

## ***PARENTING STYLES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN WITH AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR***

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this paper we analyze and explore the different challenges that parents face with aggressive children from the theoretical perspective. Positive parenting is a concept which in many studies and theoretical approaches is suggested to be taken into consideration in the education process. Parenting is a complex process, which includes multidimensional factors and actions taken by parents and teachers, educators and all other professionals who directly or indirectly are involved in the process of the children's development and education. Being a parent does not mean that you play the role of parent as the only one, but in any case, the presence of your children and their behavior is also important in this role, which means that one depends on the other and that one role determines the other, e.g. authoritarian parents usually make their children behave aggressively, withdrawn children let us know that their parents are neglectful etc. School counseling and psychology suggests a close collaboration between three main pillars; family, school and pupils to avoid misbehaviors in all forms.

Numerous contemporary studies often talk about parenting and challenges in raising children, highlighting parenting as a global challenge that carries not only simple education but a multidisciplinary task. Balancing the needs and demands of children that parents face is not easy at all, and all parents feel stressed from time to time.

**Keywords:** Parenting, parenting styles, aggressive behavior, parenting counseling etc.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Numerous contemporary studies often talk about parenting and challenges in raising children, highlighting parenting as a global challenge that carries not only simple education but a multidisciplinary task. Balancing the needs and demands of children that parents face is not easy at all, and all parents feel stressed from time to time. Many researchers argue that parents are the first caregivers of children and that the relationship between children and parents should be an interaction of both parties that requires knowledge of parenting and all symptoms of aggressive behaviors as well and other forms such as introjection or isolation (Jeong et al. 2020).

Therefore, being a parent does not mean that you play the role of parents as the only one, but that in any case, the presence of your children and their behavior is also important in this role, which means that one depends on the other and that one role determines the other. According to Sumrgi et al. (2020), referring to Santrock (2011a), the first five years of a child's life are characterized by major changes in various aspects of development, such

as physical, motor, cognitive and language development, as well as emotional and social development. During this time, parents have an important role in supporting child development, including teaching their child about social norms, good manners, and socially acceptable behavior.

Parents also need to overcome their child's misbehavior, such as fighting, breaking things, screaming and yelling, as well as feelings of excessive shame and fear (Williams et al., 2009). If problem behaviors are not managed early, they can develop into antisocial behavior in late childhood, deviance or delinquency in adolescence, and even psychopathological problems, such as anxiety and conduct disorders, in adulthood (Murray & Farrington, 2010).

### **Parenting- The role and importance**

One of the theories that clarifies parenting, its' role and importance is *The Developmental Theory of Parenting* proposed by Mowder (2005), originally called *Parental Role Development Theory (PRDT)*. This theory considers parenting according to the important social role that parents play (Mowder, 1991, 1993, 1997). The role of the parent is important to be understood because it is through this role that individuals perceive what parenting and parent-child interaction entails. According to Mowder (1991, 1993, 1997), at different times on any given day, individuals perform other social roles, such as being a friend, teacher or student, employer or employee. But when individuals interact with their children, they are performing the role of parent. Therefore, the theory defines what parenting is, examines the role of parents, clarifies how parents and parenting develop and change over time, and explains how the role of parents relates to parenting activities. Referring to the same theory, Respler-Herman et. al. (2012), point out that according to the theory of parental development (PDT, Mowder, 2005) parenting mainly includes six dimensions:

1. Connection- or attachment - here according to Mowder et.al (2006), includes the connection, love and consideration that parents feel and show towards the child.
2. Discipline - according to them, includes setting boundaries and rules and ensuring that they are achieved or fulfilled.
3. Education - the transmission of information to inform, instruct, guide and teach children.
4. Care for their well-being and general protection by ensuring that the child is protected from harm and taken care of for general needs such as food, clothing and shelter.
5. Responsiveness- perception of children's needs and response to those needs.
6. Sensitivity - distinguishing the child's needs and matching the parents' response correctly. (Mowder et. al, 2006, pp. 734-735).

These dimensions vary in importance according to different stages of children's development.

According to this theory, we understand the role and importance of parenting, being aware that the parent as a human being at the same time, in addition to the role of parenting, can perform other social roles that are required of him. However, the role of parenting is the only role and profession that is first practiced and then learned, unlike other roles and professions, which are first studied and then practiced. This makes us understand that parenting is a very specific role and that mistakes during the realization of this role are inevitable, it is enough to avoid them in time and as such to find suitable ways to overcome them in order to improve and educate genuine children.

