

Students' Views On Culture Of Fear In Education System¹

Eğitim Sisteminde Korku Kültürüne İlişkin Öğrenci Görüşleri

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to determine students' perceptions about concept of fear culture and to see what kind of fear culture do they have. This study which is conducted by qualitative research approach was carried out with 74 students studying in primary school in Diyarbakır, in 2014-2015 academic year. In order to determine study group, convenience sampling was used in this research. According to results of this study, perceptions of fear culture which students have, were grouped under three categories. The categories are "mental (inner) fears", "external fears" and "educational fears". Results on most of mental fears showed that children were worried by uncertain source of feelings. But two of them (fear of death and fear of God) were appeared with learning in social life. External fears of students were found to include the acquired experience and the fears which were occur with indirect acquired information. The fear are frequently encountered in the school environment, were collected under the title "educational" fears and students said they were afraid of teachers, supervisors, bullying, expulsion from school and disciplinary punishment.

Key words: Fear, child, culture, fear culture

Öz

Bu araştırmanın temel amacı öğrencilerin korku kültürüne ilişkin görüşlerini ve sahip oldukları korku türlerini belirlemektir. Betimsel nitelikteki araştırma, 2014-2015 öğretim yılında ilköğretim kurumlarında okuyan 74 öğrenci ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada kolay ulaşılabılır durum örnekleme kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda, öğrencilerin sahip oldukları korkular 3 kategoride altında toplanmıştır. Bu kategoriler: içsel korkular, dışsal korkular ve eğitsel korkulardır. İçsel korkulara ilişkin bulgular, çocukların kaynağı belli olmayan duygularla korktuklarını göstermiştir. Ancak iki korku türünün (Allah korkusu ve ölüm korkusu) sosyal yaşama bağlı olarak ortaya çıktığı söylenebilir. Öğrencilerinin dışsal korkularının ise, edinilmiş deneyimler ve dolaylı olarak edinilen bilgiler ile ortaya çıkan korkuları içerdiği görülmüştür. Öğrencilerin eğitsel korkularının; öğretmen, okul yöneticileri, sınav ve diğer çevresel kaynaklı korkular etrafında toplandığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Bununla birlikte öğrenciler; öğretmenlerden, yöneticilerden, akran zorbalığından, okuldan atılmaktan ve disiplin cezalarından korktuklarını da ifade etmişlerdir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Korku, çocuk, kültür, korku kültürü

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Introduction

Fear culture considered as a psychological element can also be regarded as “a sociological means” included in a social life and used if required in nomadic or settled societies. Rules in democratic systems include values instead of fears. However, in some cases, fears and values as a power directing behaviours of people go ahead by interacting with each other. In this sense, it will be proper to evaluate “fear culture” both psychologically and sociologically (Dirim, 2003; Yörükoğlu, 2003; Şehirli, 2007).

Psychological dimension of fear culture consists of a state of emotion which is experienced by a person and accordingly the reactions given. Fear which is an emotion accompanying a person can be defined as a logical and ordinary or illogical and extraordinary reaction (Mert, 2012). Fear is a natural reaction given to visible or invisible dangers, threats, momentary feelings, uncertainties, doubts, etc. except as a spiritual or emotional problem. In this sense, fear culture can be regarded by two ways as real (objective) fears arising from external sources as defined by Freud and unreal (internal) fears caused by transference or intrinsic impulses (Zulliger, 2000; Yörükoğlu, 2003; Güler, 2004; Çakıroğlu, 2013).

Sociological dimension of fear culture mainly includes objective dimension as well as both objective and unreal fears. In historical context, fear culture seen in authoritarian and oppressive regimes underlies social climate. Fear culture resulting in the formation of “you-me” communication way is discussed as a power directing human behaviours within social life. This means used at a minimum in democratic societies is used in order that individuals follow the rules within social life or within the group to which they belong. Individual is firstly acquainted with this case within family regarded as the observance of authority. Individuals within patriarchal social structure are born within family structures where there is communication networks oppressed with “fear culture”. This communication structure where values and fears intertwine lays foundations of a climate starting to occur in every part of the society. Individuals learning to respect their elders based on fear at home face with a fear culture used as a discipline means when they start the school. Additionally, when individuals who are raised by parents having democratic attitude start the school, they can be in an education system based on fear culture. (Güler, 2001; Eren, 2005; Altan, 2006).

In non-formal or formal education, individuals can take education within a structure based on fear because some educators use fear as a discipline means. This structure contributing to the increase and internalization of external fears of individuals can affect adversely healthy individuals to be raised and contributes to individuals to be raised who have fear of being late to school or exam, failing the course, fear of teacher and school management, etc (Güler, 2004; Eren, 2005).

