

Antisocial Behaviors as Indicators of Latent School Dysfunction in Urban Morocco: a Phenomenology Study

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Abstract

This present research delves into the subjective experiences of EFL high school teachers in Morocco, elucidating their daily encounters with disruptive and anti-social behaviors and the coping mechanisms they employ. Conducted within the theoretical framework of structural functionalism, the study aims at measuring the extent to which schools as socialization institutions serve their designated social roles. A phenomenological methodology is employed, allowing five high school teachers to freely share and reflect on their lived experiences with regard to the topic under investigation. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data, which offered ample freedom for informants to voice their perceptions, feelings, sufferings, and to suggest practical solutions. From the testimonies of participants, three primary themes emerged. First, the Moroccan school is now embarking on undeclared roles pertaining to security and social order rather than to education. Second, the immense suffering experienced by teachers has a substantial negative impact on their professional performances, which, in turn, affects students' academic achievements. Third, informants recognize disruptive behavior as a symptom of school dysfunction, and attribute it to teacher disempowerment, ineffective school legislations, the absence of a collaborative environment, the local authorities, the media and the family.

1. INTRODUCTION

The mission of the school has always been to correspond to societal needs not only at the academic or professional levels but also at the level of preaching the set of values that regulate social relationships and interactions (Durkheim, 1961). For this reason, it is often argued that an ideal citizen is made not born. Schools as socialization institutions are considered “as the mechanism for cultural and societal transmission” (Dill, 2007, p. 222). Educational institutions, then, are tasked with preaching normative patterns of conduct inside and outside the school.

According to functional theory (Durkheim, 1956; Parsons, 1985), this is a complementary social role undertaken by schools to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of social cohesion and stability. Values, norms, and codes of conduct are integral parts of what any given society would like its educational systems to prioritize, especially at a time when antisocial behaviours are rife and civility is on its way towards extinction (Boyd, 2006).

In the same vein, the history of the educational system in Morocco has always described value education as a priority, and this was stressed in all the reform projects that have been implemented since the country got its independence in 1956. The mission of the Moroccan school is to empower learners with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to successfully assume future social roles. Equally, educational institutions serve as environments for promoting appropriate behaviours, where learners are encouraged to embrace positive values of citizenship, human rights and other ethical principles. This is exactly what most official documents such as *The National Charter of Education and Training* (NCET) emphasize.

However, and this is the research problem from which this study departs, many Moroccan schools nowadays cultivate violence of all types, drug addiction, bullying, in addition to clothing and haircut styles which do not fall within our cultural norms and school legislations. Prior research confirms that such phenomena have significant impacts on teachers' performance and students' achievement alike (Alvarez, 2008; El Helou et al., 2016; von Haaren-Mack et al., 2020). A concrete example of this is the conclusion of Wang et al., 2022 that "due to its emotional and intellectual nature, teaching is seen as a highly demanding, challenging, and stressful vocation" (p.1). They maintain that a teachers' inability to cope with such difficulties is often associated with many unpleasant emotions "including stress, anxiety, apprehension, and boredom, which may result in their professional disengagement" (p. 1)

The main focus of this study, accordingly, is to examine the extent to which such impacts are present in the Moroccan context. Such examination is possible via gaining a comprehensive understanding of informants' lived experiences, emotions, perspectives and coping mechanisms in response to different disruptive behaviours. Ultimately, the investigation aims to address the following research question:

- How do teachers in urban high schools in Morocco perceive and experience students' disruptive behaviour?
- What coping mechanism(s) do they make use of in response to anti-social behaviour?
- To what extent are they proactive in addressing disruptive and antisocial behaviour?

1. The School as a Space of Desired Behavior: from Function to Dysfunction

The history of educational philosophy has been marked by a keen interest in producing ideal citizens able to serve and function properly in the social community. From the time of Aristotle, the development of virtuous, self-disciplined, self-directed, and responsible citizens was “a matter of public concern and not something left to the caprice of parents” (Robb, 1943, p. 206). Aristotle believed that educational goals should focus on developing balanced individuals eager not only to acquire knowledge but also to build good character. He believed that ethics and moral education should be integral parts of the educational process to foster virtuous behaviour that falls within the norms and aspirations of the community. This implies that educational systems have to guarantee an environment for the practice of socially cherished values in preparation for real future roles, and “it is a task of the school to provide that desirable environment” (Robb, p. 207).

Similarly, Jean Jacque Rousseau’s works placed great emphasis on child development. He believed that the primary purpose of education is to preserve the child’s innate goodness, innocence and purity. In what sounds more like an accusation of modern educational institutions, Rousseau maintained that “arts and sciences had given civilization little of value. Quite the opposite, they were more likely to have morally corrupted the common man” (Koops, 2012, p. 2). Such a stand seems to mimic the sharp criticism addressed to urban schools in Morocco by educational stakeholders and parents alike.

