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Excused and Legitimized Violence in School

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine whether the students excuse the teacher violence that could be resorted to them. The sample of the study consisted of 222 girls (47.1%) and 249 boys (52.9%) students studying in secondary schools and high schools in İstanbul. A questionnaire developed by the researcher was used to collect data. Content analysis and non-parametric techniques were used together in the analysis of the data. As a result of the research, it was found that the situation in which violence is mostly excused is "cheating in exams." It was found that students attending public schools excused violence more than those studying at private schools. The content analysis showed that the students stated that teachers should resort to corporal violence, psychological violence, and punishment rather than non-punitive practices.

Keywords: Violence in School, Legitimized Violence, Corporal Punishment, Turkey

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

Violence comes from the Latin "Violentia." Violentia means violence, harsh or ruthless personality, power. The act of "Violare" means acting with violence, not knowing value, and breaking the rules. These words are linked to each other by "Vis." "Vis" includes the meanings of competence, value, and vitality which means power, energy, authority, violence, bodily power, and the possibility of using the power of something (Michaud, 1991, pp. 7–8). Violence generally qualifies the excess of emotion, the intensity of a phenomenon, and rude and harsh behavior (Köknel, 1996, p. 20). This term has been used in various studies as verbal threats, damaging property, and behaviors that harm someone else (Hastings & Hamberger, 1997, p. 323). Michaud proposed a definition describing both cases of violence and acts of violence (Michaud, 1991, p.11): "In an environment of mutual relations, if one or more of the parties behave in a harmful way to the bodily integrity or moral (ethical/morale/spiritual) integrity or property or figurative and symbolic cultural values of one or more of the others, as directly or indirectly, as collectively or dispersed, regardless of proportion there is violence" (Michaud, 1991, p. 11). Violence can be seen as the act or structure that humiliates the existence of another person (Harlow et al., 1996, p. 62). When this definition is accepted, it can be considered that many basic

structures in society are conceptually violent. It can be argued that organizations such as school and work environments that can include competition, hierarchy, and non-democratic practices constitute violence (Harlow et al., 1996, p. 62).

The use of authority based on punitive power in a child's education continues to be the most common type of discipline in both families and schools (Güçray, 1995, p. 117). The dictionary meaning of punishment is "regrettable, distressful, painful practice to prevent inappropriate reactions and behaviors" (TDK, 1988, p.255). At the heart of the phenomenon described with the word "poena," which means "pain" or "ache" in Latin, lies the principle of taming the perpetrator by causing psychological or physical pain or suffering, disciplining or even taking revenge on the offender on behalf of the public (Kale, 1995). According to Good and Brophy (2000, p. 180), punishment is generally used in response to undesirable behavior. Punishment is a way of using force on the student who cannot control himself/herself. According to Foucault (1992), the word punishment should mean anything that can make children feel the guilt they commit, anything that can humiliate them and confuse them. Punishment is a brutal weapon for adults who have forgotten their childhood to make their children look like themselves in a short period, that is to shorten their childhood period, that is used when they are desperate and helpless. Adults who resort to punishment in the face of guilt and try to discipline with it create a small legal system and court model; adults are judges, children are criminals.

According to Miller (1966, p.260), when the guilty person is accepted as a responsible person, the right to punishment arises. Richard Peters (1966) stated that he does not think there is a conceptual link between punishment and the notions of "deterrence," "prevention" and "reform." According to Peters, every punishment should include retribution. Retribute means doing something in return for what someone who does something. Weijers (2000) focused on the relationship of trust and authority that should exist when it comes to the educational meaning of harming a child. Looking at the relationship of trust between the child and the adult means meeting two criteria: The adult (parent) must be convinced that (1) there is no other way, (2) it is done for the benefit of the child. In this case, punishment is inevitable. This leads to the "concept of deserving." Weijers states that the admissibility of punishment depends on the conviction that the pain of punishment is justified. In this case, legitimization of punishment in an educational context is possible in a relationship of mutual responsibility. The parent (teacher) must be convinced that s/he has no other choice and s/he is acting for the benefit of the child. The child, on the other hand, must be convinced that his/her parent (teacher) has no other choice and his/her best benefit is being treated. Punishment in child-rearing is considered as deserved only when these two conditions are met. Punishment always means testing trust and authority relationships. However, in the presence of these relationships, punishment works as an educational practice. The critical point here is that punishment will not establish authority. The authority relationship should be considered as a precondition for punishment. However, under these circumstances, the child is expected to take responsibility for the undesirable behavior.

