

Undesired Behaviors Faced in Classroom by Physics Teachers in High Schools

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to define undesired behaviors in the classroom, to better understand the reasons of these undesired behaviors, and to offer strategies to overcome these behaviors. The researchers have used a qualitative research approach in this study. For this aim, the researchers have purposefully selected 12 physics teachers who work in different high schools in Amasya, Turkey. Then, the researchers have carried out open-ended interviews with teachers. Each interview lasted around 40 minutes, was recorded and transcribed. After analyzing the collected data, the researchers have found that teachers define undesired behaviors if the behavior 1) inhibited students' learning 2) distracted the students' attention 3) destroyed the students' motivation and 4) reduced students' desire to study. Furthermore, teachers have declared that because of following reasons, students demonstrate the undesirable behaviors. These are; lack of motivation, hopelessness to learn, hopelessness to be successful, lack of ready for topic, and prejudice to physics. Teachers have also mentioned that there might be some strategies to overcome the undesired behaviors in the classroom. These are; planned ignoring, signal interference, proximity control, using humor to defuse tension, removing distracting objects, changing student places, and time out. The findings of this study show that there exist undesirable behaviors in physics classes. Unless these determined behaviors have been removed, teaching and motivating of students will be more difficult for physics teachers and it negatively affects students' learning and academic success. In this regard, the researchers have following recommendations: 1) classroom management lessons at the pre-service education level should be taught more efficiently 2) some professional development activities regarding classroom management should be offered for physics teachers 3) physics teachers should be encouraged to collaborate with psychologists, counselors, and guidance specialists to overcome and address undesirable behaviors in classroom 4) school administration should engage parents and collaborate with them by organizing periodical meetings and 5) school administration should arrange some social activities for students in school such as basketball tournament, soccer tournament, theatre, and etc.

Keywords: Undesired behaviors, Physics teachers, Classroom management

Introduction

According to the newspapers, official reports, teachers' announcements, and principals' statements, the numbers of students' undesired behaviors have been increased day after day. In this regard, a question comes to mind that either teacher is not adequately prepared to control undesirable behaviors or the strategies employed in the classroom do not work efficiently?

There is no doubt that most teachers work with their heart and soul to teach effectively and efficiently. However, sometimes they do not see the same effort from their students who

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consider that mathematics, biology, chemistry, or physics are boring and/or very difficult; therefore, they have less desire to learn these subjects. This situation causes undesired behaviors to emerge in the classroom. In this regard, knowing both theoretical and practical classroom management strategies is a must for novice and experienced teachers. Rancifer (1993) noted that if teachers (whether novice or those with experience) are not able to control their students' behaviors in their classroom, they feel disappointed. When the education literature was examined, it is very clear that classroom management is one of the most discussed topics in the education world.

The majority of learning transpires in classroom (Hung & Fan, 2014) and there is no doubt that there are some factors affecting the learning and teaching processes. These factors include teacher quality, curriculum, teaching strategies, student motivation, classroom management, and so on. Even though all of these are equally important for effective learning and teaching, classroom management is a key factor that obviously explains how the teacher should be the leader in the classroom. This explains why many researchers have debated the necessity and importance of high-quality classroom management for several decades. As a result of these ongoing discussions, there is an agreement showing a strong relationship between classroom management and student academic learning and achievement (Grigg, 2010; Evertson & Emmer, 2009; Reinke, Sprick, & Knight, 2009; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008; Johnson, Halocha, & Chater, 2007). In lights of this line, some researchers have conducted various studies that try to identify and reduce undesired behaviors in classroom (Korkmaz, 2007; Arends, 1997; Epnachin, Townsend, & Stoddard, 1994).

Students' undesired behaviors are one of the most serious issues for both novice and experienced teachers (Cruickshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2003). Since, undesired behaviors destroy students' attentions; teachers spend some of their teaching time to solve these behavior disruptions in the classroom (Kitishat & Al-Friehat, 2013). In this context, there are some attempts to define students' undesired behaviors in classroom. For example, Evertson and Emmer (2009) remarked that students' undesired behaviors can be explained any behavior that negatively affects their learning. In a similar vein, Dada and Okunade (2014) have noted that undesirable behaviors tend to destroy learning environment. When the literature has been reviewed, there are some other similar phrases referrals to undesired behaviors including: abnormal behavior, misbehavior, inappropriate behavior, unwanted behavior, and disruptive behavior.