The present paper is conducted within the theoretical framework of structural functionalism, as represented best by Durkheim (1956), Merton (1968) and Parsons (1985). Functional theory posits that institutions, often referred to as structures, take on complementary social roles as they work together to promote social unity and ensure overall stability during an ongoing evolutionary process. Durkheim emphasized that socialization plays a crucial role in shaping individuals’ conduct and principles within a community. For him, socialization is a vital procedure assigned to schools wherein individuals internalize the norms, values, and beliefs of society, enabling them to effectively contribute to their communities. Durkheim explicitly brought up the main topic being addressed by the current study: disciplinary issues in the classroom. He noted that discipline is a primordial condition for collective life in a classroom; without it, anarchy and chaos would prevail (Ballantine & Spade, 2008).

Quite similar to Durkheim, Parson tackled two concepts as key components of socialization: commitment and capacities (Ballantine & Spade, 2008). The first relates to committing one's self to perform a social role on the one hand and abiding by the norms and values of the community on the other. The second involves having the necessary competence to perform that social role and being responsible enough toward the community in general.

Taking into account the concern of this paper being mainly disruptive and antisocial behaviour in Moroccan schools, it seems that we are hinting more at a 'dysfunction' rather than a 'function' of the educational system. Merton (1968) is credited with enriching functional theory, often referred to as neo-functionalism, by developing such concepts. He used the terms manifest and latent function to refer to the intended and unintended consequences of a social structure or institution. Manifest functions are the explicit, declared, and shared purposes of social activities. In the case of education, the school's manifest function is to prepare younger generations to assume future responsibilities. However, it provides context for kids to socialize, build friendships, and connect with others, and these are latent functions, as they are not explicitly declared as outcomes. Similarly, Parson coined the term dysfunction to refer to the negative, undesirable, and of course unintended, consequences of a social structure. In explaining these two concepts, some scholars note that:

not all functions and social and cultural institutions are always and at every moment vital and positive for the integration of the social system; on the contrary, these same functions and institutions of the social system or others, can be or can become, incompatible, negative and have a disintegrating influence on a system, that is to say they can be dysfunctional. (Barbano, 1968, p. 49)

Arguably, as recent research in the Moroccan context shows, we can clearly talk about the dysfunction of the Moroccan school as long as there are signs of failure pertaining to the school's inability and inefficiency in eliminating antisocial behaviour. Sadeki (2020), for instance, referred to the issue as a 'crisis of values', meaning that a number of behaviours falling beyond our social norms and ethics are still frequent inside and outside the school. Bouklah (2020), on the other hand, concluded that despite the efforts made by school curricula and syllabi to instil values that align with the Moroccan identity, including respect and empathy, students do not appear to fully embrace these principles and codes of conduct as instances of misbehaviour persist inside and around the school environment. The same dark picture is depicted by official documents issued by the Ministry of National Education itself. One of the latest reform plans introduced in Morocco was *The Strategic Vision 2015-2030*,

mainly meant to give a new impetus to earlier reform plans. This document consists of twenty-three articles, each detailing a specific measure with clearly defined objectives. Article 18 of *The Strategic Vision* relates to antisocial and disruptive behaviour in the school context. While reiterating schools' roles as socialization mechanisms, the article admits that uncivil behaviours persist and are on the rise despite the high priority allocated to values and value education. These behaviours encompass acts such as cheating, violence, environmental pollution, peer and teacher aggression, and the destruction of school facilities (Ouladhadda, 2022).

The persistence of such phenomena, which clearly indicates a dysfunction of the Moroccan school to use Merton's term, is what motivates the embarking on such a research project. The researcher aims to document how Moroccan high school teachers struggle with incivility daily, highlight their coping strategies and share them with teachers facing the same challenges.

2. Contemporary Educational Research: What Pedagogical Solutions?

International educational literature is rich with stories documenting the suffering of teachers with classroom misconduct. Chang (2013) noted that prior research ranked classroom management issues as top challenges for most novice teachers, and that teacher burnout mainly results from students' anti-social or disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Emotional exhaustion, hence, is associated more with teaching compared with other professions. Anger, frustration, stress and similar unpleasant emotions are found to correlate with teachers' overall feeling of professional burnout. Chang then proposes a more constructive approach, suggesting that instead of labelling students as disrespectful, teachers should strive to comprehend the underlying reasons behind their misbehaviours. By adopting culturally responsive classroom management strategies, educators can better address and handle such situations in a culturally sensitive manner. Similarly, teachers are advised to gain insight into how students exhibiting aggressive behavior perceive authority; Such perception might be the root of the problem.

The effect of misbehaviour on teachers was addressed from the same angle by Aloe et al., (2014). They explored the relationship between students' misconduct in the classroom and teachers' burnout as manifested in three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Such exploration revealed a statistically significant correlation between the two variables. Besides, the authors referred to prior research about the issue which simply confirmed that:

teachers report spending a significant amount of time dealing with problem behaviours (Beaman, Reynolds, & Stephenson, 2011), and approximately one-

third of teachers indicate that misbehaviour interferes with their teaching (Robers et al., 2012). Student misbehaviour has been associated with reduced instructional time, job dissatisfaction, stress, lack of efficacy, and burnout (Aloe, et al., p. 33).

