

UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIORS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM TEACHERS ENCOUNTER IN THE CLASSROOM AND THEIR REASONS

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Abstract. The present study aims to determine how often elementary school teachers encounter undesirable behaviors in the classroom and what their thoughts regarding possible reasons of these behaviors are. The teachers' opinions about the prevalence of these behaviors and their possible reasons were evaluated according to gender, marital status, level of class being taught, size of class being taught and it was tried to be determined if there were significant differences between variables. The measurement tool was applied to a total of 54 teachers at 5 schools in Gölcük district of the Kocaeli province. The data collection tool is composed of three sections. The first section is for establishing teachers' personal information. In this study, as a data collection tool, a questionnaire was used. When preparing questions for the questionnaire, following the examination of resources available, the questionnaire prepared by Aksoy (1999) and used in the thesis study entitled "Classroom Management and Student Discipline in Elementary Schools of Ankara" and also used in the thesis study by Boyraz (2007) entitled "Discipline Problems that Candidate Teachers Servicing at Elementary Schools Encounter in the Classroom" was

employed. Although the validity and reliability of the questionnaire was tested by Aksoy (1999) and Boyraz (2007), the reliability study for the questionnaire was retested and found to be 0,9. The questionnaire include 42 items. 19 of them are related to the reasons of undesirable behaviors observed in the classroom and 23 of them are related to undesirable behaviors observed in the classroom.

Keywords: undesirable behavior, reasons, classroom management

1. Introduction

The importance of education as a social process including all the activities performed to achieve desirable modifications in the individual's behaviors, have them acquire new behaviors, and develop individual and societal abilities is gradually increasing. What is expected from education is beyond having the individual acquire information and skills but to train individuals capable of maintaining the survival and growth of society, keeping up with the rapidly changing world and making desirable changes in their environment (Varış,1998; Sadık, 2000).

Moreover, training a person with desirable qualities is an important mission of the teacher (Oral, 1997). In the heart of anyone of ours lies a memory and love of at least one teacher having deeply affected and guided us (Günay, 2005).

A major part of education that continues throughout the life of a human passes in the classroom. The classroom is a living area where the activities of education and teaching are realized (Aydın, 1998). The studies made on effective teaching have shown the importance of the classroom conditions based directly on teachers' skills of organizing and managing their classrooms (Güleç and Alkış, 2004). The classroom with its simple meaning or definition is the core center where the teaching is realized. Classrooms located under the

roof of the school can be described as the environments where students and teachers come face to face and the conditions of teaching are realized (Çakmak, 2000; Açıkgöz,1998) defines classroom atmosphere as a composition of student-student and teacher-student relationships lived in the classroom, rules to be obeyed, and psychological, social and physical factors occurring as a result of the physical conditions of the classroom (Bilgiç, 2007). One of the most important factors spoiling the positive social and psychological atmosphere in the classroom is students' preventing education and teaching in the classroom by exhibiting undesirable behaviors and, as a natural result of this, teachers' bringing to a climax. From this perspective, the management of student behaviors and the effective management of classroom atmosphere are closely related with one another. The teacher's scolding students, shouting at them, applying physical punishment or attacking their personality or values in case of only slightly negative behaviors leads to the spoiling of classroom atmosphere and the growth of fear and concern in students (Erden, 1998; cited by Sadık, 2000). Classroom management covering also the management of student behaviors at the same time determines the quality of education.

It is reducing study-related impediments before teachers and students to a minimum level, using the teaching time efficiently and ensuring students' participation in activities. It is the management of resources, people and time in the classroom (Başar, 2001; cited by Günay, 2005). The most important evidence of the success or failure in the classroom management is the behaviors exhibited by students in the classroom (Erden, 2001). A good description of behaviors which are undesirable in the classroom is important in terms of the modification of these behaviors (Aydın, 2000). Undesirable behaviors in the classroom are the ones disturbing the teacher and other students in the classroom, negatively affecting students' relationships and communication with other students and with the teacher, hindering educational goals, plan and studies, contradicting with the teacher's expectations and classroom rules and making a fuss in the classroom (Şahin, 2005). According to Okutan (2004),

undesirable behaviors are the ones decreasing the quality of classroom management. These behaviors spoil the classroom discipline and lead time management to become negative. According to this definition, all behaviors hindering education-teaching in the classroom are called “undesirable or negative behaviors” (Okutan, 2004).

