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PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE UNDISCIPLINED BEHAVIOR OF GIRLS AND BOYS AT SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study investigated students' perceptions of the participation of girls and boys in episodes of lack of discipline, at a public school in Belo Horizonte, state of Minas Gerais. The Diagnostic Questionnaire of Perception of Violence and Lack of Discipline According to Students' Gender (Q-PIV), Table of Heteroclassification and Self-classification of Undisciplined Behavior (HAE) and semi-structured interview were used. 167 students from the 8th and 9th grades of elementary school participated. The results indicate that it is a mistake to think that the behaviors of girls and boys at school follow a strict pattern based only on social expectations of gender, since we found a multiplicity of attitudes of girls and boys towards school rules.

SCHOOL INDISCIPLINE • GENDER DIFFERENCE • ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

PERCEPÇÕES SOBRE O COMPORTAMENTO DE INDISCIPLINA DE MENINAS E MENINOS NA ESCOLA

Resumo

O estudo investigou as percepções dos/as estudantes de uma escola pública de Belo Horizonte, estado de Minas Gerais, sobre a participação de meninas e meninos em episódios de indisciplina. Foram utilizados o Questionário Diagnóstico da Percepção de Indisciplina e Violência Segundo o Sexo dos/as Estudantes (Q-PIV), Quadro de Heteroclassificação e Autoclassificação de Comportamentos de Indisciplina (HAE) e entrevista semiestruturada. Participaram 167 estudantes do 8º e 9º anos do ensino fundamental. Os resultados indicam que é um equívoco pensar que as condutas de meninas e meninos na escola seguem um padrão rígido pautado apenas nas expectativas sociais de gênero, uma vez que verificamos uma multiplicidade de atitudes de meninas e meninos diante das regras escolares.

INDISCIPLINA ESCOLAR • DIFERENÇA DE GÊNERO • ENSINO FUNDAMENTAL

PERCEPCIONES SOBRE EL COMPORTAMIENTO DE INDISCIPLINA DE NIÑAS Y NIÑOS EN LA ESCUELA

Resumen

El estudio investigó las percepciones de los estudiantes de una escuela pública en Belo Horizonte, estado de Minas Gerais, sobre la participación de niñas y niños en episodios de indisciplina. Fueron utilizados el Cuestionario Diagnóstico de La Percepción de indisciplina y violencia según el sexo de los estudiantes (Q-PIV), Cuadro de heteroclasificación y autoclasificación de comportamientos de indisciplina (HAE) y entrevista semiestructurada. Participaron 167 estudiantes de 8º y 9º años de primaria. Los resultados indican que es un error pensar que los comportamientos de niñas y niños en la escuela siguen un patrón rígido basado solo en las expectativas sociales de género, ya que verificamos una multiplicidad de actitudes de niñas y niños hacia las reglas escolares.

INDISCIPLINA ESCOLAR • DIFERENCIA DE GÉNERO • EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA

PERCEPTIONS CONCERNANT LE MANQUE DE DISCIPLINE DES GARÇONS ET DES FILLES À L'ÉCOLE

Résumé

L'étude a examiné les perceptions des élèves d'un établissement de Belo Horizonte, dans l'État du Minas Gerais, concernant la participation des filles et des garçons dans des épisodes d'indiscipline. La collecte des données a été réalisée à l'aide d'un Questionnaire de Diagnostic de Perception de l'indiscipline et de Violence selon le genre des élèves (Q-PIV), d'une grille d'hétéro-classification et d'auto-classification des Comportements d'indiscipline (HAE) et d'un entretien semi-directif. 167 élèves de 6e. et 5e. au collège y ont participé. Les résultats indiquent qu'il est erroné de penser que le comportement scolaire des garçons et des filles suit un schéma rigide basé uniquement sur les attentes sociales de genre, puisque l'on a été vérifié qu'il y avait une multiplicité d'attitudes aussi bien des filles que des garçons à l'égard des normes scolaires.

INDISCIPLINE SCOLAIRE • DIFFÉRENCE DE GENRE • ENSEIGNEMENT PRIMAIRE

IN THE LAST YEARS, THE DISCIPLINE CLIMATE AT SCHOOLS HAS BECOME A CENTRAL VARIABLE for understanding education inequality, especially in the Brazilian context (Silva & Matos, 2017). As frequently attested by international studies such as the Students Evaluation International Program (Pisa) (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OCDE], 2011, 2013) and the Teaching and Learning International Survey [Talis] (OECD, 2014), in Brazil, school indiscipline is frequently associated to the academic performance of students, and the country ranks among nations in which the presence of undisciplined behaviors in schools takes a more relevant nature.

Although this is a theme of great relevance, in Brazil we still do not have a considerable production of research choosing indiscipline as the specific subject matter of analysis. A recent bibliographic study conducted by Aquino (2016) indicates that indiscipline, although one of the main complaints of education professionals, has still not been studied to a great length, and only in the last decade we can identify a more considerable growth of the interest of the scientific community in investigating the phenomenon.

Concerning the explanation of the phenomenon, academic literature has been unanimous in indicating that indiscipline is a complex phenomenon, whose investigation must consider the existence of a multiplicity of factors. Silva (2007), for example, understands that undisciplined behavior of students can only be duly understood by crossing several social, family, school, pedagogic and relational factors, which are combined as “possibility conditions” for occurring.

