

# Back to School After School Closure in the Pandemic: Student Discipline Problems

International Journal of Educational Reform  
1–19

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DOI: 10.1177/10567879221130989

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## Abstract

The study was carried out to determine the disciplinary problems students experienced on returning to school after the pandemic. This is a case study, one of the qualitative research designs conducted with five principals working in high schools in Turkey, who volunteered to participate in the research in the first semester of the 2021–2022 academic year. Principals were selected according to the snowball sampling method. In the research, disciplinary problems were handled as personal, against friends, and disorganizing problems. When the reasons for disciplinary problems are examined, they are psychological, technological, social-emotional, familial, academic, and school orders. The measures by principals taken are reward-punishment and positive language and approaches.

## Keywords

pandemic, school closure, disciplinary problems, student, principal

## Introduction

School officials have the difficult task of socializing children (Balci, 2014) while educating students with different backgrounds and needs (Bursalioglu, 2010) academically, behaviorally, and socially (Taymaz, 2011). For this reason, educators have their own legal texts and disciplinary policies (Aydin, 2015). Discipline is defined

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as the whole of the measures taken to ensure that people comply with the general thoughts and behaviors of the community they live in (Turkish Language Society, 2021). The purpose of the discipline is to teach students the behaviors, principles, and rules that they must obey at school (Cameron, 2006) and is to monitor whether students behave in accordance with these principles and rules (Perry & Morris, 2014). Accordingly, discipline is a learning process (Baloglu, 2017).

Students learn about social life through schools starting from preschool education (Aydin, 2012). In this way, schools are a tool that organizes society (Bechuke & Debeila, 2012). Disciplinary problems may arise from time to time in schools where the child socializes and learns the order of society.

In this study, first of all, the purpose and importance of discipline, the reasons for disciplinary problems (reasons from students, teachers, parents, friends and social environment, media and social media, the coronavirus disease 2019 [COVID-19] pandemic), the task of the principal in providing discipline at school were examined with a literature review, then the disciplinary problems seen in students returning to school after the pandemic, their reasons and the precautions taken by the principals against these disciplinary problems were discussed in line with the research findings.

## **Purpose and Importance of Discipline at School**

Discipline restores order, the reaction to the student who exhibits undesirable behavior, to prevent the undesirable behavior of children (Skiba & Losen, 2016), actions deemed necessary by teachers or principals for students who violate a predetermined rule or prevent educational activities (Perry & Morris, 2014). It is all kinds of activities applied to change student behaviors that disrupt the system (Rogers, 2004). In fact, discipline is aimed to provide students with the ability to control and evaluate their own behaviors (Nelson, 2002; Rogers, 2004) and to ensure harmony in society (Baloglu, 2017). This takes place first in the family and then through the schools (Kiral, 2017). The aim of the family and school is to raise good citizens and people who follow the rules of society. The effectiveness and productivity of the school depend on its ability to achieve its goals (Balci, 2014; Taskin, 2019; Taymaz, 2011). For this purpose, schools frequently use discipline to make deliberate behavioral changes in children and to improve the educational conditions of the student (Ovink, 2014).

In this respect, there is a need for an order consisting of rules and principles that will prevent deviation from the goals of the school (Harris et al., 2000). Order in schools is tried to be achieved by forming a whole with laws, regulations and the culture, tradition, customs, and value judgments developed by each school (Guclu, 2004). Otherwise, educational activities will fall short of achieving the expected goals. Therefore, educational activities have to be planned, regular, and within the framework of certain rules (Baloglu, 2017).

There are five aims of the discipline in educational institutions: developing students' awareness of behavior, self-discipline, sense of responsibility, self-control, and accountability

for their behaviors (Bursalioglu, 2010); enabling them to stay focused on learning (Ovink, 2014); developing their self-esteem (Aydin, 2012); teaching them to understand and respect the rights of others, and values such as honesty, fairness, and respect for others (Aydin, 2002); ensuring that students gain a sense of independence by being responsible in the learning process and to cooperate with other students (Basar, 2004); showing and teaching the student what behavior is desirable, and to monitor whether the student does this behavior or not (Pehlivan, 2017).