Considering that a lesson is usually performed with 30 to 50 students in elementary classrooms, students from different cultures and socio-economic classes and with different values, personalities, needs, events, attitudes, preferences and interests come together in the same classroom to acquire desirable behaviors. It seems rather difficult for students with so many different characteristics to come together in the same classroom and share the same environment with no problems (Türnüklü et al. 2000; cited by Karakaş, 2005). In such an environment, students’ behaviors resulting from their numerous characteristics such as desires, aims, interests, leadership, appropriation, self-centeredness, complex, ambition, lower or higher level of intelligence, economic capability, etc. will definitely coincide at a point and conflicts will begin. The turning of these conflicts into undesirable behaviors will be inevitable. Removing undesirable behaviors, reducing their effects or ensuring their non-occurrence with some measures is very important for the education-teaching process to become efficient (Karakaş, 2005).

Understanding behavior is necessary not only for knowing about reasons of present problems but also for predicting future undesirable behaviors. Only then will the type of the action or the strategy to be selected and the way of performing it be clear (Sadık, 2000).

Actions that teachers can use to prevent undesirable behaviors can be many in number. Among these are the ignorance of small mistakes, behaving as if not knowing about provocative actions, the establishment of eye-communication, the ability to use gestures and mimics as a deterrent factor; warning, scolding, changing one’s place, having the student realize his/her mistake by using humour, shuffling, going off the lesson, assigning

responsibility, talking with the student, depriving the student of some rights and privileges, keeping the student in the classroom (detaining), not indulging his/her desire, establishing relationship with his/her parents, making an agreement with the student, giving non-physical punishments and the methods to be carried out (Korkmaz et al., 2009).

In this study, it was aimed to investigate the frequency of undesirable, with its another name discipline-spoiling, behaviors that teachers working at elementary schools encounter and the reasons of these behaviors according to teachers. To achieve these aims of the study, answers were sought for the following questions: (1) What are the types of undesirable behaviors that teachers working at elementary schools encounter most frequently in the teaching environment? (2) What are the sources of students' undesirable behaviors according to teachers working at elementary schools? (3) What do teachers think about the prevalence of undesirable behaviors? Do these sources change according to teachers' gender, marital status, level of the class they teach and size of the class they teach? (4) Do the thoughts of teachers about the reasons of undesirable behaviors change depending on their marital status, gender, level of the class they teach and size of the class they teach?

2. Method

2.1. Sample

In this study, it was aimed to determine undesirable behaviors that teachers working at elementary schools encounter in the classroom and their thoughts about reasons of these behaviors and whether there was a significant relationship between reasons of these behaviors and variables such as teachers' gender, their marital statuses, the level the class of which they are the teacher, the number of students in their classrooms was examined. In the direction of this purpose, a total of 54 teachers working at five elementary schools in Gölcük district of the Kocaeli province were administered the measurement tool.

2.2. Data collection tool

The data collection tool is composed of three sections. The first section is for finding out some pieces of personal information about teachers. In this study, as a data collection tool, a questionnaire was used. When preparing questions for the questionnaire, following the examination of resources available, the questionnaire prepared by Aksoy (1999) and used in the thesis study entitled “Classroom Management and Student Discipline in Elementary Schools of Ankara” and also used in the thesis study by Boyraz (2007) entitled “Discipline Problems that Candidate Teachers Servicing at Elementary Schools Encounter in the Classroom” was employed. Although the validity and reliability of the questionnaire was tested by Aksoy (1999) and Boyraz (2007), the reliability study for the questionnaire was retested and found to be 0,9. The questionnaire include 42 items. 19 of them are related to the reasons of undesirable behaviors observed in the classroom and 23 of them are related to undesirable behaviors observed in the classroom.