Corporal punishment is defined as deliberate suffering or imprisonment as a punishment for crime/misdemeanor (Hyman, 1988; Hyman, et al., 1997). According to Gözütok (1994), corporal punishment in education means giving pain to the body of a student for making an action that is not approved by a teacher or other school staff. The victimization of children by school staff is commonly done in the name of discipline (Hyman & Perone, 1998). Previous studies in Turkey indicated that a high prevalence of violence perpetrated by teachers against students (Kilimci, 2009; Kiziltepe, et al., 2020; Şimşek & Cenkseven-Önder, 2011). As a result of the retrospective research conducted by Mahiroğlu and Buluç (2003), it was found that corporal punishment is widely used in schools in Turkey. The most used corporal punishment methods are slapping, ear pulling, and hitting with a rod. Gözütok (1993a) reported that teachers used tools such as a ruler, stick, compass, key chain, encyclopedia while beating students, and they used slapping, punching, and kicking when they did not use any tools. There are many reasons for using corporal punishment on students. One of these reasons is that the public supports such harsh disciplinary methods as a result of the exaggeration of inappropriate behaviors in students in the media (Hyman, & Perone, 1998). Another is that corporal punishments such as slapping are not perceived as violence (Hyman, 1990). Hyman (1995) suggests that the use of corporal punishment in school is a part of punitive and authoritarian beliefs in American society. The situation is not much different for Turkey. As a

matter of fact, it was determined that Turkish parents consider rebukes, insults, and corporal punishment as effective ways of disciplining children (e.g. Akduman, 2010; Kutlu et al., 2007; Simsek Orhon, et al., 2006; Sofuoğlu et al., 2016).

The consequences of corporal violence and sexual violence can be seen with some certain dimensions. Since the mentioned types of violence are visible in some certain dimensions, they can be perceived as the most important harm that can be inflicted on a child. However, the effects of emotional violence can reach very serious levels. The main problem here is to determine the "basic boundaries of the person." There is no consensus that this limit can be reduced to the phenomenon of bodily existence. According to Mc Carthy (1990, p.181) "Emotional and physical violence are constant attacks on the child's developing ego and individualization efforts." According to Garbarino et al. (1986, pp. 64-65), people who are subjected to emotional violence see themselves as incompetent, worthless, belonging to nowhere, and unloved and find the maltreatment unfair. However, those who have been treated that way since their childhood may think they deserve it. Studies conducted in Turkey showed that teachers and students see physical or corporal punishment as a normal and acceptable action in education (Saruhan, 1987; Timuroğlu, 1983). Although it is not sufficiently supported by empirical findings due to the inadequacy of the studies on the subject, it was observed that some teachers argue that children will cooperate only when they are treated in this way at school because they are used to being beaten at home. Some teachers, especially young teachers who have just started this profession stated that some students expressed to them that they should behave violently in the classroom, otherwise the class would not be in order. As a result of their retrospective research, Mahiroğlu and Buluç (2003) found that 11% of the education faculty students who participated in the study perceived corporal punishment as a valid disciplinary tool. Gözütok (1993b, p.12) found in his study that the teacher candidates stated that corporal punishment has no place in education and that they were against beating, however, they used the expression "our teacher was right, we deserved to be beaten" about the violence imposed on them while they were students. This study was carried out to examine whether the students excused the teacher violence that could be resorted to them. For this purpose, the questions tried to be answered are as follows:

- 1- In which cases (disrupting classroom order, cheating in exams, lecturing, having teacher status, maintaining discipline) do students accept more forms of violence expressed as yelling, swearing, ear pulling, hitting hands, slapping, and beating?
- 2- Does the excused violence differ in terms of gender?
- 3- Does the excused violence differ in terms of school type?
- 4- What are the students' views about how should the teacher treat them in the cases that may be happened in the classroom (disrupting classroom order, cheating in exams, lecturing, having teacher status, maintaining discipline)?

