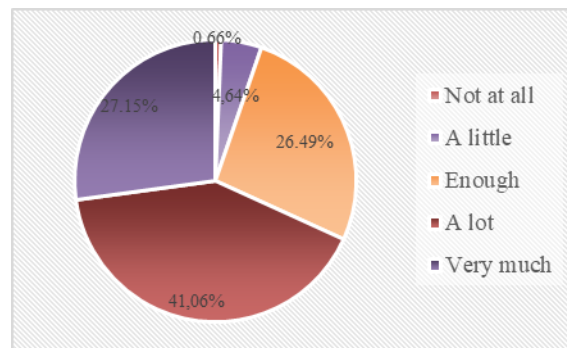


Figure 4. Students' Views on the Necessity of Discipline

6.4 The Students' Views on the Teacher's Pedagogical Measures and Practices

Regarding the question “If discipline should be attained with appropriate educational practices by the teacher”, it can be noted from the following graph that the students moved to more positive answers. The answer “Not at all” was not given by any student, and the answer “A little” got only 2 answers with a rate of 1.32%. A very high rate was recorded for the response “A lot” with a percentage of 47.68% (N=72), followed by the responses “Very much” with a percentage of 30.46% (N=46) and “Quite a lot” with 20.53% (N= 31).

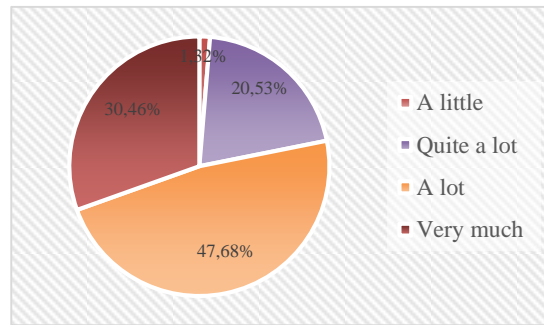


Figure 5. The Students' Views on the Teacher's Pedagogical Measures and Practices

6.5 Students' Views on Punishment in Case of Indiscipline

Students were asked about “Whether discipline should be enforced by punishment”. The responses here were in a negative context, as shown in Graph A4. The most popular answer was “A little” with 44.37% (N=67) followed by “Quite a lot” with 32.45% (N=49). The response “Not at all” received 11.26% (N=17) followed by “A lot” with 9.93% (N=15) and “Very much” with 1.99% (N=3).

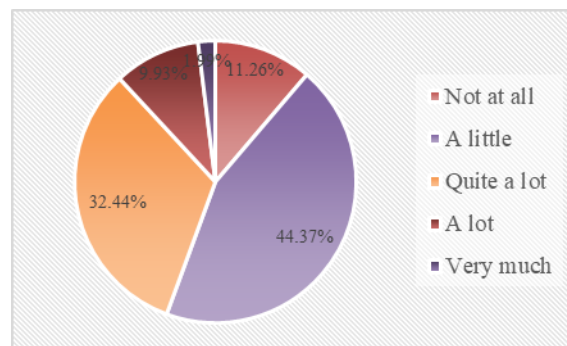


Figure 6. Students' Views on Punishment in Case of Indiscipline

6.6 Students' Views on Teacher Influence on the Discipline

In response to the question “Whether student discipline depends on the way the teacher communicates or behaves with his/her students”, the majority of the students gave a positive answer. The response “Very much” received the highest percentage with 37.09% (N=56) followed by “Quite a lot” with 29.14% (N=44) and “Very much” with 25.83% (N=39). A very low percentage received the responses “A little” with 5.30% (N=8) and “Not at all” with 2.65% (N=4).

