Conflicts and Sustainability of Coexistence in Secondary Education: An Ethnographic Study in Spain

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Abstract: In the last two decades, school coexistence in Spain has suffered an important deterioration with consequences in the quality of working life and the health of teachers, as well as in the academic performance of students. Educational administrations have promoted actions to improve it; however, the results have not been positive. To give a more adequate answer we must know in depth the scope of the problem. The objective of this study was to analyze the most common types of conflicts, the degree of incidence of each one and how they are distributed among students, as well as to determine the most important underlying cause according to the teachers. The field work was carried out during the 2018/2019 academic year, in a Secondary School located in the south of the Valencian Community (Spain). The student population was 1040, 532 women and 508 men. The research followed a mixed, qualitative, and quantitative methodology, making use of in-depth interviews with the teaching staff, participant observation and a quantitative analysis of 1501 incidents that were reported throughout the academic year. The results show us differences by sex: 84% of the incidents are produced by male students and 16% by female students. Incident distribution is very uneven among the different courses. Of the center's problems, 88.14% are concentrated in the first two years of Compulsory Secondary Education. It is remarkable that 51% of the problems are generated by only 3% of the students, mostly men and with a significant academic disinterest; therefore, it is a very small number of students, but with a great impact on coexistence.

Keywords: educational disruption; school incidents; secondary education; school coexistence; academic performance; school ethnography; anthropology of education; school sustainability

1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, Spanish society has undergone an important transformation. Globalization, technological development, migratory flows, among other factors, have transformed the way of thinking and living of the population, affecting schools, and reflecting on the behavior of part of the student body. These social changes have been accompanied by various educational reforms [1,2], which have extended the schooling age to sixteen years, rearranged educational levels, and modified the curricular design several times.

At the same time, coexistence problems in educational centers have increased considerably and have become persistent [3–10]. Unfortunately, various legislative approaches to address coexistence [11] and school plans carried out have not worked as expected [12].

The consequences of this deterioration of the educational environment in schools and the disruption in classrooms have been analyzed by scientific research. Proving that, on the one hand, it produces frustration and discomfort among teachers, which in some cases evolves towards a detriment to their health, such as stress, loss of self-esteem, depression,

or burnout syndrome [13–16]. In addition, the time required to establish an adequate learning environment in the classroom and manage conflicts significantly hinders the achievement of educational objectives, and sometimes even makes it impossible, causing curricular delays among the classes most affected by these behaviors [17–22].

Numerous studies from different perspectives have addressed the problem in recent decades [6,9,23–26]. Therefore, we are facing a widely studied phenomenon, which is beginning to create solid conceptual frameworks and proposals for action. Even so, regarding conceptual precision, we observe that the concept of "disruption" has become a heterogeneous set, where its limits are not always clear, so it is convenient to specify and delimit this term. In common parlance, and sometimes in scientific literature, we observe that terms such as bad behavior, indiscipline and even violent behavior are used as synonyms for disruption. Undoubtedly, all phenomena that alter coexistence, such as aggressiveness or violence, are disruptive acts. However, not all disruptive acts are aggressive or violent, for example, interrupting, moving around the class or making jokes to provoke laughter, are not acts of violence. After reviewing the educational literature of recent years, Martínez-Fernández [27] concludes that there are "a great variety of terms and definitions used to describe the behavior problems of students in the classroom. In general, the definitions contemplate from performance problems to the discomfort produced by disruption, including problems of order and discipline", and uses as a synthesis definition the one proposed by Urbina, Simón & Echeita [28]:

> *Student behaviors that systematically interrupt current school activities, distort the usual development of the tasks carried out in the classroom and force the teacher to invest a good part of the time dedicated to the teaching and learning processes to be able to face them.* (p. 3).

This delimitation is necessary to differentiate it from other problems of coexistence, since each one requires a specific treatment. Undoubtedly, disruptive behaviors are an important problem, although "in themselves and considered in isolation, they cannot be considered as situations of violence. However, it is relatively easy to cross the border between situations of disruption and more serious situations of indiscipline. [...]. In some cases, the scale of the conflict can grow until it generates situations of serious violence" [15] (p. 36).

Moreover, on the intensification in the last two decades of classroom disruption, the Ombudsman reports [3,4] have made it clear that the problem of disruption is a frequent conflict in secondary school classrooms. In 2010, the Ministry of Education published a report on school coexistence in Compulsory Secondary Education, indicating that 21% of teachers acknowledge that they suffer from this problem frequently and/or very frequently in their classrooms [5]. In 2010, the Spanish Federation of Teaching Workers [15] published an extensive study conducted through 1223 questionnaires to secondary school teachers from all the autonomous communities of the national territory. It indicated that almost 1% of teachers are insulted almost every day, almost 10% with some frequency and more than 54.4% have been insulted by students at some time. In addition, it found that 32.4% of teaching staff declare that they have been threatened at some time, while 5.7% are threatened with some frequency, monthly at least. The report concludes that of the different types of 'violence' that occur in schools, disruption in classrooms is "the situation that occurs most frequently, since 34.1% of the respondents claim to suffer it very frequently, that is, all weeks, and 56.5% with some frequency, which means, at least, monthly" (p. 36).

