
Gender and misbehaviour perceptions in physical education classes

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Introduction

Underlining the importance to study indiscipline behaviour management in physical education classes, Perron and Downey [1] suggest the need to analyse the impact of fundamental variables such as the characteristics of teachers and students and the teaching methods. Students' and teacher's gender is a variable that can affect misbehaviour perceptions, namely in the severity of misbehaviours and in the appropriate reactions, or control procedures, for these misbehaviours.

The behaviours that the teacher have to prevent and dissuade the students' indiscipline behaviour, is a reaction to misbehaviours, focusing on correction, and it must be studied in detail [2]. Together with the adoption of preventive measures for the solving of indiscipline problems, it is important to consider in what measure the teacher perceives the severity of misbehaviours and the adequacy of the control procedures that were adopted. In fact, misbehaviours are frequently pointed out as a cause for boredom and frustration [3], for teachers' stress [4], for worrying and a waste of energy for most of the teachers, namely, those who are in the beginning of their career [5, 6, 7]. It is, also, a factor that provokes a premature dropout in the profession [8]. It seems, also, that female teachers feel this impact in a deeper extension.

Various authors attribute a critical importance to the nature of the reaction [9, 10, 11, 12], calling special attention to imposed inappropriate punishments for the trivial indiscipline behaviours [11]. On the other hand, the students are capable of recognizing and valuing the different kinds of misbehaviours' severity and the more effective way to react to them considering their own perception about misbehaviour regulation. Students' and teachers' views must be compared because a significantly different perception can be considered as a serious problem in the communication process and in the

pedagogic relationship, which is by itself a complex and dynamic relationship, of order and contradiction, of understanding and misunderstanding.

The aim of the present study was to identify the teachers and students perceptions about misbehaviours' severity and the corresponding control procedures taking into account students' and teachers' gender.

Material and Methods

The subjects were 120 students (58 girls and 62 boys from junior and senior schools) and 40 physical education teachers (20 women and 20 men). The selection of the teachers was confined to public junior and senior schools in urban and suburban areas in the Lisbon district; those which presented similar characteristics and rules, including spatial and material conditions for the physical education class, and where the board of directors authorized the teachers' participation. The physical education teachers and the students accepted voluntarily to participate in the study.

Data gathering was obtained through a questionnaire with two sessions: (1) Eighteen current misbehaviours were classified according to their severity perception with a Likert like questionnaire applied to teachers and students, (2) participants declared the kind of misbehaviour reaction they felt more appropriate to deal with each misbehaviour. Fifteen teachers' current reactions were analysed. An independent specialist validation process, with three judges, was undertaken to assure the validity of the instrument. We used descriptive statistics and Anova One-Way calculations as well as X^2 .

Results

Gender influence of students' perception of misbehaviour gravity and adequate reactions

As we can see in table 1, female students perceived a higher severity of the following misbehaviours: "Disturbing other students activity", "Aggression to colleagues", "Interrupting the teacher", "Insulting, pronouncing obscenities and obscene gestures to colleagues", "Threatening colleagues", "Insulting, pronouncing obscenities and obscene gestures to teachers", and "Threatening the teachers" and "Teacher aggression".

We studied the teachers' reactions that were more expected by the students. In this ambit we verified that there were significant differences in the responses to the

Table 1. Comparative results of students' perception of misbehaviour gravity related with student gender.

MISBEHAVIOURS	Average		Stand.dev		T		SIG.	
	Female.	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Interrupting the teacher	3,08	2,73	0,54	0,78	2,78	2,78	0,01	0,01
Perturbing other students activity	3,01	2,79	0,54	0,63	2,08	2,08	0,04	0,04
Insulting the colleagues	3,49	3,2q	0,61	0,79	2,22	2,22	0,03	0,03
Threatening colleagues	3,51	3,16	0,64	0,99	2,28	2,28	0,03	0,03
Aggression to colleagues	3,76	3,43	0,429	0,93	2,36	2,36	0,02	0,02
Insulting the Teacher	3,80	3,54	0,40	0,80	2,16	2,16	0,03	0,03
Threatening the teachers	3,88	3,59	0,33	0,80	2,54	2,54	0,01	0,01
Teacher aggression	3,94	3,74	0,24	0,76	1,89	1,89	0,07	0,07

behaviours such as “Enter the classroom without authorisation”; “Deviate from the task”; and “Disturb the activity/colleagues’ task”. When referring to the “Enter the classroom without authorisation” behaviour, the boys prefer that the teachers respond with “remember the conduct rule”, whereas the girls prefer the “criticise the behaviour” response (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparative results in the teachers' reaction perception for the “Enter the classroom without authorisation” behaviour, in relation to the students' gender.

“ENTER THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT AUTHORISATION” BEHAVIOR	Value	STUDENTS				
		FEMALE			MALE	
		Expected Value	Adjusted Residual	Value	Expected Value	Adjusted Residual
Remember the conduct rule	4	8,5	-2,6	12	7,5	2,6
Criticise the behaviour	13	8,0	2,9	2	7,0	-2,9

In the reaction to the “Deviate from the task” behaviour, both the boys and the girls considered the teachers' reaction “give the order to leave the classroom” (table 3). However, the girls demonstrate expectations for more severe reactions by the teachers, in so far as the values of the “criticise the behaviour” are superior to the expected for this group.

