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Encountered Disciplinary Problems in Elementary Schools
Of a Low Socioeconomically Status District

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to determine the most frequently encountered disciplinary problems, reveal disciplinary punishment frequency due to students’ these disciplinary problems, and present the relationship between families and their undisciplined students in the elementary schools to be situated in a low socioeconomically status district. The sample of this study consists of 554 teachers composing of 308 women and 246 men who worked 2010-2011 academic year in 55 elementary schools to be situated in a low socioeconomically status district of Istanbul. According to the results of the research, it is seen that disciplinary problems decrease when family interest increases, senior teachers and male teachers encounter with less disciplinary problems in comparison with junior teachers and female teachers, there are similar disciplinary problems of both first and second stages, besides dress and bad language problems are incorporated into them. It is seen that contrary to expectations, walking around in the classroom, making noise, interrupting and talking without permission problems have appeared above the average as class levels rise in upper classes.

Keywords: Discipline, family, teacher, student, education

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1. Introduction

Discipline is one of the most important parts of education, thus new generation knows, and learns their responsibilities; their bounds for social peace; where and how to behave with their own free will. Schools should always revise, renew and educate themselves because discipline is a process to be always continued due to security reasons and educational objectives (Garman& Walker, 2010). Discipline states all kinds of measures providing a common unity to live in safety (Sarıtaş, 2003; Sadık, 2006). It is necessary to show consistent and decisive behaviors in order to prevent negative behaviors (Erdoğan, 2010). According to Frau and others (1993), the main reason of discipline’s negative connotation is that teachers and school management are only interested in its punishment dimension and most References sanctions are related with imposing punishments. The aim of discipline is not to force students to obey the rules imprudently but to help them control themselves, and gain them educatory, regular, proper behaviors, and perfection and bring them up. Necessary freedom should be acknowledged individuals to gain their own identity and make them compatible and successful; and an adoring supervision environment should be provided for individuals to be able to find the true path, and learn social rules (Cited by: Gökhan, 2007). We shouldn’t forget that successful discipline’s main aim is to reinforce positive behaviors and prevent possible undisciplined behaviors before they emerge.

2. The Role of Teacher in Discipline

Teacher is one of the most important factors in discipline; teachers should pay attention to students’ psychological and physical health in classroom discipline (Aydın, 2006). School management, family, environment, briefly each individual in society should be aware of the importance level of discipline separately and completely and it’s supposed to be helped teachers so that they can perform their duties successfully (Brown & Beckett, 2006; Özdemir & Yalın & Sezgin, 2004; İlgar, 2007).

Teachers should provide in-class discipline in order to reach their goals in educational activities. Teachers should follow students’ development, abilities, and capabilities well; establish a good communication with their parents; and recognize them closely (Sirkeci, 2010).

Recent searches have indicated that there is a meaningful relation between school discipline and academic success. If disciplinary rules aren’t applied consistently, disciplinary problems may increase, and incite nuisances, so students can be encouraged to make aforementioned behaviors and applications concerned with discipline may damage students’ relation with school (Cameron & Sheppard, 2006). The purpose of disciplinary rules is to endear school to students and have students apprehend why the rules are necessary.

3. Possible Unwanted Behaviors in School/Class Environment

The criterion of unwanted or terminal behaviors is features of treater, behavior, other people, and environment; enacted and unenacted rules of society; and individual judgments. Every kind of behavior, which hampers educational efforts in the schools, is called “unwanted behavior”. Their negative effects are variable. From this point of view, they are ranged from “nondestructive” to “too destructive”. Some of unwanted behaviors take most effect on the person who performs these behaviors, but they also badly affect teachers, class and lesson. Moreover, some unwanted behaviors harm school and family seriously. Unwanted behaviors in class spoil classroom organization and actions; block reaching goals; and especially cause waste of time. Teachers often encounter with disciplinary problems. Certainly, teachers may sometimes cause them by themselves, too, but these problems may have more complicated reasons; we can add them the problems arisen from society, family or school management (Edwards, 2007; Başar, 2008).

On the one hand discipline should prevent unwanted attitudes and behaviors, but on the other hand it should create a necessary environment where students will develop in every respect ( Özmen & Tonbul, 2010). There isn’t a ready receipt for each disciplinary problem. Besides, every situation must be evaluated in terms of student’s age and conditions. Consequently, management of unwanted behaviors is complexified more. The priority which behavior management strategy is chosen to change negative
behavior; and carries out successful socialization must specify how students behave in classroom environment and the reasons why they behave so. Because removing unwanted behaviors and preventing their emergence won’t be possible unless potential factors, which cause these negative behaviors, are removed (Başar, 2008; Özyürek, 2001; Weber, 1986; Brophy, 1988; Sadık, 2006).

