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Students' and Professors' Perception of Occurrence and Disturbance of Disruptive Classroom Behaviors

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Abstract

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Disruptive behavior could be defined as the behavior that interrupts the educational process and causes stress to teachers or other students. In this research an anonymous questionnaire containing 30 disruptive behaviors was given to a group of students (N=251) and professors (N=49) at the University of Applied Sciences VERN' (Zagreb, Croatia). Participants had to appraise: a) *to what extent those behaviors occur in the classroom* and b) *how disturbing they are*. Results have shown that disruptive behaviors occur to a moderate extent in general as well as that there are no significant differences in the perception of their occurrence among participants. However, professors find these behaviors significantly more disturbing. Within participant groups some gender and age differences were also found. Younger students and younger professors notice more disruptive behaviors. Furthermore, female students and female professors find these behaviors more disturbing, while female students also notice them more. Results and practical implications are discussed in relation to previous research.

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Keywords: Disruptive behaviors; university students; university professors; gender and age differences.

1. Introduction

Inappropriate university students' behaviors seem to be more and more prevalent and might keep students as well as professors from productive functioning in the classroom. They might have negative effect on students' learning motivation and general attitude toward studying. Moreover, many educators who are experts in their field do not expect to face disruptive behaviors in a University setting and are not prepared to deal with them. Consequently, if they feel disrespected and incompetent



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to manage disruptive behaviors they may become less motivated. Disruptive behaviors in classroom were found to be the main cause of emotional exhaustion and burnout found in educators (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Otero-Lopez et. al. 2008; Chang, 2009; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010). Although many universities have a clear ethical code that prescribes academic behavior and consequences for not complying with it, academic staff and students might have very different attitudes towards what they find appropriate or inappropriate in everyday classroom setting. Therefore, establishing effective rules and following them is critical for ensuring academic success and providing an effective learning environment. Disruptive behavior could be defined as behavior that interrupts the educational process and causes stress for teachers or other students. The forms of disruptive behavior include *reading newspapers, sleeping in class, arriving late, chatting and laughing, playing with smart phones, text messaging, arguing with the instructor*, etc. According to Ali and Gracey (2013) types of disruptive behavior fall into one of three categories: behavior by the student individually (e.g. playing games or reading), behavior interacting with other students (e.g. chatting), and behavior interacting with the instructor (asking irrelevant questions, confronting, arguing). Leading negative behaviors listed in research conducted twenty or thirty years ago (Brozo & Schmeizer, 1985; Appleby 1990, Parr & Valerius, 1999 all in Shepherd D.C., Shepherd K., & Sheb, 2008) were *reading a newspaper during class, talking during lectures, sleeping, dressing sloppily, chewing gum, eating, or drinking noisily, being late, acting bored, expressing negative nonverbal reactions, requesting special favors etc.*). More recent research (Shepherd et.al., 2008) have shown some behaviors which were not identified in the previous one, such as *general rude behavior, leaving class early, inappropriate (sexist, insensitive, crude) comments in class, mobile phones in class, doing as little as possible to get by, disrespectful to classmates, taking punitive action against professor, leaving class and returning unprepared to take the course*). Theory of planned behavior TPB (Ajzen, 1991) and Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action (Bandura, 1991a; 1991b) are considered for the theoretical explanation of disruptive and unethical students' behavior. Theory of Planned Behavior states that attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, determines individual's intentions and behaviors. Intentions refers to how much of an effort people are planning to exert in order to perform the behavior. Attitude toward a behavior refers to beliefs about a behavior or its consequences. Subjective norm is perceived social pressure to behave or not and perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior. Theory of planned behavior (TPB) has been found to be very useful in predicting a wide range of behaviors and might be a very good foundation for researching unethical and disruptive behavior. Beck and Ajzen (1991) showed that this theory predicts dishonest actions among students (cheating on a test, shoplifting and lying to get out of assignments) with great precision. Harding, Mayhew, Finelli, and Carpenter (2007) used modified form of TPB (with moral reasoning and moral obligation in model) to understand cheating in tests and homework of engineering and humanities students. Their results confirm the use of theory and imply that "*students who exhibit a more positive attitude toward cheating, who operate in an environment with less restrictive norms against cheating, and who have a weak sense of moral obligation to avoid cheating will be more likely to cheat in a given situation*" (p.269). Another confirmation of TPB was shown by Stone, Jawahar and Kisamore (2009). This study confirmed that attitudes, subjective norms,