Disruption is not a local problem, according *to The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)* [29], in the OECD "25% of teachers say they spend more than 17% of class time maintaining order (5% say they employ more than 35% of the class in this task). In Spain, a quarter of teachers say that they use more than 20% of their class to maintain order [. . .]" (p. 127). Specifically, "about 30% of teachers in the OECD average state that they waste a lot of time until students sit down and become silent or due to interruptions in class by students. In Spain, both figures are close to 45% of teachers (almost half)" (p. 128).

On this subject, it is important to highlight a literature review of secondary school teachers' perceptions of student misbehavior from 1983 to 2013 comprised of studies from various countries including Australia, China, Greece, Jordan, Malta, the United Kingdom and the United States. The main conclusions were that teacher perceptions of high frequency misbehaviors and serious misbehaviors were largely consistent over time and between countries. Teachers perceived talking out of turn and similar misbehaviors as being most frequent, while more extreme violent or potentially violent behaviors were not reported to occur frequently [30].

Another comprehensive review of the extant literature on the contributors to ethnicity, gender, and income disparities in disciplinary outcomes, and the effectiveness of emerging alternatives to exclusionary disciplinary approaches, found that the causes of the disparities are numerous and multifaceted. Although low-income and minority students experience suspensions and expulsions at higher rates than their peers, the authors note that "these differences cannot be solely attributed to socioeconomic status or increased misbehavior. Instead, school and classroom occurrences that result from the policies, practices, and perspectives of teachers and principals appear to play an important role in explaining the disparities" [31].

The challenging behavior of some students is often discussed by comparing them to some "other" student, who does not display challenging behavior. Gazeley et al. [32] noted that this individualization of behavior leads to seeing children in isolation instead of adopting a systemic approach to manage the over-representation of certain groups within exclusion processes.

When we consider the "child as problem" approach, we are using a model that locates the cause of challenging behavior within the individual [33]. However, if we use a social model perspective, the child's behavior must be analyzed as the result of a society that does not adapt to a wide range of different needs that children have [34]. From this perspective, it is the environment and the context that must change to adapt to the need, not the individual himself.

The tensions between the individualization and the contextualization of the causality of challenging behavior are fundamental to explain how it impacts the exclusive and inclusive practices carried out by the teacher and the school management. In this sense, Stanforth and Rose [33] conducted a study in a conventional English secondary school, where the interaction of competing notions of exclusion and inclusion was considered for children showing challenging behaviors. The findings showed that some groups were disproportionately affected by referrals. In addition, within the interviews, students and staff ranged from individualizing and contextualizing the cause of the challenging behavior, both blaming the student and seeing him as a victim of the circumstances at the same time. The authors note as relevant, that teachers indicated a greater willingness to change their practice and use a contextual approach to understand the behavior of students when they felt that they had been given a reason from family life or the student's background to do so.

These studies support the shared perception about the deterioration of the educational environment in educational centers. This fact, together with the social impact that certain behaviors have and the media noise they generate, creates the feeling that it is something generalized. However, we wonder to what extent this assessment is correct, what is the scope of coexistence problems in secondary education, what types of incidents occur, how they are distributed among the different courses and among students, and what are the causes that explain the most common problems from the teachers' point of view.

To answer these questions, throughout the 2018–2019 school year, we carried out intense field work in a secondary education center in the south of the Valencian Community (Spain). We analyzed in depth the reported incidents, written reprimands, and disciplinary files initiated to students. We analyzed in depth the reported incidents, the written reprimands and the disciplinary files initiated on the students. We interviewed tutors, teachers, and members of the management team. At the same time, we participated in meetings, commissions and disciplinary procedures carried out at the center. The results show us the

characteristics and extent of the problems and reveal elements of great interest for making more accurate and effective decisions, since the problems of school coexistence must be faced as an opportunity to improve the functioning of the school organization [35,36].

Objectives

To answer the research questions, we set the following general objective:

- Determine the main types of coexistence problems in secondary education and their distribution among students, as well as the explanatory causes of these incidents according to the opinion of the teachers.

This general objective was concretized in three specific objectives:

- Determine the types of problems that are presented according to the teaching staff and define categories for their analysis.
- Measure the degree of incidence of each category.
- Analyze how the different types of incidents are distributed among the students.
- Indicate the most relevant explanatory causes according to the teaching staff.

2. Materials and Methods

The research was carried out during the 2018/2019 academic year, in a publicly owned Secondary Education Institute located in a municipality of the Baix Segura/La Vega Baja region (Valencian Community) (To preserve the anonymity of our informants, both the name of the center and the town have been omitted). To develop the research, the following steps were followed: determine the criteria to select the study community, establish the most appropriate research instruments to guarantee triangulation, and establish the validation criteria.