By an education system where rules are imposed by fear culture instead of values, fear contributes to the formation of a structure reflecting on each interaction of people and strengthening the basis of climate based on fear by going beyond a natural human emotion. In order to attain a healthy society structure, the education systems having an important role especially in the development of individuals should be restated by a democratic climate which is not based on fear culture and in which values are in the forefront. In this sense, in order to develop democratic education, it can be said that it will be useful that educators determine fears that are present in current education system, describe perceptions of students about fear culture and review variables which are effective on fears that the students have. (Eren, 2005; Çakıroğlu, 2013).

Especially “objective fears” should be determined among fears that can occur based upon age groups, past experiences, family life, circle of friends, partners within the school, public spaces that we live, intrinsic impulses, fictions, etc. (Şerefli, 2008; Mert, 2012) and the relationship between objective fears and school partners should be described. In this sense, determining the internal fears contributes to preventing fears from attaining a place in individuals, finding proper ways for individuals to cope with their fears and learning these ways to individuals. Determining objective fears contributes to revealing and reviewing practices based on fear culture made for bringing behaviours under control or providing discipline within the education system or educational institution. Both fear cultures are internalized by individuals through education systems. This internalization prevents free and confident self-expression in some societies, but this is just the contrary in some societies (Cüceloğlu, 2008). What is important is to generalize and teach the first case through education systems.

The main objective of this research is to determine the opinions of 4th and 5th grade students in primary education institutions on fear culture. In accordance with this objective, the following questions were tried to be answered in the research:

1. What are the opinions of children on “fear” concept?
2. What are the fears with which children often face in the school?

Method

This research has descriptive qualification as it aims to reveal the fact as is. Qualitative research methods were used for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data obtained in the research,

Participants

This research was carried out with the participation of 74 students receiving education in Diyarbakır City Yenişehir Central District Toplu Konut Primary Education Institutions in 2014-2015 school year. In the selection of participants, easily accessible case sampling method was used. Information relating the participants are given in Table 1:

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants in the Research

Characteristic	f
Sex	
Female	42
Male	32
Age	
10	24
11	40
12	8
13	2
Class	
4	40
5	34
Total	74

When reviewing the Table 1, 42 of students participating in the research consist of females; 32 of whom consist of males. 24 of these students are 10 years old, 40 of whom are 11 years old, 8 of whom are 12 years old and 2 of whom are 13 years old. As for class grades, 40 of the students are at 4th grade and 34 of whom are at 5th grade.

Data Collection

In the determination of perceptions of students participating in the research on the fear culture in the education, a form consisting of two sections was used. The first section

includes personal information of participants. The second section includes two questions about “fear culture”. While the first one of open ended questions is for describing the opinions of students on fear concept, the second one is for describing the fears with which they face in the school environment. This form which was prepared was firstly expertized and applied by making necessary corrections.

Analysis of Data

Descriptive analysis was used for the analysis of answers that the students gave to the form on fear culture in the education. Descriptive analysis is to present data to the reader by keeping the original of data collected as much as possible and by quoting directly when needed from what individuals participating in the research say (Wolcott, 1994). Descriptive analysis is mostly used in the researches where the conceptual structure of the research is determined clearly in advance (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Based on this understanding, the limits which were suitable for the conceptual structure of the research were determined and the findings were supported by quoting directly from answers that the students gave to open ended questions. The fact that the collected data are reported in details and that the researcher explain how to reach the results are among the important measures of acceptability in a qualitative research (Yıldırım, 2013). Answers given to open ended questions asked to the students were separately analysed by both researches. In the analysis of data, three main categories were determined and themes were created by depending on these three main categories. These categories are internal fears, external fears and educational fears. The themes created by researchers by depending on these categories were compared and the analysis was carried out by determining those which have agreement or disagreement. 27 themes relating the three main categories were determined in the analysis result.

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of this research, two main processes were carried out. Firstly, data analysis process was explained in details in order to ensure the validity and all data obtained were given in the findings. And then the categories and themes created for ensuring the reliability were presented to the expert opinion and compared; in the comparisons, the numbers of agreement and disagreement were determined and the reliability of research was calculated by using Miles and Huberman’s

(1994:64) formula (Reliability = agreement / agreement + disagreement). The result of reliability calculation of the research is of 93%. According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 64), if 70% or above researcher and expert agreement is provided in the qualitative researches, the study is accepted as reliable. In this case, it can be said that this study is reliable.

Findings and Interpretation

Findings and interpretations obtained in the research were given by depending on the order determined in the objectives.