behavioral control, intentions and justifications were related to cheating behaviors. Authors emphasize practical implications of the study, e.g. ...“*unethical students behavior might be reduced by shaping attitudes toward cheating, changing perceptions of subjective norms regarding the prevalence of cheating, and lowering students’ perceptions of their control of cheating by, for example, emphasis on the consequences of getting caught*” (p. 221). According to Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action (Bandura, 1991a; 1991b) moral behavior is influenced by both cognitive and environmental factors. Cognitive factors include intellectual and moral developmental level, reaction to situations, and commitment to social norms. On the other hand, the environmental variables are social norms, codes of conduct, and modeling by others. According to Nadelson (2007) Bandura’s model might be applicable to higher educational settings for explaining academic misconduct. Students’ cognitive factors (moral reasoning and intelligence) could be the reasons for different environmental perception and interpretation of ethical and appropriate behavior in such environment. Furthermore, student’s perception of social norms is also very useful in explaining students’ behavior. There are students who want to be part of a group and social norms help them to conform. On the other hand, there are students who do not perceive importance of these norms or have an urge to review them. Finally, if students have good relationship with their teachers and perceive them as role models, they are more likely to behave as expected. In both theories cognitive factors are important predictors of intention to behave in a disruptive or unethical manner. While a majority of research in this field has focused on students’ behaviors at primary and secondary education levels (Burns & Owen, 1990; Sterling-Turner, Robinson, & Wilczynski, 2001; Broidy et. al. 2003; McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2006; Rydell, 2010), little attention has been directed to student behaviors in the higher education setting. Instead, in an academic context it is more usual to research unethical behaviors such as cheating on exams or plagiarism (Smith & Davis, 2004; Sutherland-Smith, 2005; Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely, 2011; Taradi, S. K., Taradi, M., & Đogaš, 2012). Appleby’s (1990), Boice’s (1996), and Amada’s (1994) research during the 1990s could be mentioned as a starting point for an empirical understanding of disruptive behavior in higher education (see in Hands, 2014). Appleby divided disruptive behaviors in two categories: immature and inattentive. Top immature behaviors were *talking during lectures, chewing gum, eating or drinking noisily, and being late to class*, whereas top inattentive behaviors included *sleeping during class, cutting class, acting bored or apathetic, not paying attention, and being unprepared*. In more recent study Paik and Broedel-Zaugg (2006) reported the behaviors of *cheating, cell phone/pager usage, making offensive remarks, prolonged chattering, and missing deadlines* as the most uncivil behaviors perceived by the pharmacy students. Gannon-Leary (2008) asked students and educators what type of disruptive behavior are frequent and how serious they perceive disruption. For both groups, three types of behavior emerged: *arriving late at classes, talking in classes* (which were perceived as a severe disruption by students and as a moderate to severe one by staff) and *use of mobile phone*. In another study which included more than three thousand public university students, Bjorklund and Rehling (2009) asked two questions: *What classroom behaviors do students find most uncivil?* and *Which potentially uncivil behaviors do students observe most frequently in their classes?* Their results show that behaviors that are perceived as most uncivil are: *continuing to talk after being asked to stop, coming to class under the influence of alcohol or drugs, allowing a cell phone to ring, and conversing*

loudly with others. On the other hand, *yawning, nose blowing, nodding or smiling in response to others' comments, and displaying attentive posture or facial expressions* have the lowest ratings. Five behaviors included in the study appeared in the top half of both incivility and frequency ratings: *allowing a cell phone to ring; using a Palm Pilot, iPod or computer for non-class work; arriving late or leaving early; packing up books before class is over; and text messaging.* This is in line with research of students' use of digital devices for non-class related purposes (McCoy 2013). Students use digital devices during class frequently for different purposes (*texting* was the top response, followed by *checking the time, email, social networking, Web surfing and games.*) However, a majority of students expressed positive attitude toward restricting policies. As a conclusion, students might have different perception of appropriate behavior in classroom and expect from educators to set clear rules and engage fully in addressing disruption. Next step toward understanding inappropriate behavior in academic context is to focus on educators' and students' perception of such behavior. What one person may experience as disruptive and inappropriate may not bother another. This could be especially be true in private education, where students more often see themselves as customers with special privileges because they pay for this service. University of Applied Sciences VERN' is one of the first private Universities in Croatia, and during the last 20 years it has become one of the biggest as well. As opposed to large student groups and ex cathedra teaching at many public Universities, VERN' guarantees small student groups, interactive teaching and approachable as well as available professors, who nurture individual student approach. This system makes studying more comfortable for students and their transition from high school to university much easier. As a private University, VERN' is highly client oriented, and a lot of attention is paid to professor selection. At the end of each semester students anonymously evaluate professors, and if professors do not meet highly set criteria, they are not engaged next year, irrespective of their expertise or reputation gained elsewhere. The high pressure on professors can, in some cases, result in over tolerance to various disruptive students' behaviors. Moreover, students themselves sometimes complain about other students' behaviors and professors' inability to manage them properly. So, a part of a problem with disruptive students can be attributed to the fact that VERN' is a private University. The other part can be attributed to general rise of consumer rights awareness and assertiveness in demanding one's own rights. Moreover, in modern technological societies, where information is found easily, perception of professor's importance and knowledge has changed. Many disruptive behaviors that professors face today were unimaginable 20 and more years ago. The purpose of the present study is to provide recent information about students' and professors' perception of disruptive behavior at a private university in Croatia.