2.1. Population and Sample

The region's economy is based on agriculture and a residential tourism sector that has been gaining in importance, attracting people from other areas of Spain and from various European countries. Both agriculture and the tourism development model have required abundant low-skilled labor, so growth boosted by both economic sectors has fostered a significant migration of families mainly from North Africa, South America, and Europe. Due to these migratory flows, the municipality has a high multiculturality, and of its approximately 22,000 inhabitants (according to data from the National Institute of Statistics referring to 2018, https://www.ine.es/index.htm) (accessed on 22 April 2021), almost 40% of the population is of foreign origin, slightly above the average for the region. (The Baix Segura/La Vega Baja region has a 34.37% foreign population according to official data. http://www.argos.gva.es/bdmun/pls/argos_mun/DMEDB_COMADATOSINDICADORES.DibujaPagina?aNComaId=34&aNIndicador=2&aVLengua=c) (accessed on 22 April 2021)

The selection of the center was made according to four criteria, specifically: type of center, degree of school segregation, size (number of students) and accessibility. Regarding the type of center criterion, secondary education centers were sought, since it is where the maximum conflict is concentrated [10], in addition to representing most of the centers of the autonomous community. Centers with special characteristics and those with less implementation were discarded. These included: Singular Educational Action Centers (in Spanish, CAES) (educational centers located in a Preferred Action Neighborhood or that enroll students with educational compensation needs in a percentage equal to or greater than 30% of the total of the center), Special Education centers (Special Education Centers are educational centers in which students with special educational needs associated with severe permanent disability conditions are enrolled and in which a set of services, resources and measures that cannot be generalized in the ordinary educational system concur), centers for Specialized Education (Specialized Education includes language education, art education and sports education), Rural Clusters (educational centers made up of a small group of incomplete rural schools located in different localities of the Spanish rural environment, where Early Childhood Education and Primary Education are taught), centers with Foreign

Educational Systems (characterized by teaching corresponding to educational systems of other countries, and in the Valencian Community there are currently non-university educational centers with British, French, Norwegian, USA, Panamanian and German systems), Home Schools (buildings where the students of the region live and attend compulsory Primary and Secondary school and the educational administration takes care of all the expenses of these students) and centers for Adult Training.

Spain has received an important migration intake during the last two decades, especially in large cities and in the Mediterranean area where we developed this study. For this reason it was relevant to consider the criterion of school segregation in the selection of the educational centers because, in certain zones, students are distributed among schools based on socioeconomic factors [37], which has direct repercussions on the classroom environment and academic results [38,39]. To prevent a bias caused by school segregation itself, our selection criterion focused on secondary education centers without school segregation or with a low level, that is, those that equally embrace the social diversity of the area of influence.

Furthermore, we used the criterion of the size of the center. The administration classifies the centers according to the number of class-groups it has. It is considered type C when it has less than 12 class groups, type B when between 12 and 24, and type A when it has more than 24 class groups. To answer the research questions, we considered it more appropriate to select centers with a high number of students, since they are more complex, so we focused on type A centers.

The intersection of these three criteria significantly reduced the number of centers, and we finally selected the one that allowed us access for the development of the research. Thus, the studied center offered Compulsory Secondary Education (in Spanish: ESO). (We will use the acronym ESO (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria) in the rest of the text, as it is the common term used to name these teachings: Baccalaureate, Basic Vocational Training and Middle Grade Vocational Training.) Furthermore, the center was classified as type A and had a staff of 90 teachers, of whom only 48 had been at the center for more than two years. This high instability of the teaching staff is a characteristic of the center and other peripheral centers of the autonomous community. On the other hand, the center had 1040 students enrolled, 532 women and 508 men, which was the entire student population of the municipality, as it was the only secondary school and, therefore, this guaranteed that there was no school segregation, and the center fully represented the social reality of its area of influence.

In the study, we analyzed the records of incidents that affect all the school's students; therefore, we included the total population of students (N = 1040) in our analysis. Regarding the teaching staff, we had the opportunity to hold informal conversations with most of the faculty, but thirty teachers were selected who were interviewed in depth. The selection was made according to gender, 15 men and 15 women; the didactic specialty, all the departments were represented with at least two selected teachers; and the years of experience, considering three groups, less than 5 years, between 6 and 20 and more than 20, thus, five men and five women were selected in each age group.

2.2. Research Instruments

The research was based on the use of quantitative and qualitative techniques. We used quantitative techniques to analyze the database of 1501 incidents registered during the school year.

From a qualitative point of view, we relied on three outstanding ethnographic research techniques: documentary analysis, participant observation, and open interviews. The documentary analysis was used to review the educational project of the center, the syllabi of the courses and the final reports of the didactic departments.

