

AN ANALYSIS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' MISBEHAVIORS AND THE PUNISHMENTS GIVEN (THE CASE OF DIYARBAKIR PROVINCE)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the misbehaviors observed in high school students, and the punishments given in the context of Diyarbakır province sample. The study has been conducted based on the discipline records of five schools in Diyarbakır central province and three schools in its towns, the discipline records belonged to the academic period between 1990–2000. The data, which consist of a total number of 1293 registered disciplinary cases, have been analyzed with descriptive statistics techniques such as percentage and frequency. The following results have been obtained through the analysis of the data: The misbehaviors that are observed most are listed respectively as: disturbance during classes or exams, smoking or carrying cigarettes, disrespectfulness toward teachers, fighting, insulting and molesting, boycotting classes and organizational crimes. And the punishments given to these misbehaviors most are short-term suspension, warning, condemnation, warning and condemnation and expulsion. It is suggested in the study that these punishments given to students have a cultural context, and bear traces from the traditional educational understanding.

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1. Introduction

One of the biggest obstacles preventing the formal education provided at schools from reaching its objectives is student misbehavior. So, student misbehavior is one of the primary problems to be faced for efficient schools. Student misbehaviors, which threaten the objectives and safety of schools and hinder classroom management are a major source of anxiety and stress for both teachers and students.

Student misbehaviors are defined as “behaviors which negatively affect instruction and learning and prevent or hinder achievement” (Şarpkaya, 2007) and “behaviors’ affecting learning in classroom and performed by students intentionally or unintentionally” (Sağnak, 2007). According to Alkan’s (2007) citation from different authors (Feldhusen, 1978; Shrigley, 1979; Karib, 2002), misbehaviors include all types of physical and psychological behaviors that do not comply with the rules of school and classroom and prevent instructional activities. While Öztürk (2002) categorizes misbehaviors in terms of academic, social and physical respects, Charles defined misbehaviors in five distinct types. These are; aggressiveness, immorality, challenging, disturbing the class and avoiding responsibility. Misbehaviors can both threaten the instruction and learning process and “affect negatively the physical and psychological development of children” (Ayas and Pişkin, 2011: 562). In this respect, it is important to prevent student misbehaviors at school in order for the school and education to reach their aim. In preventing misbehaviors, the discipline approach of schools has a considerable role (Çiftçi, 2008).

Discipline means all the educational and social harmony and arrangements in accordance with the objectives of the curriculum (Güçlü, 2004 as cited in Öktem, 2002). In other words, discipline is the precautions to be taken and rules to reach the desired aim. However, the traditional understanding of discipline restricted to providing and maintaining order at school (Çiftçi, 2008 as cited in Onur, 1976) shouldn’t be expected to be influential. Such an understanding based on obeying the rules and punishing the ones who don’t do this has a low chance of success. At this point, Hopkins (as cited in Yurттаş, 2010) suggests “restoring and training discipline” approach which aims at correcting the misbehavior and restoring the damage given.

There are a number of reasons pushing students to misbehavior at school. These can be listed as; the developmental features of students, crowded classes and competition in

education (Totan, 2007), curricula (Gökdaş, 2007), qualities of teachers, the management and discipline policies of schools (Tezcan, 1996), media (Kırbaş et al., 2007), socio-cultural and economic context (Kızmaz, 2006) and family (Moses, 1996). Therefore, it is not right to consider the students' misbehaviors apart from the context in which it has come true and punish them at once. Such approaches don't comply with the functions of school, which is the address of formal education. In addition, implementing the discipline process immediately after the misbehaviors may cause the administrator and teacher to be perceived as the warden of the regulation.

It is important to implement the required measures so as to overcome student misbehaviors, which are one of the serious obstacles preventing the school from reaching its aims. The fact that eighty-eight studies have been carried out since 2001 (Atik, 2011: 323) demonstrate the importance assigned to handling misbehaviors. In this context, departing from the case of Diyarbakır, this study, which aims at analyzing the misbehaviors observed in high school students and the punishments given can be expected to contribute to literature.

2. Method

2. 1. The Population and the Sampling

The population of the study consists of secondary education institutions in the provincial centre and districts of Diyarbakır between 1990-2000. The sampling, on the other hand, is composed of five schools in the city centre of Diyarbakır and three schools from its districts.