Discipline is sometimes used synonymously with punishment at the end of undesirable behavior (Green et al., 2018; Skiba & Losen, 2016). Punishments such as shouting, beating, humiliating, threatening, and mocking are used in the family, society, and even schools. However, punishment is only a part of the discipline (Karahana, 2020). Sometimes there are various discipline problems in schools and there are a number of reasons for them. These reasons are explained below.

*Reasons From Students:* One of the most common causes of disciplinary problems in schools is students' attitudes toward themselves (Hemphill et al., 2006). Undisciplined behaviors can be observed in antisocial and risk group students who feel ugly, inadequate, unsuccessful, and insecure. In addition, it is seen that disciplinary problems are more common in adolescents (Bilir et al., 2007) and male students (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). These students generally exhibit negative behaviors (Hanhan, 2012). These are intentional rude words and behaviors, defiance, disobedience, aggression, fighting, lying, being late, cheating, stealing, etc. (Cimen, 2010; Karaboga, 2014).

*Reasons From Teachers:* The teachers' communication with the students (Karahana, 2020), the management style they adopt, the way they teach the course, their expectations from the students, their professional ability, field knowledge and expertise (Croninger et al., 2007; Guclu, 2004), course performance (Woessmann, 2011), and personality (Rushton et al., 2007) affect the atmosphere of the classroom positively or negatively (Den Brok et al., 2004).

*Reasons From Parents:* The way parents relate to their children is one of the main sources of disciplinary problems (Nijhof & Engels, 2007). Being domineering, excessively reproachful and negligent by the mother and/or father, and keeping the children under tight control at home can cause them to lose their self-confidence (Pellerin, 2005) and create a sense of rebellion (Sumer et al., 2010). At the same time, the fact that the family leaves the child unattended, does not set rules, and fulfills the child's every wish can cause the child to become insatiable and spoiled, which is a factor in the child's opposition to the rules at school (Celik, 2005; Eipstein & Sanders, 2002). Families who do not communicate sufficiently with the school and the teacher and leave all the responsibility to the teacher and the school (Sertelin, 2003), and families who are not closely interested in the education of their child, have a high tendency to turn to undesirable behaviors (Bilgili, 2020). Family structure and socio-economic status are largely determinants of student behavior (Carter et al., 2017; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba & Sprague, 2008; Tahiroglu et al., 2009).

*Reasons From Friends and Social Environment:* The group of friends and social environment can negatively affect the behavior of the student. Students can keep up with their negative and undisciplined behaviors in order to be accepted by their peer group (Baloglu, 2017). Some students learn sarcasm, mockery, violence, slang, and abusive speech from the socio-cultural environments they live in (Cimen, 2010). Drug and smoking experiences, truancy from school, and behaviors to disrupt the classroom or school order can set an example for disciplinary problems experienced with the influence of peers (Karahan, 2020).

*Reasons From Media and Social Media:* Today, media is one of the important risk factors for the emergence of problematic behaviors. Mass media such as television and the internet have an effect on the cognitive and affective development of students (Ozunlu, 2012). Children's watching programs that are not suitable for their age period, using social media and websites with negative content can have negative effects on the development of the child. This situation can be faced by the teacher and the school administration as an important discipline problem (Ili, 2013).

*Reasons From the COVID-19 Pandemic:* Due to COVID-19 which was declared a worldwide pandemic, educational activities could not be carried out in schools, and schools had to be closed for a while (Daniel, 2020; Phelps & Sperry, 2020). School closures occurred at different times in countries. It has been revealed that 1.6 billion children all over the world cannot fully benefit from their right to education due to the closure of schools. The event that caused the largest mass school closure in education in history is the pandemic. Schools have been closed for almost a year or more due to pandemic-related measures (UNICEF, 2022).

Among OECD countries, Turkey is the second country where schools are closed for the longest time, after Mexico. This period has found approximately one and a half years with openings and closings (TUSIAD, 2021). With the closure of schools, face-to-face education activities have started to be done remotely, at home, through digital technologies (Karip, 2020). Children who cannot go to school, have limited internet access, or do not have electronic devices such as tablets are deprived of their right to receive education. Children who participated in distance education participated in the education with synchronous and asynchronous lessons. School closures have further increased the gap between children's learning and each other (Psacharopoulos et al., 2020).