The participant observation took place between the months of September and June, which allowed us to be present in various situations that altered school coexistence, estab-

lish contact with the informants, and be able to contrast and differentiate what they told us about what happened.

We conducted informal and in-depth interviews, always within an environment based on "trust, curiosity and naturalness" [40] (p. 77), specifically we discussed and listened carefully to the opinions of the entire teaching staff, and in a more formal and intense way, thirty teachers were interviewed, including tutors, heads of studies, the director, deputy director and counselors of the center.

The triangulation of the information collected was solved through the quantitative analysis of the incident reports, together with the use of the three qualitative techniques discussed. As Aguilar and Barroso [41] (p. 75) say, the complementarity of the techniques allows data to be crossed and observed if the same conclusions are reached, while combining them allows us to alleviate the limitations or weaknesses of each of them.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The study incorporated the gender perspective as a transversal methodological tool; therefore, both the data and the selected informants were differentiated by sex, bearing in mind the ideological representations of gender and the cultural construction of masculinity and femininity. For the thirty in-depth interviews, 15 male professors and 15 female professors from different didactic departments and ages were selected. Additionally, the student data was disaggregated, analyzing the realities of men and women.

The data from interviews and observations were collected in a field diary, and the selection and reduction process, as well as its organization and categorization, was carried out manually. On the other hand, the data from the center's documentary database—reported incidents, written reprimands and disciplinary files—were processed with the help of the SQL (Structured Query Language) database query language and IBM SPSS Statistics 24.0 software was used for the statistical management of the data.

3. Results

In the following sections we describe the procedure that teachers follow to manage and document the different incidents that occur in the classroom and in other areas of the center. We carry out the categorization and analysis of these, showing how it is distributed among the students and the different educational levels and courses. Finally, we inquire about the main cause of the inappropriate behavior of the most conflictive students in the school from the teachers' perspective.

3.1. Behavioral Incident Management Procedure

Throughout the academic year, 1501 reports of incidents were recorded, 497 written reprimands were carried out and 73 disciplinary files were initiated. These figures reflect the enormous effort that teachers must make to maintain coexistence in the center.

The teachers informed us that before registering an incident on a student, important mediation work is usually carried out to reorient the situation in a dialogue way. However, when it does not work or the incident is important, the registration procedure is used, and although most of the time it is informative and warning, sometimes it can also carry a sanction.

Incidents are recorded in a standardized document where the facts, and the type of incident are reflected. In addition, the teacher involved calls the family to report what happened. When students accumulate three or four minor incidents, the Head of Studies issues a formal warning (written reprimand). A written reprimand is a document that the center sends to the family to inform that the student's misconduct is repeated. The document is informative and warns that a new incident would imply the opening of a disciplinary file. According to the Head of Studies, reprimands are often effective, and students improve their behavior, at least for a time. The disciplinary files are initiated when the director of the center considers that the student's behavior is seriously detrimental to coexistence, either due to a very serious incident or due to the accumulation of minor

incidents. In such cases, Decree 39/2008 of April 4 [42] is applied to initiate the inquiry procedure about the student's behavior where teachers, counselors and the school council participate. The sanctions are educational in nature, but in serious cases they can lead to the temporary expulsion of the student and in extremely serious and recurrent cases, to the definitive expulsion from the center.

3.2. Types of Incidents, Categories of Analysis and Distribution

The faculty has developed a classification system based on twelve types of incidents. After analyzing them, for analytical reasons, we consider it more appropriate to group them into a smaller set of categories of behaviors that would be as follows:

- Disruptive behaviors, following the proposal by Urbina, Simón and Echeita [28], it would refer to behaviors "that systematically interrupt ongoing school activities, distort the usual development of tasks carried out in the classroom" (p. 3).
- Dissocial behaviors, encompassing behaviors such as theft, drug use, counterfeiting, breaking furniture, scratching cars, etc.
- Academic disinterest, refers to a lack of attendance, lack of punctuality, apathy, not bringing material, not doing homework repeatedly or general laziness, which can lead to the student falling asleep at the desk.
- Interpersonal conflicts, is a very important category that, due to its breadth, we have divided into conflicts between students, and student–teacher and –non-teacher conflicts.
  - ○ Conflicts between students: It is necessary to distinguish between specific conflicts, that is, situations in which two or more students come into conflict and that can lead to insults, fights or aggressions, and those in which a student is exposed, for a time and repeatedly, to abuse or intimidation by another, or by a group that acts as an aggressor or is passive in the face of what happens; in this case we will talk about bullying.
  - ○ Student–teacher and student–non-teaching staff conflicts: We will distinguish the actions of the student towards the teacher that can be translated into situations of disrespect, insults, threats, and aggressions. As well as with the rest of the non-teaching staff of the center, such as administrative, custodians and cleaning staff.

The following table shows the types of incidents that teachers use to record coexistence problems and how they are grouped into the analysis categories developed for the investigation (Table 1).