3. Analysis of data

In the analysis, whether data showed normal distribution was examined with Shapiro-Wilk test. For the data not showing normal distribution, Mann-Whitney U test was used for the comparison of two groups, and Kruskal Wallis test was used for the comparison of more than two groups. The relationships between the variables were examined with the Pearson correlation coefficient. The analyses regarding the answers given to the questions composing the personal information section of the measurement tool were made with frequencies and percentage calculations.

In this study, primarily, some demographic characteristics of the classroom teachers’ were given with their frequency and percentage distributions. 40 (74,1%) of the teachers participating in the study were female and 14 (25,9%) of them were male. 15 (27,8%) of the teachers were single and 39 (72,2%) of them were married. 16,7% of the classes of the teachers

participating in the study were composed of 10-24 students, 72,2% of them were composed of 25-34 students and 11,1% of them were composed of 35-44 students. 11,1% of the teachers were teaching the 1st graders, 13% of them were teaching the 2nd graders, 13% of them were teaching the 3rd graders, 13% were teaching the 4th graders, 14,8% were teaching the 5th graders, 11,1% were teaching the 6th graders, 13% were teaching the 7th graders and 11,1% were teaching the 8th graders.

Table 1. Detailed analysis of the frequency of undesirable behaviors that teachers working in elementary schools encounter in the teaching environment

Undesirable student behaviors	a	%	b	%	c	%	d	%	e	%	X
1-Behaving rudely and disrespectfully to teacher	15	27,8	19	35,2	12	22,2	8	14,8	-	-	2,24
2-Not fulfilling the teacher's desires regarding the lesson	1	1,9	14	25,9	19	35,2	17	31,5	3	5,6	3,12
3-Coming to class late	6	11,1	27	50	17	31,5	4	7,4	-	-	2,3
4-Fighting	5	9,3	9	16,7	18	33,3	19	35,2	3	5,6	3,11
5-Assaulting verbally (Quarrelling)	5	9,3	11	20,4	22	40,7	12	22,2	4	7,4	2,98
6-Talking without permission	2	3,7	8	14,8	11	20,4	23	42,6	10	18,5	3,5
7-Talking extremely and disturbingly	3	5,6	9	16,7	30	56,6	9	16,7	3	5,6	3
8-Exhibiting behaviors to spoil the course of the lesson (For example, circulating a note secretly, laughing, whistling, performing mimics)	4	7,4	16	29,6	20	37	12	22,2	2	3,7	2,8
9-Eating or drinking during the lesson	25	46,3	17	31,5	12	22,2	-	-	-	-	1,7
10-Cheating	18	33,3	20	37	13	24,1	3	5,6	-	-	2
11-Telling lies	2	3,7	25	46,3	21	38,9	4	7,4	2	3,7	2,6
12-Using bad language	7	13	19	35,2	17	31,5	8	14,8	3	5,6	2,6

13-Stealing	34	63	15	27,8	5	9,3	-	-	-	-	1,4
14-Not doing homework assignments	1	1,9	12	22,2	28	51,9	10	18,5	3	5,6	3
15-Wandering in the classroom without permission	10	18,5	18	33,3	19	35,2	6	11,1	1	1,9	2,4
16-Showing interest in other things during the lesson (For example, reading extracurricular books, painting/drawing pictures)	3	5,6	29	53,7	15	27,8	6	11,1	1	1,9	2,5
17-Sleeping in the lesson	42	77,8	11	20,4	1	1,9	-	-	-	-	1,2
18-Nicknaming	9	16,7	19	35,2	11	20,4	11	20,4	4	7,4	2,6
19-Teasing other students with tools such as a weapon, a knife and the like	47	87	4	7,4	3	5,6	-	-	-	-	1,1
20- Teasing the teacher with tools such as a weapon, a knife and the like	52	96,3	1	1,9	1	1,9	-	-	-	-	1
21-Giving harm to other students' belongings	10	18,5	27	50	12	22,2	4	7,4	1	1,9	2,2
22-Giving harm to the teacher's belongings	46	85,2	6	11,1	2	3,7	-	-	-	-	1,1
23- Giving harm to things belonging to the school	10	18,5	28	51,9	13	24,1	3	5,6	-	-	2,1