In the guidelines given by UNICEF Module 6 (2022), the art of parenting, love, talk, play and read, prepared by a group of authors in collaboration with the international association step by step, in their parenting draft, suggest that the practices of raising children to be child-centered, to encourage respect for the child's dignity and offer opportunities for the development of understanding, self-esteem and self-confidence in children. Therefore, they value parenting as an art in itself that includes play, love, conversation and empathy.

Children are fragile beings that require special care during all stages of their growth and development, and who better than parents can be the support and love for children. Love is the first factor that a child needs from the first days of birth, and it does not require any investment, it is enough to be given unconditionally and without hesitation to those who need it most, specifically children. Wanting to answer the question of whether there is a better way of parenting, Santrock (2017) refers to the answer given by Baumrind (1971, 1996), leader of the parenting and parenting authoritative style, that it does exist. According to her, parents should neither be too punitive nor too tolerant, but should create rules for children and at the same time be supportive and guiding for their children.

### **Parenting styles and aggressive behavior**

In the literature and various researches, we come across different types of parenting styles depending on the approach and interest of the researchers. Among the most mentioned parenting styles in research and theoretical reviews are four: authoritarian, liberal, authoritative and neglectful (Masud, et, al, 2017, Sarwar, 2016, Merlin & Okerson & Hess, 2013, Rita & Wan, 2016, Bonstein, 2002, Santrock, 2012).

Thus, according to Masud and colleagues (2017), referring to the theory of parenting styles, they emphasize that there are three different types of parental behavior that have a direct impact on the psychological growth of children, which include authoritarian, authoritarian and permissive. According to them, each of these parenting styles is directly and indirectly related to children's psychological growth and therefore to their behavior.

Children are the reflection of the behavior of the parents, therefore special care is needed when selecting the parenting style, because depending on the style exercised by the parents, the children will react the same way. Merlin, Okerson and Hess (2013), during their study of parenting and parenting styles, provide detailed data on the importance of parenting styles in the parent-child relationship. Thus, they potentiated two styles of parenting, the guiding and the controlling. According to them, directive parenting, also known as authoritative parenting, is characterized by a high level of demands and a high level of responsibility. This parenting style uses a mix of controlling – but not restrictive – practices with positive encouragement of autonomy and independence in children. Another characteristic of this style is that they offer rewards for positive behaviors and use discipline without physical punishment to curb delinquent behavior (p. 33). As for the controlling style, which according to them is also called authoritarian parenting, it is characterized by high demands and a low level of response. They are rapt with their children by placing discipline in place of education and are not connected or sensitive to the needs of the children. They impose high control, rules and restrictions and have a rejecting attitude towards their children (ibid.).

From their research they concluded that the directive parenting style produces better outcomes for children in the areas of behavior, initiative and challenge, mental health and academic achievement compared to the controlling style characterized by parental tendencies to responsibilities, high demands on children and low level of empathy (Merlin, Okerson & Hess, 2013).

### **Aggressive children's behaviors as a result of parenting and parenting styles influence**

Before clarifying the connection between aggressive behavior and parenting style, let's first see what is meant by aggression and aggressive behavior.

Kostelnik (2016), describes aggression as any type of behavior that results in physical or emotional injury to a person or animal or any type of behavior that leads to destruction and injury. There are two main types of aggression such as verbal and physical aggression. According to her, there are four types of aggressive behavior in children:

1. Accidental aggression - the name implies that it is about accidental and unintentional aggressive behavior
2. Expressive aggression - is an aggressive behavior that is done without the intention of hurting the other, but mainly the child does this because that behavior makes them feel good.
3. Instrumental aggression - happens when the child fights over objects, property or rights and during this process someone gets hurt.
4. Hostile aggression - is an aggressive behavior done with the intention and premeditation to physically or emotionally hurt the other person (Kostelnik, 2016:1-2).

To clarify the relationship between parenting, parenting styles and aggressive behaviors, Masud& Ahmad and Fakr (2019), referred to Baumrind, (1991), stating that children's behavioral adjustment and social competence is based on understanding their needs and behavior restrictive parents. According to them, the theory that would better clarify this relationship is the theory of parenting style by Baumrind (1971), so according to this theory, there are three different types of parental behavior that have a direct impact on the psychological growth of children, which include authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Each of the parenting styles is directly and indirectly related to children's psychological growth and therefore to aggressive behavior, but an authoritarian parenting style is especially related to aggression and aggressive behavior in children and adolescents. Since aggression can be harmful to both the bully and the victim, the current review will integrate studies that analyze the relationship between parenting styles and aggression (Masud& Ahmad &Fakr, 2019).

