

Verbal Aggressive Behaviours of Elementary School Age Children

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Abstract

Background: Verbal abuse has negative effects that will ultimately affect child development. Verbal abuse committed by parents may potentially leave a trauma in children's lives and affect their growth and development. Children's social environment where they carry out interactions may be the factor of verbal abuse of children.

Methods: The design of this study is cross-sectional, with total population of 328 children of school age. 259 children were selected with proportional random sampling technique. The independent variables were parental verbal abuse and psychosocial factors, while the dependent variable was children verbal aggressive behaviors. The instrument used was questionnaire sheets. The analysis performed was Logistic Regression Analysis.

Results: Verbal abuse behaviors were influenced by parental verbal abuse factor ($p=0.003$) and psychosocial factor ($p=0.03$).

Conclusions: Parenting style and children's social environment contribute to the probability of children verbal abuse. Family intervention is highly expected to prevent aggressive child behavior.

Keywords: *Verbal abuse, Verbal aggressive, School-age children*

Background

Children verbal aggressive behaviors are uncontrolled child behaviors that typically occur in home and school environment. These behaviors are the result of parental behaviors that unknowingly shape verbal aggressive behaviors.¹ The way parents communicate rules to their kids may have been done in an improper way. Sharp utterances that are deemed "okay" to be spoken such as calling children by names they do not like, underestimating children's abilities in front of their siblings, or yelling harsh words are forms of verbal abuse communications. That verbal abuse is common among Home Care aides and is strongly associated with physical abuse. We identified verbal abuse risk factors for which preventive interventions can be implemented. Child aggressive behaviors will certainly affect their psychological and psychosocial development in the subsequent stage of their growth.

Verbal abuse has negative effects that will ultimately affect child development. Children will constantly feel threatened and have difficulties to think ahead which in turn will cause them to act based on instinct without much consideration, replicating communications and utterances of their parents, resulting in verbal aggressive behaviors. Based on the record of The National Commission for Child Protection (KPAI), the number of violence against children shows an increase. In 2011 there were 261 cases of child abuse. In the past 4 years, cases of violence against children reached the highest rate in 2013 with a total of 1,615 cases. KPAI received 622 reports of cases of violence against children from January to April 2014 ranging from physical violence, psychological violence and sexual violence. There were also 12 cases of emotional violence. Of this amount, 51% of children experienced violence in the family, while 28.6% of children experienced violence in the school environment and 20.4% of children had experienced

violence in the community. As many as 60% are victims of mild violence in the form of verbal abuse or insults. Verbal communication abuse in children is mostly committed by parents.²

Verbal abuse is emotional abuse or treatment that hurts the child's feelings continuously so that it causes a bad and continuous influence on the child's emotional development, which includes the use of language which implies that the child is worthless or unloved, incompetent, and other utterances that describe parents' unmet expectations that are not appropriate to the child's age and child development, to the neglect and abandonment of the child's basic needs.³ Verbal abuse against children will cause heartache and make children think that they are what their parents often say they are. If a parent says a child is stupid or ugly, then the child will think of himself that way.⁴ Children will imitate the behavior of older people. If they are exposed to behavioral or verbal abuse then the child will do the same thing to others, and it will always be imprinted in their minds.⁵

These acts of violence can have physical or psychological effects. Physical effects may include actions that result in pain, bruising, broken bones to permanent disability.⁶ Psychological effects may include fear, anger, sadness, guilt, confusion, loss of self-confidence and/or severe psychological suffering and even rebellion and avoidance of the environment. Efforts in preventing the occurrence of aggressive behavior in children is an effort that can be done in the family environment, school environment and community environment. The purpose of this study is to look closer at the effect of verbal abuse by parents and psychosocial conditions on aggressive verbal behavior in school-age children.⁷

Methods

This study used analytic research design with cross-sectional approach. The purpose of this study was to determine the factors influencing verbal aggressive behavior of elementary school-age children. The independent variable of this study was parental verbal abuse behavior and child psychosocial factors, while the dependent variable was child verbal aggressive behaviors. The population in this study were all students aged 11-12 years in Surabaya and Jombang Elementary Schools. The sample in this study were all sixth-grader students aged 11-12 years old at the Elementary Schools of Surabaya and Jombang with 259. The research sample was selected using a proportional random sampling technique. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. This study used the following instruments: Parental verbal abuse behavior questionnaire based on theories of parental verbal abuse forms. The questionnaire used the Guttman scale with fifteen (15) questions with "Yes" answer being worth one (1) and "No" answer being worth zero (0). The children's aggressive behavior questionnaire aimed to identify the forms of aggressive behavior that children did verbally which was measured based on five verbal aspects namely mocking, cursing, forcing, yelling, and scaring. Psychosocial instruments used instruments developed by the researchers, containing 8 questions, with answer "Yes" being worth (1) and "No" being worth (0). Data was collected at elementary schools in the Surabaya and Jombang areas. All instruments had been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was performed using logistic regression statistical tests.