ELT literature, too, has traditionally been interested in the issue. The notion of disruptive behaviour is frequently raised by practitioners in language education in general and teaching English in particular. This is mainly due to the belief that language is always associated with culture, and culture consists of numerous dimensions including values and sets of accepted and unaccepted behaviors in a given community. Precisely, language classes usually preach civil behaviours within the framework of universal values which all agree on the rejection of violence, disrespect, drug use and other undesirable behaviours which this research explores (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Xiong et al., 2023)

Given the limited space devoted to this study, only some works are discussed to point to the prominent place the issue has occupied in ELT literature. For instance, in his popular and widely used teachers' guides, Scrivener (1994) devotes a whole chapter to classroom management in which he refers to disruptive behaviour and some sort of violence in schools. He argues that the most important part of a teacher's job is to create the conditions in which learning can take place. Having students abide by positive behaviors is of course the unique recipe to create these conditions. Scrivener concludes that 'the skills of creating and managing a successful class may be the key to the whole success of the course, and an important part of this is to do with your (the teacher) attitude, intentions, and personality' (p. 53)

Another example is the contribution of Harmer (1991) in his book *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. He details the diverse forms and ways in which students disrupt lessons and engage in misbehaviour towards teachers and peers. Furthermore, he distinguishes between disruptive behaviour coming from young children and that coming from teenagers, noting that even adults can be disruptive in different ways. Then the author suggests some pedagogical tips to cope with the problem such as careful planning, involving parents and working on students' motivation.

In the same vein, Brown (2001) showed interest in the issue, but from a different angle. In his book *Teaching by Principles: an Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*, Brown suggests that teachers ought to build up a good rapport with students, keep a healthy balance between praise and criticism, and generate positive energy. He also urges teachers to demonstrate genuine interest in each student as an individual by accepting their ideas, valuing their thoughts and opinions, and encouraging them to express their feelings and emotions. It is

crucial to acknowledge that within this context, the utilization of L1 serves as a pivotal instrument for engaging with students and communicating in a manner that resonates with their comprehension. This approach facilitates the exploration of issues pertaining to misconduct. In this vein, Shin et.al. 2020 note that “teachers may find that discourse in L1 is an opportunity to listen to the students’ voices (p. 10).

Frisby and Munoz (2021) elaborate on rapport building by suggesting its effectiveness in promoting good behaviour, improving classroom dynamics, and creating a secure and productive learning environment. They note that instructors have certain motives behind their interest in good rapport, some of which relate to the student and the classroom atmosphere, while others relate to instructors themselves. Interestingly, the authors listed some concrete strategies which teachers make use of in order to build good rapport with students. These include welcoming, emails, shaking hands, self-disclosure, addressing students by name, having a sense of humour, and using team-building exercises, among others. The EFL teacher in Morocco, according to existing literature, tends to embrace some of the above-mentioned practices. One Moroccan student, for example, reported that her English teacher ‘was cool and fun, not like other teachers; she used to greet us and bring us sweets; and we really enjoyed her class” Azhar, 2020, p. 73). Arguably, however, this is only one face of the coin; the other is found in more hostile social environments where the school is located in some urban or semi-urban zones characterized by the spread of shantytowns and social vulnerability. Such is the exact context of the current phenomenological investigation.

In an empirical study involving 251 school professionals, Wilkins et al., (2010) concluded that uncivil behaviour occurs more frequently in secondary schools compared to lower levels of education. The authors argued that in modern educational systems, there is a greater focus on the academic aspect of schooling, and this has led to a reduction in the emphasis on teaching values and civil behaviour that were previously given higher priority. The authors then, reported what participants suggested to reduce incivility and promote socially accepted conduct in the school context. Tips included modelling, involving parents and other social institutions in the process of socialization, delivering explicit instruction on the values of civility, establishing clear rules and regulations that do not tolerate incivility, and investing in character education programs.

More tips for teachers to regulate their negative emotions come from recent research studies, including Chang and Taxer (2021). The authors here suggest avoiding certain situations that are likely to yield negative emotions, changing a situation to put an end to its

emotional impact, ignoring certain stressful events, trying to alter the emotional effect of a particular situation, and trying to control their emotional responses to emotion- eliciting events. The authors, then, adopt the process model of emotion regulation (Gross, 2015). Participants in the current study shared that they use some of the tips included in this model, but the extent to which such use is successful remains unproven.

A recent study, in the Moroccan context this time, confirmed that schools now are more geared towards the academic aspects. In a study involving 428 students and 40 teachers, Hassine (2022) showed that 93, 3% of students perceive schools primarily as places for learning academic content rather than learning how to act or behave. Additionally, the data indicated that male students are perceived to engage in disruptive behaviour in the classroom more frequently than female students do. Quite paradoxically, although teachers agree on the significance of character education in enhancing students' behaviors, they do not effectively incorporate content related to values into their daily lessons. To be proactive and offer solutions rather than keep diagnosing the problem, the author suggested investing in teacher training programs and making good use of school clubs and extracurricular activities to reduce misbehaviour.

It is important to note, finally, that being exhaustive in reviewing the literature related to disruptive behaviour is beyond the scope and objectives of this study. The reason for this is twofold. First, the subject area boasts an extensive body of existing theoretical and empirical studies in various social and educational contexts. Second, the paper cannot delve into every aspect comprehensively due to space constraints.