2. 2. Data and Analysis

In this study, documentary analysis was used. Documentary analysis can be defined as collecting data through examining the existing records and documents (Karasar, 1998: 183). The records involved in the study are discipline records belonging to eight secondary education institutions in the province of Diyarbakır between 1990-2000. While analyzing the data, descriptive statistics techniques such as frequency and percentage were used.

3. Findings and Interpretations

According to the discipline records in the schools involved in the sampling of the study, most frequently committed misbehaviors and the punishments given are seen in (Table I).

(Table I about here)

When Table 1 is studied, it is observed that the students attending schools included in the sampling have committed *disturbing the flow of the lesson or exam* (40,1 %) most from among misbehaviors. Although this behavior is considered as a misbehavior since “it disturbs other students and breaks the efficiency of the class” (Alkan, 2007 as cited in Keskin, 2002), it can't be included in violence category as there is no physical damage (Kızmaz, 2006; Bushman, 2002 as cited in Çetin, 2011). The behavior of *disturbing the flow of the lesson or exam* may result from a number of possible reasons. One of these possible reasons may be the rigid discipline implementation at school. The data in the literature stating that student misbehaviors result from excessive control and rigid discipline (Karataş, 2008; Alkan, 2007; Kırbaş et al., 2007) support the possibility mentioned above. The second reason may be concerned with the puberty period of students. Because, it is pointed out that adolescents can challenge rules while acquiring their identities (Williams and Myers, 2004 as cited in Çetin, 2011). The third possibility for disruptive behavior can be concerned with the physical layout of the classroom, method of instruction or the curriculum (Ryan et al., 2003 as cited in Sezgin and Duran, 2010). The studies concerning this issue have demonstrated that misbehaviors are encountered less in the classrooms where there is a positive learning atmosphere (Sezgin and Duran, 2010).

Disturbing the flow of the lesson or exam was mostly punished with “short-term suspension from school” (66,2%), warning (15,8 %) and condemnation (14,9 %). One of the probable reasons of punishing this misbehavior with a severe punishment like “suspension from school” may be the desire of administrators and teachers to control the students or their intolerance to their authority being eroded by students. If challenging school rules (authority) by students, who are in puberty period, doesn't contain violence and isn't constantly repeated, it is not right, in terms of psychology, to punish them with a serious punishment like suspension from school. Research shows that the students who are punished exhibit cases of guiltiness and shame (Karataş, 2008).

In the schools the discipline records of which were examined, the second most frequently committed misbehavior was *smoking and carrying cigarettes* (12,4). This finding is similar to that of Güçlü (2004) who states that 14 % of students are punished due to smoking. Although this behavior doesn't seem to be a direct impediment to teaching-learning process, it doesn't comply with school rules and it can be considered a misbehavior as it bears the risk of “weakening the teaching-learning process” (Sezgin and Duran, 2010). This behavior may be based on a number of reasons. Researchers point to “inappropriate adult

model” as the first reason (Sarpkaya, 2007). This means that students’ smoking and carrying cigarettes can be connected to parents’ smoking in the family and staff’s smoking at school.

The students who smoke and carry cigarettes are mostly punished with warning (39 %). This is followed by short-term suspension (23,9%), condemnation (22%) and warning and condemnation (15,1 %). It is worth emphasizing that 23,9 % of students who smoke are punished with a short-term suspension.

Disrespectfulness to teacher is the third mostly observed misbehavior (11.5 %) at schools. This behavior hinders teacher’s maintaining order in the classroom (Sağnak, 2007), which is one of the basic responsibilities of a teacher. This, in turn, can harm students’ learning and socializing. However, it is necessary to evaluate *disrespectfulness to teacher* in detail before punishing it since this behavior depends to a particular extent to teacher’s perception. This behavior is mostly punished with “short-term suspension from school” (66,9 %). Warning and condemnation (16,2 %) and expulsion from school (10,1 %) follow the first punishment. It is worth paying attention that 66,9 % of students committing this misbehavior are suspended from school for a short period and 10,1 % of them are expelled from school. A possible reason of this can be administrators’ and teachers’ avoidance from being condemned with weakness and their sensitivity about their authority. It is more appropriate to handle this case with affection and try to find the causes of the problem before punishment. Because, the perception of misbehaviors can vary according to the person evaluating the behavior (Watkins and Wagner 2000 as cited in Sarpkaya, 2007). It is known that violence decreases at schools where there are patient, affectionate and supporting teachers (Çakmakçı, 2008). This finding is also supported in literature by correlating student misbehaviors with the personality, attitude and classroom management style (Kuş and Karatekin, 2009; Çakmakçı, 2008) of teachers.