2. Method

2.1 Participant (Subject) Characteristics

Participants of this study are 471 secondary and high school students living in Istanbul. All of the students are Turkish citizens. The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1. The open-ended questions of the questionnaire used in the study were answered by 150 students in the middle school and 112 students in the high school. Content analysis was carried out on the answers of a total of 262 students.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Girls		Boys	
	f	%	f	%
Gender	222	47.1	249	52.9
School Type	Public		Private	
	283	60.1	188	39.9
Age				
11	54	11.5		
12	66	14		
13	65	13.8		
14	50	10.6		
15	86	18.3		
16	74	15.7		
17 and above	76	16.1		

2.2 Measures

A questionnaire developed by the researcher was used to collect data. This questionnaire consists of two parts. In the first part, students' demographic information (gender, age, grade level, school type) was collected. In the second part: (a), A closed-ended question was asked to get the students' views on six types of violence (yelling, swearing, ear pulling, hitting hands, slapping, and beating) that the teacher could resort to them for each of the five different cases (disrupting classroom order, cheating in exams, lecturing, having teacher status, maintaining discipline). Answers were asked to be marked on a three-point Likert-type scale (yes, undecided, no), (b) An open-ended question was asked to get students' views on how should the teacher treat them in five different cases (What do you think the teacher should do in such a case?). Students were asked to write their opinions in the provided space. The sample item for the second part of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.

Two of the five cases that the students expressed their views which are considered under the category of behaviors requiring "condemnation" in the Ministry of National Education Primary and Secondary Education Institutions Award and Discipline Regulations are disrupting classroom order and cheating in exams. Mercan and Çam (2003) found that the most imposed punishment is condemnation in schools. The aforementioned two cases are addressed as behaviors that could be subject to disciplinary action. The other cases were chosen to understand whether the teacher is excused for only having teacher status, lecturing, and behaving violently in maintaining discipline.

3. Results

3.1 Statistics and Data Analysis

In the study, the quantitative (non-parametric techniques) method was used in the analysis of closed-ended questions, and the qualitative (content analysis) method was used in the analysis of open-ended questions. The views of the students from the relevant parts of the questionnaire about how should the teacher treat them in five cases were taken by writing answers to open-ended questions and these views were subjected to content analysis. Content analysis is defined as the decomposition, enumeration, and interpretation of repetitive issues, problems, and concepts in the obtained data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this study, the data were read line by line, sentences and paragraphs formed the basis for coding. Since there was no clear theoretical basis for students' views on how teachers should treat them in cases that may be encountered in the classroom, coding was made according to the concepts extracted from the data. Within the scope of the purpose of the research, meaning themes were created from the repetitive codes. Attention has been paid to the fact that these themes are different from each other and form a meaningful whole among themselves. Finally, the frequency of the themes was calculated.

3.2 Quantitative findings

The types of violence that are excused in different situations are presented in Table 2. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in yelling score between the different cases, $\chi^2(4) = 231.887$, $p = 0.000$, with a mean rank yelling score of 1462.15 for disrupting classroom order, 1305.13 for cheating in exams, 1174.36 for lecturing, 1035.29 for maintaining classroom discipline, 913.07 for having teacher status. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in swearing score between the different cases, $\chi^2(4) = 10.195$, $p = 0.037$, with a mean rank swearing score of 1212.90 for cheating in exams, 1187.53 for disrupting classroom order score, 1176.51 for maintaining discipline, 1165.68 for lecturing, 1147.37 for having teacher status. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in ear pulling score between the different cases, $\chi^2(4) = 55.676$, $p = 0.000$, with a mean rank ear pulling score of 1282.75 for cheating in exams, 1243.68 for disrupting classroom order, 1151.59 for maintaining discipline, 1123.33 for lecturing, 1088.65 for having teacher status. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in hitting hands score between the different cases, $\chi^2(4) = 38.127$, $p = 0.000$, with a mean rank hitting hands of 1265.17 for cheating in exams, 1221.39 for disrupting classroom order, 1152.59 for maintaining discipline, 1146.17 for lecturing, 1104.68 for having teacher status. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in slapping score between the different cases, $\chi^2(4) = 25.001$, $p = 0.000$, with a mean rank slapping score of 1129.82 for cheating in exams, 1204.73 for disrupting classroom order, 1182.06 for maintaining discipline, 1143.91 for having teacher status, 1129.49 for lecturing. A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in beating score between the different cases, $\chi^2(4) = 17.861$, $p = 0.001$, with a mean rank beating score of 1208.25 for cheating in exams, 1200.64 for disrupting classroom order, 1177.35 for maintaining discipline, 1160.57 for lecturing, 1143.19 for having teacher status. When Table 2 is examined, it was seen that the most excused situation of violence was yelling for disrupting classroom order, swearing, ear pulling, hitting hands, slapping, and beating for cheating. In the case of cheating, violence is more excused.

