

Problems of Aggressive Behaviour among Primary School Children

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Abstract: *This paper identifies the issue of pupils' indiscipline as manifested in some anti-social behaviour among which aggression is one, especially in the primary school for a long time. This paper focuses on the nature of aggression, causation of this detrimental behaviour (aggression). It also touches on the effects of aggression, discussion on the process of controlling it among the individual children in both school and the home and finally concluded with specific recommendations by the authors.*

Key words: *Problems, Aggressive Behaviour, Primary School, Children*

I. Introduction

Individuals, including the child experiences frustration situation as a result of thwarted effort to achieve a goal or satisfying some particular needs every day. These needs range from physical through social to psychological. People react differently when frustration sets in as a result of their inability to achieve their set goal to satisfy their needs (Kolo and Yaroson, 2004). A typical reaction to frustration by many children of primary school age is aggression. Aggression, be it direct or indirect is more or less regarded as anti-social behaviour which should not be encouraged in children as it cannot only be harmful to the exhibitor but also to others around him. Chauhan, (2007) was of the view that what a teacher should do to curb aggressive behaviour in child and probably the way of helping the child release the built up tension is to make it clear to him the desirable and undesirable behaviour. Aggression as anti-social emotional and behaviour is treated with contempt by most teachers. Punishment in any form is always the reward for the exhibition of such behaviour as a way of trying to curb it.

Mukherjee, (2002) was of view that punishment of any kind may not always be the best reward for the exhibition of aggressive behaviour as most aggressive behaviour in children may be result of what the exhibitor may term as an unjust treatment from a superior (may be punishment either in the school or at home). Such children would as a result of the need to release the bottle up tension created by the unjust treatment received from an adult, find a way of retaliating on the young one's by way of bullying and fighting. Therefore, Suleiman, (2011) was of the view that the effectiveness of any punishment depends largely on the teacher, the individuals concerned, and the class.

II. Review of Related Literature

Nature of Aggression

Whenever an emotion is experienced, the most striking aspect is the feeling it produces. Experience of fear, anger, gloom or glee yield a vivid, immediate sensation a number of which seem to be countless. Rathus, (1999) was of the view that it is always difficult to describe an emotional feeling other than just giving it a name. Also Robila and Krishne, (2004) were of the view that aggression like any other emotion is difficult to describe as it is accompanied by a thousand and one emotional sensations. However, it is the hostile aggression (making another person experiencing pain) that is given utmost attention by parents or teachers and anybody concern with the upbringing of children. But positive aggressive behaviours are always ignored until they turned sour.

According to William James, one of the earliest psychologists of 19th century, emotional responses were instinctive. According to James, the feelings, sensations, and behaviour appropriate to the emotions were inborn reaction to the particular stimuli. He gives an example of fear which was supposedly an inborn reaction to certain noise, strange men, strange animal, solitude, darkness and high place.

But this assertion was discredited by John B. Watson, the founder of the behavioural school of thought in psychology who put James list of fear provoking stimuli to experimental test. He found out that an infant of four to six months old displayed a total lack of emotional reactions when brought in contact with some strange animal like dog, black cat among others. Some behaviour reactions may be as a result of reflex responses (an automatic, unlearned, muscular response to a stimulus) which cause various facial changes and fear. Mcloyd, (1999) was of the view that hostile aggression is learned and develops slowly. Sometimes aggressive behaviours

are imitated from adult models even though some are inborn reflex and emotional behavior to situations. But aggression which is aimed at removing an obstacle or satisfying some needs is a learned behaviour.

Causes of Aggression

As discussed earlier, frustration is always associated with aggression as the behaviour shown by an individual when he has been thwarted and prevented from achieving a goal as well as the way a person tries to prevent being thwarted at all.

There are so many sources of frustrating situation some of which include, the social and physical needs of the child not being met by parents, teachers, peer groups, and anybody that interacts socially with the child. Other sources include poverty, personal inadequacies.

