

## Punishments Applied to Children by a Group of Pre-School Teachers in Turkey

Ümit Deniz

Faculty of Education, University of Gazi, Ankara, Turkey

**Abstract:** This study was carried out to determine whether a group of pre-school teachers applied punishment to children and what type of behavior was punished by those applying the punishment and what the punishment was for this behavior. The current study is a descriptive research. The working group was consisted of 41 teachers teaching at official kindergartens serving in the central towns of Etimesgut and Sincan of the city of Ankara, Turkey. A questionnaire form made up of open-ended questions was used to gather data and the data obtained was analyzed through content analysis. Thirty-four teachers included in the study expressed that they applied punishment to children. It was found that teachers mostly punished the behaviors of being aggressive and disobeying the rules. Teachers pointed out in terms of these behaviors that they applied such punishments in the categories as keeping them away from favorite activities, time-out and making him compensate.

**Key words:** Punishment, pre-school teacher, pre-schooler, time-out, response cost, child behavior

### INTRODUCTION

One of the significant issues frequently mentioned at the education of child is discipline. Besides being defined as improving one's care and respect against others as well as himself (Humphreys, 2002), discipline is also described as arrangement of individual's own behaviors (self control) (DeBord, 1996; Yörükoglu, 1992). The issue of discipline has long been considered together with the concept of punishment (Gartrell, 2000). However, as far as discipline has been considered recently, what is thought is that individuals attain responsibility for both himself and for others in the environment of love and respect and healthy adult behaviors needed for this attainment are highlighted (Ada and Çetin, 2002; Humphreys, 2002; Gartrell, 2000). Yet, today, frequent complaints of parents over discipline to make individuals attain responsibility (Humphreys, 2002) and practice of such punishments as humiliation at schools and using of physical force (Özyürek, 2004) is regarded that discipline is still considered to be within the framework of punishment.

It is defined as an unpleasant warning punishment practiced to eliminate undesired behavior (Selçuk, 2007). Two types of punishment are mentioned in the literature as introducing the warning disturbing individual such as spanking and scolding (first type punishment) and leaving the pleasant warning out such as depriving individual from going out (second type punishment) (Erözkan, 2007; Özyürek, 2004; Selçuk, 2007). First type punishment is never approved at education. However, the

second one is allowed whenever necessary with a great care against continual behaviors suitable for class and school environment (Aydın, 2004; Dobson, 2004; Erözkan, 2007; Özyürek, 2004; Selçuk, 2007; Yörükoglu, 1992).

In order to make punishments to be applied in connection with cognitive and moral development during childhood efficient, it is essential that the child should be known well, his limitations should be made known, suitable punishment and classroom rules should be determined and crime and punishment should be well balanced and consistency should be provided (Aydın, 2004; Özyürek, 2004; Selçuk, 2007). As cognitive and moral development in early childhood period is not adequate enough, keeping them away from pleasant things and locking them in unpleasant places could be preventive in terms of education (Özyürek, 2004). Besides, depending on undesired behavior, response cost practiced as taking natural reinforcer back (Özyürek, 2004) and time-out, defined as keeping one away from a social relation environment for a certain period (DeBord, 1996; Wyckoff and Unell, 2002), also depriving child from what he enjoys within suitable punishments for young children are all considered (Özbey, 2004; Yörükoglu, 1992).

Even if punishment is not a recommended method in disciplining child (Gartrell, 2000), it is pointed out that second type punishments can be used in an attentive way depending on the age of child. Therefore, the current study was carried out to determine whether

pre-school teachers use punishment to discipline at education and what kind of behaviors they punish and which punishment they use for these behaviors.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Working group:** Teachers working at official kindergartens serving in central towns of Etimesgut and Sincan in the city of Ankara, Turkey were included in the current study, which is a descriptive one. It was determined that seven official kindergarten in Etimesgut and 2 official kindergartens in Sincan served in the spring term of 2007-2008 educational year. Twenty-seven teachers in 6 schools in the town of Etimesgut and 14 teachers in 1 school in the town of Sincan volunteered in the study. All of the teachers included in the study were women and graduates of a university. Sixty six percent of the teachers were 35 years of age and below, 34% were 36 and above. Fifty nine percent of them had been teaching for <10 years. Twenty nine percent of the teachers taught to 3-4 year age group, while 71% deal with 5-6 year age group. Twenty two percent of the teachers expressed that they had 20 or fewer students in their class and 68% had 20-25 and 10% had 26 students and more.