a- never; b- rarely; c- sometimes; d- often; e- always

According to the findings obtained from Table 1, the first three of the undesirable behaviors that the teachers encountered most frequently were, in order of prevalence, “talking without permission”, “nicknaming” and “assaulting verbally”. When we look at the behaviors that the teachers never encountered, we saw that “teasing the teacher with such tools as a weapon, a knife and the like”, “teasing other students with such tools as a weapon, a knife and the like” and “giving harm to the teacher’s belongings” were the first three.

As a result of the Mann-Whitney U test providing the answer to the question of “Is there a significant difference between the teachers’ thoughts about the prevalence of undesirable behaviors and their gender?”, no significant difference was found between the female teachers and the male teachers with respect to the frequency of their encountering undesirable behaviors. As a result of the correlation analyses made, it appeared that the frequency of teachers’ encountering undesirable behaviors did not change according to the class level they taught.

As a result of the Kruskal Wallis analysis, it was determined that the frequency of the teachers’ encountering undesirable behaviors did not change according to the size of the class they taught either. The frequencies and percentages appearing as a result of the analyses made with regard to the teachers’ opininons about the reasons of undesirable behaviors are shown in the Table 2.

Table 2. Detailed analyses of the reasons of students’ undesirable behaviors according to the teachers working in elementary schools

Reasons	f	%	g	%	h	%	k	%	l	%	X
1-Effect of violence shown on TV and other communication means	1	1,9	3	5,6	6	11,1	18	33,3	26	48,1	4,2
2-Crowded classes	3	5,6	11	20,4	18	33,3	16	29,6	6	11,1	3,2
3-Arrangements made in the classroom	6	11,1	12	22,2	20	37	11	20,4	5	9,3	2,9
4-Unclear rules and instructions to be obeyed in the classroom	6	11,1	18	33,3	13	24,1	11	20,4	6	11,1	2,8

5-Boring lessons	13	24,1	16	29,6	15	27,8	9	16,7	1	1,9	2,4
6 Insufficient teaching aids	8	14,8	7	13	13	24,1	17	31,5	9	16,7	3,2
7- Teaching practices not suitable for the developmental levels of students	6	11,1	8	14,8	19	35,2	15	27,8	6	11,1	3,1
8-Parents' negative attitudes and behaviors toward their children	1	1,9	2	3,7	9	16,7	19	35,2	23	42,6	4,1
9-Parents' indifference to their children's education	3	5,6	2	3,7	6	11,1	14	25,9	29	53,7	4,1
10-In-family problems	-	-	-	-	7	13	16	29,6	31	57,4	4,4
11-Effect of the developmental characteristics of the age at which students are	1	1,9	1	1,9	11	20,4	21	38,9	20	37	4
12- Cultural, economic and social differences among students	-	-	4	7,4	15	27,8	25	46,3	10	18,5	3,7
13-Giving homework assignments not attracting students' attention	2	3,7	17	31,5	17	31,5	13	24,1	5	9,3	3
14-The teacher's not knowing of discipline achieving approaches	5	9,3	14	25,9	15	27,8	11	20,4	9	16,7	3

