

Hostility in Children: Causes and Reforms

Dr. Rajesh Chhabra

Retd. Associate Professor in Education/ Fine Arts at C.R College of Edu. Hisar

Abstract

God's best creation is children. They are born with all happiness and spread lot of joy all around. Some turn out to be very happy. Satisfied, calm and balanced youngsters while other become hostile and problem children. As hostile youngsters, they caused lot of harm to themselves and to those around them. There are definite reasons for their hostile behavior which is quite often due to the environmental reasons. Parents, teacher and other factors are included in the environment. Studies have shown that environment plays a major role in acquiring the aggressive traits by the children. Awareness about the causes of aggression and the way to check as well as control will help in preventing, minimising as well as controlling aggression in children.

"Children are sick of being called 'the future'. They want to enjoy their childhoods, free of violence, now".

Paulo Pinheiro, 2007, UN General Assembly

Hostility in Children

Introduction.

In psychology, as well as in other social and behavioral sciences, refer to behavior between members of the same species that is intended to cause pain or harm. According to Maslow (1962), aggression is not an essential part of human nature. It is a reaction to circumstances in which essential requirement of our nature are unfulfilled.

What do temper tantrums, teasing, rage, hate, and revenge have in common? All may stem from emotional pain inflicted by parents or others.

Aggression in children and its causes and effects have always been a matter of great concern with the policy makers of our country. Their concern with regards to the protection of the child, prevention and prohibition of all such activities that may cause mental and physical harm to the child is evident from the fact that they have suggested various steps to ensure the protection of the child. In 1999, the committee on Economic, Social and cultural Rights adopted a General Comment on "The Right to Education" which stated that corporal punishment is contradiction with

the fundamental guiding principle of international human rights.

Article 21 of the Constitution protecting the 'Right to Life' is the first point of reference. The Child Rights Charter 2003 of India specifically states "All children have a right to be protected against neglect, maltreatment. Injury, and trafficking, sexual and physical abuse of all kinds, corporal punishment, torture exploitation violence and degrading treatment."

Two out of three school going children in India are physically abused says the national report on child abuse by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2007. The crime is unchecked in every single district of the country. In spite of such chronological dating and precautions for the parents, school, teachers and law makers, the children especially of the present times are subjected to hostile treatment and are very aggressive. With this aggressive behavior, they inflict harm upon themselves and in the society in which they live .

Their aggression is not without any cause. All children have moments when they lash out in anger by using rough language, creating Panic, throwing or kicking objects. At times their aggression crosses all limits and appears alarming and out of control. The parents, teachers and others around them find it difficult to understand this behavior and control it. Aggressiveness is a result of anger, of the desegregation of the self, which leads to its fragmentation . Children who experience a hostile family environment are afraid, feel isolated, threatened and unable to defend themselves.

This extreme frustration leads to deep emotional scars and these children do not develop the ability to contain themselves. At the same time the anger and pain caused by

these scars continue to act, and anxiety underlies and their behavior. In attempting to adapt to this hostile environment, children may, amongst other strategies, turn to aggressive behavior. A number of studies have been carried out all over the world to understand the reasons behind the aggressive behavior of children. It has been established by various research studies that children who are physically disciplined by hitting or any other corporal punishment are more anxious and aggressive as compared to those who are disciplined by other approaches. In countries where physical discipline was more common and culturally accepted, children who were physically disciplined were less aggressive and less anxious than children who were physically disciplined were less aggressive and less anxious than children who were physically disciplined in countries where physical discipline was rarely used. In all countries, however, higher use of physical discipline was associated with more child aggression and anxiety.

In Thailand, a country where peace-promoting Buddhist teachings are predominant, mothers rarely hit their children or use other forms of physical discipline. In a Study conducted in Kenya in 2003, 57 percent of grandmothers reported caning, pinching, slapping, tying with a rope hitting beating and kicking as forms of discipline they had used. They don't learn peaceful ways of solving conflict when they are exposed to violence.

Types of Aggression in Children

Children with tendencies of aggressive behavior have a mindset intentionally hurting others. Aggression in them can manifest in a number of ways including hitting. Kicking. Spitting, biting, pushing

and throwing objects. Aggression in children is of four types:

- Nondestructive aggression- It is an aggression which is inborn. This type of aggression sets in drive in children to excel in academics, sports and any other fields.
- The second kind of aggression is related to the urge of obtaining food. This type of aggression is also inborn.
- The third type of aggression is related to displeasure. The temper tantrum getting into rage etc. falls in this category.
- In fourth kind of aggression is sadistic pleasure. Teasing sadistic and taunting come under this.

What are the causes of Aggression?

Children at time are not able to express themselves because of problem language as compare to the adults. This helplessness and inability of expressing their feelings verbally, at times force a child to act aggressively.