In some cases, children may exhibit inappropriate behavior, their behavior is inappropriate which adults may worry about. In these cases, they may implement strong measures to try to change or stop what appear to be disturbing behaviors. On the other hand, parents forget that children with that kind of behavior probably want to show us something. According to the Positive Parenting Curriculum, (2020) World Vision Albania and Kosovo, (2020) this behavior as a factor influencing this inappropriate behavior, the child also does it for several reasons:

1. Attention-seeking: The root cause of attention-seeking behavior is the association of self-esteem with receiving attention – even negative attention – from parents.
2. Showing power: From a very young age, children are aware of the fact that they can influence the world around them through their actions. The desire to prove their power is natural
3. Revenge: Children may feel hurt because they are not respected, treated fairly and do not receive love from their parents. They may feel they are being punished unfairly and want revenge ([www.wordvision.al](http://www.wordvision.al))

The way we were raised by our parents has a lot of influence on what parenting style we will choose to practice towards our children, because we all have our own childhood stories that we need to be aware of. The same cannot work in the time where we live and act. There is the possibility that we follow in the footsteps of our parents or go in the opposite direction for what we once did not like and for the other that we needed. From this we can freely say that there is no perfect parenting and that everything depends on many determining factors. One style works for one child and the same style may not work for another. However, we must be careful which parenting style we will follow, because then the same will have an extraordinary impact on the later development of the child (Positive Parenting Curriculum, 2020).

Authoritative and neglectful styles clearly affect the children's behavior, and the children of these parents tend to show inappropriate behavior, aggressive behavior and disinterest in the implementation of social rules as a result of a weak parent-child relationship, on the other hand, we can also have behavior attracted to children as a result of these two styles. It should not be forgotten that different families have different styles and different

ways of doing things, so one should not blame one or the other style that a parent may exercise. Based on numerous researches that talk about the four types of parenting, Aliaj & Caushi (2019) emphasize that:

**The authoritarian style** usually leads children to be obedient and competent. Here it is worth noting that the level of happiness, social skills, spontaneity and self-esteem are not at the desirable level. These parents do not give children much freedom of choice and expect children to accept their authority without questioning it. And these children always expect approval from someone else and are not spontaneous.

**Liberal/ tolerant style** children of these parents are in some cases creative, on the other hand they are disorganized and tend to show behavioral problems and are not completely satisfied. These children have difficulty controlling their impulses and are often irresponsible, face more problems related to authority, school results, are more impulsive, and in adolescence show inappropriate behavior and tend to use drugs. There are rare cases when these children are emotionally secure, independent, able to live without the help of others, but such cases are few.

**Authoritative/Democratic style:** This type of parent manages to balance the demands on children by providing warmth and respecting children's independence. Democratic parenting results in children who feel happy, capable, and successful (Maccoby,1992). They give children a sufficient sense of freedom that helps them develop their independence, and in turn they are more responsible and adapt better to social situations that require cooperation.

**Neglectful parenting** is the type of parenting that causes low outcomes in all areas of their children's lives. Children raised by these parents tend to lose self-control, have low self-esteem, and are less capable than other peers (Aliaj & Caushi, 2019, 5-6).

### Parenting counseling

The latest data on the importance of parenting and parental counseling suggest us for a healthy parent-child relationship. For a good functioning of a family and exercising the role of parenting, the relationship between the child's parents and not only is very important. The respect and love shown by both parents has a great influence on the child because in the end children learn not from what is said to them but from what they see, therefore as a parent they should always choose what is best, that is to be tolerant where we must also set rules where necessary.

Various recommendations from numerous studies and theoretical analyzes for counseling and positive parenting offer us concrete suggestions about parenting. Thus, Sarwar (2016), based on the study and the results obtained from the research done on the influence of parenting styles and child's behavior, gives us the following recommendations:

1. Parents should choose authority over authoritarianism
2. Parents should spend time with their children because it can reduce the possibility of developing delinquent behavior.
3. Parents should be constantly involved with children so that teenagers are prevented from committing crimes and engaging in actions that violate the law (Sarwar, 2016: 243).

## CONCLUSION

Perfection does not exist and parenting is not an easy job, because the individual is a lifelong learner and learns new things. True parenting is not about keeping your child or yourself happy all the time. Every family experiences its ups and downs and has many challenges ahead. Remember that your presence and the power of love can make a real difference in your child's life, it must be given in the right place, space and time when the child has it.

"Childhood is a period of creation. He is born knowing nothing and after a year he knows everything. So, in the case of human being, we are not dealing with development but with creation which starts from zero". Maria Montessori.

Calm and balanced parents can raise happy children. The importance of parents is crucial, they educate the future citizens of society, so their support in terms of counseling and increasing self-esteem are the first steps for the future of their children.

As Franklin D. Roosevelt said, *"We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we must prepare our children for the future."*

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