2. Research goal and problems

The main goal of this research is to explore to what extent different kinds of disruptive behaviors are visible according to students and professors and how disturbing they are considered to be. Four research problems were set within the research goal:

1. To examine which of disruptive class behaviors are most perceived by students and professors (occurrence of behavior)

2. To examine which of disruptive class behaviors are perceived as most disturbing by students and professors (disturbance of behaviors)
3. To examine the differences between students and professors in perception of occurrence and disturbance of disruptive class behaviors.
4. To examine the differences within groups of students and professors in perception of occurrence and disturbance of disruptive class behaviors, related to their gender, age, and previous experience in studying/teaching

3. Procedure and instrument

On the basis of authors' teaching experience and literature review, a large set of nonacademic student behaviors was listed. The list was supplemented with some behaviors found in several Croatian educational institutions' Codes of Ethics. The final list consisted of 30 different disruptive student behaviors (see table 1). On a five points scale and for each of the 30 listed behaviors participants had to appraise: a) to what extent these behaviors are visible or present among students during classes; b) to what extent they are perceived (or would have been perceived) as disturbing. Two type of slightly different questionnaires were constructed - one for students and the other for professors. The students' questionnaire additionally included some demographic questions (age, gender, year of the study, previous study if they had had one, type of high school institution (public or private) they had finished). In two open type questions students could also comment: a) whether they perceive any differences between Vern's students and other students (if they had studied before) and if yes, what type of differences these are ; b) whether they perceive any differences between their high school classmates and Vern's students and if yes what type of differences these are. Professors were also asked some demographic questions (age, gender, number of years of teaching experience). In addition, in two open type questions educators could comment: a) if they see any differences between Vern's students and other institutions' students (if they have teaching experience elsewhere) and if yes what kind; b) if they see any and which differences among students of different generations (if they have a longer teaching experience). Anonymous questionnaires were distributed to VERN's students of different age and study, and to a group of VERN's teachers.

4. Participants

The student sample consisted of 251 participants, among them 119 were male (47.4%), and 132 female (52.6%). Age ranges between 18 and 39, with the dominant value $D=20$ and the mean $M=21.14$ ($SD=2.82$) years. The majority of students are on their first year of study ($N=135$; 53.8%), followed by second year students ($N=110$; 43.8%) and third year students ($N=6$; 2.4%). To the majority of students ($N=173$; 68.9%) VERN' is their first study. The remaining 78 students (31.1%) had studied somewhere else before. The majority of students went to a public high school ($N=213$; 84.9%) and the remaining participants went to a private high school ($N=38$; 15.1%). The teachers sample consisted of 49 participants. Among them 13 are male (26.5%) and 36 female (73.5%). Age ranges from 30 to 65, with

the average 46.27 years ($SD=9.28$). Teaching experience ranges from 2 to 40 years, with dominant value $D=16$ and mean $M=15.69$ years ($SD=8.59$).