Table 1. Categories of analysis and associated types of incidents. Source: self-made.

Analysis Category (Etic)	Incident Type (Emic)
Disruptive behaviors	Inappropriate behavior
Dissocial behaviors	Consume prohibited substances
	Absenteeism: the student was picked up by the police and offered resistance
	Impersonation of personality. Forgery of identification card
	The student spoils the center material
Academic disinterest	The student does not bring school supplies
	The student arrives to class late
	Absenteeism: the student was picked up by the police and entered the center without offering resistance
Conflict with teachers and non-teaching staff	Disrespect towards the teacher
	Disrespect towards non-teaching staff
Peer conflict	Bullying or assault
	Disrespect to a student

The quantitative analysis of the incidents (Table 2) gives us a precise vision of the most relevant coexistence problems. Specifically, conflicts with teachers and the rest of the center's staff account for 41.57% of the incidents recorded, followed by disruptive behaviors that reach 34.38%. Far behind them follows academic disinterest (12.72%), peer conflicts (6.80%) and dissocial behaviors (4.53%).

Table 2. Number of cases registered by type and category of analysis. Source: self-made.

Analysis Category	Incident Type	Number of Cases	Percentage
Disruptive behaviors	Inappropriate behavior	516	34.38%
	Total	516	34.38%
Dissocial behaviors	Consume prohibited substances	13	0.87%
	Absenteeism: the student was picked up by the police and offered resistance	12	0.80%
	Impersonation of personality. Forgery of identification card	14	0.93%
	The student spoils the center material	29	1.93%
	Total	68	4.53%
Academic disinterest	The student does not bring school supplies	19	1.27%
	The student arrives to class late	163	10.86%
	Absenteeism: the student was picked up by the police and entered the center without offering resistance	9	0.60%
	Total	191	12.72%
Conflict with teachers and non-teaching staff	Disrespect towards the teacher	585	38.97%
	Disrespect towards non-teaching staff	39	2.60%
	Total	624	41.57%
Peer conflict	Bullying or assault	63	4.20%
	Disrespect for a student	39	2.60%
	Total	102	6.80%

To analyze the distribution of behavior problems among the students, it was decided to use a scale of five ranges, ranging from those with no recorded incidents to those with more than 15 (Table 3). As can be seen in the table, 78% of the students had no registered incidents and only 3% exceeded 15 incidents; however, this last group was concentrated with 770 cases, which represents 51% of the total incidents registered in the center. That is, 30 students, just 3% of the student body, caused 51% of the documented incidents, more than half. Specifically, following this group, we observe that these 30 students generated 48% of the written reprimands and 81% of the disciplinary files initiated.

Table 3. Distribution of incidents among students. Source: self-made.

Range of Incidents per Student	Students N = 1040		Incidents Ni = 1501		Written Reprimands Na = 497		Disciplinary Files Ne = 73	
	Total	**%**	**Total**	**%**	**Total**	**%**	**Total**	**%**
More than 15	30	3%	770	51%	241	48%	59	81%
Between 10 and 15	19	2%	232	15%	110	22%	9	12%
Between 6 and 10	41	4%	287	19%	96	19%	4	5%
Between 1 and 5	138	13%	212	14%	50	10%	1	1%
0	812	78%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

When we disaggregate this information by sex, very interesting trends are observed (Table 4). Among the 1040 students, 508 are boys (49%) and 532 are girls (51%), a similar proportion; however, most incidents are committed by male students, 84%, while female students only generated 16%. Regarding written reprimands, 91.3% were directed at male students and 8.7% at female students. Therefore, in the case of female students, a percentage decrease is observed with respect to incidents, this fact is explained by a lower repetition of inappropriate behaviors among female students.

Table 4. Distribution of incidents by sex. Source: self-made.

Gender	Incidents Ni = 1501		Written Reprimands Na = 497		Disciplinary Files Ne = 73	
	Total	**%**	**Total**	**%**	**Total**	**%**
Men Nv = 508	1261	84%	454	91.3%	66	90.4%
Women Nm = 532	240	16%	43	8.7%	7	9.6%

Regarding disciplinary records, from a total of 73 files, only seven were initiated to female students (9.6%). Furthermore, among the 30 students with the highest number of recorded incidents, there were only four female students.

Our informants alluded to this fact in the interviews:

In general, girls are calmer. Sure, there are conflicting ones, but if you catch their attention, they usually respond in a positive way. However, with them [the boys] you must be very careful not to make the situation worse, because they get aggressive, they challenge you. (Math male teacher, with 30 years of experience)

One variable to consider due to the characteristics of the context studied has been the ethnic origin of the students. The teachers point out a greater conflict among some male students of Maghreb origin, something that contrasts with the attitude of female students of the same origin, who are seen as calmer and more educated than most of the school's female students. Analyzing the incident records, we did not detect a significant variation in the number of incidents associated with the students based on their ethnic origin. This question was contrasted with the teaching staff who told us:

Maghreb male students are not more confrontational than the rest, but when they do, they are very provocative and aggressive, and that draws attention. Then, you are surprised that Moroccan girls are by far calmer and more educated than the rest of the girls in the center. (Computer science male teacher, 18 years of experience)

Another important fact is the distribution of incidents by educational levels and courses (Table 5); the highest concentration occurs in the first grades of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO, in Spanish). The first grade is where the most incidents occurred, accumulating 57.43% of the entire center. Followed by the second grade with 33.71% and declining radically from the third year.