3. A Phenomenological Approach to Anti-Social and Disruptive Behavior in the Moroccan School.

3.1.Design

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate the perspectives of five EFL teachers working in schools situated in urban areas characterized by prevalent violence and anti-social behaviour in Morocco. Specifically, it utilizes the phenomenological approach to delve into the essence of participants' experiences concerning the phenomena under investigation (Husserl, 1970). The research provides, through the informants' eyes, a comprehensive examination of negative conduct including drug use inside schools, disruptive and violent behaviour, and inappropriate clothing and haircut styles, and the effect of all these on both learning and teaching. The inductive nature that distinguishes phenomenological investigation leaves no room for researchers to elicit predetermined outcomes through deliberate attempts to provide a pure description of lived events precisely as they are shared by

participants. As Orbe (2000) puts it, “phenomenology focuses on the conscious experience of how a person relates to the lived world that she or he inhabits” (p. 605)

3.2.Context and Participants

Five high school teachers of English in public high schools participated in the study. They constituted a homogeneous group as they have shared experiences with the same phenomena. In other words, a criterion-based selection was used as a sampling method. A main strength of purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of informants who are knowledgeable of the specific phenomena being studied. This methodological option enables a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences (Mapp, 2002). Accordingly, the five teachers, two males and three females, work in five Moroccan public high schools situated in populated urban areas prone to frequent incidents of violent behaviour and drug sales and consumption. These schools are surrounded by slums and serve students who come from unprivileged families. To abide by the principle of anonymity, participants are given the following nicknames: Rachid, Soad, Yassine, Hamid, and Samira. The small number of participants is inspired by Carpenter (1999) who proposes that as long as the objective is not to generalize the findings, a large number of informants is unnecessary. A small sample in a phenomenological investigation enables an in-depth examination of each individual experience. The five participants are, in line with phenomenological traditions, considered as co-researchers; they play a more significant role than being mere subjects or objects of the study and their testimonies are the cornerstone in the co-construction of meanings.

3.3.Data Collection Instrument

The instrument used to collect data is in-depth interviews. These were conducted with a semi-structured approach. Typically, the researcher initiated the interview with a question such as ‘tell me about your experience with misbehaviour’, and then specific questions followed depending on the participant’s responses. This qualitative research tool helped to obtain detailed facts about the participants’ experiences, perceptions and ideas regarding disruptive behaviour. The researcher developed an interview protocol consisting of the rules and regulations to be abide by while talking to each participant in order to ensure consistency between interviews. This helped increase the dependability of the study findings. Then, an interview guide was developed and it was made up of a list of eight questions to be used in interviewing participants. However, spontaneous questions that depended on participants’ responses were also used to explore the topic under investigation. It is important to note, finally, that the eight questions were translated into Arabic as some participants preferred being interviewed in their mother tongue.

As a qualitative data collection instrument, the semi-structured interview is relevant to the topic and objectives of the research for three reasons. First, it allows for obtaining open-ended responses. Second, it offers a more complete picture of the participants' experiences about the studied phenomena. Third, it provides a relaxed and anxiety-free atmosphere that allows for generating rich phenomenological data (Mapp, 2008; Moustakas, 1994).

4. Data Analysis

The research consisted of many related steps as suggested by Moustakas (1994). The first stage included selecting participants and conducting in-depth interviews with them, while the second stage involved transcribing and indexing the collected data, reducing it phenomenologically and then coding and thematizing were carried out. The researcher, then, used a bracketing process to avoid personal judgments. As Orbe (2000) noted, "primary researchers, for instance, are required to acknowledge, and subsequently bracket, their preconceived subjective biases while inductively arriving at thematic interpretations" (p. 609). This is very important as during the interviews the researcher shared his own experiences as a former high school teacher to encourage participants to be more open and feel more comfortable about sharing their ideas and feelings

After this, horizontalization was conducted, and it directed the researcher to give equal value to each developing segment of meaning. This process consisted of listing all the relevant expressions and statements in the transcripts. Then, these horizons were organized into themes and thematic clustering was conducted to create a detailed image of the diverse phenomena related to disruptive behaviour. In addition, indexing the data helped the researcher quote the participants when needed. Through iterative data reduction and interpretation as simultaneous processes, our analysis yielded the emergence of three main themes related to aspects of school dysfunction, informants' coping strategies, and external factors contributing to disruptive behaviours.

5. Results

Participant Narratives

5.1.Soad: My Life Was Better in Khemisat.

Soad is a young teacher who had been teaching in a high school in Khemisat (in a rural zone) for five years before she moved to a new school in Sale (a big city) four years ago. She has to struggle against disruptive behaviour on a daily basis in her classroom and often hears mocking remarks while walking in the schoolyard. "They (students) are so rude and spoiled," (Soad). The young teacher talked about a ministerial circular that bans suspending students as a disciplinary measure. In one sentence, she summed up her suffering: "My life was better

when I was in Khemisat; I really regret having left that good school and the kind people there” (Soad)

Soad admits that she doesn't communicate with disruptive students as some of them are often under the effect of drugs. She also accuses the school administration of being too permissive. For her, administrators should offer the needed support for teachers. They just insist on engaging in school clubs, which she does but with no results. She wants to communicate with parents but they never show up in schools. She also mentioned the story of one of her friends, a female teacher in Casablanca, who is now considering leaving the teaching profession because of students' misbehaviour inside the school and violence in the surrounding areas. Last but not least, Soad says that she is gradually developing symptoms of depression.