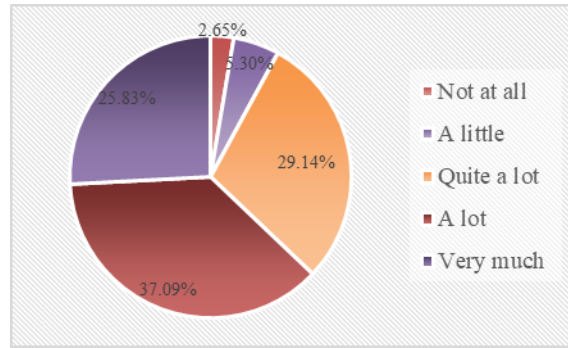


Figure 7. Students’ Views on Teacher Influence on the Discipline

6.7 Students’ Views on Their Responsibility for Indiscipline

Regarding the question “If the lack of discipline is students’ fault”, the answers did not give a clear inclination to one answer or the other. The response “Quite a lot” received the highest percentage of 47.02% (N=71). This was followed by the answer “A little” with 22.52% (N=34) and then the answer “A lot” with 13.25% (N=20). Last came the answers “Not at all” with 12.58% (N=19) and “Very much” with 4.64% (N=7). In this particular question, a statistically significant difference emerged (p-value<0.05). Particularly, primary school students believe, to a greater extent than secondary school students, that the students themselves are mainly responsible for the lack of discipline.

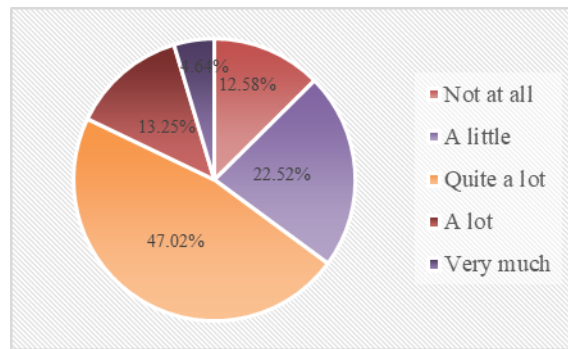


Figure 8. Students’ Views on Their Responsibility for Indiscipline

6.8 Students’ Views on the Teacher’s Strictness in Discipline

In the question about students’ preferences concerning the strictness of the teacher in the issue of discipline, the answer received the largest percentage is “A little” with a percentage of 43.71% (N=66), followed by the answer “Quite a lot” with 26.49% (N=40) and “Not at all” with 17.22% (N=26). Finally, the response “A lot” received 9.93% (N=15), and “Very much” followed by 2.65% and (N=4).

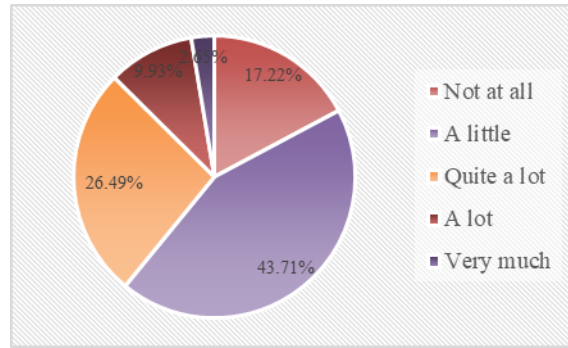


Figure 9. Students' Views on the Teacher's Strictness in Discipline

6.9 Students' Views on Their Participation in the Rules-Setting

The students' responses to this question indicated that they want to participate in the rules-setting. Specifically, with a percentage of 37.75% (N=57) the answer "Quite a lot" is the most popular. The answer "A lot" was highly rated, with a percentage of 33.77% (N=51) followed by the answer "Very much" with 21.19% (N=32). At lower levels were the answers "A little" (5.30%, N=8) and "Not at all" (1.99%, N=3) rated.

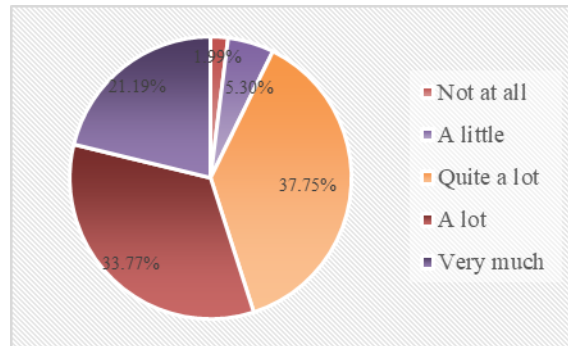


Figure 10. Students' Views on Their Participation in the Rules-Setting

6.10 The Students' Views on the Outcome of Rules Implementation Based on Their Participation in Their Formation

The question posed to the students was "Whether the rules are better applied when they (the students) have participated in their formation." The set of responses showed a positive bias. Specifically, the answer "Quite a lot" received 34.44% (N=52) followed by the answer "A lot" with a rate of 28.48% (N=43). Next, is rated the answer "Very much" with a percentage of 27.15% (N=41). The responses "A little" with 7.28% (N=11) and "Not at all" with 2.65% (N=4) recorded low percentages.