Although violence types and cases were varied, boys were more likely to excuse violence against themselves than girls. A Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the violence type scores of boys and girls in the case of "disturbing the classroom order." The test indicated that the differences were statistically significant in favor of boys for ear pulling ($U = 25376,5$, $p < .05$), hitting hands ($U = 25400$, $p < .05$), slapping ($U = 24489$, $p < .01$), and beating ($U = 25881$, $p < .05$). A Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the violence type scores of boys and girls in the case of "cheating in exams." The test indicated that the differences were statistically significant in favor of boys for swearing ($U = 25252$, $p < .01$), ear pulling ($U = 24995,5$, $p < .05$), hitting hands ($U = 24244,5$, $p < .01$), slapping ($U = 24040$, $p < .01$), beating ($U = 24638$, $p < .01$). Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the violence type scores of boys and girls in the case of "lecturing." The test indicated that the differences were statistically significant in favor of boys for ear pulling ($U = 25550$, $p < .05$), slapping ($U = 25459$, $p < .01$), beating ($U = 26242$, $p < .01$). Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the violence type scores of boys and girls in the case of "having teacher status." The test indicated that the differences were statistically significant in favor of boys for slapping ($U = 26227$, $p < .05$), beating ($U = 26549$, $p < .05$). A Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the violence type scores of boys and girls in the case of "maintaining classroom discipline." The test indicated that the differences were statistically significant in favor of boys for hitting hands ($U = 25184$, $p < .01$), and slapping ($U = 24741$, $p < .01$).

Although violence types were varied in all cases, it was found that students studying at public schools were more likely to excuse violence against them. A Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the private and public school students' violence type scores in the case of "disrupting classroom order." The test indicated that the differences were statistically significant in favor of public school students for ear pulling ($U = 21489$, $p < .01$), hitting hands ($U = 22780$, $p < .01$), slapping ($U = 23740$, $p < .01$), beating ($U = 24563$, $p < .01$). A Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the private and public school students' violence type scores in the case of "cheating in exams." The test indicated that the differences were statistically significant in favor of public school students for yelling ($U = 23864$, $p < .05$), swearing ($U = 24446$, $p < .01$), ear pulling ($U = 21605$, $p < .01$), hitting hands ($U = 22222$, $p < .05$), slapping ($U = 23527$, $p < .01$), beating ($U = 24034$, $p < .01$). A Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the private and public school students' violence type scores in the case of "lecturing." The test indicated

that the differences were statistically significant in favor of public school students for yelling ($U= 23865$, $p<.05$), swearing ($U= 24412$, $p<.01$), ear pulling ($U= 24068$, $p<.01$), hitting hands ($U= 23872,5$, $p<.01$), slapping ($U= 24717$, $p<.01$), beating ($U= 24859$, $p<.01$). A Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the private and public school students' violence type scores in the case of "having teacher status." The test indicated that the differences were statistically significant in favor of public school students for yelling ($U= 24167$, $p<.05$), hitting hands ($U= 24747$, $p<.05$), slapping ($U= 24616$, $p<.01$), beating ($U= 25757$, $p<.05$). A Mann-Whitney U test was run to compare the private and public school students' violence type scores in the case of "maintaining discipline." The test indicated that the differences were statistically significant in favor of public school students for ear pulling ($U= 23731$, $p<.01$), hitting hands ($U= 23865$, $p<.01$), slapping ($U= 23918,5$, $p<.01$), and beating ($U= 25376$, $p<.05$).