In reality, there are so many reasons of unwanted behaviors and they are generally complicated and one within the other situations. Primary reasons of unwanted behaviors of students are viewed as schools, teachers and families. Classes may be too crowded, curriculum may not be suitable for students, assignments may not arouse interest, teachers may always complain and be devoid of sense of humor, families may not be interested in their children’s education or children may bring their familial problems into classes in the schools. All of these factors cause unwanted behaviors of students to display (Baron, 1992. Cited by: Dağlı & Baysal, 2010).

4. Coping with Undisciplinary and Unwanted Behaviors

It is known that only punishment isn’t an effective way to dissuade people from a behavior. It is monitored that if students’ unwanted or unacceptable behaviors are only tried to be removed with punishment, these students who are prone to violence do their best not to be arrested and to be escape from punishment; when they are punished they try to revenge themselves on school angrily. Also, if we try to stop students forcibly we convey a message to them that “If you’re strong, you’re obeyed.” and “He who has strength is the ruler.”, so we reinforce these kinds of beliefs (Pişkin & Öğülmüş & Boysan, 2011). If punishment doesn’t change the behavior in a desired way; on the contrary, if it supports negative behavior, the first thing to be done is to help students avoid behaviors of their own free will which necessitates punishment at all costs.

Studies have indicated that motivational techniques, punishment and rewarding carried out in classes and in the schools aren’t enough. While school/class rules are being determined social relations should be strengthened, classroom size should absolutely be reduced, a good communication environment should be established, guidance and counseling service in the schools should be improved, you should be merciful and patient to correct unwanted behaviors, parents should be informed in order to apply the rules more easily and school should be aligned with family more (Gökhan, 2007). It is useful to take headmasters’, supervisors’, and families’ opinions together with students while rules are being determined. In addition to them, the features of school and environment, school administration’s preferred subjects, and students’ requirements should be considered (Çiftçi, 2008).

Family and school who try to create terminal behavior changes want to raise a good person who obeys the rules of society. Therefore, a certain order is necessary for it. This order is based on affection, and if it aims for child’s future, a healthy society’s base can be established. Loved and respected child loves and respects others and constitute base of the order during early development years (Yavuzer, 1997).

5. The Importance of Family-School Cooperation in Discipline

Making contact with families can be a good opportunity to inform them about problems and train them confinedly. Conversations with families show school’s sensibility about students’ negative behaviors and enable information exchange between family and school about the event’s dimension realization (Pişkin & Öğülmüş & Boysan, 2011).

Although families have a great effect and importance on school discipline, they are less focal point in the studies related with discipline in comparison to students and teachers. Shaw and Scott (1991) have studied on the relation between discipline practices in families and children’s problematical behaviors. The results have shown that there is a relation between sense of discipline at home and children’s problematical behaviors.

It has been found that students who are rarely controlled by their families show less problematical behaviors (Gottfredson, 1986).
Students who have close relations with their families’ teacher are prone to show more constructive behaviors. When families feel good things about their children’s teachers and school, children incline to show expected appropriate school behaviors (Celep, 2004).

One of cyclical and controlled important variables of student behaviors is family. Education begins with family. Basic behaviors of personality structure considerably are acquired in the family. It is too difficult to change them later. Lazy-hardworking, truthful-liar, shy-sociable, selfish-generous and similar situations’ acquisition begin with family, develop, and mostly strengthen. It’s difficult to change them for school, hence family plays a very important role in child’s socialization and first core of child’s unwanted behaviors’ resources is formed within the family (Başar, 2008).

Firstly society and family should be made safe in order to make safe school. Safe school is the school where everybody has a positive communication with each other, and it’s open to personal development. In other words, it’s a place where student and personnel live in peace, any groups don’t act superior to others, everybody respects each other, and there is a positive interaction among teachers, students, managers, personnel and visitors (Bucher & Manning, 2005). Experiences gained from family and group of friends will affect school life of student (Tarcan, 2007).