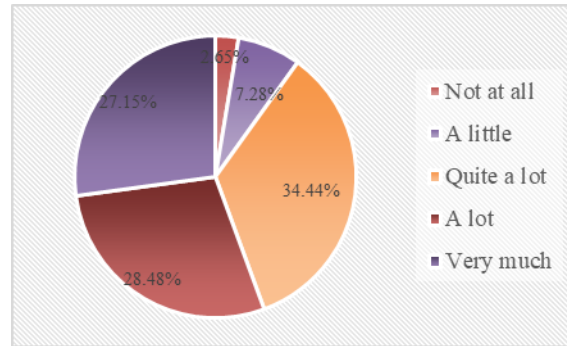


Figure 11. The Students' Views on the Outcome of Rules Implementation Based on Their Participation in Their Formation

6.11 Students' Views on the Effectiveness of the Rules' Implementation, Set by the Teacher

About the question “Whether students prefer the rules to be set by the teacher” from Graph A10, it seems that this is not something students would prefer. The most popular answer is “A little” with 42.38% (N=64) followed by the answer “Quite a lot” with 28.48% (N=45). The responses “Not at all” with 10.60% (N=16) and the responses “A lot” and “Very much” with 9.27% (N=14) were both rated at similar percentages. The specific question, “I prefer the rules to be set by the teacher”, was also found to be statistically significant (p-value=0.017). Also, in this question, the students of the primary school express, more strongly, the opinion that the rules should be, primarily, set, by the teacher. It seems that this way they feel “safer” about what is happening at school.

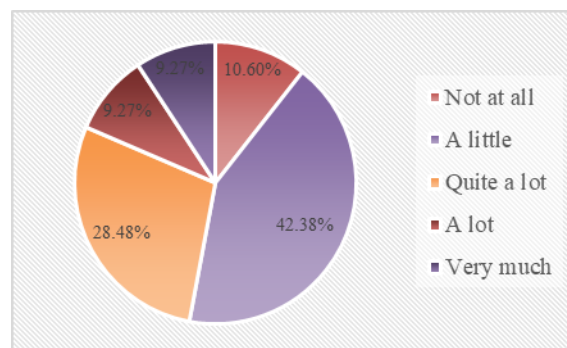


Figure 12. Students' Views on the Effectiveness of the Rules' Implementation Set by the Teacher

6.12 Students' Views on the Expulsion of a Student from Secondary School for Indiscipline

Students were asked to answer the question “If they think expulsion is appropriate as a punishment measure in secondary school”. The most popular answer is “A little” with a percentage of 37.75% (N=64) and follows the answer “Quite a lot” with a percentage of 30.46% (N=45). At lower levels were rated the answers “Not at all” with 14.57% (N=16), “A lot” and “Very much” with the same percentage of 8.61% (N=14).

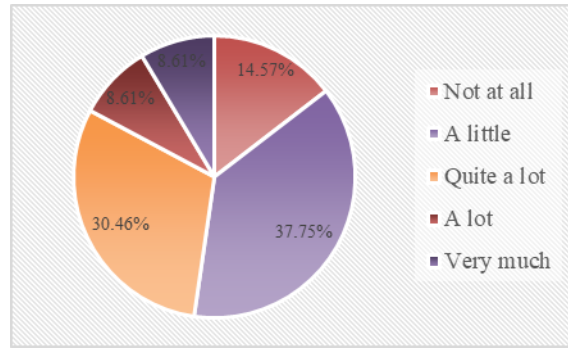


Figure 13. Students’ Views on the Expulsion of a Student from Secondary School for Indiscipline

6.13 Students’ Views on the Expulsion of a Student from Primary School

Regarding the question “How do students judge the application of such a measure, i.e., expulsion, at school”, the answers showed a negative tendency. More particularly, the answer “Not at all” came in first place with a percentage of 37.09% (N=56) followed by the answer “A little” with a percentage of 29.80% (N=45). The answer “Quite a lot” moved lower to 20.53% (N=31) and, finally, the answers “A lot” and “Very much” with 8.61% (N=13) and 3.97% (N= 6) respectively, were low-rated.