Table 5. Incidents by educational level and grades. Source: self-made.

Grade	Number of Incident Reports	Percentage of Incidents by Grade
1 ESO	862	57.43%
2 ESO	461	30.71%
3 ESO	106	7.06%
4 ESO	40	2.66%
1° Baccalaureate	21	1.40%
1° Basic Vocational Training	7	0.47%
2° Baccalaureate	2	0.13%
1° Middle Vocational Training	1	0.07%
2° Middle Vocational Training	1	0.07%

The data are conclusive, showing that the first and second year of ESO are extremely conflictive, and this gradually improves throughout secondary education. At the end of compulsory secondary school and in post-compulsory education, the behavior of the students and the classroom learning environment are remarkably restored, and the problems of coexistence are anecdotal.

The explanation given by teachers about this fact is that the programs, based on smaller and more homogeneous groups, with curricular adaptations, alleviate the problem a little in the second year; when the student reaches the age of fifteen, some may begin basic vocational training. However, above all, the greatest impact occurs when the most conflictive students reach the third year of ESO, since most have repeated courses and, therefore, turn sixteen and leave the educational system. In addition, this data acquires special importance when Spain is the OECD country with the most repeating students in secondary school, and the school failure rate is double the average of developed countries.

This is how some of our informants expressed it:

Many are not bad kids; they just don't want to be here. They are forced to do so and as soon as they reach the age [16 years old] they leave the center, and we relax for a while. (Biology female teacher, 12 years of experience)

The programs play their part, those who are good kids and want to study even if it is difficult for them in the end they manage to advance, but in the normal class they get lost. The programs are a great help. (Spanish Language and Literature female teacher, 22 years of experience)

The direction of the school tells us that these students are no longer a school problem, but you cannot ignore that these students do not even have the title of ESO and will have great difficulty in finding work and integrating into society.

The truth is that many times we are looking forward to these students turning 16 and dropping out of school. It is a pity! but we can't do more. Then you see them around town doing nothing or worse getting into trouble. It's a disaster! (Member of the management team)

> *It is a relief when they reach the age and leave the center, we [the teachers] celebrate it and also the students who are fed up with their antics.* (Third ESO female tutor, nine years of experience)

3.3. Academic Disinterest, Grade Repetition, and Discipline Problems

"They are always the same students" is a recurring phrase among teachers to refer to the problems that arise in the center. In addition, they inform us that part of this small percentage of students, with a high impact on the coexistence of the center and the educational environment of the classroom, have a very specific academic profile. They are students who are in the center against their will, by law, since they are under 16 years of age and are within the period of compulsory schooling, but they do not have any academic interest.

> *I recognize them the first day because they are immediately noticed. It is easy to know that they will be problematic during the course.* (Second year ESO male tutor, five years of experience)

> *Many are not interested in the classes, because they do not understand or because they do not want to study. Some have repeated one or two courses and do not mind failing . . . . We have to put up with them because they are obliged to be here, but they want to leave and we [the teachers] do too, so that we can work.* (English female teacher, eight years of experience)

> *As they are repeaters, they know that this year they will automatically promote to the next course and they will continue with their friends, which is the only thing that worries them.* (Geography and History female teacher, twelve years of experience)

This perception of the teaching staff was reviewed. To do this, we analyzed the correlation between "repeated courses" and "discipline problems", observing a strong link (Table 6). In the first grade of ESO, students who have repeated a course have an incidence rate of reported misbehavior up to seven times more than non-repeating students. When the student has repeated two courses, the figures rise to almost 11 points. For the second grade of ESO the trend is similar, since the lag of one and two years multiplies the frequency of incidents by six and eight.

Table 6. Relationship between "grade repetition" and "discipline problems" in first and second year of Compulsory Secondary Education. Source: self-made.

Repeated Courses	Current Grade	Number of Students	Cumulative Number of Incidents	Incidence Rate per Student
0	1° ESO	130	137	1.1
	2° ESO	131	83	0.6
	Total	261	220	0.8
1	1° ESO	64	466	7.3
	2° ESO	32	114	3.6
	Total	96	580	6.0
2	1° ESO	23	259	11.3
	2° ESO	47	220	4.7
	Total	70	479	6.8

In short, in the first and second year of ESO, students who have not repeated any course have an average of 0.8 incidents per student, while those who have repeated one or two courses have an average of 6 and 6.8 incidents per student. These data show us a strong correlation between students' academic difficulties and discipline problems. Although not all repeating students or those with curricular gaps present discipline problems, it is evident that most of the problems are generated by students who have repeated a course.