5. Results

In table 1 descriptives for the occurrence and disturbance of 30 listed behaviors are given for both groups of participants. As it can be seen, the highest grades (around 3.6) for occurrence were given to behaviors: *Surfing, texting or playing games during the class, Arrive at school without basic supplies for work (notebooks, books, pen), Talk with colleagues from groups not related to classes* from both groups. The lowest occurrences (around 1.6) have behaviors as *Arrival to class under the influence of alcohol or other opiates* and *Flirting with a teacher or professor*. The majority of 30 listed behaviors are equally noticed by students and professors, as independent samples *t*-tests proved to be insignificant. The exceptions are found in two behaviors that are significantly more noticed by students: *Grooming during class (hair care, nails)* and *Getting out of the classroom during class (to go to the toilet, answer the phone etc.) without seeking permission*. However, the total average result of perception of these behaviors does not discriminate two groups of participants. In the right column of table 1, it can be seen that a lot of behaviors have high scores for disturbance (>4.5) in professors' perception. These are behaviors that include *cheating on exams, plagiarism, rude communication, answering a cell phone during the class*. On the other hand, from the students' perspective none of these are highly disturbing behaviors, as the highest disturbance score is 3.22, given to the behavior *Confronting or arguing with a teacher*. Moreover, professors find almost all of the listed behaviors significantly more disturbing than students, with the exception of behavior - *Interrupting teacher's presentation in order to ask a question*. Moreover, the total result of differences in perception of disturbance is statistically significant.

Table 1. Average perception of occurrence and disturbance of 30 different behaviors in a group of professors (PR; $N=49$) and students (ST; $N=251$) and t-test results for each item

BEHAVIORS	GROUP	OCCURRENCE			DISTURBANCE		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
Coming to class less than 15 minutes late	PR	3.26	1.09	-0.52	3.84	1.09	8.89**
	ST	3.36	1.15		2.26	1.35	
Coming to class more than 15 minutes late	PR	2.43	1.21	-0.86	4.41	0.86	11.99**
	ST	2.58	1.13		2.56	1.46	
Arrive at school without basic supplies for work (notebooks, books, pen)	PR	3.65	1.20	-0.07	4.29	1.00	10.98**
	ST	3.67	1.17		2.44	1.40	
Eating during class	PR	2.88	1.25	-1.74	4.02	1.03	10.82**
	ST	3.22	1.26		2.18	1.37	
Consumption of soft drinks in class	PR	3.33	1.30	-0.99	2.73	1.54	4.09**
	ST	3.54	1.38		1.78	1.20	
Arrival to class under the influence of alcohol or other opiates	PR	1.45	0.91	-1.01	4.59	1.17	7.72**
	ST	1.61	1.04		3.08	1.62	
Interrupting teacher's presentation in order to ask a question	PR	3.27	1.02	1.79	2.55	1.35	0.55
	ST	2.97	1.06		2.44	1.32	
Confronting or arguing with a teacher	PR	2.45	0.94	-0.06	4.1	0.98	5.32**
	ST	2.46	1.08		3.22	1.42	
Confronting or arguing with other students	PR	2.45	0.98	-0.42	4.27	0.63	9.95**

