

# High School Students' Misbehaviors and the Principal's Role – A Qualitative Approach

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## Abstract

This study investigates the high school principal's role in the students' misbehavior. The findings indicated that this role is a central one, as principals in secondary education are called to design, inspire and implement strategies and policies effectively. Furthermore, it was concluded that both the contribution of the state with training, funding, and a well defined legislative context, and the harmonious cooperation between principals and the Teachers' and Parents' Associations is crucial, for this principals' role to be successfully fulfilled.

**Keywords:** discipline, misbehavior, principal, high school, prevention, confrontation.

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## INTRODUCTION

The management of students' misbehavior in a classroom and in the school environment generally, is a very important part of the educational process and has consistently engaged many scholars over the years. The majority of such misbehaviors that teachers face concerns misconducts of small intensity and scale. However, when these behaviors persist, are generalized or go beyond certain limits, teachers' recourse to the Teachers' Association and principal becomes necessary and is a common practice. The principal, as the head of the school, is obviously not a mere listener, a passive receiver of such incidents, and his role is not exhausted to the possible imposition of subsequent penalties.

This study, therefore, focuses on high school principals' role in tackling the phenomenon of indiscipline. In other words, this research seeks to investigate, among other things, the principal's contribution to the formation of a disciplined school and particularly in the particularities of high school.

## THE SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

### School discipline and misbehaviors

Discipline is a concept that has been variously defined over time. Aeschylus mentioned that "discipline namely is the mother of well doing [1]". Durkheim defines it as "the submission of behavior to a set of rules and commands in which principles of general

acceptance are analyzed" [2]. Its meaning, therefore, relates to obedience and discipline to the laws, written and unwritten, and more generally to the system of values that governs a social whole which is a school unit. Each school, as a microcosm, invites students to be adapted and disciplined to the obligations and rules dictated by the state through presidential decrees and circulars, as well as, to the existing moral, socio-economic and cultural conditions [3]. However, the spirit and application of the rules have evolved over time, and in addition to the evolution of the Education Sciences [4]. School discipline is characterized as a tool for the effectiveness of educational practice [5]. It is about teaching and promoting positive behavior, discouraging violent and aggressive behavior, but also about creating a culture that expects healthy and productive relationships [6]. Meyers and Pawlas [7] have concluded that the ideal version of discipline is that which is pedagogically aimed and achieved by the improving of students' self-discipline and self-control.

On the other hand, students' misbehavior disrupts or interrupts teaching by circumventing school community rules [8], as it interferes with the teaching practice, the right of the rest in learning, aggravates psychological or physical insecurity and destroys foreign property [9].

### Reasons of indiscipline in the school unit

The seriousness of the consequences of unruly behaviors has also led to the investigation of their causes in order to deal with them more effectively. The review of the Greek and foreign literature revealed that these causes are multidimensional, complex and will

not be analyzed in the present study. However, in the following table, the factors that potentially lead to disciplinary behaviors, as they emerged from the literature, are listed after their aggregation and categorization.

**Table-1: The causes of manifestation of undisciplined behavior**

Intra-school factors			Out-of-school factors		
Teacher	Student	School climate and process	Family	Social context	Pathological and psychological factors
Bossiness	Attractiveness of classmates' attention	Overcrowding in the classroom	Financial problems	Media	Learning difficulties
Biased handling	Attractiveness of teacher's attention	Stifling timetable	Parents' apathy and loose supervision	Financial situation	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
Delinquency	Detachment with the lesson	Mundane curriculum	Oppression for performance	Political situation	Low self-esteem
Inadequate of lesson preparation	Weakness of the adjustment in rules	Building facilities, huge school	Family problems (alcoholism, frictions, divorce)	Group of friends	Depressive, stress
Insufficient education	Inability to understand the lesson	Shortage of educational staff and books	Authoritarianism	Social standards	Law intelligence index
Unfair evaluation	Revengeful reaction to teacher	Principal	Classiness		Opposition due to age

### Theoretical approaches of prevention and intervention

Regarding the handling of indiscipline research indicates that schools become disciplined not by chance and there no simply or magical solutions [10]. The schools that respond to are that which establish efficient and long-lasting policies, which collaborate with parents and the community, having knowledge about their existing and real needs while these policies are differentiated among schools [11]. These policies are implemented in three stages. At the first stage the policy about a school's character is established with general directions for all the students, even those who have not previously misbehaved. At the second stage, prevention aims at the initial stages of the incidents of unruly behavior which becomes apparent to specific students. Finally, the third stage is addressed at these incidents that could not be faced by the first and second stage, while this last stage regards persistent, long-lasting and recurrent undisciplined behaviors. Even though the final stage is the most demanding and the most difficult, the majority of the incidents (75%-85%) concerns the first two [12, 13].