During their stays at home, children spent the time they normally spend with their friends using digital tools to have fun and socialize, etc. Staying away from school, social environment, and friendship relations during the pandemic process has led to an increase in aggressive behaviors in students. It is seen that some children get angry and behave aggressively during the restraint process without any reason (Ministry of National Education, 2020). In addition, it has been observed that students have difficulty focusing on lessons thanks to digital addiction (Erol & Erol, 2020).

During the pandemic process, there have been problems such as parents' difficulties in maintaining distance education, increased school dropout rates, difficulties in measurement and evaluation, social isolation, and learning losses of students

(Sari & Nayir, 2020). Apart from these, students were also affected psychologically in this process (Fardin, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Fear and anxiety of getting sick, loss of a relative, obsession with washing hands constantly, and stress are some of the problems (Erol & Erol, 2020). These reasons have led to some behavioral problems in students. With the opening of schools, students inevitably experienced problems of adaptation to school and discipline.

## **Principals' Roles in School Discipline**

There is a need for a discipline system that includes rules and goals in school (Bottiani et al., 2018). Principals have the authority to conduct and supervise all the works of the school in accordance with the laws, regulations, programs, and Ministry orders. To the extent that the school principals can fulfill this responsibility, they can positively affect the functioning of the school and realize the goals (Bursalioglu, 2010). With effective discipline practices, the school turns into an ideal learning environment for students (Garrett, 2015). For this reason, principals should ensure the effectiveness of disciplinary practices and empower teaching (Akcaokca & Bilgin, 2016).

School principals' overly oppressive, inconsistent, or erratic management approach increases disciplinary problems (Feuerborn et al., 2018). On the other hand, there is chaos, disorder, and nonsafety in schools where the discipline is very loose (Aydin, 2012). The attitude of the school administration is effective on the behavior of the students. Principals have responsibilities to do in order to create a positive discipline understanding. When responsibilities are not fulfilled, discipline problems begin to appear (Demirtas, 2012).

School principals should assume an important leadership role in ensuring school discipline by exhibiting effective management and exemplary personality (Garrett, 2015; Olufunke & Abimbola, 2018), and they should be role models seen throughout the school (Bursalioglu, 2010). Principals should manage the school not by sitting in their chairs, but by walking around the school, they should be busy communicating with all stakeholders in the school and solving the problems in the school as soon as possible (Aydin, 2012).

As can be seen, multiple factors contribute to school disciplinary problems. Managing disciplinary problems and ensuring the order of the school are among the responsibilities of school principals. It is seen that various studies have been carried out on school discipline problems. Green's (2006) study in the American Midwest found that the most common discipline problems in school are fighting and bullying. In the research, it has been determined that preventive strategies are widely used for disciplinary problems. A study conducted by Kaemingk (2006) in California determined that school rules improve the understanding of discipline and that guidance programs are effective in the implementation of discipline. It has been determined that school administrators who exhibit leadership also play an important role in school discipline. In the study conducted by Cimen (2010), teachers expressed the leadership behaviors of school principals as effective in preventing nondiscipline behaviors.

Bilir et al. (2007) study in Mugla, administrators mostly expressed behaviors that disrupt the school's order, such as not obeying the dress code, bringing mobile phones to school, and acting disrespectfully, as behaviors of indiscipline. School administrators showed the causes of indiscipline behaviors as the effect of adolescence, media-series, and family-related reasons, respectively. Pehlivan (2017) identified the most common disciplinary problems in middle and high schools in Malatya as disturbing the peace of the class, fighting, smoking, damaging school property, and threatening students. It has been determined that administrators make applications such as informing about harmful habits, reading hours, having students make responsibility projects, satisfaction surveys, and complaint boxes in order to provide discipline. Agin's (2019) study in Ankara, it was determined that the vast majority of teachers applied to disciplinary practices to develop desired behaviors for students, to protect students from bad habits, and to eliminate deficiencies and negativities caused by family and environment. Disciplinary problems at school are usually resolved on the basis of guidance and dialogue.