	ST	2.5	1.14		2.98	1.45	
Answering a cell phone during class	PR	2.67	1.21	0.92	4.61	0.70	13.31**
	ST	2.5	1.19		2.8	1.46	
Surfing, texting or playing games during class	PR	3.67	1.31	-0.41	4.47	0.92	14.82**
	ST	3.75	1.23		2.19	1.29	
The non-participation in group exercises	PR	2.82	1.09	-0.26	4.2	0.93	7.93**
	ST	2.86	1.2		2.94	1.36	
The non-participation in individual tasks	PR	2.86	1.15	-0.81	4.27	0.91	10.12**
	ST	3.0	1.16		2.68	1.39	
Grooming during class (hair care, nail, makeup, ...)	PR	2.31	1.14	-2.03*	4.39	0.89	12.11**
	ST	2.69	1.24		2.51	1.42	
Talk with colleagues not related to classes	PR	3.43	1.24	-1.76	4.37	0.73	14.37**
	ST	3.76	1.18		2.43	1.36	
Getting out of the classroom during class (to go to the toilet, answer the phone etc.) without seeking permission	PR	3.29	1.11	-2.25*	4.02	1.05	11.56**
	ST	3.70	1.2		2.05	1.29	
Earlier departures from school, without notice or request (e.g. after the break)	PR	2.84	1.12	0.15	3.88	0.97	9.84**
	ST	2.81	1.19		2.28	1.34	
Complaining to the teacher about the content or method of teaching	PR	2.08	1.06	-0.42	3.35	1.01	4.67**
	ST	2.15	1.07		2.55	1.41	
Complaining to the teacher about evaluation or assessment criteria	PR	2.39	1.13	-0.17	3.41	1.12	4.44**
	ST	2.42	1.16		2.59	1.44	
Ask for special privileges for themselves (e.g. justify the absence from the class, etc.).	PR	2.8	1.15	1.62	4.04	1.12	6.33**
	ST	2.49	1.20		2.87	1.49	
The use of crib notes or copying (including whispering) at exams	PR	2.67	1.09	1.41	4.59	0.70	13.76**
	ST	2.4	1.28		2.66	1.56	
Using other people's seminars (or other written assignments) and presenting them as one's own	PR	2.88	1.2	1.9	4.63	0.60	13.31**
	ST	2.5	1.29		2.88	1.59	
Inappropriate dress in class (e.g. a very short skirts or shorts, clothing and footwear as for the beach)	PR	2.85	1.17	1.02	4.06	1.05	8.14**
	ST	2.65	1.36		2.62	1.49	
Use of profanity in addressing other students	PR	2.49	1.08	-1.44	4.69	0.71	12.51**
	ST	2.77	1.27		2.94	1.53	
Making improper comments (sexist, racist, homophobic, etc.)	PR	2.37	1.03	0.05	4.86	0.35	14.64**
	ST	2.36	1.24		3.16	1.65	
Having headphones during class	PR	2.04	0.99	-0.61	4.45	0.86	12.05**
	ST	2.14	1.19		2.56	1.53	
Students touching or pampering themselves during class	PR	1.96	1.19	-1.55	4.38	0.83	13.59**
	ST	2.26	1.27		2.34	1.42	
Sleeping or napping during the class	PR	2.37	1.11	-1.35	4.49	0.78	16.2**
	ST	2.62	1.22		2.2	1.41	
Flirting with a teacher or professor	PR	1.63	0.83	-1.83	4.24	1.16	9.4**
	ST	1.94	1.13		2.43	1.55	
Reading newspapers / books under the tuition	PR	2.16	0.92	-0.32	4.24	0.99	13.12**
	ST	2.21	1.18		2.11	1.27	
TOTAL	PR	2.66	0.7		4.15	0.43	19.21**
average result	ST	2.73	0.67	-0.69	2.56	0.87	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Next, on a sample of students, a two-way between subjects ANOVA on the perceived occurrence of disruptive behaviors was conducted. Independent variables were gender and age. Students were divided in two similarly sized categories according to age, whereby one group consisted of younger students

(aging up to 20), and the other group of older students (aging 21 and more). This criterion was chosen based on the fact that in Croatia students generally enroll their study at the age of 18 and 19, so at their second year they are usually 19 and 20 years old). The older freshmen are usually the ones that either had a break between high school and study or had studied somewhere else prior to VERN'. ANOVA had shown that age did not affect students' perception of the occurrence of disruptive behaviors ($F=1.04$, $p=.31$). However, gender of students did influence perception of occurrence of disruptive behaviors ($F=20.56$, $p<0.00$). As average results suggest, female students ($M_{\text{fem}}=2.9$, $SD_{\text{fem}}=0.65$, $N=132$) notice disruptive behaviors more than male ($M_{\text{male}}=2.54$, $SD_{\text{male}}=0.64$, $N=119$). There was no significant interaction effect between gender and age ($F=0.03$, $p=.86$). Another two-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted on a sample of students on the perceived disturbance of disruptive behaviors. Independent variables were again gender and age. Once again, female students find listed behaviors more disturbing ($F=13.93$, $p<0.00$). The age is not a significant factor in discriminating between groups ($F=0.00$, $p=.97$), and no interaction effect between age and gender was found ($F=1.33$, $p=.25$). A correlation between age and average results on occurrence and disturbance was also calculated. Age proved to be significantly correlated with a perception of occurrence ($r=-.14$, $p<.05$), meaning that older students notice less of those behaviors. Age is uncorrelated with the perception of disturbance ($r=-.05$; $p=.045$). Other variables have also been tested (such as – if they had studied before (yes or no) and what kind of high school they had attended (private or public), but no significant differences on two dependant variables were found among students. In an open question students were asked if they noticed any differences between VERN's students and other students (if they had studied somewhere before). Although only 78 (out of 251 students) had studied before, 137 of them gave their answers (presumably comparing studying at VERN' with their public university students' friends' experiences). Out of them 90 (65%) noticed no differences and remaining 47 (35%) left their combined positive and negative comments categorized as follows: *Studying at VERN' is better because*: studying at VERN' is more organized and more relaxed for students; students acquire more knowledge, and of better quality; everything is easier; professors are more understanding; communication with professors is better; everything is more relaxed; students can ask whatever question they want and they will get the answer; at a public university students do not have any rights. *Studying at VERN' is worse because*: discipline during the class is worse; students have more informal relationships with professors - sometimes even arrogant; students are more spoiled; less punctual; cheating and plagiarism is more common; asking for special privileges; Compared to VERN', public university students: respect professors more; are more quiet during the class; don't argue; don't nap; have more decency in dressing; do not use cell phones; do not eat during the class; do not go to the toilet during the class; have more strict punishments; are more responsible. On a second open ended question students were asked whether they see the differences between their high school classmates, and VERNs' students. Majority notice no significant differences ($N=170$; 67%) explaining that this is more or less the same as in high school. The rest of them ($N=81$; 32%) notice some differences categorized as follows: *There was more discipline in high school* - teachers showed more strictness; more discipline during the classes; teachers there were less forgiving and had stronger authority. *There is more discipline at VERN'* - students behave more as adults; are more professional; chat less with each other during the