Despite the need to understand the multiplicity of factors relative to the phenomenon, an aspect still little explored by academic literature has been the relation between indiscipline and gender and/or sex of students.¹ The term gender refers to the social and historic construct of the concepts of masculinity and femininity produced based on biological, anatomic and sexual differences between men and women (Scott, 1990). Therefore, as highlighted by Moreira e Santos (2002), both gender in school and indiscipline in school are studied, but without crossing both phenomena. Even rarer are studies specifically focusing on the analysis of indiscipline by girls in schools. Overall, in the social, academic and school imagination, indiscipline has been frequently considered an almost exclusive boys’ social practice, with little attention paid to indiscipline practiced by girls. Few studies seek to investigate, for instance, the form and frequency of participation of girls in undisciplined behaviors or the explanations given by students and teachers for said participation (Moreira & Santos, 2002; Neves, 2008; Prodócimo et al., 2010; Santos, 2007; Vargas, 2008).

In this sense, this article has the objective of contributing to filling this important gap in the investigative field, by presenting results of an investigation that sought to analyze the perceptions of students of a public school in Belo Horizonte, state of Minas Gerais (MG), on the participation of girls and boys in episodes of indiscipline in the classroom. As underscored by Carvalho (2007, p. 20), “. . . in Brazil, we know very little about the opinions of the children themselves, about being a boy or a girl, and also, about being a good student; or their perceptions on the masculinity and femininity in light of disciplinary school rules”. Knowledge of these perceptions becomes quite relevant, especially at times some studies have emphasized that, in the perception of teachers, the conduct of girls toward school rules is changing, since they are tending to match boys in acts of indiscipline (Moreira & Santos, 2002; Neves, 2008; Prodócimo et al., 2010; Santos, 2007; Vargas,

1 We point out that, although research and what is usually asked of subjects is their sex, in this study, sex and gender will not be used as synonyms.

2008). We point out, moreover, that in the rare studies that do address this relationship between indiscipline and gender, the analysis are frequently made based on the perception of teachers, and there are even fewer studies whose analysis are based on the perceptions of the students of their own behavior at school.

Specifically, from the perception of students, the study sought to answer the following questions: In what way do students perceive the frequency and form of participation of girls and boys in indiscipline episodes? What types of indiscipline would be, in the perception of students, more frequently practiced by girls and by boys? What explanations do students have for the similarities or differences observed in disciplinary behavior of girls and boys?

We underscore that studying the perceptions of students on indiscipline and violence is important, to the extent that the existence of the phenomenon and the feeling or opinion one has of its presence in the schools are both relevant sociological elements. As reminded by Dubet (2011, p. 295), “. . . concerning socialization, representations and believes are as important as facts, or, more accurately, they are symbolic facts with their own specific level of importance”. Furthermore, methodologically, in addition to being viable, this strategy has been revealing itself effective and appropriate for the investigation of education phenomena, especially of interactive phenomena in the classroom, as indicated by literature (Matos, 2006; Sortkaer & Reimer, 2016).

School, gender and indiscipline

By analyzing literature, it is possible to say that the academic approach of the relationship between indiscipline and gender in Brazil was initially associated to the attempt of understanding differentiated academic performance between girls and boys in school, a theme that at the time already had some tradition, especially in countries such as the United States, England, France and Canada (Carvalho, 2003).

In this sense, pioneer studies conducted by Brito (2004), Carvalho (2001, 2003, 2004a, 2007), Matos and Vasconcelos (2015), Rodrigues (2009) and Silva et al. (1999), among others, sought to understand the school mechanisms that contributed to school failure, predominantly of boys, ultimately trailed the path to a more specific discussion concerning the relations of girls and boys with school rules and on the way that relation would be influenced by gender stereotypes present in society, at school, and among teachers.

In research of Brazilian dissertations and thesis that focused on this performance difference, Carvalho (2012) claims that it is possible to identify, based on the studies, the existence of a certain homogeneity in school culture, especially in the initial years of elementary school, concerning several aspects: a) teachers tend to attribute to undisciplined behavior the main reason for boys' difficulty in school; b) teachers attribute the origin of the indiscipline problems among students to their families, as if the school was neutral in the process of building masculinity and femininity; c) authors of studies could not always keep a critical distance from the opinions and stereotypes produced by the interviewed teachers, usually based on polarity and hierarchy between male and female. When they were able to overcome these issues, they managed to notice the permanent rupture, the co-existence of the opposites and the need for diversifying male and female, intersecting them with differences in class, local culture, which multiplies the perceptions of the forms of being a girl and a boy in the school environment.

More recently, however, we have been watching the development of academic production approaching this relation between indiscipline and gender as the specific subject matter of analysis. These are articles that have been sought to analyze discipline behavior of girls, focusing on the analysis of rule-breaking by them inside teaching establishments. Overall, it is possible to state that

this academic interest for the theme derives basically from two findings: 1) the deterministic link established between indiscipline and masculinity is fragile, only reproducing gender stereotypes, leading to a generalized perception that girls do not break school rules; 2) there is in schools a growing perception that the behavior of girls would be undergoing changes in the past few years, and what, in basic terms, they would be moving from the category of mere spectators to the leading roles of indiscipline.

In this group of studies, there are investigations such as the ones conducted by Moreira and Santos (2002), Vargas (2008), Neves (2008), Prodócimo (2010) and Santos (2007). It would be impossible to provide a detailed and complete report of these studies in the scope of an article. However, it is worth highlighting two of these studies for providing the context for the types of conclusions that have already been extracted from the results of these investigations.