Table 2: Excused violence in different situations

Violence type Score	Cases	N	\bar{x}_{sira}	χ^2	df	p
Yelling	Disrupting classroom order	471	1462,15	231,887	4	,000
	Cheating in exams	471	1305,13			
	Lecturing	471	1174,36			
	Maintaining discipline	471	1035,29			
	Having teacher status	471	913,07			
Swearing	Cheating in exams	471	1212,90	10,195	4	,037
	Disrupting classroom order	471	1187,53			
	Maintaining discipline	471	1176,51			
	Lecturing	471	1165,68			
	Having teacher status	471	1147,37			
Ear pulling	Cheating in exams	471	1282,75	55,676	4	,000
	Disrupting classroom order	471	1243,68			
	Maintaining discipline	471	1151,59			
	Lecturing	471	1123,33			
	Having teacher status	471	1088,65			
Hitting hands	Cheating in exams	471	1265,17	38,127	4	,000
	Disrupting classroom order	471	1221,39			
	Maintaining discipline	471	1152,59			
	Lecturing	471	1146,17			
	Having teacher status	471	1104,68			
Slapping	Cheating in exams	471	1129,82	25,001	4	,000
	Disrupting classroom order	471	1204,73			
	Maintaining discipline	471	1182,06			
	Having teacher status	471	1143,91			
	Lecturing	471	1129,49			
Beating	Cheating in exams	471	1208,25	17,861	4	,001
	Disrupting classroom order	471	1200,64			
	Maintaining discipline	471	1177,35			
	Lecturing	471	1160,57			
	Having teacher status	471	1143,19			

3.3 Findings Regarding Content Analysis

The open-ended questions of the questionnaire used in the study were answered by 150 students in the middle school and 112 students in the high school. Content analysis was carried out on the answers of a total of 262 students. As a result of the content analysis, four themes were found as corporal violence, psychological

violence, punishment, and non-punitive discipline. Some examples of student views on these four themes are as follow: 1) Students' views on corporal violence; *"Student should be warned, if s/he does not listen, s/he should be beaten," "Student just be warned, if s/he does the same thing after warning, s/he should be beaten,"* 2) Students' views on psychological violence; *"Intimidation should be given and s/he should be warned with a harsh language not to do it again," "S/he should be taken an oral exam and disgraced,"* 3) Students' views on punishment; *"Teacher should take his/her exam sheet and give 0 points to his/her exam", "Teacher should send him/her to the board of discipline,"* 4) Students' views on non-punitive discipline; *"The reason for the behavior should be learned, and s/he should come to an agreement by talking," "S/he must be treated in a friendly manner."* The definitions and frequencies of these themes are presented in Table 3. When the data obtained as a result of the content analysis are examined, students stated that teachers use corporal, psychological violence, and punishment rather than non-punitive practices. Corporal violence, psychological violence, and punishment were more excusable in two cases of disciplinary actions (disrupting classroom order and cheating in exams) than cases that are not considered disciplinary actions. It is observed that the themes regarding the need to use non-punitive practices in cases that do not involve disciplinary actions are expressed more frequently.

Table 3: Definitions and frequencies of the themes

Theme	The frequency of the theme	Definition of the theme
Corporal violence	N=10	Violent behaviors towards the physical integrity of the student. For example; ear pulling, being kept standing, hitting hands, hitting, beating, etc.
Psychological violence	N=129	Behaviors that are directed towards the student's self rather than his/her behavior, that could cause harm either immediately or in the future: verbal violence, threatening, humiliating, intimidating, warning, making him/her do whatever the teacher wants, behaving in a way that hurts pride.
Punishment	N=100	Assigning additional assignments/ dropping grades, invalidating the exam and making a new exam, getting back the student's paper, sending the student to the principal/disciplinary board, notifying the parents, taking the student out of class/expelling or suspending the student from school.
Non-punitive practices	N=84	Trying to solve the problem by talking to the student, ignoring, giving advice, showing love/tolerance, being like a friend with the student, trying to improve student behavior positively, etc.