Differences of families in discipline and education understanding shape children’s interest towards educational life. While some parents are interested in their children’s education more closely, some others never come to school until their children are graduated from school (Çelik, 2009). Discipline based on using of force within the families includes depriving children of their fundamental right; applying corporal punishment; threatening; mocking; not exhibiting love; paying no attention to child; separating them from their brothers or sisters. These practices have a strong influence on children (Sadık, 2006). According to researches, children of helicopter families cause more problems in the schools because these kinds of children have difficulties in controlling by themselves and showing expected behaviors at school (Quesada, 1983). Low socioeconomic level of family may cause student’s unwanted behaviors to show (Burden, 1995; Türünkül & Galton 2001; Dağlı & Baysal, 2010). Especially, children in crowded families having insufficient financial income aren’t fed enough; also they are worked by their families as financial contribution to income. This situation alienates children from school. For these reasons, teachers and school administrators express that families are responsible for students’ unwanted behaviors (Porter, 2007; Edwards, 2007; Dağlı & Baysal, 2010).

Social norms deeply affect family members’ behaviors and relations, namely that social norms are always together with family life (Huntington, 2010) and therefore school rules will be the arbiter in the relation of students with their families.

Parents’ support should be planned well for disciplinary effort, and family education programmes should be arranged. Parents may be insufficient about discipline. Instead of criticizing parents because of this situation, schools should educate them. Teachers as a domain expert in disciplinary practices should create solutions relying on academic data; they should persuade parents of reasons (Cemaloğlu, 2007).

It is necessary to establish communication channels between school and house as from the first days of school. Children who must obey some definite rules accept other rules easily outdoor. Therefore, making in contact with parents are quietly crucial to apply the rules. Some parents may think that rules are silly and unnecessary. It is useful to speak with them about these subjects (Yüksel, 2011).

Cooperation with parents should be established as from first days of school, and parents should be informed about parents-students communication and interaction out of school education. While participation of families is being provided into school disciplinary practices, the most important considered subject is families’ subjectivity to their children. School administrators and teachers should cope with this situation (Cemaloğlu, 2007).

We can give that information about being searched on population with its family, teacher, student and general environment in studying area: Parents’ financial income is usually at the minimum of subsistence
or lower. Most of parents are the families emigrated from different parts of Anatolia because of economic problems. Some students live in heavy living conditions (in the basement, in the dampish rooms, with a crowded family in a very small house etc.) Parents can’t join into parents’ meeting adequately. Schools don’t have enough infrastructures for a healthy education. Most schools even don’t have a garden where students will be able to spend their time at breaks. Classroom sizes are too crowded. Different teachers apply different rules in classrooms. First appointed inexperienced teachers or paid teachers instead of senior teachers work in these schools. Schoolteachers constantly change, so teachers and students can’t be attuned to each other completely.

6. Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this research is to determine the most frequently encountered disciplinary problems, reveal disciplinary punishment frequency due to students’ these disciplinary problems, and present the relationship between families and their undisciplined students in the primary schools to be situated in a low socioeconomically status district. So it is sought answers to the following questions:

6.1. Problem statement: What are the most encountered disciplinary problems in the primary schools of Istanbul Province Bağcılar District? Is there a meaningful difference among gender of teachers, class level of students, and level of parental interest towards children with disciplinary problems?

6.2. Sub-Problems

1. In the primary schools;
   a. What are the most frequently encountered disciplinary problems?
   b. What are the disciplinary problems causing punishment too often?
   c. Is there a meaningful relation between disciplinary problems and seniority of teachers?
   d. Is there a meaningful relation between disciplinary problems and parental interest?

7. Method

7.1. Pattern
This research is a descriptive study in the relational pattern which aims to determine most frequently encountered disciplinary problems of primary school teachers in the schools/classes, undisciplined students’ perceptions about their families, students’ punishment frequency when disciplinary problems have been encountered.

7.2. Population and Sample
The sample of this study consists of 554 official teachers composing of 308 women and 246 men who were chosen from 55 elementary schools of the Ministry of National Education to be situated in a low socioeconomically status district of Istanbul in 2010-2011 academic year.

7.3. Data Collection Tool
As a data collection tool, a likert scale involving 32 disciplinary problems which include the probable encountered disciplinary problems in the schools/classes by teachers; specify punishment frequency of students related with these problems; determine degree of relation causing difficulties between family and student has been made and applied to teachers. SPSS packaged software is used for analysis of data.