In the “Disturb the activity/colleagues’ task” behaviour, the students of both genders considered that the most adequate response by the teacher was “to mark a disciplinary foul” (table 4). However, the boys presented a more superior value than expected, which means that they accept more severity from the teachers in their reaction to this behaviour. Freire [13] did not verify differences in relation to the gender, but he

Table 3. Comparative results in the teachers' reaction perception for the "Deviate from the task" behaviour, in relation to the students' gender.

"DEVIATE FROM THE TASK" BEHAVIOUR	Value	STUDENTS				
		FEMALE		MALE		
		Expected Value	Adjusted Residual	Value	Expected Value	Adjusted Residual
Give the order to leave the classroom	1	4,5	2,6	7	3,5	2,6

realised that the students, in general, refused the excessive severity and indulgence, preferring the teacher's control and firmness, joined with ways of encouragement and persuasive dialogue.

Table 4. Comparative results in the teachers' reaction perception for the "Disturb the activity/colleagues' task" behaviour, in relation to the students' gender.

"DISTURB THE ACTIVITY/COLLEAGUES' TASK" BEHAVIOUR	Value	STUDENTS				
		FEMALE		MALE		
		Expected Value	Adjusted Residual	Value	Expected Value	Adjusted Residual
Mark a disciplinary foul	2	6,1	-2,8	8	3,9	2,8

Influence of teachers' gender on the perception of misbehaviour gravity and adequate reactions

We studied the degree of perceived gravity in each of the 18 behaviours that were considered, in relation to the teachers' genders. Conceptions about severity of misbehaviours are very similar between female and male teachers. Only in one behaviour, "Disturb the activity/colleagues' task", did we verify that there were significant differences, having the female teachers a higher degree of severity (table 5).

Table 5. Comparative results in the perception of the gravity in the students' behaviour "disturb the activity/colleagues task", in relation to the teachers' gender.

GENDER	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	SIG
FEMALE	3,45	0,52	2,14	0,04
MALE	3,03	0,57	2,14	0,04

When we compare the gender variable in relation to the reactions understood as more adequate, we verify that there are only significant differences in the "Not bringing necessary material" and "Assaulting the colleagues" behaviour responses.

In the “Not bringing necessary material” behaviour, the differences were verified in the two conjugated and perceived reactions as the most appropriate answers to be used in this behaviour, which were “warn/advise the student” and “mark lack of material” (table 6). In the “Assaulting colleagues” behaviour, two conjugated reactions were also found: “mark a disciplinary foul” and “Inform the Class Director or Board of Directors” (table 7).

Table 6. Comparative results in the teachers’ reaction perception for the “Not bringing necessary material” behaviour, in relation to the teachers’ gender.

“NOT BRINGING NECESSARY MATERIAL” BEHAVIOUR	TEACHERS					
	Value	FEMALE		Value	MALE	
		Expected Value	Adjusted Residual		Expected Value	Adjusted Residual
Warn/advise student and mark lack of material	8	4,3	3,1	6	9,7	-3,1

In both behaviours the female teachers are the ones that present higher values than expected, which means that the female teachers are more severe in the reactions to the “assaulting colleagues” and “not bringing necessary material” behaviours (table 7). This outcome concludes that the teacher’s response to the students’ indiscipline behaviour might vary in relation to the gender. Other studies corroborate the results found in the present study. Amado [14] showed that the female teachers present a superior number of disciplinary reports and Gonçalves [15] verified that the female teachers resorted more to the behaviour modification (65,6%) and to punishment (2,8%), than the male teachers (55,5% and 0,7%, respectively). The female teachers also presented higher values in the “not marking” (35,2%) and “criticising” (21,4%) categories, than the male teachers (33,6% and 14,3%, respectively).

Table 7. Comparative results for the teachers’ reactions to the students’ “Assaulting colleagues” behaviour, in relation to the teachers’ gender.

“ASSAULTING COLLEAGUES” BEHAVIOUR	TEACHERS					
	Value	TEACHERS		Value	MALE	
		Expected value	Adjusted Residual		Expected Value	Adjusted Residual
Mark disciplinary foul and inform the Class Director and the Board of Directors	3	1,2	2,3	1	2,8	-2,3

Conclusions

The groups of students differ, significantly, in the perception of the severity of the misbehaviours. Female students seem to regard misbehaviours as more severe, with only one exception. On the other hand, teachers do not significantly distinguish themselves in the perceptions about severity. Only one significant difference was found. This difference shows, however, that female teachers regarded misbehaviour as more severe than male teachers. We conclude that females perceived misbehaviours with higher severity than males. The results regarding the reaction behaviours are less homogeneous. Indeed, male and female students' perception of the adequate reaction is not very different; some significant differences show that male students accept easily more severe reactions than female students.

There was only one difference between the severity perception between male and female teachers. This severity perception comes with a more severe perceiving of the adequate reaction to misbehaviours and with a higher acceptance level of more severe control procedures by female teachers. They were expecting a more controlled environment and a more severe misbehaviour regulation. Female teachers seem to value a more ordered class environment.

Results showed that students' and teachers' gender has an influence on the perception of misbehaviour severity and in regulation procedures. Having conscience of those differences is a key requisite for a good class management and a basis for teacher reflection and education. The functional relationship between indiscipline behaviour and control behaviours should be studied in a more fine and articulated form.

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