**Data collection:** An open-ended questionnaire form prepared by the researcher was used to collect data. Such questions as gender of teacher, age, the school graduated, duration of teaching, age of group taught and number of students were given in the first part. In the second part of the questionnaire, teachers were asked if they punished children, what behaviors were punished and what kind of punishments were applied. The questionnaire form was examined by a specialist and no more recommendation was given. The form was filled by pre-school teachers working at Hamdullah Suphi Primary School in Ankara as a pre application study. Teachers had no question and recommendation regarding the questions in the questionnaire form.

**Analysis of data:** Age of teacher, duration of teaching and number of students in the first part of the questionnaire form were grouped. The behaviors punished by teachers claiming to have punished child (34 in total) were examined through the analysis of content. According to Tavsançil and Aslan (2001), analysis of content is; a scientific approach searching the reality through classifying the message within verbal, written and other materials objectively and systematically in terms of semantics and grammar, converting them into numbers and making a deduction (Tavsançil and Aslan, 2001). Firstly, behaviors punished by teachers were coded as

sentences. These sentences, 18 in total, were categorized into two as aggressive behaviors and disobeying the rules. Each item was given a number by the researcher and these numbers were written under the categories. Of the coded behaviors, behaving excessively and not eating were left out as they did not suit both the categories (3 teachers gave these behaviors). Categories were named and two specialists were asked to do the same process simultaneously. An equality of 0.100 and 0.88 were determined at the process of matching items with 2 categories by specialists. While one of the specialists left out the item of behaving aggressively, she regarded the behavior of taking friend's toy from him into the category of aggressive behaviors. According to Tavsançil and Aslan (2001), for the reliability of the technique of content analysis; the formula; of the number of compromise / the number of compromise + the number of non-compromise is used. This formula testifies the appropriateness between formula coders and it is expected to be over 70% (Tavsançil and Aslan, 2001).

Similarly, the punishments applied by the teachers for aggressive behaviors and disobeying the rules were coded and numbered separately. Punishments applied for aggressive behaviors were examined and were categorized as deprivation from favorite activity, time-out and making him compensate for the light of literature (Dobson, 2004; Özbey, 2004; Özyürek, 2004; Yörükoglu, 1992). Making him bring chocolate from home, distributing them out to his friend but depriving him from eating them (one teacher expressed) were left out as it was not suitable for three categories and asking him to think what he had done (expressed by 8 teachers) were also left out as it was not regarded as a punishment. The list of punishment was delivered to 2 specialists and they were asked to categorize them suitably. The equality between coders was found 0.95 for both of them. One of the specialists regarded the behavior of Not letting him speak to anybody in the category of depriving him from his favorite activity. Other specialist regarded the behavior of making him sit and think in the category of making him compensate. As the punishments for the behaviors of not obeying the rules were not too intensive to categorize. Punished behaviors and the punishments applied by teachers for these behaviors were presented as frequencies in the tables under categories.

## **RESULTS**

The results of this study that was conducted descriptively in order to determine whether pre-school teachers applied punishments to children, what kind of behaviors were punished by them and what type of

punishments were applied are given below. In this study conducted with 41 teachers in total, 34 teachers expressed that they applied punishment to children and the child behaviors that needed to be punished by teachers and punishments given for these behaviors.

Aggressive behaviors punished by teachers are given in Table 1. As seen in the table, most of the teachers indicated the behaviors of harming his friend, hitting his friends, using bad words and harming school objects deliberately. Behaving aggressively and harming himself were considered as the behaviors punished by teachers.

Table 2 shows the behaviors punished by the teachers within the extent of disobeying the rules. In this sense, disobeying the rules and spoiling the activity were named mostly. Using cleansing materials roughly was also considered within the scope of behaviors to be punished. Constantly not doing what is asked and not listening to stories were among the punishments given by teachers.