The first example of a study on the theme is the one developed by Moreira and Santos (2002) entitled *Indisciplina na escola: uma questão de gênero?* [T.N.: *Indiscipline at school: a question of gender?*] The authors problematize the inter-relation between indiscipline and gender and examine the disciplinary sanctions imposed on girls and boys in school. To them, this problematization is important, since it helps understanding how the standardizing practices and disciplinary sanctions may converge to producing and defining certain behavior patterns as being specifically male or female. For conducting the research, the authors sought to analyze the acts considered indiscipline in male and female students of the 9th grade of a state school in the municipality of Presidente Prudente, state of São Paulo. To do that, they used diversified research instruments, such as observations, interviews and analysis of occurrence records.²

The results produced allowed the authors to identify that school tends to reproduce the inequalities based on gender differences. The institution uses practices based on hegemonic standards of femininity and masculinity, creating different treatment in light of behaviors of students. One of these practices was identified in the occurrence log, where the authors found different treatment afforded by the school to girls when imposing any sort of sanction on them. They found that, for the same behavior, girls tended to be more severely punished than boys, since more was expected from them than from boys, behaviors such as obedience and commitment, attributes considered eminently feminine.

It is worth mentioning that this sort of disproportionality in punishment has been broadly studied, for example, in the United States, a country where sanctions such as expelling and suspension of students are generally allowed, originating precise quantitative information on individuals who are the most frequent targets thereof. We can mention, as an example, the report *Exclusionary school discipline: An issue brief and review of the literature*, published by Danfeng Soto-Vigil Koon (2013), which indicated that black boys and girls were prone to being suspended due to disciplinary infractions and receive severe punishment, such as suspension from school, more than other students. Another example is the article *Girls behaving badly? Race, gender, and subjective evaluation in the discipline of African American girls*, published by Morris and Perry (2017), which identifies that male black students were more prone to being punished than white male students and that black girls were more prone than other girls to being called out for infractions, disruptive and aggressive behavior. In both cases, this disproportionality is supposedly explained by expectations and negative stereotypes reproduced in school around black children, especially black girls.

2 Document in the form of a book where are recorded all disciplinary occurrences relative to students.

Moreira and Santos (2002) also notice that teachers mostly attribute girls indiscipline to matters relative to sexuality, emphasizing they would generally be in groups talking about dating and they would be very “forward”, i.e., liked to show off to others, and to that effect, they would tend to use their sex appeal. I.e., the school was supposedly reinforcing gender stereotypes, demanding more from girls behaviors like silence, dedication to studying and discipline and, especially, demanding them to postpone their sexuality and to have, at school, an asexual behavior. Therefore, girls would be doubly questioned in case of breaking school rules, in a process very similar to what studies on female criminality have as a double deviation punishment.³ I.e., girls would be more severely punished because they committed a double deviation, breaking school rules and also social expectations for their gender. Therefore, Moreira and Santos (2002) call attention to the construction of femininity and masculinity profiles in school, comprehending this institution as one of the social dimensions responsible for production and reproduction of gender-based inequality.

Another example of a Brazilian study on the theme was published by Neves (2008) in his Masters’ dissertation – *As meninas de agora estão piores do que os meninos: gênero, conflito e violência na escola*. [T.N.: *Girls now are doing worse than boys: gender, conflict and violence at school*]. The research started based on the assumption that speech causes significant change in the behavior of girls in the school environment and that girls are doing worse than boys regarding discipline. The study was conducted in a state school located in Northern São Paulo and its core subject matter was analyzing the behavior of some girls in elementary school II considered violent by their teachers. For conducting an empirical investigation, several data collection instruments were employed, such as observation, questionnaires, meetings with female student groups and semi-structured interviews.

Among the several results produced by the research, was identified that indeed, the researched girls, as a practice, engaged in violent conduct at school. As for boys, even those considered undisciplined, they tend to use more dialog as a way of resolving conflict, to the extent they seemed to notice the lethality rate is higher among them when they engaged in confrontation. However, the study found that fights involving girls were not usually related to romantic involvement with boys, as frequently disseminated at the school. Fights usually happened as means of reestablishing lost reputation or breaking a certain gender invisibility ceiling at school. This restoration happened, for example, in the case of gossip around school, which almost invariable targeted girls. Gossip (rumors) have the purported power to cause tension by exposing the private life of students and publicly challenging their reputations, especially on matters of sex life and romantic relationships. The authors underscored that it was especially in the domestic and school environment that girls developed this practice of using violence as means of establishing and restoring order, individuality and dignity. To do that, they used at school the same practices they observed at home by their parents: attacking using force or curse words. They highlight, moreover, that fighting played the role to break a certain gender invisibility ceiling at school and, in that sense, girls learned from boys how to become popular and be recognized at school: being involved in fights that always count on a large and captive audience.

Finally, the author concludes that aggression practiced by girls in the school environment challenge the history task of education new generations, but, at the same time, they operate as means of resisting to gender stereotypes that insist in defining girls as fragile, peaceful and lacking the ability to break the rules. We highlight, however, that these aggressions ultimately reproduced part of these stereotypes that compose male hegemony by reinforcing the idea that violence is the best way to resolve conflict.