Furthermore, when the literature has been examined, both domestic and foreign researchers have explored the types of undesired behaviors that commonly occur in classrooms. For instance, Charles (1992) categorized undesired behaviors as following: 1) attack, 2) corruption, 3) disobeying authority, 4) disrespect in classroom, and 5) wasting time. Dada and Okunade (2014) have found in their study that bullying, excessive noisemaking, use of foul languages, stealing, fighting, lying, skipping school, and violent acts are the most common faced undesired behaviors in classroom. Likewise, Güleç and Balçık (2011) have discovered that lying, fighting, stealing, cheating, talking without permission, and chewing or eating during lessons are the most common undesired behaviors in classroom.

When the literature has been scrutinized, there are some studies that attempt to explain the reasons for undesirable behaviors in classroom. Kitishat and Al-Friehat (2013), for example, have confirmed that if a teacher wants to control his or her students' behaviors, first of all, he or she should focus on the reasons of undesired behaviors. They have mentioned that teachers' behaviors, teaching strategies, school administration, students' family environment, boredom, depression, violent tendencies of some students, and attracting the attention of other students are possible reasons for undesirable behavior. Yücel, Karataş, Sengil Akar, Demirhan, and Binici (2012) have stated that students show undesired behaviors in classroom

because of coming from different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Kuhlenschmidt and Layne (1999) classified the reasons of undesired behaviors. According to them, these behaviors include: 1) physical causes, 2) emotional challenges, and 3) environmental factors.

Some researchers have admitted that almost every teacher faces undesired behaviors in classroom. Therefore, there is no way to avoid these behaviors when teaching. In this regard, researchers have offered several solution strategies in order to overcome undesired behaviors in classroom (Kitishat & Al- Frieihat, 2013). For instance, Dada and Okunade (2014) have found that time-out, punishment, rewarding, and ignoring are the most used strategies in order to overcome undesired behaviors in classroom. Some other researchers have supported and improved the findings of Dada and Okunade (2014). They have found that teachers mostly use ignoring, signal interfering, proximity control, using humor, removing distracting objects, changing student places, and time out strategies to overcome undesired behaviors in classroom (Grigg, 2010; Starr, 2008; Beşdok, 2007; Girmen, Anılan, Şentürk & Öztürk, 2006).

As can be understood from the above literature, undesired behaviors can be called as inappropriate behaviors in classroom. As a result, these behaviors harm teaching and learning activities both directly and indirectly and prevent students' learning. Therefore, there is a critical need to find the reasons of undesired behaviors and some possible solution ways to overcome these behaviors in classroom.

Research Questions and Purpose of the Study

Even though the importance of classroom management on teaching and learning process and creating for effective classroom climate has been accepted by many researchers and educators in the world of education, there remains insufficient research exploring how both physics teachers define undesired behaviors and what physics teachers do in order to overcome undesired behaviors in classroom while they are teaching. This gap in the literature clearly illustrates a need for further research to determine undesired behaviors and how to solve them in real life classroom situations. Therefore, the purpose of this present study is threefold: 1) to define undesired behaviors in classroom, 2) to better understand the reasons of undesired behaviors, and 3) to offer some potential strategies in order to overcome these behaviors by providing case-based evidence. By conducting this study, the researchers have hoped to find some potential solution strategies to overcome undesired behaviors in classroom. That is why; this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the definition of undesired behaviors?
2. What are the reasons of undesired behaviors?
3. What kinds of strategies can be used to overcome these behaviors?

The Importance of Study

This current study explores the definition of undesired behaviors, the reasons of undesired behaviors, and strategies for overcoming these undesired behaviors. That is why; this present study is informative for the readers of the journal to learn more about one of the top issues, not only in the Turkey but also in many countries around the world. Since, the researchers personally believe that the findings of this present study will guide them in developing strategies for reducing undesired behaviors in classroom and creating more effective teaching and learning environment.

Methodology

This research employed a case study, which is a kind of qualitative research approach. In this regard, the researchers have used a qualitative research approach in this study. Since, Taylor and Bogdan (1998, p.7) stated that the qualitative research approach “refer[s] in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data on people’s own written or spoken words and observable behavior”. Mertens (2009) also explained, “Qualitative methods are used in research that is designed to provide an in-depth description of a specific program, practice, or setting” (p. 225). Likewise, Lichtman (2013) stressed the importance of qualitative research approaches for gathering in-depth information for any study.

The researchers have utilized a case study design in this research to get in-depth information in real life context. Since, they believe that case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon in real-life situations (Yin, 1984). Similarly, Crowe et al. (2011) have stated, “The case study approach allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings” (p. 1).