class; professors show more respect and treat students as adults; education is better here; high school pupils are more spoiled. Due to a rather small professors' sample, the differences between them related to gender, age and previous teaching experience were tested with independent samples t-test. The results showed that there are no significant differences between male ($N=13$) and female ($N=36$) professors in perception of occurrence of disruptive behaviors ($M_{\text{male}}= 2.66$, $SD_{\text{mal}} = 0.61$; $M_{\text{fem.}}= 2.66$, $SD_{\text{fem.}}= 0.73$; $t = -0.01$, $p= .98$). However, female professors find these behaviors to be more disturbing in general, than male professors ($M_{\text{male}}= 3.8$, $SD_{\text{male}} =0.54$; $M_{\text{fem}} = 4.27$, $SD_{\text{fem}}= 0.31$; $t= -2.86$, $p<.05$). As the age of professors ranges from 30 to 65, and a dominant value of teaching experience years is 16 years, instead of dividing professors into categories, a correlation coefficient was calculated between these variables as well as average results on occurrence and disturbance of disruptive behaviors. Among those, correlations between age and awareness showed to be significant ($r= -.39$, $p<.00$) suggesting that younger professors notice those behaviors more than the older ones. Of course, correlation between age and years of teaching experience is significant ($r= .64$, $p<.01$). However, the other correlations proved to be insignificant, including the one between years of experience and dependant variables, meaning that younger professors notice more disruptive behaviors, irrespective of their teaching experience. On an open ended question, professors were asked whether they have teaching experience elsewhere, and if they do, do they find VERNs' students different in any way. Out of 49 participants 24 (49%) had no such experience, 18 (36%) had experience but notice no differences. Remaining seven professors (14%) had experience and notice differences. Their answers mostly describe less respect toward teachers (compared to public university students), less punctuality, less motivation, and worse communication with professors. On a second open end question professors were asked if they have noticed the differences among generations, through the years of their teaching experience. Out of 49 professors 15 do not see any differences (30.6%), two (4.08%) think that previous generations were worse (because the rules of behavior are clearer now), and the remaining 20 (40.8%) find today's generations worse. Their answers are grouped in several categories: *Less respect for the teacher in general*; *Bad manners and home upbringing* (rude, with no basic manners); *Less motivated, focused, and interested in learning* (they only learn what they need to); *Addicted to technology* (smart phones) and therefore less concentrated during the class; *Less responsible, and less disciplined in general*; *Poorer cognitive abilities and skills, less competent, less informed, and read less*. Remaining twelve professors (24.5%) think that today's generations are better at some things and worse at others. They are better at technology use, more independent and more networked. Before they were more obedient, less aggressive, they have clearer life values, and more desire for learning.

6. Discussion

Disruptive behaviors examined in this research show moderate prevalence in general, as the average grade for professors is 2.66 and for students 2.73. Among them, the highest grades are given to behaviors like chatting, using the cell phone and being unprepared for the class (without basic supplies). This is in line with previous research (Paik & Broedel-Zaugg, 2006; Gannon-Leary, 2008; Bjorkland & Rehling, 2009 Ausbrooks, Jones, & Tijerina, 2011; Sterner, Jackson-Cherry & Doll, 2015). However, it should be mentioned that no matter how low the prevalence of some behavior might