3 For example, Matos and Machado (2012).

Therefore, the results of these and other studies lead us to conclude that, despite the persistence of certain pictures built around the behavior of girls in school and in society, there seems to be a portion of girls that break with the gender stereotypes based on submission, docility, fragility, attributes which are “mandatory” for them. Therefore, one could raise the hypothesis that there is a movement toward challenging the gender standards among girls, especially by these rule-breaking girls, trying to become visible in both the school and social environment. It is not possible to say there is a political, intentional and organized movement, but there is a day-to-day movement of paradigm-shifting relative to social and gender roles. In this sense, we highlight in this article, the relevance of investigating the perceptions students have of the participation of girls and boys in episodes of indiscipline and violence in school. By conducting this study, we expect to contribute to the debate on the indiscipline and gender interface, still little explored in the academia. We point out that what moves us the most, specifically, are perceptions that students have of the disciplinary conduct of girls. However, provided gender is a relational concept and considering the scientific need for comparison, data referring to girls were produced and analyzed in comparison to data on boys (Scott, 1990). Consequently, seeking to meet the goal of capturing the perceptions of students on indiscipline primarily by girls, we conducted a research seeking to reconcile the qualitative and quantitative approach, thus mixing different instruments for collecting data. That is what we will pass to present in the section addressing the methodological path of the research.

The methodological research path

The school selected for conducting the research is located in the outskirts of the city of Belo Horizonte (MG), an area that encompasses social contrasts, i.e., unfavored sectors and medium-income/intellectualized sectors of the social extracts. The school was mid-size and had 550 students enrolled in grades 1 through 9 of elementary school in 2018. In total, 167 students enrolled in 8th and 9th grade classes answered the quantitative instruments of the research and 24 participated in the interviews.⁴ The option to work with students from the 8th and 9th grades was due to the fact that national and international research indicate this is the phase when schools face the most indiscipline problems (Estrela, 1992; Silva, 2007). Of the 167 students enrolled in 2018, the year when the research was conducted, 90 (53.9%) are female and 77 (46.1%) are male. Regarding ages, 58 (35%) were 13 years old, 68 (41%) were 14, 15 (9%) were 15 and 4 (2%) were 16, 2 (1%) students aged 17 and 20 (12%) could not or did not wish to answer. Regarding race/skin color, 41 (25%) self-identified as white, 19 (11%) as black, 70 (42%) mixed-race, 7 (4%) native-Brazilian, 7 (4%) as yellow and 23 (14%) did not answer the question regarding skin color or race.

In this study, perceptions of students were analyzed by combining the qualitative and quantitative data, for expanding and triangulating the information available (Bruggemann & Parpinelli, 2008). Therefore, the following instruments were used for collecting data:

Diagnostic Questionnaire of Perception of Indiscipline and Violence according to Sex of Students (Q-PIV)

For ascertaining the perceptions of students concerning the participation of girls and boys in various sorts of school undisciplined behaviors, we adapted the questionnaire built by Silva and Matos (2016) which had the goal of diagnosing school indiscipline and violence behaviors in Região dos Inconfidentes, state of Minas Gerais (MG). The building of the questionnaire by

4 Nine hearing impaired students participated in the research. Participation in the research required the presence of a Brazilian sign language/Portuguese interpreter.

the authors was inspired by the model presented by Pasquali (1999). The adapted instrument originated the Q-PIV, formed by 41 items, where the answer options are given by the Likert scale, a psychometric measurement scale regularly used in research for allowing the respondent to express opinions in detail regarding the frequency of acts, facts and feelings. In this research, the Likert allows capturing the frequency by which, in the perception of students, indiscipline and violence behaviors are manifested in the classroom by girls and boys, using five levels of different answers: “never”, “rarely”, “frequently”, “always” and “I don’t know”. The questionnaire was divided into three parts or sections: in the first, the student gives answers regarding sociocultural characteristics – age, sex, skin color/race, family structure, parents education and occupation; in the second, they answer questions referring to the participation of girls and boys in 14 types of indiscipline episodes, considering especially the classifications that have been made by academic literature (Silva & Matos, 2016); in the third and last section, students answer 16 questions regarding the participation of girls and boys in different school violence episodes, once again, considering some classifications of this phenomenon provided by academic literature (Silva & Matos, 2016). In this article, we will analyze only questions relative to undisciplined behaviors.

Note that, in the scope of this research, indiscipline and violence are considered different phenomena, despite the fact it is not always possible to make a precise conceptual distinction between both (Silva & Nogueira, 2008). Therefore, we considered school indiscipline an interactive and relational phenomenon materialized by failing to comply with rules that govern, guide and set the conditions for the functioning of pedagogic activities at school and in classrooms (Amado, 2001; Silva, 2007).

For analyzing the information collected, a database was created in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 10.

Table of Heteroclassification and Self-Classification of Students According to Disciplinary Behavior in the Classroom (Q-HAE)

The Q-HAE was prepared for the purpose of identifying the form how students perceived and tended to perceive their classmates, both girls and boys, concerning the frequency of their participation in episodes of indiscipline. The instrument was inspired by the classification of students made by Silva (2007), which led to considering the frequency students participated in indiscipline episodes in the classroom, identified by the author. In his article, Silva (2007) prepared a classification of students into three types: 1) those frequent in discipline; 2) those frequent in indiscipline; and 3) those occasional in indiscipline. Namely, “frequent in discipline” are those who tend to present a quire regular conduct in complying with school rules. As for students “frequent in indiscipline” are those who present more regularity in being involved in events considered by teachers as indiscipline. Finally, students “occasional in indiscipline” are those who would only engage in undisciplined behaviors sporadically, since they behavior vary greatly throughout their school journey. It is worth noting that, when using the idea of frequency, the author seeks to overcome the disciplined-undisciplined binary choice, very common in the school environment. Frequency is thus understood as means of not essentializing the subjects and their conducts, provided that, in the factual context, the behavior of students tends to assume certain patterns, but they can never be considered static and immutable. In this sense, the use of expressions “disciplined” or “undisciplined” for classifying students, common in the school environment, tends to create a stigma or fail to account for the complexity and plasticity of the behavior of students toward school rules (Silva, 2007).