As was seen in Table 3, among the punishments of depriving child from his favorite activities applied by teachers for their aggressive behaviors are keeping him away from activity and not allowing him to play with his favorite toys in the first places. Not allowing him to go out to the playground and the park are considered within this extent.

The punishments of time-out applied by the teachers for aggressive behaviors were given in Table 4. Four of the teachers expressed that they applied the punishment of making him sit. Such punishments as making him sit at a corner alone and sending him out of the class and making him wait there for a while were considered in this category. One of the teachers expressed that he applied the punishment of making him sit keeping minutes equal to his age.

As shown in Table 5, only three punishments were taken in the extent of making him pay (compensating) the price applied for aggressive behaviors. Making him apologize from his friend was given in the first place. Making him repair the toy of the school and making him buy a new toy for his friend were the punishments applied by the teachers within this scope.

Table 6 shows the punishments applied by the teachers for the behaviors of disobeying the rules. In the cases of disobeying the rules by children, teachers applied the punishments of leaving him out of a game or an activity, leaving him out the class and making him wait and making him sit mostly. As for the whole content of the table, it is clear that the punishments applied by teachers for disobeying the rules are similar to ones

**Table 1: Aggressive behaviors punished by teachers**

Behaviors	Frequency
Harming his friend	14
Hitting his friends	13
Using bad words	5
Destroying school objects deliberately	3
Behaving aggressively	1
Making fun of	1
Harming himself	1

**Table 2: The behaviors of disobeying the rules punished by teachers**

Behaviors	Frequency
Disobeying the rules	7
Spoiling the activity	4
Spoiling the order of class	3
Not listening to stories and speaking	2
Being naughty during a game	2
Not doing what is asked constantly	2
Taking the toy from his friends	2
Not waiting in the line	1
Using cleansing materials roughly	1

**Table 3: The punishments of deprivation from favorite activities applied by the teachers for aggressive behaviors**

Punishments	Frequency
Keeping him away from activity	8
Not allowing him to play with his favorite toys	4
Separating them from the play group of friends	2
Keeping him away from a game	2
Depriving him from his favorite game	1
Keeping him away from the environment he likes	1
Not allowing him to play with toys for a certain period	1
Not allowing him to go out for the playground	1
Not allowing him to go out for the park	1

**Table 4: The punishments of applying time-out by teachers for aggressive behaviors**

Punishments	Frequency
Making him sit	4
Giving a break	2
Making him sit at a corner alone	2
Making him sit and think	2
Making him sit at the table	1
Making him sit keeping minutes equal to his age	1
Making him stand still at a corner	1
Leaving him alone	1
Not allowing him to talk to anybody	1
Sending him out of the class and making him wait there for a while	1

**Table 5: The punishments of making him pay the price (compensation) applied by teachers for aggressive behaviors**

Punishments	Frequency
Making him apologize from his friend	4
Making him repair the toy of the school	1
Making him buy a new toy for his friend	1

**Table 6: Punishments applied by teachers for the behaviors of disobeying the rules**

Punishments	Frequency
Leaving him of a game or an activity	3
Leaving him out the class and making him wait there for a while	3
Making him sit	3
Not allowing him to talk to anybody	1
Not allowing him to go to lavatory as he used the cleansing material badly	1
Giving up reading stories	-
Getting angry	1

applied for aggressive behaviors. However, it was determined that one of the teachers applied getting angry as the first type of punishment as the reaction.

## **DISCUSSION**

According to the findings of the current study, the fact that teachers punish physical and verbal behaviors such as harming themselves, others and to school materials and of behaviors unsuitable for classroom rules shows that children are expected to behave suitably to social and school norms and that they apply sanctions to those disobeying the rules through punishment. Teachers mostly punish aggressive behavior by keeping the children away from the activities in the classroom or giving them the punishment of time-out. It is suggested in the literature, that depriving children from what they enjoy will not have an impact on making them attain (gain) a new behavior (Özyürek, 2004), on the other hand it is claimed that it can be applicable if it is proportional with crime and if it is reliable (DeBord, 1996; Yörükoglu, 1992).