Examining the studies, no such research was found regarding the disciplinary incidents that took place after returning to school after the pandemic, while studies on school discipline were conducted. For this reason, the research is important. Considering that schools have been closed for about a year and a half in Turkey, it is inevitable that children follow the rules in the school environment and have problems.

In the Turkish education system, after 2014, the duty and responsibility of teachers to supervise the courses were given to school principals instead of education inspectors. School principals started to give evaluation grades based on teachers' course supervision and teachers' performances (Official Gazzette, 2014). School principals have the authority to follow teachers' courses. Its legal basis is stated in the Regulation of Secondary Education Institutions.

According to the Regulations of Secondary Education Institutions (2013), some of the duties of school principals are as follows (Article 78/4):

(d) School principals follow the courses of teachers at least once in each academic year and provide guidance to them in order to increase the performance of teachers in their schools.

(f) School principals take all kinds of measures regarding the order and discipline of the school.

(g) School principals carry out the performance management of teachers and their disciplinary affairs, as well as student reward and discipline.

(m) School principals ensure that research is carried out in order to increase the efficiency, quality, and continuous development of education and training, and to prepare and implement projects for improvement in these matters.

(n) School principals offer to reward teachers who perform their duties with outstanding success. It warns teachers who do not fulfill their duties properly and ensures that disciplinary action is taken against them when necessary.

The school principals, who supervise the courses of the teachers, follow the courses of the teachers. They know the pre-pandemic and postpandemic situations of the students. Therefore, they also have the opportunity to compare before and after the pandemic.

For this reason, the study was carried out to determine the disciplinary problems and the measures taken after the schools were opened after the pandemic. Based on this general purpose, this study was designed to answer the following questions.

1. According to the school principals, what were the disciplinary problems and reasons of students returning to school after the pandemic?
2. What measures did school principals take to solve disciplinary problems?

### *Method*

In the research, qualitative research was adopted to work in depth and with few people in detail and it is a case study. This research, which aims to reveal the current situation, was carried out in a descriptive case study. It aims to describe and reveal existing and current situations in real life (Creswell, 2016). In the case of studies, the context is evaluated with an in-depth, detailed, and holistic perspective, and is described by explaining the event to the reader or the people involved (Yin, 2011).

### *Participants*

The research was carried out with principals working in five schools in Turkey in the first semester of the 2021–2022 academic year. Participants were selected according to the criterion sampling method. The criterion in the research is to be a school principal in working high school during the pandemic process. In addition, the snowball sampling method was used, and the participants suggested another principal participate in the research after them. Thus, these participants from different cities of Turkey were included in the study. The executive seniority of the participants ranges from two to 12 years. All of them are male, one of them is a principal and others are vice principals.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher reviewed the literature and conducted semi-structured interviews with principals. While preparing the form, first of all, three school principals and an academician were consulted for content and validity, a preliminary application was made with three principals, and then the form was given its final shape. Ethical-IRB approval was obtained from the researcher's university. The research was started by informing the participants that their information such as name-surname and school information would not be deciphered under any

circumstances and that the confidentiality principle would be respected. Two interviews were noted down because the participants did not want to be recorded, the other participants preferred to write down the problems and solution strategies they had experienced and sent it via e-mail. In the study, the interviews were ended with five participants because the participants gave similar answers. In the research, the data was analyzed using content analysis.

## **Validity and Reliability**

For each sub-problem, categories and sub-categories were created according to the opinions of the participants and direct quotations were used in the study for validity and reliability (Yildirim & Simsek, 2005). For validity, purposive sampling method was used, literature review and the methods of examining the research process and results of another researcher were applied. The researchers, who conducted the interviews in the research, treated the participants objectively and away from prejudices and avoided giving direction; they exhibited behaviors in accordance with professional and academic ethical principles. The researchers avoided examples and expressions that would reveal the identity of the participants in the study. Each participant in the research was presented within the research by giving a code name.

## **Findings**

In this part of the study, the disciplinary problems, reasons, and measures were examined by findings.

## **Disciplinary Problems**

Disciplinary problems in high schools are discussed under three headings. These are personal, friends, and school orders problems. The findings regarding the problems experienced in high schools are given in Table 1.

According to Table 1, students have some disciplinary problems. Below are the views of the participants.