Based on this categorization built by Silva (2007), the Q-HAE was constructed in the following way: for each class, a list was organized with the names of all students. In that list, they should rate themselves (self-classification) and rate all their classmates (heteroclassification)

relative to frequency of their participation in indiscipline episodes in the classroom. Therefore, for each of the names on the list, including their own names, students indicated in which category each person on the list fit: if frequent in discipline, frequent in indiscipline or occasion in indiscipline. That typology was explained in simple terms to each student before filling the table. One of the advantages of the Q-HAE is that we can obtain an assessment of the conduct of each student based on the perception of a broad group of people with who they interface on a day-to-day basis and not exclusively based on the assessment of their teachers. In the context of this research, 167 charts were collected 167 heteroclassifications were made and 152 self-classifications were obtained. That difference between the number of those self-classified and heteroclassified was due to the absence of 15 students on the day the instrument was applied.

For carrying out an analysis of the data obtained by applying the Q-HAE, in the database created in the SPSS, three variables were inserted for identifying the way each student was classified by their peers and how they classified themselves: 1) a variable that indicated self-classification by each student; 2) one variable that identified heteroclassification of each student, considering the typology for which they received the higher number of heteroclassifications; and 3) a variable relative to the coincidence – or lack thereof – between the self-classification and the heteroclassification received by each student.

Semi-structured interviews

With the goal of deepening the analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students based on a script prepared beforehand, based on which the interviewee was encouraged to elaborate on questions related to the objectives of the research. Twenty-four students were selected. To do that, we sought to balance the participation of girls and boys and also the characteristics of students according to the heteroclassification they received from their classmates in the Q-HAE, according to Table 1.

TABLE 1
Gender and heteroclassification of interviewees (n = 24)

Gender/Sex	Frequent in discipline (n)	Occasional in indiscipline (n)	Frequence in indiscipline (n)
Girls	5	5	2
Boys	4	4	4

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Q-HAW data.

The interviews were conducted and recorded in the school IT Lab and subsequently transcribed. The analysis was performed according to the content analysis technique (Bardin, 2011).

Results and discussion

Undisciplined behaviors of girls and boys

Next, we will analyze the data obtained through the Q-PIV. Table 2 presents students' perceptions regarding the frequency in which different undisciplined behaviors are presented by girls and boys in the investigated classes.

TABLE 2

Perceptions on the frequency girls and boys engage in undisciplined behavior in the classroom (n = 167)

Behavior	Gender	N (%)	R (%)	F (%)	S (%)	NS (%)
Making noise and being disorderly in the classroom	Girls	4.8	19.7	50.3	19.0	6.1
	Boys	1.4	12.2	44.2	34.0	8.2
Talking in the classroom	Girls	1.4	18.4	46.3	25.9	8.2
	Boys	0.0	10.9	51.0	32.7	5.4
Walking around the classroom	Girls	5.4	39.5	37.4	10.2	7.5
	Boys	2.7	29.3	42.9	19.0	6.1
Leaving the classroom without permission from the teacher	Girls	32.7	47.6	8.2	4.8	6.8
	Boys	23.8	39.5	19.7	9.5	7.5
Arriving late to class	Girls	8.2	43.5	34.0	8.2	6.1
	Boys	4.1	41.5	32.0	14.3	8.2
"Skipping" class	Girls	52.7	21.2	2.7	0.7	22.6
	Boys	45.6	23.1	7.5	0.0	23.8
Becoming distracted with objects (cell phone, games, toys, earbuds, etc.)	Girls	9.5	29.3	31.3	23.1	6.8
	Boys	4.1	21.1	40.8	30.6	3.4
Failing to do the assigned activities	Girls	0.7	9.5	49.0	32.0	8.8
	Boys	0.7	11.6	51.0	28.6	8.2
Dedicating to activities of other teachers	Girls	9.5	34.7	30.6	10.9	14.3
	Boys	7.5	29.3	36.7	10.9	15.6
Playing around, joking or mocking classmates	Girls	12.2	32.0	25.2	19.7	10.9
	Boys	6.1	19.7	30.6	37.4	6.1
Verbally fighting or cursing at classmates	Girls	10.2	29.9	26.5	27.2	6.1
	Boys	7.5	21.1	27.9	38.1	5.4
Disobeying teacher's orders?	Girls	17.7	41.5	21.1	4.8	15.0
	Boys	10.2	32.7	30.6	13.6	12.9
Talking back at teachers	Girls	22.4	42.2	16.3	2.7	16.3
	Boys	16.3	38.1	23.8	10.2	11.6
Joking, mocking or making fun of the teacher	Girls	38.4	26.7	11.0	2.7	21.2
	Boys	29.9	25.9	14.3	8.8	21.1

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Q-PIV data.
F = frequently; N = never; NS = don't know; R = rarely; S = always.

Some conclusions can be extracted based on the analysis of the data presented in Table 2.