These data corroborate the perception of the teaching staff. Most of the coexistence problems are produced by repeating students; students who, according to the teaching

staff, present significant curricular gaps, and academic disinterest. How did they get to this situation? It is a question that we asked teachers, and although each student has a different and personal story, for teachers there are two fundamental reasons that explain the lack of interest and demotivation to study: the family context, fundamentally the socioeconomic and cultural status of the family; the personal characteristics of the student, such as attitude, ability, motivation, and work habits.

> *Sometimes you call the parents to tell them about their son's problems and then you understand everything. The truth is that they behave quite well given the situation they have at home.* (Member of the management team)

> *There is a lot of unstructured family, and the children suffer the consequences. How are they going to be interested in polyhedral or Euler's relationship, with the problems they have?* (Math female teacher, two years of experience)

> *Parents are not attentive to the needs of their children; some are carefree, and others are working all day in the fields or in the warehouse. The result is that the boy is alone, and no one controls him or knows what he is doing.* (Second ESO female tutor, technology teacher, three years of experience)

> *They are not bad kids. They just have difficulty learning, and instead of being the class fool they prefer to be the funny one or the bad one, because that way at least the other students respect them.* (Technology male teacher, four years of experience)

The teaching staff did not refer to teaching competencies, methodologies and specific programs that could improve the educational experience of these students, so we asked if something can be done from the center and the teaching action. In the end they gave us a wide variety of answers, among the most common: the proportion of students and specific programs. The teachers indicate that it is impossible to give adequate personalized attention when there are up to 30 students in the classroom. On the other hand, they miss specific programs for these students, mainly programs that reduce the academic and theoretical component of the curriculum and increase the aspects based on learning by doing.

> *There are students who should not be in the center. We can't handle them. They should go to special centers. Some have smoked joints before entering my class. We are not prepared to treat these students.* (English female teacher, three years of experience)

> *I find it ridiculous and amusing that the administration asks us to make curricular adaptations and provide personalized attention to the diversity of students in the classroom. I would like someone to explain to me how personalized teaching can be offered simultaneously to thirty students in one hour of class. . . . Make groups of fifteen students and then we could do something!* (Philosophy male teacher, twenty-two years of experience)

> *There are students who do not want or cannot study. They tell us that they want to enroll in vocational training. Basic vocational training is very good for them, but they have to wait until they are of age. So, in the meantime, they are in the classroom doing nothing and bothering.* (Technology male teacher, five years of experience)

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Complex societies develop in constant transformation. Social, technological, and legislative changes, among others, are affecting the school system, reflecting in part of the student body through their academic disinterest, rejection of school and increased indiscipline in the classroom [3–8,10,43]. The result is that teachers are spending much more time solving behavior problems [5,15,29], with educational consequences for students [17–22] and for the health and job quality of the teachers themselves [13–16].

To face this new reality, it is essential to distinguish and differentiate the types of conflicts that are generated at school, from the most serious, caused by violent and aggressive behaviors, to the less serious disruptive behaviors, such as getting up, talking, disturbing or disobeying the teacher's orders. This distinction is pertinent and necessary to go beyond

the problems with the greatest media impact and recognize the true scope of the different behaviors that affect school coexistence and the appropriate educational environment and, thus, be able to articulate effective educational and organizational measures for each specific problem.

We have defined five categories of analysis that have allowed us to carry out this differentiation of the problems, observing that most of the incidents fall under the categories of disruptive behaviors (34.38%) and student–teacher conflicts, the latter are mainly specified in incidents that the teachers consider as a "lack of respect" (38.97%). Respect is a central value for coexistence and the proper development of school activity [44]. When we inquired of the teachers about these behaviors, we found that the disruption is considered a low intensity behavior that is normally redirected with a verbal warning or by informing the student that it will be registered, normally allowing the class to continue. However, when this procedure does not work, disruptive behaviors become persistent and tend to worsen, so that the student challenges and denies the teacher's authority, causing the loss of control of the class and altering its normal development. At this point, this incident is treated by the teacher as a lack of respect and recorded as such, entering the category of student–teacher conflict. Therefore, disruptive behaviors and student–teacher conflicts are linked to the effort of teachers to maintain the learning environment in the classroom and, although they are low-violence conflicts, they have great importance in school life, since it was possible to verify that the sum of both represents 73.35% of the total incidents registered in the center. Far behind are other types of problems, such as academic disinterest (12.72%), peer conflicts (6.80%) and dissocial behaviors (4.53%).