8. Findings
Respondents who participate in this research are 55.6% women and 44.4% men. It has been seen that only 20% respondents have ten-years or more experience in teaching. 54.3% respondents are the teachers who teach 6th, 7th and 6th grade students, and others are classroom teachers for smaller ones. It is conceivable as the reasons why senior teachers are in the limited number that the population of the research is at a low socioeconomically status district; appointment procedure has based on seniority; and senior teachers have preferred high socioeconomically districts because they may think of dealing with their jobs more comfortably.
8.1. Most Frequently Encountered Problems in Classes

Table 1 – Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>1.2.3. Classes</th>
<th>4.5. Classes</th>
<th>6.7.8. Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>sd</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wandering in class</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making nose</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking without permission</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrupting</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not doing homework</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of materials</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not participating in the lesson</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irresponsibility</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Littering</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=103  n=150  n=301

According to the chart, the most frequently encountered (X>2.50) classroom management problems are similar in almost all classes of primary school such as interrupting, speaking without permission, not doing homework, wandering in the class, littering, lack of materials, not participating in the lesson adequately. It has been seen in the chart that appearance problem has been added to the problems at 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. The varying problem at 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades is “not to fulfill responsibilities”. It seems that when it has been regarded the smallness of classes, this situation may be acceptable; however, lack of parental interest may be a reason of this condition. Lack of classroom materials, not doing homework, and appearance problem encountered at upper classes may result from lack of parental interest, too. It is thought that some problems can be solved when parental interest increases. It is seen that the problems, which are anticipated, to decrease while class level is increasing are on the rise on the contrary.

8.1.1. Most frequently punished problems

Table 2 – Most frequently punished problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>1.2.3. Classes</th>
<th>4.5. Classes</th>
<th>6.7.8. Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>sd</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making noise</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not doing homework</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irresponsibility</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking without permission</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers frequently punish the students who don’t do their homework; speak without permission; and don’t fulfill their responsibilities. “Using rude words” behavior is one of the most frequently punished behaviors at 6th, 7th and 8th grades.

Table 3 – Disciplinary action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punishment</th>
<th>Parental interest</th>
<th>Seniority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Action</td>
<td>.439**</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When viewed the chart, it is seen that there is a meaningful relation (P<.05) between crime and punishment. It is found that there is a negative and meaningful (P<.05) relation among parental interest, seniority and disciplinary problems. While parental interest is decreasing the problems in classes, less classroom management problems happen in the classes of senior teachers. It is thought that this situation is arisen from improvement in classroom management skills of senior teachers year after year, so classroom management problems increase more and more in the low socioeconomically areas in which senior teachers don’t prefer working much.

Table 4 – Disciplinary reaction differences between genders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Woman</th>
<th>Man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>88.00</td>
<td>86.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sd</td>
<td>23.94</td>
<td>20.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sem</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the chart, female teachers have more difficulty in classroom management than male teachers (p<.05), and they punish students more often. The gender of teachers doesn’t cause a meaningful difference in terms of parental interest towards their children (p>.05). This situation is interpretable that male teachers create a more deferent factor, especially for upper classes.

Table 5 – Parental interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Interest</th>
<th>ANOVA</th>
<th>Subset for α= 0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sum of Sq</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>13919,62</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>261632,98</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>275552,61</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the chart, parental interest towards student is decreasing while student is moving up an upper class (p<.05). When children just start school, families are more enthusiastic and interested, but when children are grown up, parental interest decreases, hence responsibility of teacher and school is on the increase. Parental interest may be decrease because subjects widen more and enter into details; and
families can’t help children in their lesson any more. Families may show avoidance behavior because they don’t support their own children with private teaching institutions or a private teacher in the low socioeconomically areas or some families may plan their children to run anywhere in order to be contributed family budget, so both children and families can’t allocate enough time for lessons and school.

9. Conclusion
According to the research findings, there are disciplinary problems related with classroom management in almost all levels, they are similar and the most frequently encountered ones are these: interrupting, speaking without permission, not doing homework, wandering in class, littering, lack of materials, not participating in the lesson. While class-level is rising, problems are accreting, too, contrary to what is anticipated. Appearance and using rude words are some examples of classroom management problems when class-level rises.

Parental interest has classroom management problems decreased, but advancement in class-level induces difficulty in subjects, and lessons, so parental interest has decreased. The students who have a low financial income are less successful than other students, and consequently these students get lower points from the exams being required superb performance. This situation induces loss of motivation in both students and teachers, and so some teachers and students may not be follow lessons any more. Immigration, absence, nonhomogeneous classes, etc. hinder increase of academic success. At the same time, all of these conditions have negative effects on classroom management.

Experienced teachers have classroom management problems decreased, but these teachers would rather work at more equipped schools in every respect, and these schools are generally in high socioeconomically status districts. While senior teachers are working in high socioeconomically district, junior ones are working in low socioeconomically status district, because seniority is an important element in teacher appointments, so classroom management problems are going to continue.

In conclusion, if it isn’t taken any precautions, it is considered that classroom management problems in low socioeconomically districts are going to continue increasingly even in basic cases such as speaking without permission, littering, etc.

References