First, students' perceptions seem to confirm the results of different national and international studies indicating that undisciplined behaviors are very frequent in the classroom (OCDE, 2011,

2013; Silva & Matos, 2014, 2017). We point out that, for the vast majority of recorded behaviors, the frequency of answers summing “frequently” and “always” is superior to 50%, whether for girls or boys, provided that in some cases, it exceeds the 70% mark. The higher frequencies, when considered with the answers “frequently” and “always”, whether for girls or boys, the following behaviors were identified: failing to perform activities (81 and 79.6%), chatting in the classroom (72 and 83.7%), making noise (69.3 and 78.2%) and becoming distracted with objects (54.4 and 71.4%). These are behaviors that, according to Amado (2001), tend to impact the class process the most, i.e., they prevent or disturb the proper functioning of classes by interfering with the teaching, organization and classroom management process. Less high frequencies, when considering the set of “frequently” and “always” answers, whether for girls or boys, were identified for the following behaviors: walking around the classroom (47.6 and 61.9%), being late for class (42.2 and 46.3%), dedicating to activities of other teachers (41.5 and 47.6%), making jokes, mocking or making fun of classmates (44.9 and 68%) and verbally fighting or cursing at classmates (53.7 and 66%). Here, again, are shown some behaviors that impact the class process and others that, according to Amado (2001), are associated to interpersonal relations, such as relations between the students themselves. As for the lower frequencies, when considering the set of “frequently” and “always” answers, whether for girls or boys, were identified for behaviors such as: leaving the classroom without permission (13 and 29.2%), skipping class (3.4 and 7.5%), disobeying teachers’ orders (25.9 and 44.2%), talking back to teachers (19 and 34%) making fun or mocking teachers (13.7 and 23.1%). The majority is undisciplined behavior that impacts more directly teacher-student relations. Therefore, although it is correct saying that any undisciplined behavior challenges, in some way, the authority of the teacher, those who do so in a more open way would be, in the perception of students, the most rare in the investigated classes. Once could argue that if, on one side, our data confirm that the teacher’s authority has been indeed permanently challenged in schools by the presence of blatant acts of indiscipline, it is not, however, as frequently questioned directly through permanent and open confrontation with the teacher’s figure. I.e., according to the Q-PIV data, contrary to what social imagination would have us believe about the profession of teachers, it is possible to infer that the investigated students tend to keep – at some level – recognition of the authority of the teacher in the classroom. As a whole, this data indicate that, according to Silva and Matos (2017), lack of discipline seems to have indeed become a quite common and generalized phenomenon in the school environment. It is not by chance that academic literature indicates it tends to be one of the most common complaint of teachers, causing a negative impact on the learning-teaching process, and is an important factor in explaining unequal learning opportunities for students (Estrela, 1992; Silva & Matos, 2017).

Second, when taking into account the comparison between girls and boys, it is evident that, according to the students’ perceptions, boys are still raking first, more frequently, in undisciplined behavior. Only in one single instance, not performing tasks assigned by the teacher, the rate of “frequently” and “always” answers, summed, for girls, was higher than for boys: in this case, only in 1.4 percentile points. The greatest differences identified between girls and boys, when considered in conjunction with the “frequently” and “always” answers were: becoming distracted using objects (17 points), making fun, mocking or playing with classmates (23.1 points), disobeying teachers’ orders (18.3 points), leaving the classroom without permission (16.2 points) and talking back to/speaking impolitely with teachers (15 points). Therefore, overall, data seems to suggest that the differences between girls and boys tend to grow to the extent the targets of indiscipline pass to be interpersonal relations between the subjects in the classroom and, especially, the authority of the teacher. What is worthy of attention, moreover, is the difference relative to behaviors such as walking around the classroom (14.3%) and leaving the classroom without permission (16.2%), which shows

that girls break rules that define mobility standards in the classroom more often. A plausible explanation for these differences would be the family socialization model of girls and boys: girls are generally educated to occupy the private space, household chores, not to circulate alone on the street and not leaving without their family's permission; boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to occupy the public space, walk the streets. It is important to underscore, moreover, that in this research, no specific test was used for verifying whether these differences between boys and girls were statistically significant.

Therefore, the Q-PIV data for school undisciplined behaviors seem to corroborate several studies that underscore the fact that girls are more frequently submissive to the authority of the teachers and adjust better to the school discipline (Silva et al., 1999; Rodrigues, 2009). In a large portion of these studies, the higher adhesion of girls to school rules tends to be explained by family socialization characteristics, which would require discipline, modesty, passiveness and submission. We point out, however, that differences between girls and boys, according to the perception of students, were almost always very small. That indicates that, according to Moreira and Santos (2002), Neves (2008) and Prodóximo et al. (2010), girls, although in slightly smaller proportions than boys, also break school rules. I.e., girls would be acting opposite to social expectations for their gender, which would have them presenting a modest, docile and submissive behavior in both society and school (Silva et al., 1999; Moreira & Santos, 2002; Neves, 2008; Prodóximo et al., 2010).

Self-classification and heteroclassification

Through the Q-HAE data, our goal was to identify how students tend to perceive themselves and their colleagues in the classroom, both girls and boys, concerning the frequency of their participation in indiscipline episodes.

Therefore, Table 3 presents the results referring to the self-classification and the heteroclassification made by the students.

TABLE 3

Self-classification and heteroclassification of boys and girls according to frequency of participation in indiscipline episodes (n = 167)

Classification	Gender	Frequent in discipline (%)	Frequent in indiscipline (%)	Occasional in indiscipline (%)
Self-classification	General	40.8	5.9	53.3
	Girls	50.0	1.4	48.6
	Boys	30.2	11.1	58.7
Heteroclassification	General	46.7	9.6	43.7
	Girls	62.8	2.6	34.6
	Boys	30.4	15.9	53.6

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Q-HAW data.

Some general conclusions may be taken from the analysis of heteroclassifications and self-classifications of students concerning their conduct on the classroom.