The aim of prevention and intervention is to modify the undisciplined behavior. There are two options for teachers in shaping a desired behavior. To approve and reinforce the accepted pattern of behavior, or rather, to disapprove and downplay the undesirable. More specifically, the theoretical approaches for the management of behavior consist of a combination of the following practices: *positive reinforcement* intends to motivate compliance with the desired behavior, *negative reinforcement* aims at increasing the likelihood

of a behavior occurring, eliminating a consequence or obligation unpleasant for students, and finally, *extinction or differential reinforcement or planned planning* [14]. The latter with the blatant ignorance and an apathetic attitude to unwanted behavior, it makes it repulsive and debilitating to the disciplined student and to his classmates [9].

The application of the above strongly illustrates the use of penalties and rewards which, although over time is a controversial issue both in terms of their use and effectiveness [14], remain essential tools for a teacher to modify behaviors. It is useful to clarify though that penalties are not only those lay down by the legislation of the state, but any action taken by the teacher aims at refusing to meet the student's needs or generally damaging his / her reputation [15]. Concerning penalties, research have highlighted the usefulness of reward as a mean of addressing problem behavior in schools [13, 16]. The reward in order to be effective has to be given not to person, but to action, namely student's action. The reward is not only about the performance, but also about the interest, participation and the behavior generally that is done [2].

### School principalship and discipline

According to Stravakou [17], a key driver in the proper functioning of the school unit is the Principal, whose role since the past has been clearly differentiated and is multifaceted (coordinating, organizing, pedagogical, administrative, reforming). He/she engages in a network of partnerships with institutions and individuals, contributes to the quality of education

provided, and delimits the goals of the school that manages [18].

The state, through presidential decrees and ministerial decisions, sets out principal's duties. More specifically, in the articles 27 till 32 of the ministerial decision (FEK 1340/2002 - F.353.1/324/105657/Δ1/2002) the principals' duties regarding to the different actors involved in a school unit (students, fellow teachers, the Parents' Association, supervisors e.t.c.) are discussed. Indicatively, in relation to the issue of discipline in articles 29,31 it is stated that "principal is responsible for protecting the health and safety of pupils, for maintaining discipline, ensuring that the educational work is carried out in a friendly, safe, democratic environment, away from conflict and generally aggressive and violent behavior".

Numerous studies highlight either the Principal's leading role in his/her school unit or the issue of discipline. But in terms of the combination, that is to say, of the role of the Director in dealing with disciplinary behavior, Greek literature is poor. The purpose of the present study therefore is to explore the views of teachers and principals on school discipline in high schools, focusing especially on the role of principals.

### The methodology of the study

For the conduct of this study, the qualitative method was preferred as it focuses on deeper analysis and interpretation of situations, beliefs and in-depth exploration of phenomena, lived experiences and social meanings [19]. In addition, it concerns the gathering of information and data on the participants' daily lives [20]. As a tool for collecting the research material, the personal semi-structured interview was selected and some axes were created to guide the interviews. Each guide was based on three axes - thematic modules designed to represent the research objectives and research questions. The final inductive category system that was also the guide of the analysis of the data in the present study is the following:

**1<sup>st</sup> Axis:** In the first axis the meaning and the conceptualization of discipline, as well as the importance that teachers/principals give to the issue of school discipline are explored. The first axis is divided into the following sub-axes:

- The conceptualization of school discipline
- The causes of discipline
- The importance of its consequences

**2<sup>nd</sup> Axis:** The second axis investigates the participants' suggestions and opinions about the discipline's prevention in parallel with the needed actions have to be taken in order this phenomenon to be tackled. The second axis is divided into these sub-axes:

- The most important actions
- The role of rewards and punishments

- The role of training

**3<sup>rd</sup> Axis:** Finally, the third axis concentrates on the principals' opinions and contribution to the creation of a disciplined school environment. It is divided into these sub-axes:

- The principal's personality
- The principals' actions and duties
- The principal's policy
- The principal's cooperation with teachers and the Parents' Association
- The school regulation
- The suggestions and opinions about the strengthening and help of principal's role.