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15-The teacher's incapability in teaching methods	11	20,4	14	25,9	8	14,8	12	22,2	9	16,7	2,8
16-The teacher's being inconsistent	6	11,1	14	25,9	9	16,7	12	22,2	13	24,1	3,2
17-Dependency on peer group	2	3,7	7	13	13	24,1	21	38,9	11	20,4	3,5
18-Not knowing about friends well	4	7,4	7	13	22	40,7	17	31,5	4	7,4	3,1
19-Misguidance by friends	2	3,7	6	11,1	17	31,5	15	27,8	14	25,9	3,6

f- strongly disagree; g- slightly agree; h- moderately agree; k- greatly agree; l- strongly agree

According to the findings obtained from the Table 2, the four of the reasons of undesirable behaviors with which the teachers strongly agreed were, in order of frequency, “in-family problems”, “effect of violence shown on TV and other communication means”, “parents’ indifference to their children’s education” and “parents’ negative attitudes and behaviors toward their children”. The items with which the teachers strongly disagreed were “boring lessons”, “the teacher’s incapability in teaching methods” and “insufficiency of teaching aids”.

From the findings obtained as a result of the Mann Whitney U test, it appeared that the teachers’ opinions about the reasons of undesirable behaviors did not change depending on their gender.

From the findings obtained as a result of the Mann Whitney U test, it appeared that the teachers’ opinions about the reasons of undesirable behaviors did not change depending on their marital statuses.

According to the findings obtained as a result of the Kruskal Wallis H test, it can be said that the teachers' opinions about the reasons of undesirable behaviors did not change depending on the size of the class they taught.

4. Conclusions and suggestion

The conclusions reached following the analyses made in accordance with the aims of the study are as follows:

1- The undesirable behaviors that the teachers encountered most frequently were ranked as follows: "Talking without permission", "nicknaming" and "assaulting verbally". The undesirable behaviors that the teachers encountered least frequently were ranked as follows: "Teasing the teacher with such tools as a weapon, a knife and the like", "teasing other students with such tools as a weapon, a knife and the like" and "giving harm to the teacher's belongings".

2- No significant difference was found between the female teachers and the male teachers with regard to the frequency of encountering with undesirable student behaviors.

3- The frequency of the teachers' encountering undesirable behaviors did not change according to the level and size of the class they taught and their marital statuses.

4- The four of the reasons of undesirable behaviors with which the teachers strongly agreed were, in order of frequency, "in-family problems", "effect of violence shown on TV and other communication means", "parents' indifference to their children's education" and "parents' negative attitudes and behaviors toward their children". However, the items with which the teachers strongly disagreed were "boring lessons", "the teacher's incapability in teaching methods" and "insufficiency of teaching aids".

5- It was observed that the teachers' opinions about the reasons of students' undesirable behaviors did not change according to their gender, marital statuses and the size of the class they taught.

When the results obtained are considered, the following suggestions can be made to increase the quality of teaching: i) An undesirable behavior may result from many reasons. Encountering an undesirable behavior, classroom teachers should primarily be open to search for possible reasons of this behavior; ii) Classroom teachers should keep in mind that an undesirable behavior may appear due to their mistakes and open to self-criticism and take necessary precautions; iii) Classroom teachers should continuously develop themselves about classroom management and open to innovations; iv) Classroom teachers should determine the method and approach to use in classroom management when trying to prevent an undesirable behavior by taking the reason for the behavior to appear and characteristics of the student causing the behavior into consideration; vi) In the end of the study, the three of the items from among the undesirable behaviors with which the teachers strongly agreed were “In-family problems”, “Parents’ indifference to their children’s education” and “Parents’ negative attitudes and behaviors toward their children”. Considering these, parents should be communicated closely and informed about necessary topics; vii) This study included the classroom teachers working at elementary schools in Gölcük district of the Kocaeli province. By expanding the scope of the study, it can be carried out in other provinces and also at secondary educational institutions.

The study can be expanded in scope by adding new variables such as socio-economic status of the environment where the school is located, socio-economic status of the student’s family and the educational status of the student’s family.

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