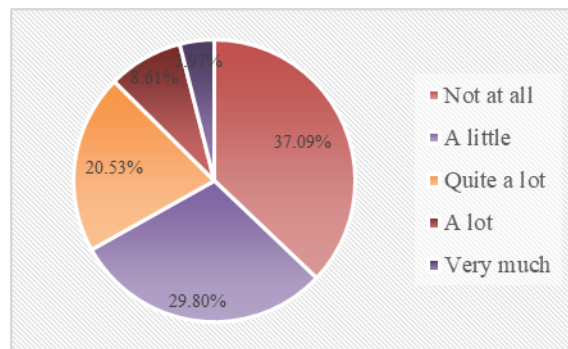


Figure 14. Students’ Views on the Expulsion of a Student from Primary School

6.14 Students’ Views on Corporal Punishment

Students were asked, “Whether they consider corporal punishment (e.g., ear pulling, cuffing, etc.) as a means of discipline.” Graph A13 clearly illustrates that they do not agree at all with the specific method of punishment. The most popular answer is “Not at all” with a percentage of 85.43% (N=129). The rest of the responses recorded very low rates. Specifically, the answer “A little” received 9.27% (N=14), the answer “Quite a lot” 1.32% (N=2), the answer “A lot” 0.66% (N=1), and, finally, the response “Very much” received 3.31% (N=5).

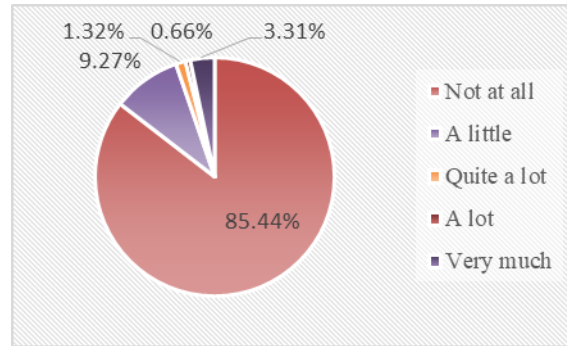


Figure 15. Students' Views on Corporal Punishment

6.15 Students' Views on School Disorder

A more equal distribution appears to be in students' responses to this question. The largest part of the graph pie was covered by the answer "Quite a lot" with a percentage of 37.75% (N=57). Then follows the answer "A lot" with a percentage of 20.53% (N=31). The responses "A little" with 15.89% (N=24) and "Very much" with 15.23% (N=23) were rated at similar levels. Finally, the answer "Not at all" received only 10.60% (N=16). In this specific question, "Does it bother you when there is a disorder in the classroom and, in general, in your school?", a statistically significant difference (p -value=0.004) was found between primary and secondary school students. Also, in this question, primary school students seem to be more disturbed when disorder prevails than secondary school students.

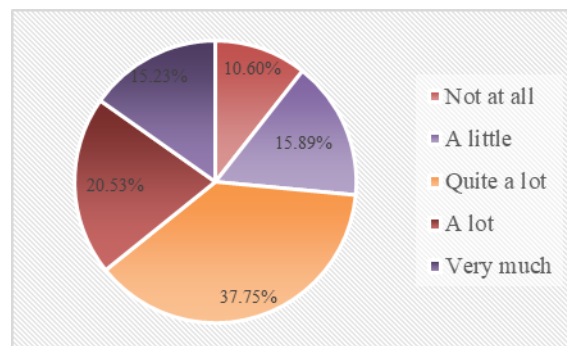


Figure 16. Students' Views on School Disorder

6.16 Students' Views on Cultivating Appropriate Behavior Skills at School

To this specific question, the students clearly showed their opinion by demonstrating that they are in favor of cultivating appropriate behavior skills at school. The most popular answer is "A lot" with a percentage of 39.07% (N=59), followed by the answer "Very much" with a percentage of 36.42% (N=55). The answer "Quite a lot" was rated with 19.21% (N=29). A very low rate was recorded in the answers "A little" with 4.64% (N=7) and "Not at all" with less than 1% (N=1).