Besides, according to Educational Curriculum of Pre-school of ministry of education, inner discipline will not work if undesired behaviors of children are tried to be changed by applying such sanctions as punishment. Therefore, for the undesired behaviors of children, it would be effective to determine the rules of classroom together with children, to use reward in balanced way and to introduce such applications as stop and think technique and preparing a daily behavior table (Ministry of Education, 2006). Gartrell (2000) does not propose teachers to use the punishments of time-out and others in the years of early childhood, but proposes that they prepare suitable classroom environment and teach children the strategies of conflict management in stead. In this case, it is likely to consider that the punishments of keeping children from what they enjoy prevent children from their activities in the class and that keeping them away from activities will not have an impact on teaching the correct behavior. On no occasion are the activities like game-activity used for the education of the child recommended to be used as a method of punishment. Such punishments could affect the educational purpose of making children attain desired behaviors and cause the children to efface themselves and develop hatred (Aydin, 2004). However, the fact that teachers keep children away from activities reminds us that they apply such a thing with an idea of giving them the punishment of time-out.

Besides, when we consider punishment as giving individual a warning the he does not desire or depriving him from the desired one (Aydin, 2004), the application of keeping a child not obeying the rules of classroom for an

aggressive one cannot be perceived as a negative warning if the child keeps coming in contact with his friends or if he is not interested in being in the activity anymore. This perception could give the opportunity to child carry on undesired behaviors in the class. One of the teachers expressed that he applied the punishment of getting angry, the first type punishment, as a result of an undesired behavior. Getting angry after an undesired behaviour not only reinforces the negative behavior, it could be a behaviour to be an example for others as well (Özyürek, 2004). And this could give the children an opportunity to carry on negative behaviors and to use unsuitable approaches in solving the problem.

In coping with undesired and continual behaviors, time-out is considered within recommended punishments. In the case of punishment, the fact that the child is in a boring environment, other children and teacher have no connection with the child during the time-out and that keeping minutes equal to the age of the child are the issues to be paid attention (DeBord, 1996; Dobson, 2004; Özbey, 2004; Özyürek, 2004). The child made to sit on a chair or a table and the one sent out of the class should never be given reinforcer and it should be taken into consideration that other children ignore the punished child (Özyürek, 2004). Otherwise, if the duration of time-out is not defined well enough and the child is in communication with his friends will not be able to have an impact of dying down (disappearance) on negative behavior. The applications of teachers included in the study such as making him sit, making him wait at a corner, leaving him alone at a corner remind us that they use the punishment of time-out while the fact that they did not declare that they applied these punishments suitable to the rules of time-out generally recalls that they did not use the punishment of time-out effectively.

Özyürek (2004) pointed out that the punishments of response cost and dying down (disappearance of behaviour) could be applied in the second type punishment as an alternative to a great many ineffective and negative punishments applied to younger children. In order to apply the punishment of response cost each child should be known well, their positive behaviours should be determined and these behaviors should be reinforced. When an undesired behavior is encountered with, formation of the behavior can be reduced later on with the loss of current reinforcers partly. The punishment of dying down is applied in way that reinforcers carrying on undesired behavior are finalized.

The teachers included in the study did not name the punishments of response cost and dying down among the punishments they applied in coping with undesired behaviors or no expression of them regarding this issue is

encountered. This result leads us to think that the teachers included in the study did not apply punishments effectively. This case makes us think that teachers are not aware of this issue and they cannot spare their time well enough for the application to be carried out continuously, carefully and regularly such as determining and informing the rules of classroom together with children, determining the behaviors that they should get reinforced to and that they could lose easily, due to such reasons as large classes.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The punishments applied by pre-school teachers were determined with the current study but the methods of changing positive behaviours to be used in coping with undesired behaviours were not questioned. Depending on the results of the study, teachers applied punishments considered within the content of keeping away from a favorite activity, time-out, making him pay the price (compensation). Response cost and dying down of behavior suitable for younger children are not included in the punishments applied. In this study, the punishments applied by teachers were not carried out detailed data collection methods such as observation and interview, but only determined depending on the answers they gave in the form of questionnaire. Despite these limitations, the conclusions of the current study could shed light on such topics as the training of pre-school teachers on effective punishments they will apply and informing about the punishments being applied at pre-school education over the researches to be carried out on the punishments pre-school teachers apply.