The fourth most frequently encountered misbehavior is *insulting, fighting and molesting* (9,9 %). In similar studies, the percentages of this behavior may vary from 21,3 % (Güçlü, 2004) to 50,2 % (Aras et al., 2007). Molestation is among the first three in violence exposed at school (Çinkır, 2006 as cited in Memduhoğlu and Taşdan, 2011). The punishments given to these misbehaviors are short-term suspension (63,3 %), warning (12,5 %), condemnation (11,7 %) and warning and condemnation (10,9 %) respectively. It is worth stressing that only 1,6 % of insulting, fighting and molesting behavior that includes violence has been expelled from school. This finding can be interpreted in such a way that in the schools where the research has been carried out *disrespectfulness to teacher* is tolerated less than *insulting,*

fighting and molesting. The reason of this can be the sensitivity of administrators and teachers about their authority rather than inurnment to violence in these schools.

The fifth in the line of misbehaviors is *cheating* (7,9 %). Aras et al., (2007) who studied the same subject determined that the second among the three mostly observed misbehaviors in high school students was cheating. In the study carried out by Güçlü (2004) the rate was 1 %. Unless the necessary interventions are made, *cheating* can pave the way for some misbehavior in the future. Cheating is punished with short-term suspension from school (58,8 %) most. It is followed by warning (32,4 %), condemnation (5,9 %) and warning and condemnation (2,9 %).

Disobeying the school rules (6,4 %) is the sixth mostly observed misbehavior. Even though it is not certain what kind of behaviors it includes, this behavior, which disturbs the order at school, is punished with “short-term suspension from school” with a high percentage of 54,2 %. This finding can be interpreted in such a way that school administration perceives this misbehavior as a threat and uprising. When the importance of school rules (Kuş and Karatekin, 2009) are taken into consideration in terms of socializing and academic achievement, this perception is understandable. The behavior of *disobeying the school rules* may depend on a number of reasons such as school management policy, environment and family. It is important to identify students and find out the reasons of the behavior before punishing this misbehavior. Otherwise, the punishment can push the student to behave in a more aggressive way.

The frequency of *carrying sharp and wounding objects* among the student misbehaviors is 4,3 %. In similar studies, different percentages have been determined such as 14,5 % (Aras et al., 2007), %22,1 (Durmuş and Gürkan, 2005) and %7 (Uzbaş and Kabasakal, 2010). When these results are considered, the percentage (4,3 %) in the schools where the study has been carried out is bothersome if not high. However, it is interesting that this behavior is punished with condemnation (48,2 %), short-term suspension from school (28,6 %), warning (14,3 %) and expulsion (5 %).

The frequency of *boycotting the lesson* is 3,1 %. Since attendance is an important matter of discipline (Nicholson et al, 1985 as cited in Sağnak, 2007), *boycotting the lesson* is considered a misbehavior. In a study carried out by Aras et al. (2007:192), “escaping from school” was among the first three misbehaviors. Similarly, in the schools where this study has

been carried out, this behavior has been taken very seriously and all the students committing this misbehavior have been punished with *short-term suspension from school*.

The misbehaviors, *alteration and forgery of documents* (2,6 %) and *unsuitable dressing* (1,4 %), haven't been encountered as frequently as the ones mentioned above. There can be a lot of reasons of *unsuitable dressing*. In his study, Sarpkaya (2007) has listed the reasons of unsuitable dressing as following the fashion, expressing themselves and being influenced by media and friends. The punishments imposed for this behavior are warning (44,8 %), short-term suspension from school (38,9 %), condemnation and warning (11,1 %) and condemnation (5,6 %) respectively.

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 5 % of the students have committed the behavior named as organizational crimes. It is again understood from the same Table that this behavior, which mostly has a regional character, has been punished severely. The punishments enforced for this behavior, which is thought to have resulted mostly from socio-cultural and economic factors are "expulsion from school" (50 %), "warning" (33,3 %) and "short-term suspension from school" (16,7 %) respectively.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

A sum of 1293 misbehaviors were reported between the years 1990-2000 in eight secondary schools, five from the city centre of Diyarbakır, where the study was carried out and three from its districts. The frequencies of these misbehaviors are as follows proportionately: distributing the flow of lesson or exam (40,1 %), smoking or carrying cigarettes (12,4 %), disrespectfulness to teacher (11,5 %), insulting, fighting and molesting (9,9 %), cheating (7,9 %), disobeying school rules (6,4 %), carrying sharp objects (4,3 %), boycotting lesson (3,1 %), alteration and forgery of documents (2,6 %), unsuitable dressing (1,4 %) and organizational crimes (0,5 %). The punishment that is imposed most for these misbehaviors is short-term suspension from school (58,6 %), the one that is imposed least is expulsion from school (2 %).