The participants in this research were for (4) high school Principals (D1-D4) and six (6) high school teachers (E1-E6) from General and Technical high schools in the prefecture of Evros in Greece. The central criterion for the participants' selection was their experience, their easy access, their professional appreciation, their sensitivity in the issue under investigation, as well as their willingness to participate in this research (convenient sampling). Furthermore, in the analysis that follows the participants' way of expression without any lexical, grammatical or syntactical interventions is maintained.

## FINDINGS

### 1<sup>st</sup> Axis

#### The conceptualization of school discipline

The main aim of this research was to find out the participants' opinions for the importance and conceptualization of school discipline. Below some excerpts are given regarding the most significant opinions of the research participants.

One female teacher (E5) stated:

*{« ...the denial, of student to follow the specific regulations that help in the good functioning of school environment»}.*

In the same context, another female teacher (E4) added:

*{« It is a dysfunctional context that due to the absence of regulations most of the times, or due to the inadequacy of regulations' implementation, a chaotic situation emerges in which the central aims of the school, didactical, pedagogical and social, cannot be satisfied»}.*

In summary, school discipline is understood as the failure of students to follow the rules, which are agreed upon in the school or imposed to the school.

#### Opinions about the causes of indiscipline and its handling

The non-existence of rules or even the non-compliance with them was also refereed as the main

reason due to which the students' misbehaviors provoked, while at the same time the apathy of family, students and teachers were also added.

More specifically, a female teacher (E4) stressed:

*{«The key is to have a set of rules that have been co-decided by the teachers, by the principal, but also by the students, their collective bodies ... the consent and the recording of these rules so that they are clear to everyone»}.*

The same teacher added:

*{«... students who are out of bounds from their family environment, ... the fact that they have no particular interest in learning ... because of the afternoon lessons they already know some things, so they come here with little willingness to participate and ... teachers feel apathy as ... they are not doing anything... for improvement, they do not follow the rules... That is, there are three axes I think: the lack of interest, the family and apathy of teachers»}.*

There were also reports about psychopathological and learning problems as well as the size of the school and the peculiarity of adolescence.

In fact, a male participant (E2) stated:

*{«Another cause may be problems that the student himself/herself may have, either regarding the family or learning, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and it may be very difficult for him/her to discipline and stay within the context set and desired from his/her teacher»}.*

Another male participant (E3) advocated:

*{«...For students in General high school, one of the key factors is age, adolescence, where anything that it said to the students, they try to reverse it and deny it before they understand what they are asking for. A very important factor ... is ... the financial crisis ... and that many times teachers do not have a common line so that the students themselves are confused about what is acceptable and what is not ...»}.*

A female principal (D3) advocated:

*{«... There are, of course, factors that substantially influence the achievement of a disciplined school, such as its size. Certainly in a smaller school it is easier for you to understand what is going on in a school, to understand behaviors...»}.*

Another female principal (D4) considered the principal's role as crucial:

*{« In order for a school to be disciplined in its creative potential, I think the message must first be given by the principal...»}.*

### **Opinions about the importance and the consequences of indiscipline**

One of the research aims was the investigation of the seriousness of the phenomenon under study in school life, as well as its consequences in learning and pedagogical level.

Another female teacher (E4) said:

*{«... Indiscipline creates a framework that such relationships (trusts) cannot cultivate so there is no productive climate in the classroom and academic goals cannot be achieved. When the teacher tries to impose discipline in an authoritarian way, then pedagogical performance is not achieved...»}.*

Finally, one male teacher (E1) referred:

*{«The school indiscipline constrains a lot the productive time in the lesson, produces a negative climate in the other students that do not misbehave, and in the end ... the flow of the learning object cannot be followed properly»}.*

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Axis**

### **Opinions of both high school teachers and principals about the prevention and handling of school indiscipline**

The study also sought and recorded the respondents' opinions concerning the actions regarded as important in combating disciplinary behavior. Rewards and penalties along with training were judged to have to be treated as separate themes, as their role in tackling the research phenomenon emerged as significant.