There are two reasons why the researchers have decided to study with teachers. First, the researchers had difficulties in physics lessons when they were students in high school. Therefore, they are interested in what physics teachers experience about classroom management in today’s education. The second reason is that, as stated by Eisner (1991), the researchers strongly believe that the voices of teachers are very important sources for educational research. Hence, the researchers aim to hear what physics teachers say about their experiences on undesired behaviors. For this aim, the researchers have focused on physics teachers in Amasya. In order to reach the aim of this current study, the researchers have visited high schools in Amasya and invited physics teachers to participate in this study. However, 12 of them were volunteers to interview with the researchers. That is why; the sample of this study consists of 12 volunteer physics teachers (6 male and 6 female) who have been working in different 12 high schools in Amasya, Turkey. Then, the researchers have carried out semi-structured interviews with these teachers. By this way, as stated by Patten (2010), “Some questions will be developed in advance with follow-up questions on the spotlight of participants’ responses” (p.77). Each interview lasted around 40 minutes, was recorded and transcribed. By doing so, the researchers have gathered the data about the participant physics teachers’ first-hand experience with their classroom.

This research is a descriptive study. After all data has been collected, the researchers have analyzed them based on descriptive perspective. In this process, the researchers first have determined the codes; then gotten categories by combining the codes. After that, the researchers have merged similar categories and finally reached the themes. In order to name the themes, the researchers have also benefitted from the literature. After that, the researchers have put some of the participants’ statements to the study as citation or quotation.

The researchers have employed “adequate engagement in data collection”, and “rich, thick descriptions” strategies for promoting and providing the reliability and validity of the data analysis process (Merriam, 2009).

Findings and Discussion

First, the researchers have wanted to recognize how the participant physics teachers define undesired behaviors. After analyzing the collected data, the researchers have come to the conclusion that when the participant physics teachers define undesired behaviors in classroom, they use the following criteria that are if a behavior 1) inhibits students’ learning, 2) distracts students’ attention, 3) destroys students’ motivation, and 4) reduces students’ desires to study. For instance, one of the participant teachers stated:

I think that classroom can be defined the complexity of behaviors. In this regard, there happen a bunch of behaviors in classroom when I am teaching. There is no doubt that some of them are undesired behaviors. But the question how we describe undesired behaviors. To me, if a behavior negatively affects learning environment, it can be named as undesired behavior (Participant 1, 2015, personal communication).

Another participant teacher confirmed that:

As far as I am concerned, teachers should be prepared in terms of classroom management. In this regard, facing undesired behaviors in classroom is destiny of teachers. However, the point is that how we can outline undesired behaviors. If a student's behavior terminates positive learning and teaching environment, we can call it as undesired behavior (Participant 2, 2015, personal communication).

The perspective of another participant teacher is very similar to that of the above teachers. He similarly pointed out that:

Classroom management is very difficult, in particular, if there happen often undesired behaviors. Instead of listing undesired behaviors in classroom, we need to create some principles that address undesired behaviors. If a behavior destroys students' attentions, motivations, and aspiration, we can define it as undesired behavior (Participant 3, 2015, personal communication).

This finding is coherent with the statement of Başar (1999) and Korkmaz (2007), who stated that if a behavior negatively affects teaching and learning environment, it could be defined as undesired behaviors.

In order to better understand the reasons of undesired behaviors in classroom, the researchers have asked the participant physics teachers “Why students show undesired behaviors in classroom?” After analyzing the collected data, the researchers have understood that because of the following reasons students show undesired behaviors. These are 1) lack of motivation, 2) hopelessness to learn, 3) hopelessness to be successful, 4) lack of ready for topic, and 5) prejudice to physics. For example, one of the participant teachers made clear that:

I, as a physics teacher, feel sometimes that I cannot motivate my students to learning physics. Unfortunately, this is one of the main reasons why I face undesired behaviors in classroom when I am teaching or trying to teach physics. So, if we motivate our students, I am sure that the number of undesired behaviors in classroom will diminish (Participant 4, 2015, personal communication).

Another participant teacher similarly asserted that:

If your students are hopeless to learn and be successful, it is very difficult to include them in learning atmosphere. As a result, they do not care about what is going on here, in classroom and mostly show undesired behaviors (Participant 5, 2015, personal communication).

The perspective of another participant teacher is similar to that of the above teachers. She stated that:

As you know, students have some negative biases against physics. Because of these biases, they are not interested in physics learning; worse, they like to damage teaching and learning environment by showing undesired behaviors in classroom. Hence, we need to change students' negative biases through positive biases (Participant 6, 2015, personal communication).