be, it still does not mean that it is a small problem for a teacher. Sometimes, even one problematic student in a group of 25 (which is the average at VERN'), can subjectively make teaching very hard. If there are several disruptive students in a group (which often is a case) teaching becomes stressful. As regards the second research problem, the disturbance of 30 listed behaviors was examined. As expected, the majority of those behaviors are seen more disturbing by professors than by students. If some student is giving a passive resistance to the teaching process (like not having the basic supplies, napping during the class, playing with its cell phone etc) his/her behavior does not have a direct negative effect on other students. The same goes for cheating at exams, or plagiarism, i.e. behaviors that are highly disturbing for teachers, but of low significance to other students. However, cases when a student is giving an active resistance to the teaching process by arguing with or confronting a teacher, it affects the other students as well, as this wastes class time, and makes the atmosphere tense and unpleasant, especially if it is repeated by the same students (which usually is the case). This finding is in line with some previous research. For example, Maurer, Sturges, Averette, Lee, and Allen (2009) examined differences between faculty and student perceptions of inappropriate student behaviors and effective class management strategies. Educators were more likely to view the following as disruptive: *texting, reading papers/magazines, sleeping in class, drinking beverages in class, doing work for another course, and using laptops for unrelated work*. On the other hand, more likely disruptive behaviors for students were *talking out of turn, asking questions already answered, and asking irrelevant questions*. What is interesting, behaviors that faculty perceive as disruptive, might be seen from a student perspective as "disrespectful" but not necessarily "disruptive" (i.e. texting or reading a newspaper). Furthermore, Campbell (2002) found that both students and educators reported strong perceptions of mobile phones ringing as a disruptive and wanted restriction of mobile phones in classrooms. However, younger participants (18-23) tended to be more tolerant to mobile phone interruptions during class and reported less support for restricting policies. For young people the mobile phone, especially smart phone might be an important tool for social connection and using it during class might be perceived as „no big deal“. Within the group of students, significant differences in perception of prevalence and disturbance of various disruptive behaviors are found related to their gender. Female students notice more of these behaviors and are more disturbed by them. This is in line with previous research which show that usually male students and pupils are making more discipline problems to teachers, especially manifesting more aggressive and disobedient behavior (Rowland & Srisukho, 2009, Nordstrom, Bartels & Bucy, 2009). Nordstrom, Bartels & Bucy (2009) noted that students with a consumerism orientation, narcissistic tendencies and with positive attitude toward disruptive behaviors were more likely to engage in such behaviors. Their study found that males were more likely to hold a consumer orientation to education and were more likely to view disruptive classroom behavior as appropriate. Furthermore, males were more likely to score higher on the *Narcissism Scale* than females. Moreover, a significant negative correlation between age and perception of occurrence of disruptive behaviors was found. Negative correlation can be explained through the fact that older students at VERN' are in most cases employed and study part time. As part time student groups at VERN' are smaller, and constituted of older, employed students, discipline problems hardly ever happen. It is surprising, though, that age was not related to the perception of

disturbance. We expected that older students would be more intolerant to those behaviors, as they usually pay for the tuition fee themselves (as opposed to full time students that are in most cases sponsored by their parents). In a group of professors, similar age effect was found. Younger professors, irrespective of their teaching experience, notice more disruptive behaviors in general. As at VERN' professors of various ages teach both full-time and part-time students, different explanations for this effect should be offered. In general, these differences could be based on more subjective or more objective professors' perception. For example, perhaps young professors (who were more recently students themselves) perceive these behaviors more, because they compare them to a fresher image of their own student behavior. The other explanation could be that younger professors might have more problems in gaining authority and respect by students, and objectively face more disruptive behaviors. Furthermore, female professors even though they equally perceive the occurrence of disruptive behaviors, find those behaviors to be more disturbing. It is also indicative that 75% of VERN' professors, with 15 years of teaching experience on average, notice some differences between recent students generations and the previous ones. Although the line of demarcation between old and new generations has not been specified, it seems that almost every new generation challenges the educators with new set of behaviors and sometimes it is not easy to reach consensus about what constitutes disruptive behavior. This is probably the reason why many educators do not address classroom disruptions effectively. Gannon-Leary (2008) also found that majority of educators considered disruptive behavior more prevalent now than previously. The reasons they offered were: general social changes and a decline in discipline at home and school, widening participation and access to colleges by students who might not previously had had the opportunity for higher education, larger classes without individual approach, availability of technology, and students as paying customers having different expectations. The authors found that 40% of educators had lowered their expectations for students as a result of disruptions. Maurer et. al. (2009) indicate that there are two main reasons for the tolerance for such behaviors in literature: 1. lack of administrative support for dealing with disruptive behaviors and consideration that any intervention might result in lower student evaluations 2. lack of knowledge and skills in how to effectively deal with disruptive behaviors. In addition, the authors introduce inability to effectively define what disruptive behavior is as another important reason. This is in line with Patron and Bisping's (2008) emphasis that students and faculty might have different perception of disruptive behavior. This is confirmed in this study as well. Students notice all of the listed behaviors, but just do not perceive them as problematic. Although a written Code of Ethics exists at VERN' and it is presented to students at the beginning of the first semester, some of them obviously do not pay attention to it. Also VERN' has an Ethics Committee and written Rules for Disciplinary Proceedings, but the answers to the open ended questions showed that a lot of students have perception that professors themselves are over-tolerant and are not doing enough to sanction problematic behaviors. However, as we stated earlier, the problem is in a different reference frame that students and professors have. Many of disruptive behaviors just are not important to students or they do not find them inappropriate. So an additional effort should be made in order to equalize basic assumptions about suitability of different behaviors. Teachers should precisely explain why playing with a cell phone, or not having a textbook is disturbing, and should not assume that behaviors that are