#### **The most important actions**

Sincere dialogue, the avoidance of consolidating behaviors, the cooperation with parents and school rules dominated the responses.

A male teacher (E2) cited:

*{«... the first action that has to be taken is the school regulation to be notified where the rules of conduct should be very detailed.... so that students know what the consequences of each of their actions will be ... the rules should be absolutely clear to students ... should be posted on the school's site and shared with students and their parents ... Generally everyone should be aware of the punishment that his/her behavior would bring about»}.*

Another female teacher (E4) supported:

{«...personally I think that a teacher...should define his/her own rules, discuss them with students, without being extreme... should immediately react, not allow the negative behaviors to be established... furthermore, when you see that an established rule is not proper, you should change it ... However, the same should also occur with rewards»}.

The same teacher also added:

{«... We are used to calling parents in the school only when students do something really bad. For that reason parents see teachers as enemies... Namely, I cannot severely punish a child that he/she has never before in his/her home been punished. He/she cannot understand this»}.

Finally, the following opinion of a female principal (D4) was very interesting:

{« ... The dialogue with students' communities is very important. Because students are in an age that they like their opinion to be regarded..»}.

### The role of rewards and punishments

Rewards and punishments are the most traditional and common means that educators use in order to handle the phenomena of students' misbehavior. That was particularly apparent in the following answers.

Specifically, a male teacher (E2) reported:

{«...Therefore, there should be not only punishments, but also rewards for those who behave correctly and understand and correct their wrong behavior when it is inappropriate, both as a reward and as an example to others»}.

The following opinion of a female educator (E4) was also interesting:

{« ...we should start by rewarding someone who behaves properly and by punishing the person who is being wrong...punishments ... however should have a meaning for student, namely, the absence or exit from the classroom, as we are used doing, it does not have any sense for students, because a student is happy when he/she is in the yard or drink coffee in school canteen. Therefore, punishment should deprive from him/her something that is very important to him/her...»}.

Regarding now the participants who were principals, a male principal (D1) underlined:

{«... So, the use of rewards and punishments is significant. Fortunately, I think that in praxis, the most common is the use of punishments, but personally I am in favor both of the usage of rewards and of the findings of particular rewards... the latest presidential decree for Technical high schools has... new ethical type of rewards, rewards concerning the progress e.t.c. that they have been absent until lately»}.

In fact, the same principal characteristically stated:

{«...there was a school year in which two students did not make a single absence the whole year. That's why the teachers of the school really came to collect their own money and give it in the form of a gift voucher... to these two kids to reward them»}.

### The role of training

A special and crucial role to the handling of students' misbehavior has the teachers' training.

Specifically, a female teacher (E2) stressed:

{«Unfortunately, any kind of training about these issues has been made lately, not only in the school but also out of it... and many times we recall our experiences since we were students to face such incidents, something that is neither a progress or any solution, because years have been changed..»}.

An apparent positive position has a female teacher (E5):

{«It is necessary. It is a kind of training that should be part of, let's say, compulsory education... Some things have been obsolete and an update has to be made... because there have been progress and new data have been released»}.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Axis

#### Teachers'-principals' opinions about high school principals' role in the prevention and handling of school indiscipline

The central research question was the degree and the way by which high school principal's influence and contribute to the students' desirable behavior. From the research, some basic axes emerged that are analyzed below.

#### The principal's personality

From the data analysis, it became apparent that a common parameter concerning the role of principal's personality in the disciplined high school.

Calm, coolness and knowledge were regarded as essential characteristics by a female teacher (E4):

*{«Calm. To be calm and fair. To listen to the opinions of others and to process them properly. Not to have personal affinities, dislikes or empathies. To be well organized and basically to be there. To know the problems... and to be able calmly to handle them...»}.*

A female teacher (E6) particularly stressed the leadership characteristics a principal should have.