The total number of misbehaviors observed at schools in a period of ten years is bothersome as it bears the potential to prevent education from reaching its aims. However, it can be said that the misbehaviors aren't behaviors that are impossible to overcome when the fact that the puberty period the students were going through then is a hard and complicated

period, violence is a part of daily life in the world and in Turkey, the ten-year period and regional characteristics.

When the 1293 misbehaviors found in the discipline records of schools where the study was carried out are examined closely, it can be concluded that a significant majority of these behaviors cannot be described as violence even though they are not acceptable in terms of school rules. Thus, these misbehaviors which don't contain violence can be regarded as the symptoms of the puberty period in which personality emerges. These misbehaviors which challenge the authority (administrator and teacher) and can be considered as a typical indicator of puberty period can be directed to the desired direction by handling with an affectionate approach and with a professional guidance including solutions such as anger management. However, misbehaviors like fighting and molesting, carrying sharp objects, boycotting the lesson and organizational crimes can't be handled with the same approach since they bear the risk of suspending the teaching-learning process and jeopardizing the safety at school. For efficient education and a safe environment, such behaviors including violence should be handled with a professional approach and corrected in the light of the principles of pedagogy and psychology.

In the discipline records of the schools where the study was carried out, the fact that the rate of the students expelled from school who committed *disrespectfulness to teacher* which doesn't contain violence is 10,1 %, that it is observed more frequently compared to *insulting, fighting and molesting* (1,6 %) and *carrying sharp objects* (5 %) both of which include physical and sexual violence has demonstrated that school administrators and teachers can't stand attempts which weaken their authority and erode their respectability. Administrators' and teachers' intolerance may result from cultural factors and the perception of traditional education regarding teacher the basic authority in the classroom. Moreover, personal characteristics of administrators and teachers, regional characteristics and school culture may also be held responsible for this intolerance.

Suggestions

The Ministry of Education should train school administrators and teachers about understanding, preventing and correcting student misbehaviors at school. The scope of this training which must be given by experts should encompass identifying students and legal,

psychological and sociological dimensions. The participation of parents to these training sessions may prove useful.

The schools should train students about puberty and stress and anger management so as to prevent or decrease student misbehaviors.

Researchers should discuss the issue comprehensively by carrying out studies on the subjects such as the purpose and content of the curricula allegedly causing misbehaviors, crowded classes and competition in education.

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TABLES

Table 1. The Frequency of Student Misbehaviors and the Punishments Given

Type of the Misbehavior	Punishments Given											
	Warning and				Condem-				Short term		Total	
	Condem-		Warning		nation		Suspension		Expulsion			
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	n
Disturbing the flow of a lesson/exam	2,9	15	15,8	82	14,9	77	66,2	343	0,2	1	40,1	518
Smoking and carrying cigarette	15,1	24	39,0	62	22	35	23,9	38	-	-	12,4	160
Disrespectfulness to teacher	16,2	24	3,4	5	3,4	5	66,9	99	10,1	15	11,5	149
Insulting, fighting and molesting	10,9	14	12,5	16	11,7	15	63,3	81	1,6	2	9,9	128
Cheating	2,9	3	32,4	33	5,9	6	58,8	60	-	-	7,9	102
Disobeying the school rules	-	-	13,3	11	32,5	27	54,2	45	-	-	6,4	83
Carrying a sharp object	-	-	14,3	8	48,2	27	28,6	16	8,9	5	4,3	56
Boycotting the lesson	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,0	40	-	-	3,1	40
Alteration and forgery of documents	-	-	-	-	15,2	5	84,8	28	-	-	2,6	33
Unsuitable dressing	11,1	2	44,4	8	5,6	1	38,9	7	-	-	1,4	18
Organizational crimes	-	-	33,3	2	-	-	16,7	1	50,0	3	.5	6
Total	59,1	82	208,4	227	159,4	198	602,3	758	70,8	26	100	1293