Parents

Ajeagbu, (1999) was of the view that parent may be responsible for aggressive behaviour in their children. According to her, the child who turns into a bully may be a product of parental teasing and bullying. She added that homes where tension is incessant are damaging for the child's emotional development. It is also observed that some children came from homes in which they are neither loved nor valued by their parents. This type of child may become lonely and helpless as his need for affection, and security are threatened.

These unmet needs may be the source of one's misbehaviour, if the child notices that he gains attention only when he misbehaves. Other conditions in the home, such as polygamy and extended family can also be harmful to the child's security if they are characterized by tension. Haggai and Mallum, (2000) were of the view that poor family relationship and interference from the extended family also make the child develops aggressive behaviour. Therefore, it is clear that where there is poor parenting, then there must be resultant effect on the child that can lead to aggression in him.

Peer Group Influence

Aggression caused by peer group influence always finds its root in teasing and bullying. This accordingly may involve pointing out and jerking at a real or supposed disability. This includes the use of nickname which arouses anger. In addition to the above assertion, some children indulge in activities socially unacceptable like beating up younger ones and making others, feel miserable just to make their group of friends hold them high as mark of superiority. This behaviour has its roots in inferiority complex that may have developed as a result of over protection or neglect of the child by the parents, or lack of security and love.

Teacher's Role

The contribution of teachers as source of unwholesome behaviour of children cannot be overemphasized. Erikson, (1973) maintains that teachers who are inadequately trained in psychology and mental hygiene unwittingly commit many serious errors and carry forward practices that are extremely detrimental to good mental health of the pupils. As a result of lack of knowledge of psychology, many teachers use stringent, autocratic control in the classrooms that have the unfortunate effect of reducing children's resourcefulness and initiative. Since teachers, peers, older children, parents, and status – figures are model to the child. Children tend to emulate blindly actions of the teachers. Thus, an aggressive teacher whose only method of controlling his class is through punishment, corporal or otherwise will only produce aggressiveness in his pupils' personality. The degree of teacher's punishment towards pupils is positively correlated with their aggressive behaviour (Sule, 1994). Anger in the teacher, expressed physically or verbally towards children tends to make them give wrong answers or make mistake and this also leads to aggressiveness in them.

Personal Inadequacies

The child who is physically or mentally inadequate for tasks that are expected of him is certain to experience frustration. According to Haggai and Mallum, (2000) frustration can also be as a result of the child's inability to reach the goal he set for himself. The aggressive behaviour in this case may be direct in which case the object of frustration is either destroyed or thrown away or indirect when the pen-up energy that cannot be used to achieve a particular goal might be channeled to a socially acceptable activity. Also Haggai and Mallum, (2000) were of the view that if proper care is not taken by the people that interact with this type of a child, he may become a social isolate with its numerous attendant problems.

Poverty

Worthy of mention also is the socio-economic status of the home where a child comes from. Although not all children who came from underprivileged homes by any means, but statistically speaking low socio-economic status breeds condition unfavourable to sound adjustment.

Sociological studies by Lai and Omololu, (2005) found out that among some juvenile delinquent children in Chicago shows a close connection that exists between poverty and personal mal-adjustment as the saying goes. A hungry man is an angry man! Thus the child who does not sleep well at night and is not fed before coming to school as a result of poverty is not expected to perform excellently both behaviourally and academically in school.

Okonkwo, (2005) was of the view that a child who as a result of poverty cannot afford materials necessary for school work might exhibit retaliatory aggression towards those who have or more so, bully them and collect such by force or even resort to stealing from them. For the forgoing, it can be seen that the likely causes of aggression behaviour in children are numerous and varying in degrees.

The Effects Of Aggression

Garcia Coll and Magnussen, (2000) were of the view that aggression can be devastating on both the aggressor and the recipient of the aggressive behaviour when aggression is intended to assault or injure another, to belittle, harm, or maliciously ridicule a person. In this case the aggressive behaviour exhibited may inflict physical or psychological injuries on the recipient there by causing a permanent damage to recipient in a form of blindness, deafness, lameness or even death leaving the exhibitor of the aggressive behaviour with a feeling of the guilt for life which may ever make the exhibitor go psychotic.