*{«... a principal himself/herself should be a consistent person. He/she should have knowledge in the science of pedagogy... there should be a relevant training and a proper theoretical training... He/she has to appreciate every single person and his/her needs in the school unit... to adjust his/her behavior to each person, in terms of to be able to maintain the order and a friendly climate. This also presupposes to have personal leadership capacities... Many times, a principal exerts authority abusively only due to his/her official position, which does not function positively in the school climate»}.*

### **The principal's actions and duties**

The creation of a disciplined school needs management, segmentation of duties, and also the appropriate “managerial” tools. Regarding the above, in the research the participants’ point of view was explored concerning the principal’s duties and his/her actions that have to be made for the successful handling of the issue of students’ misconduct.

The more characteristic teachers’ opinions about the issue under study follow.

A male teacher (E1) stated:

*{« Surely a disciplined school has to do with a well organized school. For the students to know what to anticipate and to be aware of their role... a principal should be well informed about the cases of children that tend to misbehave... to define some “red” lines... in the context of the particularities of each student...»}.*

Or another male teacher (E2) advocated:

*{«A principal should...have a very energetic role in a safe and healthy not only to the whole school but also to classroom to be created. He/she should supervise the teachers’ supervising of students in the schoolyard and generally to be present... to be very active and to participate intervals and in schoolyard..., the students must “feel” the principal’s presence...and he/she should intervene only when he/she perceive it as*

*necessary...he should not be only in his office»}.*

Another female principal (D3) concentrated on the school climate:

*{«Each principal should be interested in...cultivating a positive school climate»}.*

And she also added:

*{« I think that a principal should first of all be fair and impartial ... be a role model... inspire the whole school community»}.*

### **The principal's policy**

In the study it was considered as necessary the main axes of principal’s policy for school discipline to be explored in order for the plan and specific aims to be emerged, if indeed there were some. In parallel, it was explored the participants’ stance about the zero tolerance policy, which was applied in schools of U.S.A.. The most significant of such opinions are the following:

A male teacher (E1) advocated:

*{«... the creation of a climate... in which all students could participate... the non participation leads more easily to the indiscipline. Another significant issue is that teachers should listen to students...without this comes to an exaggeration ... but they have to feel that their opinion is heard...»}.*

The same teacher added about the zero tolerance policy:

*{«I’m very opposed. Zero intolerance drives behaviors to extreme ones. It causes a negative learning environment and generally with such a policy school totally loses its role...»}.*

The opinion of a female teacher (E4) was very interesting:

*{«In the school pedagogical meeting are made in which usually... there is a “patch”, a short-term handling in specific problems to move further down... The principal ... should give the general line, the policy... which has to be designed with a plan, as we do with written assessments, with school trips, with school activities... the issue of discipline should be a different part in the first pedagogical meeting of a school unit, an action plan should be designed»}.*

She also added the issue of the zero tolerance policy without any hesitation:

*{«... The zero policy is wrong... I think that we must have tolerance, it is a part of our job»}.*

### **The principal's cooperation with teachers, the Parents' Association and other out-of school actors**

An issue intensively emerged from the data analysis was also the importance of principal's cooperation not only internally to school with the Parents' and Teachers' Association, but also externally, with bodies and agencies functioning in community, for the better handling of the school discipline.

A female teacher (E6) characteristically said: *{«... it is not very easy... the relationship between principal and teachers...there is usually a superior-inferior relationship... However, generally speaking, a common line should be followed, there has to be a common policy... in other ways both should perceive all misbehaviors as equally punishable»}*.

Regarding the Parents' Association she added: *{«... I think that parents' opinion should also be heard and wrongly many time we as educators do not communicate with them, and we only ask from them economic help and we don't want their intervention... we should have near us the parents and not have them opposite to us. With community bodies and agencies, surely there has to be a relationship, school should be open to society... pedagogical seminars should also be designed for students and also seminars in psychology, in sociology, in human relations,... so that students understand their limits, their position... because generally students are difficult to be restricted»}*.

### **The principal and the school regulation**

From data analysis, the importance of both a school regulation's existence and its implementation as it concerns students' behavior. In addition, in these cases that a school regulation was absent, the answers were in favor of its design.

A male principal (D1) stated: *{« ... it is about a year that I write a four-page text that is promoted to all parents and as text and as e-mail, but there isn't at the official website of school... in a meeting at the beginning of the school year I always inform about what is applied to our school because every school has its rules and its distinctiveness»}*.