5.2. Yassine: I Spend More Time on Education than on Teaching

Yassine's seven years of experience as a public high school teacher helped him realize that no learning can take place unless the conditions for it are provided first. He says “we work for the ministry of education and training. Therefore, education comes first and this is what other teachers don't understand” (Yassine). As a coping strategy, Yassine spends much time socializing with students either in class or in the school club as this helps him gain the respect of even those who are not interested in his subject. Yet, he feels a sense of frustration because he thinks he is not doing what he is supposed to do. He is there to teach and not only to avoid problems inside and outside the school.

Moreover, Yassine accuses another teacher of provoking students through negative remarks and insults, which makes them even more violent and undisciplined. He used the term ‘Mcharmlin’ (adj. plural) to refer to students who use drugs, put on strange clothes and show up in unaccepted haircut styles. In Moroccan Arabic, this adjective sums up all aspects of juvenile delinquency.

5.3. Rachid: After Each Quiz, I Find an Iron Nail Dug in the Tire of my Car.

Rachid, 54 years old, portrays himself as a severe but fair teacher. He said that he is in school to teach motivated and self-disciplined students and not criminals. At one point, he used the same term ‘Mcharmlin’ as Yassine. For Rachid, communication with parents is the responsibility of the administration! When asked about school clubs and designing extra activities to promote civic behaviour, he answered with a question: “Do you think we have time for that? Students, too, don't have time to revise for their exams; after each quiz, I find an iron nail dug in the tire of my car; students do this as revenge as they always think my quizzes are deliberately hard” (Rachid). This experienced teacher stressed that the textbook is

overloaded with too much content to cover. Just like Soad, he talked about a ministerial circular that forbids punishing students through temporary suspension. The circular suggests alternative punishment consisting of having students volunteer to plant flowers, decorate classrooms etc. “Can we call this a punishment? This is just what some students want: hanging around in school and creating more problems” (Rachid).

5.4.Samira: Normalizing with Permissiveness

Samira more or less possesses the same professional profile as Yassine. She started teaching 11 years ago, and the accumulated experience has helped her change her perceptions of her role as an educator; during her first years, she tended to focus more on content with a keen interest in covering the whole syllabus within the period given. Now, however, her main interests are to ‘have a peaceful day’ as she puts it. This approach was imposed on her due to the number of misconducts she witnesses daily. Samira feels that the education authorities “want us first and foremost to keep teenagers inside the walls of schools while teaching them something is a second goal only” (Samira). Being permissive, she concludes, is a good tip to survive the detrimental effects of student’s noise. However, she makes a lot of efforts to teach them as well, often investing from her pocket to serve her ‘spoiled kids’

5.5.Hamid: Physical Health Issues Aggravated by Psychological Stress

Hamid works in a school surrounded by slums in Temara, approximately 16 kilometres south of the capital Rabat. He is a teacher and at the same time a doctoral student. His hereditary health issues, namely diabetes and high blood pressure, impair not only his professional performance but his academic and personal life as well. These are made worse by the amount of students’ incivility he encounters at school. Hamid admits that he intentionally takes sick leaves whenever he feels unable to put up with the issue. He notes that “a sick leave gives you a break from riot; let’s send them [students] back to their parents for a while” (Hamid). He explicitly accuses the family of failing to properly educate their kids and confirms that if not educated on values at an earlier age in the family, this cannot easily happen during the secondary school years. Hamid plans to join higher education soon once he gets his doctorate. He believes that dealing with university students is much easier due to their age and the professional power a university professor has compared to a high school teacher.

5.6.Aspects of School Dysfunction

During the process of analysis and interpretation, many significant statements were identified and organized into seven coded clusters (figure 1). These were further categorized

into three basic themes which clearly indicate the school's failure to perform its function as a socialization institution. This failure, or dysfunction to use Merton's term, can be summed up in factors relating to the teachers themselves, the administrative staff, and the general educational policy undertaken by the Ministry of National Education.