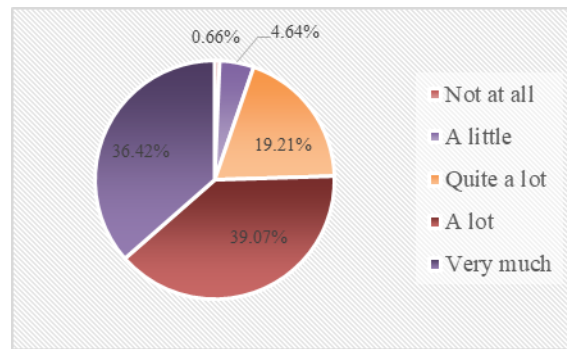


Figure 17. Students' Views on Cultivating Appropriate Behavior Skills at School

7. Discussion and Final Remarks

From the previous theoretical approach concerning the role of discipline in the educational process, the following have, comprehensibly, emerged: Completing the analysis of the issues concerning rules, discipline, and sanctions, it is found that their role has dual and decisive meaning in any institutionally organized group. On the one hand, discipline facilitates the educational process and, on the other hand, it educates and socializes the student to understand the role of the rules' application within the social coexistence and cohesion of society. It should be mentioned at this point that the Greek educational system was one of the few in the European Union that had no "internal regulations", which, for reasons of functional efficiency, are the product of cooperation between the state, the school, the parents, and the students. Most recently (Government Gazette 491/9.2.2021), the establishment and implementation of an internal regulation for the school functioning have been in action which is issued by the central political educational authority and has a unified character for all school units. We consider that the establishment and implementation of internal regulations, which will be based on the converging views of Pedagogical Science, as well as the specific characteristics of each school unit, will outline the rights, obligations, rules of behavior, and the consequences of their violation would limit or even prevent to a significant extent the cases of illegality, delinquency, vandalism and the destruction of public property in each school. At the same time, it will familiarize, in other words, educate and socialize, all participants in the functioning of the school unit and, in particular, the pupils, with the application of rules and legality.

Furthermore, it became apparent from our approach that the foundation of the teacher-student relationship is based on the principle of hierarchy, superior-inferior, which implies almost absolute authority for the teacher. The power and authority of the teacher are reinforced by the fact that the legislator does not define, except in great ambiguity, the rules to which the teacher has to adapt the use of his authority. For example, there are no lists that clearly describe the violations, misdemeanors, and penalties that correspond to them. In this sense, the educator is the bearer of three different types of authority, namely legislative, judicial and executive. Thus, it is at his "discretion" to define and conceive rules for the student's participation in the pedagogical relationship or to supplement their lack,

to interpret them, to comment on them whenever he decides it is necessary, to evaluate them, to supervise their application and, finally, to proceed with the “corresponding” penalties, if he considers it appropriate.

Consequently, the teacher’s influence on the student’s behavior is of decisive importance, because he is “equipped” with almost unlimited means of power. This almost absolute authority of the teacher towards the student is dictated, controlled, and evaluated by higher levels in the organizational-administrative hierarchy of the school, with the state as the leading authority, the educational policy of which the teacher himself is ultimately called upon to implement. Therefore, the way this power is exercised belongs to the teacher, who carries it out depending on his/her socializing background, his/her pedagogical and specialized training, and, in general, his/her personality. Nevertheless, the teacher is, also, influenced while exercising this particular authority by other, non-personal factors, such as the school’s operating conditions, i.e., principal, colleagues, material and technical infrastructure, cultural area, etc., the broader socio-cultural environment of the school, and the political, cultural, and social ideology that determines educational policy. The institutional and financial incentives offered to teachers in the performance of their work, also, play a key role in this direction.