First, we have identified that, according to the perceptions of students, the behavior of girls and boys in light of school rules is not on the extremes, i.e., within the disciplined/undisciplined binary choice. We point out that only a very small percentage of students was self-classified and heteroclassified as “frequent in indiscipline”: 5.9 and 9.6%, respectively. On the other extreme, a significant portion of students was self-classified and heteroclassified as “frequent in discipline”:

40.8 and 46.7%, respectively. However, as warned by Silva (2007), although it is common wanting to classify the conducts of students in the extreme ends, in the real school context, that we see is the existence of a multiplicity of forms of conduct by these students toward school rules. Evidence of that is the high rate of students self-classified or heteroclassified as “occasional in indiscipline”: 53.3 and 43.7%, respectively. I.e., that indicates that the largest portion of students would only engage in acts of indiscipline sporadically, probably depending on certain characteristics pertaining to pedagogic action by the teacher and/or specific situations occurring during class (Kounin, 1977; Estrela, 1992; Amado, 2001; Silva, 2007). Silva (2007) also warns that students who are “occasional in indiscipline” are usually neglected in education research for ranking in both extreme ends of school judgment, despite their relevance for understanding the interaction processes occurring in the classroom.

Second, the Q-HAE data confirm the results found in the Q-PIV by indicating that, in the perception of students, girls would be less involved in episodes of indiscipline, adhering more frequently to school rules (Silva et al., 1999; Rodrigues, 2009). As the heteroclassification data indicate, girls were more commonly perceived as “frequent in discipline”: 62.8 compared to 30.4% of the boys. Again, one of the possible events for explaining this data is that socialization of girls, especially in the family structure, expects from/develops in them, more than in boys, a conduct of modesty, docility and submission to rules, more than what is expected from boys.

However, our data also indicate there are many girls who escape this rule, breaking social gender expectations. We point out that a small percentage of girls was classified as “frequent in indiscipline” (9.6%), signaling that, in the perception of students, some girls would have breaking school rules as a regular conduct. Furthermore, most of the students was heteroclassified and self-classified as “occasional in indiscipline”, 43.7 and 53.3%, respectively, signaling they would not shy away from questioning school rules, even if sporadically. Therefore, thinking that the conduct of girls in school would follow a rigid standard based on social gender expectations is a mistake, since we have identified a multiplicity of behaviors of girls concerning school rules.

Likewise, we point out the existence of an important group of boys classified as “frequent in discipline” (30.4%), which shows that boys articulated some sort of affirmation of their masculinity as a very positive school behavior. That indicates it is necessary understanding the multiple concepts of masculinity circulating between students.

Finally, a relevant matter to be analyzed is to what extent heteroclassification and self-classification of students tend to match. In other words, to what extent the form how students perceive themselves and are perceived by their peers is close or coincides? Overall, we found that 72.4% of classifications coincided and 27.6% conflicted. Thus, the way students perceive themselves, to a large extent, coincide with the way their classmates perceive them. This data seems to confirm the studies of Sortkaer and Reimer (2016), which identified high reliability and consistency in the perceptions of students for assessing classroom situations.

Deepening the analysis: what do the interviews say? For going deeper into the analysis, through the interviews, we asked students how they perceived possible differences and similarities in the behaviors of girls and boys in the classroom and which factors would best explain these differences and similarities.

The vast majority of interviewees categorically stated they noticed many differences in behavior between boys and girls.

Maria:⁵ *I do not see similarities. Boys and girls are nothing alike! [laughs]. I see too many differences! Totally. Chatting during class, boys only talk to boys... differences in the way of acting, like, they talk more to boys and girls will talk to anyone. The way of speaking, boys use a lot of curse words and girls are more delicate... I think that's it.*

Sthefane: *Boys. They are too disruptive [laughs].*

Pedro: *Boys. Because we are freer and we play around more. We forget we are in class.*

Douglas: *Boys, because girls in my class are practically all smart and they stay quiet, and boys keep walking around, talking to each other.*

Overall, students highlighted that girls were more delicate, quiet, they did the activities, stayed home, were mature and defended their points of view, whereas boys cursed, were rowdy, they've got more of a nerve, play on the streets, did not do the activities and are childish. In this sense, during the interviews, students' perceptions followed the same trend already established in the quantitative portion of this article, seeing boys are more undisciplined.

It is worth noting that for explaining these differences between girls and boys, students were fundamentally based on social expectations for gender, which tend to assign each gender specific social behaviors. As shown in the interview with Maria, they resorted especially to family socialization as means of explaining how these behaviors are built in the bosom of the families.

Maria: *I think it may also be influenced by parents, for example, my mom doesn't let us go out on the street, if another girl's mom let them go out on the street, play soccer, playing catch on the street, my mom would not let me do it, so... I don't play those kind of games at all. Family influence is big and the school's small. I think that's because of the interaction they have with soccer. Soccer involves a lot of cursing, things like that, slang, and girls don't do much of that, so I think that has a lot of influence too. I think that of the two, girls just talk more. And with boys, they have those little fights, keep horsing around... girls are calmer, they talk in their corner, that's it.*

To the interviewees, boys and girls receive different stimuli, whereby girls would be, from an early age, prevented from having in society, roles that should be played by boys.