In the research, the students were firstly asked "What do you understand by fear? Can you explain it?". The answers given by the students to this question were gathered under two main categories. These categories are internal fears and external fears. Themes relating the internal fears of students were given in Table 2:

Table 2. Internal fears that Students Create for Fear Concept

Internal Fears
Feeling the Shiver
Giving immediate reaction
Living the fear of death
Fear of God
Lack of control of emotions
Fear as a result of bad emotions and feelings
Fear of darkness

When Table 2 is reviewed, it is seen that the perceptions of students about fear are based on the emotions coming from inside. Shiver, feeling fear as a result of an immediate reaction, fear of death, fear of God, lack of control of emotions, having bad feelings and emotions and fear of darkness were determined as internal fears. Some opinions of students about internal fears are as follows:

When it comes to fear, firstly I'm thinking of my emotions. My emotions scare me. What I feel scares me, because it feels like my fears are walking over me, they are putting me in a tight spot. (5th grade, female student, internal fear)

When it comes to fear, I'm thinking of shiver. It feels like something is making me scared and I cannot control my emotions. (5th grade, female student, internal fear)

The one that I'm afraid of is the God. (5th grade, male student, internal fear)

When it comes to fear, the things that people see, hear and watch stick in their mind and they are remembered easily every time. These are the emotions that they feel in those times. The name of these emotions is fear. (4th grade, female student, internal fear)

Fear impresses human very much. Fear seems like lasting forever. It causes an immediate change for human. He scares and feels the shiver. (4th grade, female student, internal fear)

It can be said that the source of fears that the students stated are the fears relating the human inner world and emotional world. With this meaning, these fears that children have are defined as acceptable and normal fears. However, it can be said that internal fears such as fear of God and death are related to the culture, social value judgements and the way that they are raised.

Themes relating the external fears created about the fears of students were given in Table 3.

Table 3. External fears that Students Create for Fear Concept

External fears
Losing the beloved ones
Fear of abduction
Fear of living a war
Fear of parents
Fear of wild animals
Fear of being raped
Street demonstrations
Violence and fighting
Fear of gunshot
Fear of stray dogs

When Table 3 is reviewed, it is seen that the external fears of students are related to the environment where they live. It is seen that all of the themes such as losing the beloved ones, abduction, living a war, fear of parents, fear of wild animals, being raped, street demonstrations, violence and fighting, gunshots and stay dogs are the external fears. The opinions of students on this matter are given below:

When it comes to fear, I'm thinking of crying, trembling and shouting. For example; seeing a snake makes me cry, because the snake can bite me. In other words, if I live what I haven't expected before, I'm scared to death. (5th grade, female student, external fear)

When it comes to fear, I'm thinking of death, stabbing and being raped. (5th grade, female student, external fear)

It is an impression on human. Violence and fighting occur to me. It is all negative behaviours that occur one's mind. For example; a woman beaten by a man before me. (4th grade, female student, external fear)

If there is a war, all people are afraid of it. I guess this is fear. War means that a neighbour fight against its neighbour. (4th grade, male student, external fear)

When it comes to fear, I'm thinking of a feeling that a child who was engaged in violence experienced. Being scared of someone in a place where a child lives is a fear. Fear is an emotion that we experience. I'm afraid of gunshots. I'm afraid of shouts coming from outside too. (4th grade, female student, external fear)

While some fears of students are related to what they see in their environments and experience, some of which can be defined as external fears that they can estimate their indirect results without experiencing. This can differ according to the social structure, culture and environment.

As the second question in the research, the students were asked what their educational fears they faced with in the school were. The themes created by answers that the students gave to this question are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Types of fear with which students face in the education environment

Types of educational fear
Fear of examination
Fear of teacher
Fear of director
Violence in the school (relating to the circle of friends)
Fear of failing the class
Fear of counselling unit
Being dismissed from the school
Being referred to the disciplinary
Staying alone in the school
Staying alone in the school restroom

When Table 4 is reviewed, it can be said that the fears of students about school are the fears including teacher, director and circle of friends. Additionally, the fears such as examination, being dismissed from the school and being referred to the disciplinary come up as other educational fears. Another fear is the educational fear that they experience in benefiting from the counselling service of the school. Direct quotes about the opinions of student relating this issue were given below:

The thing that I fear most in the school is the exams, because I have difficulty in exams. When I have difficulty, I take low points from exams. When my teacher asks me any questions and I cannot answer, I fear most and I choke up. And when my teacher gets angry, I fear most. (5th grade, female student, educational fear)