It is demonstrated by this description that the student is at the bottom of the school hierarchy, “trapped” in an authoritarian framework, which is controlled by the teacher, who has the responsibility and power to determine, in his/her way, the kind and format of organization of the pedagogical communication-relationship. Therefore, it is the teacher’s responsibility to provide the student with the right to pursue the satisfaction of basic and important pedagogical demands related to his/her role, needs, and interests, the determination of the situation, the right to defend himself/herself, etc. These theoretical aspects and reflections were the points of reference in our research, seeking to elicit students’ views on these issues. Hence, by analyzing and interpreting, the overall findings of our research, it can be concluded that both the theoretical insights and the findings of the relevant research are confirmed to a very high extent. In particular, one of the main aims of the study was to elicit the views of primary and secondary school students regarding the role of discipline and, the implementation of rules in school.

By analyzing the outcomes of the survey, firstly, it is found that the vast majority of students (83.44%), clearly, define the concept of discipline, as it was presented in the theoretical part of our study. This is considered an important factor for the school to support students’ behavior on a healthy basis during their time at school. This is reinforced by the students’ response about the necessity of discipline to facilitate the educational process. Adding up the ratings of “Very much”, “A lot” and “Quite a lot” results in a vast majority of 94.70%, which is not subjected to any misinterpretation in terms of the clarity of the students’ views. In this question, primary school students were differentiated, showing more “sensitivity” and “social solidarity” to the necessity of discipline, in order not to obstruct the teaching. Also, students sent a clear message concerning the school and especially the teacher’s

administration of discipline. The cumulative percentage of “Very much”, “A lot” and “Quite a lot” ratings of 98.67% is, in any case, both overwhelming and unquestionable. Students “demand” that the school shows its pedagogical face towards the pupil and the educational processes. However, based on their responses to the next question, which is about punishment in the case of indiscipline, it appears that students seem to be unaware of the pedagogical and social triad of “rule-breach-penalty”. Thus, by adding up the scores of the answers “A little” and “Not at all”, a very significant percentage of 55.63% appears, which indicates that students do not accept punishment as a means of educational “compliance”. A possible interpretation of this parameter is that students associate punishment with strict measures that bring physical and psychological consequences for themselves, while we know that pedagogical science proposes other and different pedagogical means and practices, for these cases.

The next finding confirms a general pedagogical principle, which plays a crucial role in pedagogical communication and the relationship between the teacher and the students and which has been highlighted in the theoretical part. In particular, Pedagogical Science, firmly, argues that the way the teacher organizes pedagogical communication and relationship has a decisive impact on the student’s behavior. Thus, by summing up the ratings of “Very much”, “A lot” and “Quite a lot”, an impressive majority of 92.06% is derived. Consequently, students are, undoubtedly, affected to a decisive degree, in the issue of discipline by the behavior of the teacher. This practically signifies that the teacher is obliged to convince the student that he or she applies pedagogical principles within their communication.

The next finding is remarkable because it highlights the responsibility and maturity of students. More precisely, when asked about their responsibility on the issue of discipline, students expressed the opinion that they are responsible for it with a percentage of 64.91%, which results from the accumulation of the ratings “Very much”, “A lot” and “Quite a lot”. In this question, primary school students’ opinions differed again, showing more “sensitivity” and “responsibility” in taking over the responsibility for their own behavior. This fact constitutes a pedagogical ground of cooperation between the teacher and the students, even in matters that are practically complex and difficult in education and socialization. From our perspective, the next finding relates to the students’ experiences within both their families and the wider social environment. More specifically, concerning the question about the teacher’s strictness in discipline, an impressive percentage of 39.07% claim that they want the teacher to be strict in the matter of discipline. The interpretation of this aspect is, at least, controversial. By “strictness”, we presume that the students imply the teacher’s consistency in the principles of orderliness or taking strict measures for its implementation so as to confirm their previous opinion that discipline is necessary for the educational process.