In particular, students act as if they have forgotten the concept of in-school and out-of-school. In terms of student behavior, if the student talks to his friends outside of school such as slang, behaves rudely and carelessly, he continues these behaviors in the school. School culture is almost forgotten. Students are uninterested in bringing materials to come to class ready. In this case, not listening to the lesson in the classroom causes problems such as disrupting the lesson flow (Ali).

After the pandemic, I saw that students forgot to go to school and their social media habits increased a lot. His phone addiction was advanced. There were those who made phone calls and played games, took videos of each other, and shared them. Those who take pictures of their teachers and share them, and those who photograph their



**Table I.** Disciplinary Problems in High Schools.

Category	High school
Personal	Not being ready for class/subject, Not bringing course materials, Not listening to the lecture, disrupting the course flow, Act aggressively, Feeling sick all the time, Indifference to classes/subjects, Smoking addiction, Being late for lessons, Escaping from school, Behaving to be sick, Trying to quarantine the class, Phone use in class, Making posts on social media, Not wanting to attend class, Trying to avoid exams, Behavioral disorders, Communication problems
Friends	Insulting the friends, slang, and abusive speech, Being rude and careless, Treating the friends, Bothering their friends, Decreasing in friendship relations, solidarity, being together, sharing behaviors, Weakening of social relationships, Using force and violence against friends
Problems about school order	Following disciplinary rules difficulty, Forgetting the school culture, Problems in obeying the school rules, Playing the phone in classes, Trying to disrupt the order of the class, Trying to break disciplinary rules, Problems with obeying social rules, Disobeying dress code

girlfriends ... They are also extremely comfortable in school uniforms. I even have students who come to an open school. There were smokers in the toilets ... (Ahmet).

For example, when a student has a problem with his friend, he chooses to solve it by insulting or using force instead of using communication channels (Emin).

They try to go home by pretending to be sick or they make excuses for the class to go into complete quarantine. The student tries to smoke in school toilets and in secret places or tries to do this just outside the schoolyard. The students do not want the phones to be collected, they try to use the phone in the lesson and they also make negative posts on the social media (Yigit).

### Reasons for Disciplinary Problems

The reasons for disciplinary problems in schools are classified as psychological, technological, social-emotional, familial, academic, and school orders. Table 2 shows the reasons for disciplinary problems.

As seen in Table 2, it is seen that the most important reasons for disciplinary problems in high schools are family, academic success, school/classroom order, and technology. Examples of participants views are given below.

Students are very insistent on using the phone. They have a lot of difficulty in complying with the school rule that the phones must be turned off all day in the school (Erman).

Even in classes, they display negative behaviors that go up to using the phone and broadcasting live if they find the opportunity. In particular, students act as if they have forgotten the concept of in-school and out-of-school. In terms of student behavior, the

**Table 2.** Reasons for Discipline Problems in High Schools.

Category	High school
Psychological	Indifference
Technological	Getting used to distance education, Using social media constantly, Phone and social media addiction
Social-Emotional	Failure of students to live the age period, Students' lack of socializing with friends at school and outside, Being at home all the time makes it difficult to adapt to the social environment at school
Familial	Parents' objections, Indifference of parents, Low attendance at parent meetings, Parents do not follow their children, Inconsiderate of parents, Parents' discussion as a result of the school principals' complaint about the child, Failure of parents to admit their children's mistakes, Parents' lack of trust in teachers, principals, and schools, Students are in the same environment with their parents constantly
Academic and school orders	Not listening to the lecture, not understanding subjects, Distancing from school, Transfers between schools continuously, Too much student freedom, Students get used to comfort during the pandemic period, Ensuring that all students pass their classes during the pandemic period of the Ministry of National Education, The student thinks that he/she will pass the class is guaranteed, The necessary background for the lessons is not formed

student continues to behave in the same way in the school as he talks and acts with his friends in the external environment. School culture is almost forgotten (Ali).

Most parents don't care about their kids. While the rate of participation in parent meetings in ninth grade is almost 60%, this rate can drop to almost 3% in 12th grade. Parents cannot accept that their children can make mistakes. They act with the logic that my son/daughter will not do it. But his child is doing whatever he is doing. Parents also have difficulties in keeping track of their children. Running away from school, the boy spends time in the cafe. If we didn't call the parents, maybe she wouldn't know where her child is, just because she/he was absent (Ahmet).