Results and Discussion

1. Respondent Characteristics Based on Parents' Professions and Educations

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics Based on Parents' Professions and Educations

No.	Fathers' Professions	Total	(%)
1	Unemployed	15	5,7
2	PNS	65	25,1
3	Self-employed	107	41,3
4	Nomadic job	72	27,8
	Mothers' Professions		
5	Unemployed	74	28,6
6	PNS	19	7,3
7	Self-employed	95	37,2
8	Nomadic job	71	27,4
	Fathers' Education		
9	SD	22	84,9
10	SMP	89	34,3
11	SMA	105	40,5
12	Sarjana	43	16,6
	Mothers' Education		
13	SD	56	21,6
14	SMP	88	34
15	SMA	104	40,1
16	Sarjana	11	4,3

Based on the above table, it was known that there were 107 (41.3%) self-employed fathers and 95 (37.2%) self-employed women. While fathers with high school education totaled 105 (40.5%) people and mothers with high school education totaled 104 (40.1%) mothers.

2. Child verbal aggressive behavior based on parental verbal abuse and child psychosocial factors.

Independent Variables	Mild Child Aggression		Severe Child Aggression		F	%
	N	%	N	%		
Mild Child Psychosocial	109	81,3	25	18,6	134	51,7
Severe Child Psychosocial	85	68	40	32	125	48,3
Mild Parental Verbal Abuse	164	79,6	42	20,4	206	79,5
Severel Parental Verbal Abuse	30	56,6	23	43,4	53	20,5

Table 3. Independent Variable Significance

	Independent Variables	Significance Value
1.	Parental Verbal Abuse	0,003
2.	Child Psychosocial Factor	0,001
Logistic Regression Analysis, Nagelkerke R Square 0,080 square, $\alpha = 0,05$		

Based on the above table, all independent variables significantly affected child aggressive behaviors, with significance value of parental verbal abuse of 0.003 and psychosocial factor of 0.001.

Discussion

Child psychosocial factors are one of the causes of aggressive behavior in addition to biological, familial, socio-cognitive, peer groups or groups, academic, community school factors.⁸ Biological factors are related to genetic temperament, family factors are related to parenting, environmental factors are related to group pressure or rejection. Environmental factors also influence acts of violence on children. The environment can increase the burden of child care and cause sudden environmental problems which also play a role in verbal violence. Television as the most effective media in conveying various messages to the wider community has the highest potential to influence the violent behavior of parents in children.⁹ Messages targeting the wider community have the potential to influence the violent behavior of parents in children. A study conducted by Fitriana et al. in 2015 showed that there was a relationship between the respondent’s environment and the possibility of parents verbally

abusing pre-school children in Pendowoharjo Village, Sewon District, Bantul Regency.¹⁰ The environment has a big influence on the behavior of parents in verbal abuse against pre-school children. In accordance with the result of the study, it is known that parents who have a good environment have behaviors that tend not to verbally abuse their children. Conversely, parents who have a bad environment tend to verbally abuse their children.¹¹

The results of the verbal abuse study of parents showed a high statistical value for the category of severe verbal abuse. Verbal abuse is one type of violence that often occurs in children. Verbal abuse is all forms of actions or utterances that have the nature of insulting, yelling, cursing, and frightening by uttering inappropriate words.¹² Parental verbal abuse can occur because of minimal parental knowledge, where parents do not understand the process of child development, parents force children to do something and become angry when they could not, yelling and berating them. In

addition, parent economic factor may also be the cause of verbal abuse. In addition, parent economic factor may also be the cause of verbal abuse. Poverty can cause violence in children because of the increasing crisis in life and parents do not have room to look for economic resources. Because of these economic pressures, parents experience prolonged stress, become sensitive and eventually become irritable. Childhood verbal abuse may also increase risk for the development of PDs by increasing the likelihood that youths will experience profoundly maladaptive thoughts and feelings, such as mistrust, shame, doubt, guilt, inferiority, and identity diffusion during their most critical years of psychosocial development.¹³