4. Discussion

As a result of the research, it was seen that the most excused case of violence is yelling for disrupting classroom order, swearing for cheating, ear pulling, hitting hands, slapping, and beating. In the content analysis, it was found that the answers given by the students to the question of "What should the teacher do in such a case?" for each case were gathered under 4 themes. These themes were corporal violence and psychological violence, punishment, and non-punitive practices. Students stated that teachers could resort to corporal violence, psychological violence, and punishment rather than using non-punitive strategies. This finding of the study was consistent with the findings obtained from the quantitative part. Unfortunately, students thought that violence may be justifiable and they could excuse violence. This finding was consistent with studies showing that teachers and students found physical or corporal punishment as a normal and acceptable action in education (Saruhan, 1987; Timuroğlu, 1983). Though corporal violence and psychological violence enacted by teachers has been banned and is illegal, previous results indicated a high prevalence of violence perpetrated by teachers

against students in Turkey (Kiziltepe et al., 2020; Mahiroğlu & Buluç, 2003; Şimşek & Cenkseven-Önder, 2011). Gözütok (1993a) reported that some of the students who were beaten directly found the teacher right. However, when the data of the aforementioned study were analyzed, it was found that some of the students answered as "I promise to myself that I will study or not talk again," "I regret," "I ignore," "I think my teacher does not love me," "I am silent," "I apologize." If these responses are considered to indicate that the violence is believed to be deserved and excused, the proportion of children who believe that they deserve violence increases. Sadık and Türkoğlu (2007) conducted a similar study, examining the discipline methods resorted to children within the family from the perspective of parents and children. In this study, children who thought they deserved parental beating used expressions such as "They beat us because they want our favor," "They beat us because we are doing something wrong," "My parents slapped me because I committed major guilts," "Because what they say is for my sake," etc.

When excused violence against oneself and others was analyzed in terms of gender; although the types and the cases of violence were varied, it was observed that males excused violence in more situations than females. Studies conducted in Turkey showed that male students got more corporal punishment than females (Coral & Pine, 2003; Mahiroğlu & Buluç, 2003). Sadık (2000) found that the strategies teachers use in dealing with unwanted student behavior were varied in terms of students' gender. It was found that the strategies of an immediate verbal warning, scolding and intimidation, using force to the body, uttering insulting words, teasing, judging-criticizing-accusing, and isolation were mostly used on male students.

According to another finding of the study, students who attend public schools were more likely to excuse violence than students attending private schools. Gümüş, Tümkaya and Dönmezer (2004) found that the incidents of scolding and beating students in schools were mostly in lower socioeconomic districts, whereas in richer places, students were punished by giving extra homework. Studies showed that teachers' behavioral management strategies were varied in terms of school type and location of the school. Thus, private school teachers stated that they were more effective in practice and they had fewer problems, whereas rural teachers and teachers working in the slums of the city said that discipline events were getting worse and they spent more time on the management of problem behaviors (Boldmaz, 2000; Brown & Payne, 1992; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001.). Further studies should investigate which variables related to public school are associated with excusing violence.

Finally, it is necessary to mention the limitations of this study and some suggestions. The most important limitation is that the data were collected using a questionnaire. It is recommended to use parametric tests for future studies. Since the study was conducted only in the Istanbul province, there is a problem regarding generalizability. Studies to be conducted in different regions will be more suitable in terms of generalizability. The mechanisms behind the excuse for violence should be examined in more detail by focus group studies or interview methods. The possible future consequences of excusing violence should be analyzed in longitudinal studies.

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Appendix A**Sample item**

1- If you disrupt classroom order, the teacher should

	Yes	Undecided	No
Yell at you			
Swear to you (Uttering insulting words, swearing, etc.)			
Pull your ear			
Hit your hands			
Slap in your face			
Beat you			

How do you think the teacher should treat other than those stated above? Please write:

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