Ensuring that all students pass their classes during the pandemic period and the expectation that the student will be in the same situation again ... In this process, students cannot understand the lessons in the classroom because they cannot create the necessary infrastructure for the lessons ... (Emin).

During the quarantine period, the student does not develop the social adaptation skills that should be taken in the social environment and the students are constantly in the same environment with their parents, reasons such as making it difficult to adapt to the social environment at school ... (Yigit).

### Measures for Disciplinary Problems

The measures taken by principals for disciplinary problems at school were examined in two categories. These are in the form of using positive language and approaches with the reward-punishment method. The measures taken by principals are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Measures Taken by High School Principals for Disciplinary Problems.

Category	High school
Reward-punishment	Keeping the disciplinary board active, Penalty after alternative ways are finished
Positive language and approaches	Collecting phones, Holding meetings with stakeholders about school rules, Meeting with class president students about school rules, Parent-teacher conferences, meetings, Getting parents support, Repeating school rules at ceremonies, Communication with parents constantly, Reminders on issues such as tolerance, living together, the necessity of being in the same environment, Presentations to parents/students about phone/smoking addiction Information seminars on discipline regulation and penalties

As can be seen in Table 3, principals generally chose to use positive language and approaches. It has been stated by the principals that some sanctions against students are used as the last way. Below are examples of the opinions of principals.

First of all, meetings were held with advisory, classroom, and field teachers to raise awareness among students about school rules. Again, we held a meeting with the class president students as the school administration and guidance service regarding school rules. We held a meeting with the teacher and parents attending the classes where the problems are intense. We tried to get the support of the parents. We remind the school rules by repeating them in ceremonies (Ali).

Phone addiction was at its peak. As soon as I took office, I went around the classroom almost every morning, collected the phones, handed out the last minute of the lesson, gathered the class presidents and gave information. Two of my teacher friends from the disciplinary board also helped me constantly. At the parent-teacher conferences meeting, I advised our counselor to make a presentation about phone addiction to the parents. We informed the parents. I called all classes day by day and gave information seminars on discipline regulations. I organized seminars about which punishments will be given to which behaviors and the bindingness of the disciplinary board decisions. It was effective. Most parents don't care about their kids. If we didn't call, maybe she wouldn't know where her child is because she was absent. We kept calling the parents on the phone (Ahmet).

Guidance is given about the need to correct the negative behavior by meeting with the student in cooperation with the school guidance teacher, the class guidance teacher, and administrators (Emin).

In cases where the lowest disciplinary punishment, reprimand is required, instead of being punished immediately, having the student perform any community service-garden cleaning, etc. instead of punishment (Erman).

When necessary, parents are invited to the school to learn the reasons behind their child's negative behavior and try to find a solution accordingly. Disciplinary action is taken when all the ways are exhausted or in cases requiring higher punishment that is difficult to forgive (Yigit).

## **Discussion**

The COVID-19 pandemic, which affected all over the world, caused schools to be closed from kindergarten to 12th grade and interrupted education (Phelps & Sperry, 2020). This directly affected education and students. Although it is known that the losses in children's education will increase (Daniel, 2020), the closure of schools has been made compulsory to protect the health of children and individuals (Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). Children who stayed at home as a result of the closure of schools received education through digital technologies. In this process, the children stayed away from the school-classroom environment, rules, and friends (Erol & Erol, 2020), and spent time alone at home only with their families. Children living at home caused some changes in their psychology (Fardin, 2020), academic

success (Daniel, 2020), behaviors, human relations, and many other aspects. This change was clearly noticed only with the opening of the schools.

This research carried out in order to determine high school students' disciplinary problems in Turkey, after the opening of the schools, the reasons for these, and the measures taken by principals. When the disciplinary problems are examined personal, problems with friends, and problems with disrupting the school system. Personal problems include not coming to class ready, being aggressive, being sick, being late, not listening to the courses, etc.; problems with friends are speaking slang, showing rude behavior, using force and violence against their friends, etc.; behaviors disrupting the school order were identified as problems in complying with the disciplinary rules, using the phone in lessons, taking videos, forgetting the school culture, etc. The fact that the school rules and order, which were settled before the pandemic, were forgotten with the pandemic, caused the educators to experience difficulties at the beginning and increased their responsibilities of the educators.