In fact, as we have seen, many authors have underscored that gender expectations based on hetero-normative social standards and socially built and instill, from very early age, through family socialization, gender differentiation. According to Quaresma (2010), these gender differentiations assume a hierarchic-setting role, asymmetric valuing women and men, assigning males attributes such as dominance and instrumentality and females, characteristics such as submission and expressiveness. In childhood, right from birth, toys and playing emit gender messages: girls get miniatures of home appliances and dolls, preparing for home and maternal duties, and boys get building games, balls, toy cars and toy guns, competitive, aggressive and inventive dexterity (Quaresma, 2010). Through toys, we can see the outlining of the spaces (for girls, the private space, domestic, and for boys, the public space), aggressiveness (for boys, guns) and labor division (girls destined to activities that relate to care, teaching and assistance and boys destined to building, military career activities).

Therefore, predominant social expectations for gender in our society seem to be strongly branded by differentiation whereby girls are expected to be modest, responsible, organized, docile and caring and boys are expected to have a certain aggressiveness, autonomy, exploring the public space and independence.

5 Fictional names were used.

However, interviews with students also reveal that there were girls and boys that were trying to break with these expectations. For example, during the interviews, some students evidenced the existence of girls who take positions and make themselves visible by defending their opinions, breaking with social expectations for the gender based on modesty and submission.

Flávia: Undisciplined girls are having the same behaviors and undisciplined boys, but disciplined girls have the same behavior as disciplined boys.

Flora: That's more valid for girls, because today's girls want to be bad-asses, show that nobody can mess with them, so they will feel superior. The same for boys and some girls, but girls show it off more. Girls are showing off more often, they want to be school celebrities. That's why they keep dealing on intrigue and causing trouble. Boys are more rowdy and girls are more feisty.

Eduardo: Girls. For example, everyday when I arrive, everyone comes in late after the bell rings, and most of the time, it's girls, and when the teacher calls them out, it's most girls too.

In the perception of Flora and Eduardo, girls have been displaying a certain need to make themselves visible through undisciplined and violent behavior, something similar to what was identified by Vargas (2008) and Neves (2008) in their research. Therefore, we may infer that, for girls considered “undisciplined” or “violent”, breaking with social gender expectations may grant power and prestige from their peers.

We must also highlight that, as illustrated by Sol's words, this type of conduct can be also perceived as a negative quality in girls.

Sol: To me, it's the clothes. I think the clothes some girls wear are outrageous. For example, folding the shorts or trying to attract male attention from the boys, because they are already men, girls have their breasts, their bodies... that attraction they seek is not healthy in a school environment, because this is a study environment. I'm not saying we should be test or school robots, we can have fun, of course... Some of their behaviors bother me, like folding up their shorts, raising their pants, raising their shirt, because if you want to be sexy, there is a time and a place, and to me, you have to be sexy with elegance. So you don't get labeled as a slut, a whore or a hussy, let's put it like that. I admire women older than me, who know how to dress, how to have their sensuality...

As we can see, deviations of girls who break with established femininity standards can be the target of negative perception in the school environment. With the work of Moreira and Santos (2002), the matter of sexuality is at the core of these assessments, since girls are seen as seductive and provocative, which ultimately requires them to have an asexual behavior in school. These girls seem to be, therefore, the target of a double assessment: as students and as women. Therefore, from the perspective of their peers, they seem to commit a double deviation when they break, at once, school and social rules that define the conducts expected from women in our society.

Final considerations

Despite the impact and recurrence in the school environment, lack of discipline still has little visibility in academic studies, rarely constituting a specific object of analysis. What has been even less explored is the relation between indiscipline and the matter of gender and/or sex of students, especially indiscipline by girls in schools. In this sense, we consider this work has contributed to minimize an important gap in the academia and confirmed both the relevance and the potential to investigate the relationship between indiscipline and gender.

In conclusion, we highlight, as the most relevant result of this work, having identified that thinking that the conducts of girls and boys in schools follow a rigid standard based only on social gender-based expectations is a mistake, since we have identified a multiplicity of behaviors by boys and girls toward school rules.

Therefore, although, according to the perception of students, boys are the main actors in classroom indiscipline behavior, the differences between them and girls were not so significant in most of the behaviors analyzed. As established by Moreira and Santos (2002), Vargas (2008), Neves (2008) and Prodócimo et al. (2010), girls also break school rules, even if, as we established, in a lower proportion than boys. That means saying that, to some extent, girls would be acting opposite to social gender-based expectations that would require from them a modest, docile and submissive behavior both in society and at school. It worth noting, however, that according to the testimony of some students, girls who break social gender expectations can be negatively perceived by their classmates. That fact has led us to raise the possibility of a double deviation phenomenon existing in the investigated school, provided that, to the spectators, these girls break, at once, school rules and social gender roles assigned to them (Matos & Machado, 2012).

Finally, we highlight this study does present some limitations. First, we indicate the research refers to a restricted number of students, which prevents any generalization of its results. In this sense, it would be relevant building investigations involving a higher number of subjects for allowing for broader comparisons between schools and students of different sociocultural profiles. It seems to us that the instruments built and adapted by this investigation served that purpose very well. Furthermore, we faced difficulty in working on the intersectionality between indiscipline and variables such as skin color/race, religion and social class, especially due to the reduced number of participants in the research, which would demand using statistical techniques for, for example, comparing and testing differences and relations between variables. In the next stages of the research, we will increase the depth of our analysis by using more sophisticated statistical techniques, using a factorial analysis for identifying the psychometric properties of the instruments. These are some of the challenges that may be posed to this important field of study.

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Note on authorship

The authors participated in all stages of conception and writing of the article.

Data availability statement

Data referring to interviews made for the research and questionnaires applied to students are protected due to ethical standards. However, it can be made available, so long as requested and so long as subject identity preservation procedures are adopted.

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