### **REFERENCES**

- Ada, S. and M.Ö. Çetin, 2002. Eğitim ve Öğretim ortamında Disiplin Nedir? What is Discipline in the Environment of Education and Teaching? 1st Edn. Ankara: Nobel, pp: 3-9. ISBN: 975-591-407-2.
- Aydin, A., 2004. İstenmeyen Davranislarin Yönetimi, Sinif Yönetimi Management of Undesired Behaviors, Classroom Management. 5th Edn. Ankara: Tekagaç Eylül Publishing, pp: 149-172. ISBN: 975-8888-20-X.
- DeBord, K., 1996. Appropriate limits for young children: A guide for discipline, part one and parttwo. [http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/14/e4/14.pdf](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/14/e4/14.pdf).
- Dobson, J., 2004. Ağaç Yasken Eğilir Make Hay when Sun Shines (Translated by Bünyamin Erdogan). 1st Edn. Istanbul: Beyaz Balina Publishing, pp: 161-205. ISBN: 975-63874-7-5.
- Erözkan, A., 2007. Davranisçi Yaklasimda Öğrenme, Eğitim Psikolojisi. Learningat Behavioristic Approach, Psychology of Education. In: Deniz, M.E. (Eds.). 1st Edn. Ankara: Maya Akademi, pp: 259-296. ISBN: 978-605-5985-03-5.
- Gartrell, D., 2000. Beyond discipline to guidance: A primer on the guidance alternative. [http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/000019b/16/c6/0f.pdf](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/000019b/16/c6/0f.pdf).
- Humphreys, T., 2002. Disiplin Nedir? Ne degildir? What is and Isn't Discipline? (Translated by Berat Çelik). 3rd Edn. Istanbul: Epsilon Publishing, pp: 9-34. ISBN: 975-331182-6.
- Ministry of Education, 2006. Okul öncesi eğitimi programi (36-72 aylık çocuklar için) Pre-school education program (for children of 36-72 months of age, [http://oogem.meb.gov.tr/mevzuat\\_bank/içerik.asp?id=48](http://oogem.meb.gov.tr/mevzuat_bank/içerik.asp?id=48)).
- Özbey, Ç., 2004. Çocuk sorunlarına yapıcı çözümler Positive solutions for child problems. Istanbul: İnkılap, pp: 81-94. ISBN: 975-10-2145-6.
- Özyürek, M., 2004. Davranislarini azaltma: Ceza işlem süreçleri, Sinifta davranis degistirme Reducing behaviors: Process of punishment, Changing behaviors in the class. Ankara: Kök Publishing, pp: 113-163. ISBN: 975-499-242-8.
- Selçuk, Z., 2007. Öğrenme Psikolojisi, Eğitim Psikolojisi Psychology of Learning, Psychology of Education. 14th Edn. Ankara: Nobel, pp: 125-218. ISBN: 978-9944-77-146-7.
- Tavsancil, E. and E. Aslan, 2001. Sözel, yazili ve diger materyaller için içerik analizi ve uygulama örnekleri Content analysis for verbal, written and other materials and samples of application. Istanbul: Epsilon, pp: 22-81. ISBN: 975331310-1.
- Wyckoff, J. and B.C. Unell, 2002. Bagirip Çağirmeden ya da Dövmeden Çocuk Terbiyesi Socializing Children without Shouting and Beating (Translated by Ümit Topuz Sargüney). 2nd Edn. Ankara: HYB Publishing, pp: 1-10. ISBN: 995-6972-24-6.
- Yörükoglu, A., 1992. Çocuk Ruh Sağligi Child Mental Health. 17th Edn. Istanbul: Özgür Publishing and Distributio, pp: 195-220. ISBN: 975-447-006-5.