In a study conducted by UNESCO in 1996-97 it was found that the children indulged in more than three hours of TV viewing. This, it was observed was next only to school attendance in terms of time spent on any activity. The study found that children turn to violence to solve problems as they watch lot of TV programmers' related to violence.

In another study carried by centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) in 2001, the impact of media violence was studied on children. The study was carried out in five Indian cities (Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Jaipure. The Study reported high aggression in learnt behavior.

Children in the United States spend three to four hours each day watching TV which has a great influence on their future behaviour. About 40% of these programmes have heavy violence (Rowell Huesmann, 2006). There are other factors also that contribute to the problem of aggression in children. They are:

1. Video Games:- Video Games have greatly influenced the children these time playing video games and most of the video games have violence. Video games were considered to be more harmful in increasing aggression than violent movies or television shows due to their interactive and engrossing nature of time. (Karen E. Dill and Craig A. Anderson. Sept 2007).
2. Punishment at School:- When the teacher at school uses corporal punishment on him for small offences, that is more common these days, he/she reciprocates the same. The child during his adult days, if not given something, he is duly entitled to. It kindles violence when he is not given his due. The attitude of might is right automatically gets impressed on him. (Charies Karelis, 2009).
3. Environmental aggression. Some children act aggressively because that is what they have learnt. They have seen parental

argument, divorce and work schedule of parents. As a result of the family environment, they have been treated aggressively. This way they learn aggression.

4. Social problems, separation, limited communication skills, stress, abuse, temperament, heredity factors, substance abuse, stressful family life, brain damage, limitation of aggressive behaviour, unfulfilled needs and desires, envy, desperation etc. can be some other causes of aggression in children.

Warning signs of Aggression in Children:

The warning signs of aggression can always be seen in children. Higher the sign of aggression more will be the threat. An aggressive child can cause harm to himself and to those around him. Some of these warning signs are:-

- Uncontrollable outbursts of anger at home or outside home.
- Taking weapons like knife, scissors etc. to school without any requirement.
- Suicide attempts or threats of suicide.
- History of family in attempting suicide or violent behaviour
- Selection of violent movies
- Always blaming others and destiny for misfortune.
- Medical in conversation problems.

- Any mental illness
- Bullying, beating or indulging in some kind of violence.
- Difficulty in making friends
- Overprotection of parents or family

How to handle Aggressive Children

According to social psychology, violence is a learned behaviour. Criminal or violent children are not born with these traits. They observe aggression around them and imitate it. The media play a significant role in assimilation of hostile traits and ideas in children. These factors contribute in aggression. Some suggestions to handle the children with aggression are:-

1. Constant and consistent checking of unwanted behaviour.
2. Caring and patiently dealing with them will also help. Giving quality time to children can make them less aggressive.
3. The surroundings should provide calm and peaceful ambience to children.
4. Providing them with ways means and opportunities likes sports, games to utilize excess energy.
5. Removing stimulants that trigger violent reactions or behaviour
6. Taking note as well as keeping a watchful eye on aggressive tendencies of the child.
7. Selection of right type of TV programmes for children.
8. Firm but gentle approach works best with an aggressive child.

9. Letting the child know that you want.
10. Introducing them to yoga and meditation.
11. Acknowledging their feelings within limits.
12. Avoiding corporal punishment for an aggressive child as it can become counter productive.
13. Encouraging the child to talk about the problems with you.
14. Giving them positive vibrations instead of blaming, punishing and publicly ridiculing them.

Conclusion

No matter what we do, children do show aggression at times. When this happens, we need to keep a close eye on children and reach out of them before such a flashpoint

References

- Dill Karen E. and C.A Anderson May 2020. "Video Games and aggressive Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviour in the Laboratory and in Life ", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.Vol78 No.4
- CHARLES KARELIS, 2009. Physiological Effects of Poverty in Children", Journal of Health and Hussmann L.R. 1994 Aggressive behaviour: Current perspectives New York: Springer.
- Kohut H. 1996 Psychology of Self Allen M. Siegel : Rutledge.

may arise. At times like these, children need to be guided as calmly as possible. The hostile aggression in children is greatly influenced by the way their parents and teachers treat them. Physical, emotional and any other type of unpleasant treatment meted out to these children gets reflected in their behaviour.

Emotional scars are left on the mind of the child by the parents and teachers at times unknowingly and unintentionally which finally leads to hostile aggression. To avoid the hostile aggressive tendencies in children, it is important to remember that children also have feelings. This does not mean that we should not be firm. We have to be role models as well as watchful gardeners.

- Maslow, Abraham H. 1962. Psychology of Self, Allen M. Siegel : Rutledge.
- HUESMANN, Rowell and Lenonar Eron D June 1989 "Individual differences and the trait of aggression"
- Shin Grace "Video Games: A Cause of Violence and Aggression" Accessed 6 December 2010.