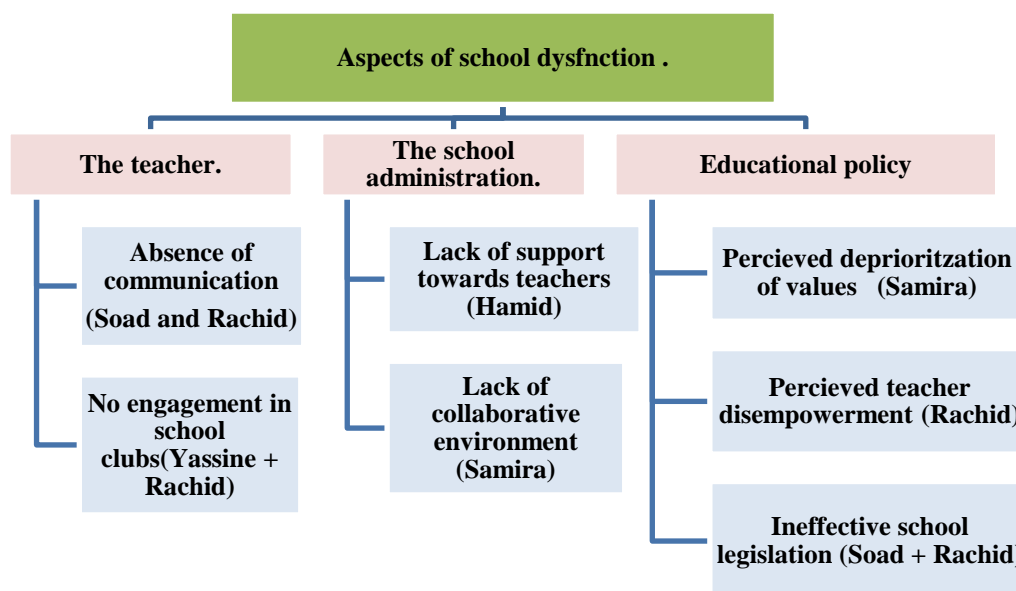


Figure 1: Coded cluster and emerging themes related to school dysfunction

Soad and Rachid, for example, admitted that they rarely communicate with students and their parents on issues pertaining to misconduct. For Soad, trying to reach out to some students who misbehave all the time is seen as a sign of weakness. Hence, it is believed to give counter effects according to her:

Some students think that you are weak when you try to approach them and negotiate their misbehaviour in a friendly and informal way outside class time. I tried this the first year I moved to this school; it has never worked; In Khemisat (the city where she previously worked in a rural area); Students used to appreciate such an approach; they love being approached, unlike the situation here. (Soad)

The possibility to communicate with students outside the formal classroom context is offered within the framework of school clubs. In the Moroccan educational systems, these serve complementary roles to regular classes, and all educational stakeholders are encouraged to actively take part in them. However, most informants are unwilling to engage in school clubs for different reasons. Yassine for example noted that:

school clubs are ideal spaces for approaching students and getting to know about their problems, but we don't have time as we have already too many slots to teach,

and correcting students' assignments and quizzes already takes up a significant portion of the time we would typically spend with our family. (Yassine)

Some participants accused the school administration of being partly behind the persistence of disruptive and anti-social behaviour. Administrators often do not offer the necessary support for teachers, especially novice ones. Hamid declared that the school headmaster once said that "a classroom's problem should be solved in the classroom" (Hamid), suggesting that he should not seek help from other administrators to restore discipline, or write any disciplinary reports to the headmaster himself; Samira, too, noted that the administrative staff consider teachers who resort to the administration as incompetent. She concluded that "they just do not want you to disturb the comfort they are enjoying in their desks away from students" (Samira). For both Hamid and Samira, a collaborative environment inside the school is crucial for reducing misbehaviour and restoring the school's double function of educating as well as teaching.

The teachers in this study did not limit their criticism to the local school administrations, but they extended it to encompass the general educational policy undertaken by the Ministry of National Education. For Samira, the latter does not seem to prioritize values and value education. She maintains that "their (the officials) main expectation from us is to keep students inside the school and not allow them to hang on the street and cause problems, as if we are just collaborating with the police" (Samira). Soad and Rachid provided concrete arguments for this accusation. They talked about prohibiting teachers from taking disciplinary measures against students who misbehave in class. In this regard, the Ministry of Education issued a circular that forbids punishing students through temporary suspension and suggests having them do voluntary work inside the school as an alternative. This circular is perceived by Rachid and Soad as a way to disempower teachers and "deprive them of any tools to exercise their power and maintain an orderly classroom" (Rachid)

5.7. Informants' Coping Strategies

Before exploring the various coping strategies employed by informants, let us just sum up the suffering they face in the professional environment. Strict teachers like Rachid frequently encounter various forms of violence: verbal, physical or psychological. Very often, students want to engage in fights with him, threaten to harm him physically outside the school, or at least cause some damage to his car as he shared.

Soad raised two types of psychological pain. First, she talked about developing depression just like her friend in Casablanca who is probably planning to quit teaching. In one powerful expression, she sums up the challenges associated with the teaching profession: ‘slow death’. Second, she spoke about harassment as another type of violence when she was a beginning young teacher. She was often harassed by “people around school, and I could do nothing to deal with the problem” (Soad). An even more obvious proof of teachers’ suffering is the story of Hamid. He is so fed up with problems related to students’ misconduct and violence that he cannot wait to get his doctoral degree and shift to higher education.

As coping strategies, Yassine and Samira make use of similar methods (figure 2). Yassine chose to socialize with students as much as to teach them the English language. For him, departing from the daily lessons to talk, using his mother tongue, about topics that engage students helps him gain their respect and prevents them from misbehaving in class. He notes that “the same students I get on well with thanks to this approach, show high levels of incivility and anti-social behaviour towards other teachers who just focus on teaching the subject they are assigned” (Yassine). Samira, on her part, realized that being too strict is probably an ineffective recipe. Normalizing or coping with misconduct works fine with her:

You will not bring about change alone; changing a person’s behavior is impossible unless everyone shows concern; we cannot do this huge task alone, and no other individual teacher can. The family, the media, and the neighbours, are all responsible. What I can do is simply to tolerate as many misbehaviors as I could. (Samira)