These data give us a more precise vision of the true scope of each type of problem, and although they are all important, there is no doubt that the impact on school coexistence is highly focused. In any case, the data allows us to go further. Our study shows that this distribution is not homogeneous between students and not even between the different courses of secondary education. On the contrary, when we analyze the distribution by courses, we observe that most of the conflicts are concentrated in the younger ages of 12 and 13 years that correspond to the first and second year of Compulsory Secondary Education, representing 88.14% of the total incidents from the center. Of these, 57.43% occur in the first year and 30.71% in the second year, declining radically after the third year. On the other hand, when analyzing the distribution among the total number of students, we observe that 3% of the school's students accumulated 51% of the total incidents, 48% of the written reprimands and 81% of the disciplinary files.

Going one step further and disaggregating these data by sex, it is observed that 84% of incidents are committed by male students while female students only generated 16%. In addition, 91.3% of the reprimands were directed at male students and 8.7% at female students; 90.4% of the files were filed with male students and only 9.6% with female students. Furthermore, among the 30 students with the highest number of incidence parties, there were only four female students. These data show that male students manifest more inappropriate behaviors than female students, a fact that coincides with other investigations, such as Campos, Juste & Rodríguez [45], Velasco & Álvarez-González [46], Ombudsman reports [3], Postigo et al. [47], Cerezo & Ato [48]; Hoff et al. [49] and Villarreal-González et al. [50].

From a gender perspective, we therefore see that the greatest conflict is presented by boys, where the cultural construction of hegemonic masculinity is still more associated with aggressiveness [51–56]. In this sense, an explanatory cause could be linked to gender mandates and differentiated socialization that intervene in the most aggressive, violent, or disruptive behaviors of male adolescents compared to girls. Well, in "traditional models of gender identity, masculinity is associated with hyperactivity and sexual potency, strength, courage, aggressiveness, work, inhibition of emotions ("boys don't cry", etc.)." [57] (p. 61). (Appreciating the differences, serves as an example, that according to the UN in 2013 of the people convicted of homicide, 95% were men compared to 5% who were women. Another interesting piece of information that largely reflects the consequences of violence is that of people who are admitted to prisons. In turn, in a report "World Population List"

(2018) of the Institute for Criminal Policy Research, University of London, it is shown that throughout the world it is estimated that there are 10.74 million people in prison, of which of which 93.2% are men and 6.8% women.)

Therefore, we can affirm that the problem is highly focused on the first years of Compulsory Secondary Education and on a relatively low number of students; however, these few can block the learning process and capture the full attention of teachers. In addition, a good part of the activity of the center, discussions of the meetings of the faculty, meetings of the educational class teams, orientation services and the time of the management team is focused on how to manage the behaviors of this small group of students.

Determining the profile of these students is a matter of great complexity, so any generalization will be incomplete, even so, teachers report that disruptive behaviors and a lack of respect for teachers are strongly linked to academic disinterest. According to the teachers, these are students who have received negative academic grades for a long time and most of them have repeated a course. These data are supported by the relationship between the number of incidents per student and the number of repeated courses. In the first two courses of ESO, students who have not repeated any course have an average of 0.8 incidents per student, while those who have repeated one or two courses have an average of 6 and 6.8 incidents, respectively. This correlation between disruptive behaviors and school failure has been pointed out from other studies, such as Jurado-de-los-Santos and Tejada-Fernández [58], Inglés et al. [59], Gotzens et al. [43] or Jurado and Olmos [60]. The teachers point out as main causes, the family context of the student and their own personal characteristics. Unfortunately, teachers consider that they do not have the means to offer these students adequate attention given the high number of students in the classes and the lack of specific training programs for these students.

These data connect us with the two models discussed, the one that focuses responsibility on the individual or on their context [32–34]. We observe that the teachers act on the student from an individualized approach, but they are aware that the social and family context is decisive in the challenging behavior. This dilemma is solved by teachers, justifying that they do not have the means or margins to act and that more means and resources are needed to respond to the needs of these students.

Of course, the study has certain limitations that open the possibility of it being expanded in future research. It focuses exclusively on the perception of teachers, and it would be interesting to continue it with the vision of students and families.

In conclusion, the problems of coexistence are mainly concentrated in the first and second years of Compulsory Secondary Education, and especially among male students with academic disinterest and with a curricular gap. The problem is radically reduced after the third year, at which time many of these students can enroll in specific programs (improvement programs, diversification, or basic professional training) or leave the educational system. In this sense, improving coexistence involves focusing efforts on this small group of students and recovering their academic interest before conflicts begin. Solving the educational needs of this 3% of students can improve the problems of school coexistence by more than 50%. We must not forget that grade repetition and school failure are social constructs [61–64] that do not recognize the diversity of students from an inclusive position. Recognizing and attending to the diversity of the student body is a mandate of compulsory education and to respond to the principles of equity and equal opportunities that the system proposes. However, in addition, the effort to attend to students with academic difficulties at an early age can be the most effective measure to reduce many of the problems of coexistence in educational centers.

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