Finally, a female principal (D3) added the issue of the school regulation's design by all the actors in school unit.

*{«... every year at the beginning of the school year with the cooperation with all of the actors of school units, such as students, parents, teachers, through discussion the school regulation emerges..., after all having*

*contributed, the school regulation is cosigned and made public to all the members of school community...»}*.

### **The role of principal generally**

Before the end of data analysis, it became necessary a review to be conducted about the general role of principal from participants' answers.

A male teacher (E3) considered the role of principal as very significant:

*{«The principal plays...a huge role in the formation of school discipline and there are and examples of principals... that as long as a specific principal served we saw... the school discipline was at lower levels while when the principal changed we saw that the levels of the indiscipline in the school were lowed»}*.

A female teacher (E4) had a somewhat different opinion:

*{«In general, I think that only coordinating it can be... His/her role is also to supervise but not to intervene in the teacher's role... He/she can't punish on the position of the teacher and he/she can't reward on the position of the teacher»}*.

Concerning principals' opinion, a characteristic example is that of a male principal (D1):

*{« I will use at this point what the Director of Secondary Education has said, so according to him, a principal is the soul of a school, this I believe and live... he/she is the one who gives the imprint... for the way of handling of school indiscipline»}*.

### **The suggestions and opinions regarding the strengthening and help of principal's role**

The last question that was posed to the participants, it tried to uncover their opinions about the ways with which principals could be helped by the state in order to cultivate a disciplined school. For example, such suggestions are the following:

A male teacher (E1) asked from the state realism and financial support:

*{«The state...what the state asks from schools has to be applicable. There should be realism. From now on, there should also be provided some financial support... Except from good ideas, all happen with a funding»}*.

A male teacher (E2) stressed the role of school psychologist:

*{«The state could... apply that which is implemented the last years in Technical high schools that is the school counselor, the teacher-psychologist... so a principal has one*

*more “weapon” to use and the state... should wide this measure also to other schools»}.*

On the other hand, another female teacher (E4) considered that what was needed was the legislative to be more accurate:

*{«I think that the basic is the legislation. Principals many times have to function out of context... Regarding for example rewards and punishments that you said previously, the context is not specific...»}.*

A female teacher (E5) mentioned the principal's training because she considered that the phenomenon would rise:

*{«In the principal's case there should be a training... there should be prevention of extreme violent incidents that we see... in United States of America for example... not to end up to such incidents there should be ... a role more enhanced from the state ... because we are talking here about the whole system and not only about a particular school»}.*

## CONCLUSIONS – DISCUSSION

From the data analysis, the following conclusions are drawn: Firstly, concerning the conceptualization of school indiscipline, it emerged with clarity that the concept is explicitly related to the difficulty in following and being adjusted to school rules. The latter prescribes the undesirable behaviors of students as well as their consequences. The indiscipline was identified as a significant problem, as all agreed upon that an undisciplined school falls behind in pedagogical and academic accomplishments. These are in line with the findings of other research conducted [21, 4, 22, 13].

Regarding the causes, it became apparent that the nonexistence or the problematical non implementation and design of a school regulation at the beginning of the school year, as well as the limited consent of both students and the Parents' Association on it, make difficult the situation. The non-uniform application and stance of teachers towards the regulation, gradually leads to its cancellation and inactiveness. These findings were also found in other studies [10, 23]. Furthermore, for the participants a crucial role plays the age of students, because adolescence is strongly characterized by the reaction and refusal to the rules. In addition, the particularities of high schools, and particularly, the high learning requirements and inability to attend, as well as the attendance of afternoon tutoring courses, lead to apathy and non-participation in lessons, which are the vanguard of indiscipline. The above, in association with the biases and the apathy, as it was characteristically referred by participants, of teachers occasionally, are in accordance with Eccles and Roeser [24], who summing up previous findings, supported that the transition from primary to secondary education and the

childhood to adolescence, it is accompanied by a growing discrepancy in needs of emotional and psychological support, which, according to our respondents, are not supported by the partial structure of high school and the more impersonal climate in which it leads. In fact, high school teachers spend less time with students than the teacher in elementary schools, while time is rarely spent on personal acquaintance and building trusting relationships, because of their teaching needs. Finally, the dependency on the size of the school unit (buildings, pupils) on the degree of adequate control and supervision was highlighted.