I'm afraid of our Deputy Headmaster Mr. S... He beats me, but I'm not afraid either. As I respect my elders, I'm not afraid. (5th grade, male student, educational fear)

I'm afraid of our English Teacher M... when he shouts at us, because he shouts very loudly. If I don't wear school clothes and our headmaster sends me over to my home, I fear, because I run off the rails and get lost while I'm going home. (5th grade, female student, educational fear)

If there is a quarrel in the school, I fear most. I fear most of knife fight. I'm also afraid of some of my teachers, they hit us. Some students intervene with us, for this reason I fear most. (5th grade, female student, educational fear)

Let's say that I quarrel with my friends. I fear the teachers shout at me, because it seem like I become speechless when they talks loudly. Therefore, the teachers are angry at me. (4th grade, male student, educational fear)

What I face with at school and I fear most is that my teacher D... says come here. So I fear most. (4th grade, male student, educational fear)

Some children at school carry dangerous materials such as knife. I fear of these persons, because this kind of children harm people. (4th grade, female student, educational fear)

Discussion and Conclusion

In this research where the perceptions of students in primary school institutions on fear culture in the education were examined, it aimed to determine general and educational fears of the students. It was concluded that general fears of the students were gathered under two main categories as internal and external fears. Their educational fears came up as school directors, examinational and environmental fears.

Considering the internal fears of students receiving education in the primary school institutions, it is seen that fears relating their emotional world outweigh more. This is accepted as a natural part of human. For example; living the fear of death, giving reactions, living the fear of darkness, feeling the shiver, lack of control of emotions and consequently giving reactions such as crying are accepted as internal fears and the reactions given are

natural and ordinary reactions. However, external reactions are related to the environmental factors that they experience and can differ from society to society.

It is seen that participant are at their middle childhood by their age groups. There is a similarity between the perception ways of outer world during childhood and the perception ways of adults. In this sense, it is likely that there are similarities between the fears of children in their middle childhood and the fears of adults (Alak, 1993; Topbaş, 2003; Şehirli, 2007). During this period when the fears come up depending upon the reasons and social environment, the fact that mass communication is an integral part of life and that the students can reach these means out of parent's control affect their fears. The fact that they see and experience frequently violence in their environment and that they are a part of experiencing this regularly determine their external fears. Everything a child sees in his environment affects his life and reflects in his life and the child interiorizes by accepting this in time. While the fact that the internal fears are accepted natural is normal, we confront that the fact the external fears are varied and based on violence is one of the thought-provoking results. The fact that these kinds of fears occurring and becoming part of child during this period are among the reasons of child-teenager delinquency and substance dependence increase the case importance (İçli, 2007; Çakıroğlu, 2013). In this sense, it can be said that examining in details the external fears that children have during this period will be useful for fighting against child-teenager delinquency, the psychological, sociological and biological basis of which are discussed.

In the research, it is concluded that the educational fears experienced by students are common fears that can be seen within the same age group and education system. The fears such as fear of exams, failing the class, being referred to the disciplinary, being dismissed from the school are the fears that can be seen and consequently anticipated in the patriarchal structure and traditional education system. Tremendous responsibility falls to teachers and families in order that these fears becoming part of internal fear status cannot be carried to adulthood and adverse negatively the personality development (Topbaş, 2003; Şehirli, 2007; Serim, 2010). The fact that the failure is normal and that determining the solution offers with the reasons of failure is more important should be taught to the child. As for the fears such as being dismissed from the school, being referred to the disciplinary, the rules should be infused into the children not based on fear, but based on values. In this sense, it can be said

that determining the rules with children and helping them to comprehend the reason why the rules are required will be useful. Thus, the guilt feelings sticking in children can be avoided.

The educational fears which is teacher-related and experienced in the school creates a big problem. The fact that the teacher talks and shouts loudly and engages in physical violence from time to time can cause that the students show adverse attitudes towards school. Similar attitudes are related to school directors. The fact that the headmaster and the deputy headmaster solve the problems the children have through verbal and physical violence causes that the students normalize the violence and enables them to adapt this in daily life. The fear type which is faced with at school and affects the students is the environmental violence. For example; the fact that the students always fight with each other at school and this fight sometimes becomes a knife-fight can affect negatively the students.

The school to be evaluated as important and small reflection or an important social group of the social life (Odacı, 2007) should be the environments based on love, respect and trust. In this process where the physiological and psycho-social development continues rapidly, individuals need to obtain positive marks in their life. A school climate created based on fear results in an occurrence of negative projections in individuals' life and a life with a constant fear culture effect. In this sense, it can be stated that school climates based on trust and paying attention to values should be created.

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