The following observation is considered to be of high pedagogical value since it confirms the concepts of Pedagogical Science mentioned in the theoretical part. Especially, for the question regarding students’ participation in the rules-setting, the vast majority of them (92.71%), which is total ratings for “Very much”, “A lot” and “Quite a lot”, answered that they would like to participate in the formation

of the rules. In this sense, it becomes apparent that the student, through his/her involvement, is educated to be or become more responsible in aspects that are within his responsibilities, i.e., to apply in practice the pedagogical rules that socialize him/her to take responsibility in important social proceedings of everyday life, and thus contributing to the cohesion of the immediate and wider social network. In addition, this process concerns the development of democratic awareness in the student, as well. Confirmatory to our arguments is the finding on the question of whether the rules are better-applied when students have been involved in their formation. The great majority of students, at a rate of 90.07% (sum of ratings “Very much”, “a lot” and “quite a lot”), answered that the outcome of the implementation of discipline rules will take a positive context if they are involved in their formation. Yet, there is also a percentage of students (37.02%) who want the rules to be set by the teacher, a score that represents the sum of the “Very much”, “A lot” and “Quite a lot” ratings and which contradicts, to a small extent, the previous relevant finding. To this question, it is again observed a differentiation among primary school students, who stated, more emphatically, that it is preferred the rules be set by the teacher. Possibly this way, the students feel more secure, however, they confirm the dominance of the teacher in an established and more “teacher-centered” educational process.

The following evidence is linked to our previous interpretation, according to which the student’s behavior on the issue of strictness and orderliness is correlated with his/her experiences in his/her family and the broader environment. To be more specific, the students were asked whether they consider expulsion from school as an appropriate punishment measure in high school, and almost half of them, 52.72% (sum of “A little” and “Not at all” scores), answered that they approve it to an “a little-short” and “zero to no” extent. In this case, however, they may, also, associate it with the consequences of their absence from the learning process, as well as with their personal social orientations and aspirations. Regarding the question of whether this measure -concerning the expulsion of pupils from school- should, also, be applied to primary school, the majority of 66.89% (sum of “A little” and “Not at all” ratings) gave a negative answer. This confirms our interpretation above, according to which expulsion from school deprives students of educational benefits or distracts them from achieving their personal goals. Afterward, students were asked whether they considered corporal punishment (e.g., ear pulling, slapping, etc.) as a means of discipline. The vast majority of students (85.43%) answered that they do not prefer corporal punishment “At all”, while there is a percentage of 5.29% (sum of “Very much”, “A lot” and “Quite a lot”) who are in favor of it. We speculate that in the case of affirmation, these are students who are either familiar with it or perceive it as an effective disciplinary measure. Regarding the question concerning disorder (“Does it bother you when there is a disorder in the classroom and, in general, in your school?”), the vast majority of students 73.51% (sum of “Very much”, “A lot” and “Quite a lot” ratings) answered that they do not want it. Upon this question, primary school students differed, claiming more strongly that classroom disorder bothers them. Perhaps, by being annoyed at the disorder they send the message that they respect the school rules and want to focus more on the learning process. Apparently, the disorder is a factor of annoyance

for them during lessons. However, there is a not negligible percentage of students who are not annoyed, expressing this way either impulsive spontaneity, familiarity, or indifference to this issue.

In the last question, regarding the cultivation of good behavior skills at school, the vast majority of students, 94.70% (sum of “Very much”, “A lot” and “quite a lot”), agree with the implementation of this pedagogical measure. This pedagogical parameter is a finding directly related to the basic pedagogical orientations and aspirations of the school and should be used appropriately by educational policymakers. The students with their explicit views underline the need for the school to highlight and apply in its educational and socialization processes the reinforcement and enhancement of skills that contribute to the development of the student’s social behavior, which is essential for the proper and effective functioning of the social system.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that, in any case, the application of discipline and, more generally, of legality in social life is a very challenging and demanding school and social issue and, of course, a fundamental purpose of the school, which aims, through education and socialization, at familiarizing the student with social values such as respect for fellow human beings, respect for the natural and social environment, respect for culture, respect for public and private property and respect for the institutions of a democratic society.

This implies that, on the one hand, the school is necessary to be pedagogically well-organized and with advantageous educational operating conditions, and on the other hand, the teacher needs to be equipped with the required scientific, pedagogical, economic, and social assets to perform his/her role in an effective way.

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