Although similar results (Agin, 2019; Bilir et al., 2007; Green, 2006; Pehlivan, 2017) were found in studies on disciplinary problems before the pandemic, this research indicates that disciplinary problems have increased more. Because the pandemic has caused students to become lonely, forget the school order and rules, have insufficient academic background, learning loss, anxiety, and stress. Huang et al. (2020) and Cao et al. (2020) found that students experience anxiety and psychological problems. It has been found that long-term school closures, quarantine periods, and house arrest have negative effects on students' physical, mental, spiritual, and psychological health (Brooks et al., 2020; Fardin, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Yilmaz et al. (2020) found an increase in distraction and aggressive behavior in children after the pandemic in Turkey.

In fact, it has been concluded in this research that among the causes of disciplinary problems experienced are psychological, technological, social-emotional, familial and academic success, and school order. When school principals evaluated the causes of disciplinary problems, they stated that there were mostly problems with parents, academic success, and technological tools. In this process, the school principals and the parents had into various arguments for reasons such as the excessive trust of some families in their children and their belief that their children would not do anything wrong, the child using the phone in the lesson, etc.

It determined that some parents have disciplinary problems as a result of excessive indifference, leaving the child unattended, and the children being with their parents all the time. However, being away from the school environment has caused the learning losses, being indifferent to the lessons, and being at home all the time has caused them to forget the rules of school and social life. As a matter of fact, Saavedra (2020) also identified the negativities experienced in education during the COVID-19 epidemic period as learning loss, increased school dropout rates, and nutrition.

Children have experienced problems due to reasons such as being constantly with the family, not being able to spend time with their friends, closing of schools, and cancellation of extracurricular activities. It has been determined that children who have to

stay at home due to situations such as interruption of education, curfew during the pandemic period, neglect by their parents, and exposure to psychological issues have also increased (Ergonen et al., 2020). Principals have already stated this clearly in the research.

## **Conclusion**

As a result of the research, it was concluded that disciplinary problems increased compared to the pre-pandemic period with the closure of schools due to the pandemic. Lessons learned from the research are school principals solve and try to prevent these disciplinary problems with positive language and approaches. These include holding meetings with both students and parents, individual meetings with students, cooperating directly with parents, constantly reminding rules, and counseling services working actively. Despite all the positive approaches, it concluded that the reward-punishment method was used as a last way. According to the research, firstly students are made to work for community services and school, and then disciplinary punishments are applied as the last part. It also determined that the attitudes of the parents toward their children and the fact that they spend too much time together due to the pandemic cause disciplinary problems at school.

The best way to eliminate disciplinary problems or reduce negativities in the classroom and at school is to take and implement measures to create positive discipline. As a matter of fact, it is mentioned in the study that measures are taken for positive discipline. It should not be forgotten that individuals are children up to the age of 18 according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, the Turkish Criminal Law, and other national and international legal texts. Children will learn acceptable behaviors in different situations in society by needing the guidance of adults. This guidance, especially by educators, will give good results if it is done using positive discipline ways. In this respect, the implementation of the rules required by the social life, both inside and outside the school, by the students, depends on the teachers, administrators, and families working together and guiding the children in the right way.

## **Limitations and Recommendations**

This research was carried out to examine the disciplinary problems faced in students returning to school after the pandemic, from the perspective of the different five public high schools' principals. The research is limited to the perspective of these high school principals. For this reason, the research does not include disciplinary problems in private schools, elementary, and middle schools. In the future, researchers can investigate the disciplinary problems experienced in these school types. Similar and different aspects of disciplinary problems in high schools can be compared by conducting this research in different countries. Within the scope of the research, it can be suggested to increase home visits, to give students more responsibility in the classrooms,

to make lockers for cell phones and to leave them in the lockers before class, and to have students do more in-school community service activities. It can be beneficial to apply a “family psychologist” to every family. Professional development courses on alternative discipline methods and communication can be planned free of charge for school principals.


### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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