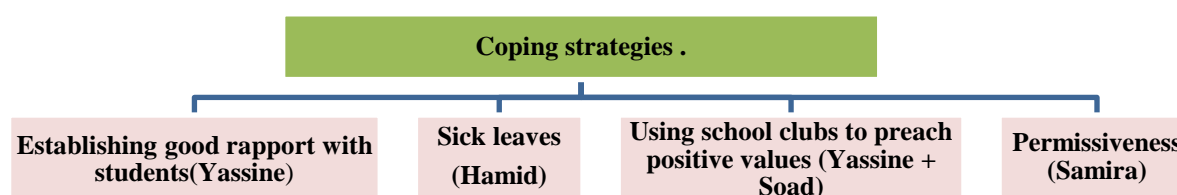


Figure 2: Coded cluster and emerging themes related to participants’ coping strategies

Hamid’s approach does not appear to be proactive either. While it may be legitimate for a teacher to take a sick leave whenever they feel unable to carry on, such a strategy remains ineffective as it does not solve the problem. It just allows a temporary break from its related challenges. A proactive approach is embodied by the initiatives occasionally taken by Yassine and Soad: moderating school clubs. These provide ideal spaces for the explicit teaching and

practice of values and social skills. However, Soad noted that “almost whenever I schedule an event in one of the school’s clubs, only well-behaved and courteous students show up; the ones we really want to come never attend”. (Soad)

5.8.Perceived External Factors

The study found four subordinate themes that relate to what informants perceive as external factors that contribute to the persistence of disruptive and anti-social behaviour inside and around Moroccan schools (figure 3). The media and the family received the highest amount of criticism. In the Moroccan educational system, the family is an official partner of the ministry and in every school the establishment of a parent’s association is obligatory. The latter is tasked with managerial and pedagogical roles. However, as Hamid noted, “the family never cares about the conduct of their kids, they just care about the grades they get by the end of the year” (Hamid). For him, an education that does not start at home can never successfully take place at school despite the efforts invested by educators. While confirming the role of parents, Rachid added the media and described it as another socialization institution. He shared his frustration with regard to the negative impacts local and international media institutions have on students’ behaviour since “they just pick up the negative behaviors and pay no attention to the positive values in media contents” (Rachid)

The local authorities, represented by the local communities, were held accountable for the phenomena under discussion. These are, in the Moroccan context, partners of local schools just like the family and they are charged with contributing to enhancing educational quality and services. Rachid, Yassine, and Samira pointed out the absence of security and sales of drugs around schools, which is a direct responsibility of the local authorities. In fact, “you can’t lecture against drugs while they are sold just behind the school’s sports area” (Samira). Social vulnerability, manifested by poverty and unemployment, makes the problem worse according to Soad.

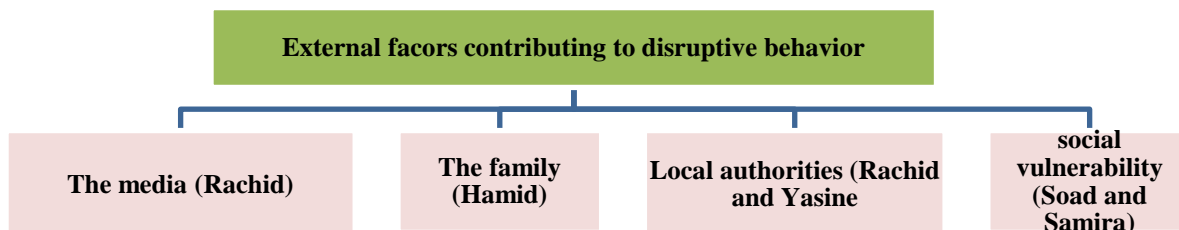


Figure 3: Coded cluster and the emerging themes related the external factors behind the phenomena according to participants.

6. DISCUSSION

This section is a sort of reflection on the study as a whole and on the diverse themes that emerged throughout it. It is clear from the narratives of the five participants that promoting civil behavior is primordial for successful teaching and learning. Spreading good practices in and around school is part and parcel of the school's mission itself as a socialization tool. The finding of this study draws our attention to three basic facts.

The first one is that many teachers expect to have self-directed and self-disciplined students without explicit teaching of these values. This misconception should be corrected. Education that only targets cognitive aspects of the learner is doomed to failure. In fact, disseminating the set of values that regulate social relationships and interactions remains a key task of schools as socialization institutions (Durkheim, 1961; Dill, 2007). According to Parsons (1985), similarly, the school undertakes complementary social roles to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of social cohesion and stability. Interestingly, the Moroccan official educational discourse seems to adopt such stands when talking about the mission of the Moroccan school. The NCET, which frames the philosophy of education adopted in the country focuses on values and sets them as ultimate goals of the educational system. These goals, however, are not being met according to the testimonies of participants; and this puts the effectiveness of educational polity into question. We propose, accordingly, a significant shift towards prioritizing value-related content in school syllabi. Teachers, too, should be made aware of their primordial roles in positively impacting how students behave at school regardless of the subject they teach. It is in fact the task of educational stakeholders, including the classroom teacher, to eliminate or at least reduce the unintended consequences of the school as a social structure or institution (Merton, 1968). Unless this is achieved through teacher training programs or other channels, we will have to keep talking about the dysfunctions of the Moroccan school.