Child Verbal Aggressive Behavior

The result showed that some children at elementary school age exhibited mild verbal aggressive behavior and some others exhibited severe verbal aggressive behavior. Aggressive behavior that appears in individuals is closely related to anger that occurs in individuals. Aggressive behavior may be caused by the following action: There is an attack from another person, where the individual will reflexively give rise to an aggressive attitude towards someone who suddenly attacks or hurts whether with words (verbal) and with physical actions; the occurrence of frustration in someone.¹⁴

When individuals experience frustration, anger can arise which can arouse feelings of aggression; the expectation of retaliation or motivation for revenge, that is, when an angry individual is able to take revenge, the anger will be greater and the possibility of aggression will also increase. A study conducted by Sulastris in 2017 showed that most of these students made verbal remarks that mocked, cursed, forced, shouted, and frightened to hurt the feelings of friends or for their own pleasure. This proved that the children had received verbal attacks from other people.¹⁵ Verbal aggressive behavior could arise due to situations such as provocation. Since the provocation is seen by the aggressor as a threat that must be dealt with by an aggressive response to negate the danger implied by the threat. In the face of threatening provocation, aggressors tend to believe that rather than being attacked it is better to attack first, or rather than being killed it is better to kill.¹⁶

Factors Influencing Child Verbal Aggressive Behavior

The result showed that there was an influence of verbal abuse of parents and child psychosocial factors on verbal aggressive behavior of school-age children in elementary schools. Factors that influenced parental verbal abuse were internal factors which included parental knowledge, in which many parents did not understand children's developmental needs and force them to do things that they were actually incapable of doing and are angry at, shout and insult them and parenting experience factor in which a child who was abused by their parents will become aggressive and do what was done to them to their children when they become a parent. In social theory, it is stated that children imitate aggressive behavior committed by their parents, or imitation. This happens because a child has a high tendency to imitate. Violence that is seen or experienced by children continuously will form a mindset in children that the environment in which they live is not a safe place for them, so they will tend to be suspicious and cause aggressive behavior. Children who experience constant violence also tend to have lower self-esteem. Low self-esteem leads to negative attitudes and reduces coping when frustrated, thus causing an aggressive behavior tendency in children.¹⁸

The dominant influence is the social change in people's lives characterized by events that often cause tension, such as economic competition, discrimination, mass media (e.g. pornography, porno-action), recreational facilities (such as PlayStation), and night clubs, such as discotheques. This condition is a driving factor for the emergence of destructive (negative) behavior in adolescents. This study also identifies the community factors that become one of the environments for adolescents, indicated by several respondents' answers that answer "often" and "sometimes" which indicated the dominant agreement regarding activities in the community.¹⁹

Verbal aggression is an aggression committed by utterance intended to hurt other people that may take forms as insults, cursing, coercing, yelling and scaring. Factors influencing school-age child aggressive behavior include biological factors that are typically comprehensive in nature, meaning that they can

affect all aspects of behaviors, from intelligence to immunity against stress. Biological factors that may influence one's aggressive behaviors include genetics, cerebral system and blood chemistry. The next factor is psychological factors, where the aggressive behaviors exhibited are closely associated with anger within oneself. Relationships with peers are a source of social influence that is closely associated with aggression. An adolescent peer group can refer to neighborhood people, sports teams, friend groups, and acquaintance. Peer influence or peer group depends on the specific setting and context.¹⁷

Aggressive behavior can arise due to several reasons, one of which is when there is an attack from another person, the individual will reflexively exhibit aggressive attitude towards someone and suddenly attack or hurt with words (verbal) or with physical actions. One influential psychosocial factor is childhood trauma (psychological) or in other words, experiences that destroy a sense of security, a sense of ability, and self-esteem that cause psychological injuries that are difficult to cure completely. Psychological trauma experienced in childhood tends to continue to be carried into adulthood, especially if the trauma is never realized by the child's social environment.¹⁷⁻¹⁹

Conclusions

There is a correlation between parental verbal abuse and child psychosocial factor with elementary school-age child aggressive behavior. Parents are advised to carefully word their utterances when conversing with their children.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

Ethical Clearance: This research has been proved by Health Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Public Health universitas Airlangga

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