This finding is consistent with the declaration of Wiseman and Hunt (2008), who stated that motivation is very important for classroom management. In a similar vein, Brophy (1987) stated, "Students are more likely to learn when they appreciate the value of classroom activities and when they believe they will succeed if they apply reasonable effort" (p. 40). Moreover, Kitishat and Al-Friehat (2013) have discussed the importance of emotional factors on undesired behaviors by stating, "If the teacher understands the psychological needs of his students, he will handle any problem that rise inside class" (p. 37).

To find some potential solutions for overcoming undesired behaviors in classroom, the researchers have asked the participant physics teachers "What kinds of strategies do you utilize to overcome the undesired behaviors in classroom?" After analyzing the collected data, the researchers have noted that the participant physics teachers employ the following strategies to overcome undesired behaviors in classroom. These are 1) planned ignoring, 2) signal interference, 3) proximity control, 4) using humor to defuse tension, 5) removing distracting objects, 6) changing student place, and 7) time out. For instance, one of the participant teachers declared that:

We, as teachers, cannot escape from undesired behaviors in classroom. Therefore, we need to find some potential solution methods in order to overcome these behaviors. I mostly like to use "ignoring, kidding, and giving time out" when some of my students show undesired behaviors in classroom (Participant 7, 2015, personal communication).

In a similar vein, another participant teacher reported that:

Controlling himself, as a teacher, is sometimes really difficult in classroom. Since, even though you try to teach with heart and soul, some students do not care about what you are doing. In this context, you must be patient and instead of yelling them out, you can use some strategies such as ignoring, making jokes, and sending away confusing objects (Participant 8, 2015, personal communication).

The perspective of another participant teacher is similar to that of the above teacher. He proclaimed that:

I personally believe that every teacher faces undesired behavior in classroom. However, master teachers have some strategies in their mind to use for overcoming kinds of these behaviors. For instance, I am close to employ these strategies; come near to student, altering student places, and time out (Participant 9, 2015, personal communication).

This finding is coherent with the results of Beşdok (2007), Girmen, Anılan, Şentürk, and Öztürk (2006), Grigg (2010), and Starr (2008) who stated that teachers mostly use

ignoring, signal interfering, proximity control, using humor, removing distracting objects, changing student places, and time out strategies in order to overcome undesired behaviors in classroom.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The researchers strongly value teachers' voices in educational research. Hence, the researchers have invited physics teachers to participate in this study to better understand how undesired behaviors can be defined, what the reasons of undesired behaviors are, and what kinds of strategies can be employed to overcome undesired behaviors. Based on the above findings, the researchers have come to the conclusion that the participant physics teachers have defined undesired behaviors if a behavior 1) inhibits students' learning, 2) distracts students' attention, 3) destroys students' motivation, and 4) reduces students' desires to study. The researchers have also concluded that because of the following reasons students show undesired behaviors in classroom. They are 1) lack of motivation, 2) hopelessness to learn, 3) hopelessness to be successful, 4) lack of ready for topic, and 5) prejudice to physics. The researchers have also come to the conclusion that some strategies might be used to overcome undesired behaviors in classroom. These strategies are 1) planned ignoring, 2) signal interference, 3) proximity control, 4) using humor to defuse tension, 5) removing distracting objects, 6) changing student places, and 7) time out.

The findings of this study show that there exist undesirable behaviors in physics classes. Unless these determined behaviors are removed, teaching and motivating of students will be more difficult for physics teachers. Also, it negatively affects students' learning and academic success. Kitishat and Al-Friehat (2013) have affirmed this situation by stating "Even teaching using the best update curriculum will be useless if there are no rules that prevent the undesirable behavior from interrupting the teaching process" (p. 37).

In this context, the researchers have recommendations for policymakers, researchers, educators, and teachers. These recommendations are following:

1) Classroom management lessons should be taught more effectively in terms of practical application at the pre-service education level, college of education, and university.

2) Professional development activities regarding classroom management should be offered for both novice and experienced physics teachers by the Ministry of National Education.

3) Physics teachers are encouraged to collaborate with psychologists, counselors, and guidance specialists to overcome and address undesirable behaviors in classroom.

4) School administration should engage parents and collaborate with them to overcome undesirable behaviors in their children. To do that, school administration should organize periodical meetings with parents.

5) Furthermore, school administration should arrange some social activities for students in school such as basketball tournament, soccer tournament, theatre, and etc. By doing so, student can spend some of their energy, create more close friendship, and feel that they are part of school and more importantly their class.

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