The second significant fact lies in the seemingly intolerable suffering from classroom misbehaviour. This confirms prior research in other international contexts; students' disruptive behaviour and incivility towards educators lead to inevitable burnout and unbearable emotional stress (Aloe, et al 2014; Chang, 2013). The five informants reported forms of psychological pains that directly relate to their profession, and most of them complained that they are left alone, or at least they feel so, with no support from parents, local school administrations, or the ministry. Worse, such burnout and suffering have a direct impact on education quality. The performances of teachers are reduced, and with this comes the automatic decrease in students' achievement. Again, established research confirms this as uncivil behaviours typically

correlate with decreases in students' motivation and teachers' performances. (Alvarez, 2008 ; El Helou et al., 2016 ; von Haaren-Mack et.al., 2020). We accordingly propose gearing practitioners' efforts towards the establishment of a collaborative school culture wherein teachers, administrators, and supervisors as sub-institutions or structures work hand in hand to help the wider school institution or structure restore its double function of teaching and educating on values. So far in most Moroccan schools, as understood from informants' testimonies, there is an overemphasis on the academic side of education. Most teachers of English, for instance, complain about the quantity of content to be taught each semester. The focus on too many grammatical areas, writing tasks, reading passages and so on leaves no room for teachers to design activities related to the domain of values. Given the fact that, in high school, regional and national exams represent a priority for teachers, students, and parents, all the efforts are geared towards meeting the requirements of these exams. This results in costly neglect of preaching and modelling good behaviours. The issue of loaded content is, surely, not restricted to English, but it extends to other subjects and levels. The best proof for this is the image with which we are all familiar in Morocco: that of a seven-year-old primary student struggling to carry his huge schoolbag before heading to the classroom.

The third fact is the lack of real and effective partnerships between the school and other agencies or institutions. Although the NCET clearly states that quality education is a shared responsibility, the elected local councils, as official partners, do not afford security around schools in coordination with the police. Many families in marginalized areas, the Moroccan media often report, have withdrawn their girls from school because of the fear of rape and other sorts of violence. Besides, promoting civil behaviour requires active engagement of the family as a primary socialization agency. The school legislation in Morocco guarantees the involvement of parents in school life through institutionalizing parent associations. These are regarded as real partners to the local school administrations. They can organize events to sensitize students to the dangers of diverse phenomena and to the importance of being good and proactive citizens. However, we notice that the role of parents' associations in most schools is reduced to minor tasks such as repairing doors and windows or buying curtains for the classrooms. Partly because the current study took place in urban areas characterized by social vulnerability, illiteracy and poverty, it was noted that the family does not help much. Learners, especially teenagers, go through significant changes at the psychological level, and parents in such a social environment are often unable to understand these changes. Hence, teenagers might end up addicted to smoking and drugs, which pushes them into a vicious circle of absenteeism, misbehaviour, confrontations with administrators, and all types of violence.

Unfortunately, we have nothing concrete to propose for the educational authorities with regard to this; this seems beyond their prerogatives. However, local schools might seek the help of local NGOs as these know better the context and its related challenges and prospects. They can play the role of mediators between a student and a teacher or an administrator in case of conflict, and hence help in building up a good relationship between the two. A good rapport with students is, as noted earlier, believed to be an essential tool teachers might use to solve disciplinary issues and manage their classrooms effectively (Brown, 2001; Frisby & Munoz, 2021)

7. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of this study may help future research focus on detailed aspects related to antisocial and disruptive behaviour in Moroccan schools. In fact, every single issue that this research raised -such as engaging the family, the media, and the local authorities- deserves an independent research project with ample space for exploration and analysis. Also, this study made it clear that several measures should be taken so that schools could succeed in their mission of preaching good values and hence moving from a state of ‘dysfunction’ to a state of ‘function’. Such measures may include but are not limited to:

- Investing in teacher training, with particular focus on helping teachers become proactive in promoting civil behavior.
- Coordinating with local authorities to fight against violence and drug use and sale around schools.
- Assigning parents’ associations roles related to values education.
- Setting up diverse clubs in the schools and employing them as tools to preach positive conduct
- Enhancing communication and collaboration between teachers and administrators.
- Modifying some school legislations to assure discipline in schools.
- Investing in high-impact partnerships to help the school with the phenomena listed.

It is important to mention, finally, three facts that constitute limitations of the current research. First, concerning the research methodology, only one instrument was used for collecting the needed data. In addition to in-depth interviews, it would have been better to consider other instruments to increase the levels of credibility and dependability. Observation, for instance, coupled with more informal interviews, would have significantly enriched the data and allowed for immersion in the participants’ environment. In fact, observing drug use and violence around school could have given the researcher a better understanding of issues related

to civil behaviour and enriched the discussion section. Second, the time duration given to one participant (Yassine) was short. The whole interview lasted for thirty-four minutes only. It is true that he was able to share significant details about his experience, but obviously, he would have shared more had the interview time been longer. Third, time and space constraints represented major challenges. The nature and the topic of this research deserve a wider space and timeframe for exploration and investigation.

Disclosure statement

The two authors report no potential conflict of interest.

Data availability statement

Data is available as audio files and transcripts.

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