inappropriate in their opinion are inappropriate from the students' point of view. Patron and Bisping (2008) show that if students feel that a behavior is inappropriate they are much less likely to engage in that behavior. Furthermore, the form of punishment does not have a statistically significant relationship with any of disruptive behaviors, however, probability of getting caught reduced inappropriate behavior. Although quantitative data in this study show that students in general do not find examined behaviors significantly disturbing, qualitative data showed that many students realize that a problem with general class discipline exists. It is obvious that a form of measuring affects results - when asked numerically to appraise the level of disturbance of certain behaviors, grades are lower in general. But when asked what is different here or what should be changed, a lot of suggestions for stricter rules came up. Sterner et al. (2015) found that students view faculty actions taken to reduce incivility as less effective compared to faculty perceptions. Similarly, Ausbrooks, Jones and Tijerina (2011) indicated that faculty tended to perceive disruptive behaviors less serious and frequent than students. On the other hand, qualitative findings suggested that while faculty believed they were addressing such behaviors, students did not have such perception. Moreover, they wanted educators to be stricter and more engaged in managing their classrooms, and remove perpetrators from the classroom if needed. Therefore, the important step for educators is to take appropriate action to react and stop disruptive behavior. In general, educators, especially young ones, may be reluctant to properly react to disruptive behavior and discuss it with colleagues or authority fearing that they will be perceived as incompetent. Although ignoring disruption in some cases may be an effective strategy, more often it leads to more disruption. To conclude, it implies that educators need more institutional support in dealing with disruptive behavior which include, besides clear rules and procedures, practical training to address classroom incivility and open discussion among colleagues with similar experience. The major contribution of this study is focus on students' and educators' perception of disruptive behavior and development of a list of disruptive behaviors in a high school setting which could facilitate continued research. However, it is important to note the limitations of this research. This study was done at one private university (VERN⁷) and generalization to other students' populations should be taken with care. A recommendation for future research is to use larger, representative samples in different types of institutions (public/private universities, different study fields and departments etc.) which would allow comparisons and further conclusions.

7. Conclusion

The main goal of this research was to test the subjective prevalence and disturbance of 30 different disruptive classroom behaviors in a group of students and professors from a Croatian private university. Behaviors that have the highest prevalence, as seen by students and professors, are *chatting, using the cell phone and being unprepared for the class*. Students and professors generally concur in the assessment of the occurrence of various disruptive behaviors, and find them to be of moderate prevalence. However, estimates of disturbance of same behaviors are in most cases significantly higher in professors group, and the behaviors like *cheating on exams, plagiarism, rude communication, and answering a cell phone during the class* are of the highest disturbance. None of these behaviors were highly disturbing to students, as the total average result is significantly lower than in the group of

professors. However, within a group of students some gender differences were found, as female students proved to be more sensitive to disruptive behaviors, that is, they notice them more, are find them more disturbing. Also, younger students notice more of these behaviors, which can be explained by the fact that older students at VERN' University usually study part-time in groups consisted of older, employed individuals. Within the group of professors, age and gender are also discriminating among participants. Female professors find disruptive behaviors more disturbing, and younger professors find them to be more present, irrespective of the age of students they teach. Majority of teachers finds today's generation different (mostly harder to manage) than the previous once. This research has once again highlighted the differences in perception of disruptive behaviors between students and professors. These differences are partially related to generation gap, but mostly to the role differences. Students do not seem to care about other students behaviors that do not have direct effect on them. However, almost all the disruptive behaviors have a negative effect on professors, as they make their job more difficult. Professors should therefore invest additional time and effort in explaining rules of proper behavior to students, and clarify the consequences for not obeying them. These consequences should be consistently implemented, which requires more administrative support.

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