In as much as hostile aggression which aim at destruction of life and property should be curbed, psychologist have argued that positive aggressive which responses to the need to fight and win by way of trying to achieving a set goal should be encouraged (Haggai and Mallum, 2000). Every classroom needs a monster indicated that to repress all aggressive feeling is bad from a mental hygiene point of view. The repression of such they continues, may lead to anxiety and neurosis. In support of creating a vent to occasionally to blow off the steam pent-up. Devries and Devries (1997) were of the view that every child needs to find some weary to express an anger, hostility, and destructiveness which arise out of the thwarting which he faces. Some of the socially accepted channels for relieving aggressive feelings include activities like athletic contest or sports, dramatic plays, storytelling and a host of others. The child who has not socially accepted outlet for his hostile feeling will either repress them or possibly develop anxieties, or he may becomes aggressive in non- socially acceptable ways.

Process of Controlling Aggression

One way, Freud proposed to control aggression is by channeling pent-up aggressive energy in to socially approved activities, from painting to competitive sports.

Family and socializing agents would use the power of rewards to socialize males who commit most of the physical violence to be more quite and compassionate (Devries and Devries, 1997).

The boys should be discouraged from aggression very early in life and rewards them for other behaviours. They should be encouraged to develop socially positive qualities like tenderness, sensitivity to feelings nurturance cooperativeness and empathy.

Chauhan (2007) recommends using teachers' and parents' reports to identify children who seem headed for aggressive behaviour. The parents of these youngsters would be taught how to punish anti-social behaviour.

Eliminating the pay offs of aggression. Aggression can be reduced by identifying and then eliminating its reinforcing consequences.

The catharsis process, it was once believe that aggression is a means of venting steam, and that it can thus prevented by having the aggressive child channel energy in to other behaviour or experience aggression vicariously. Hitting a punching bag or watching a wrestling match, then, could take the place of engaging in aggressive behaviour.

The assertion of Routh (1999) revealed that media awareness causes a lot of aggressive behavior in children. Therefore, many psychologist favours an approach that would limit the media's influence by educating children and adults.

III. Conclusion

In this paper efforts have been made to show the effect of aggression on children when they failed to achieve their set goal or satisfying their needs especially physically, socially or psychological. The main purpose for doing so are first to draw attention to the fact that there are differences in aggression ranging from mild to hard aggression among children as a result of personal inadequacies, parental failure, peer group roles, poverty e.t.c.

Other condition necessitate this condition involves polygamy and extend family influence where poor family relationship interferes in consistent requirement from different adult security of a child resulting in such anti-social behaviour such as aggression as a means of satisfying the need for social recognition.

The remediation of the problems pointed out above would not only make teaching and learning successful, but would also make the acquisition of the right type of skills, knowledge, and desirable attitude change possible for the improvement and development of the learner (child), and their society or environment.

IV. Recommendations

Specifically, the authors recommended the following:

- Counsellors are to be employed into our primary schools, so as to counsel the child who shows some signs of aggression.
- Professionally trained teachers are to be employed into our primary schools, so that aggressive behavior of the children can be properly managed and controlled.
- Proper and regular supervisions by the supervisory division of the LEA, SUBEB and UBEC should be carried out to monitor the way teachers are handling the children in our primary schools.
- Proper application of reward and punishment by both the teachers and parents can help in tackling aggressive behavior in primary school children.
- Well conducive school atmosphere should be provided so as to make children comfortable, thereby reducing the occurrence of aggressive behavior in them.
- Sporting activities should be emphasized in our primary schools to reduce the level of aggression in primary school children.
- Curriculum of primary school should always reflect the needs of the children and should be child and activity centered.
- Parents and teachers should work hand-in-hand in dealing with aggressive behavior of primary school children.

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