The above are supplemented by out-of-school factors, such as problems due to family and social factors (parental apathy, financial crisis), but also in cases where there are various psychopathological factors (over-mobility, distraction).

Finally, all the respondents consider school discipline to be one of the most serious and at the same time the most worrying factors in disrupting their educational work.

Concerning the prevention and handling of the issue, the participants for another time emphasized the importance of following and disclosure with any possible manner of school regulation, while the latter should be a result of collaboration. Timely and consistent interventions with a uniform plan, without spasmodic actions, are considered also necessary, in combination with an impartial but not authoritarian attitude by teachers and principal. The factor of age is emphasized as requiring an exhaustive dialogue with good intentions in order for a greater understanding and consent to emerge for the rejection of undesirable behaviors. The adoption of the desired behavior by students is not mandatory, it is earned. In accordance with the above, Griffith and Weatheilt [25] maintained that good communication is initially required for the acceptance and involvement of school members in policy about discipline, and Hester *et al.* [26] suggested the teaching of social skills and skills regarding conflict avoidance, as well as a teachers' positive response to adolescents' effort for communication.

Punishments and rewards are recognized as an intertemporal and necessary tool in shaping desired behaviors. This finding is consistent with the literature [2, 15, 5, 9, 16, 13]. However, their heterogeneous use was found. In particular, it is found that teachers resort to punishment more often and easier than to reward. However, it is suggested that any punishments or rewards should be given sparingly and they should re-evaluated for their effectiveness and efficiency.

Importance is given to the role of students' participation in educational activities and school curricula, so that through such activities, they feel useful rather than marginalized.

Difficulties in implementing the above, according to the participants, in educational praxis, lead to the need for searching for help. Help can come from the cooperation with the Parents' Association, the contribution of bodies and agencies from the community, from school psychologists, from their own training being offered either in school or out of school, because the knowledge of the majority in issues of psychology and the management of behaviors, clearly come only from their own experience.

Participants point out that for a disciplined school the principal should ideally lead, inspire, associate, and administer with a sense of fairness, impartiality, stability and determination. To be a composed personality, open-minded and intelligent, with the ability to inspire respect and trust.

Priority is given to the principal's knowledge of regulations and ministerial decisions concerning his responsibilities and jurisdiction. It is emphasized that uninterrupted participation, supervision and two-way information on the events of school life, approach with understanding and cooperation in dealing with students' problems, act as deterrents to the occurrence of offensive behaviors. The above is in agreement with the results of other studies [27, 28, 7, 29]. Furthermore, it was concluded that a disciplined school presupposes the cooperation between the principal and the Parents' Association and Teachers' Association, with the main aim to a common and uniform stance. The same conclusions have also been drawn and in other studies [30, 31, 29]. However, while the cooperation and solidarity are a common aim between teachers and principals, there is the assumption that divergences do occur in practice.

All of the above have been proposed as key pillars of principal's policy planning. A policy that will be expressed through a school regulation will be characterized by a long-term strategy without spasmodic actions, without any form of centralization or zero tolerance for its implementation. All of the respondents were opposed to the zero-tolerance policy at these ages as it is believed to produce exactly the opposite of the desired results, and as a conclusion is identified with a large study by Harvard University [32] in 2000.

In conclusion, the principals participated in the research consider their role in school discipline as a central one. The same trend is also observed in the teachers' answers. But they do not fail to mention the lesser contact that principals have with students as they enter only for a little time in the classroom in high school. There is also agreement in the need for state assistance to meet its many demands and expectations, not defined in upgrading the principal's punitive jurisdiction, but in a more formal and financial level as well as and in a clearer legislative context.

## Epilogue

Principal and teachers do not deal exclusively with desirable and idealistic behaviors. They are invited to educate students with traits, characteristics and references that are not only different from their own as students, but are often differentiated at the school or even school year level. A complex and multifactorial task, at stake in the education and social adjustment of students, which cannot be left to past practices or rigid approaches. It takes collective effort, support, training, vision and dedication.

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