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VIOLENCE IN YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

With the change in socio cultural environment, today's youth is encountering more challenges than ever before. This encounter is influencing heavily on their daily life activities and behaviors. Youth today has become more violent and vigilant than they were before. Some leading factors of this behavior can be marked as more prone towards the gadgets and smart handheld devices, mainly the video games that promotes violence. Other leading factors could be poor parenting, lack of attention and affection from family, and corporal punishments used at home or other institutes for correcting deviant behaviors force them to indulge in activities from which they can express their aggression. Lower IQ level at school and peer also promote the violence in behaviors. This study is therefore conducted to ascertain the important factors that leads to violent behaviors among youth.

Keywords: Youth, Violence, Age, Family, Peer Group, The Social Learning Theory, Uninhibited Temperament, IQ, Behavior, Corporal Punishments.

INTRODUCTION

Technology today has grown more than any date in past. From huge computers to smart handheld devices, youth has become more prone towards these devices since early ages in the form of smartphones and video games. With the introduction of new gadgets to youngsters, the pattern of their behavior towards the society has changed. It is a common observation that youth spend more than two hours on video games which contain shooting, stealing, punching and killing others etc., that has a great impact over the psyche and behavior of these youngsters.

Viewing these activities and the behaviors of youth, the impact of these violent video games on the young minds and their psyche was analyzed. Certain details were collected for the paper related to behaviors which include abusing others, getting involved in fights, forming groups etc. While working on this analysis, it was observed

that not only these games but there are other factors that are significantly associated with the violent behavior. A fact sheet published by UNO on September 30th, 2016 states that approx 2,00,000 homicides occurs among youth between the age 10 to 29 years making it the fourth largest cause of deaths around the world (WHO, 2016). Considering these facts, the paper intends to reflect the idea of violence in youth.

1. Age and Violence

Youth is the age between the childhood and maturity (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, 2010) and violence is the expression of physical or verbal force against self or others, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt (Esmæilpour, Salsali, & Ahmadi, 2011).

Youth and violence both are so blended together that if a person hears the incident or on eye balling on news gets easily scared whether the youth is the prey or executor of

the violence. In context to Karachi, Pakistan Edhi Ambulance Service transported 4091 intentionally injured persons during the 29 month period from October 1993 to January 1996 (Chotani, Razzak, & Luby, 2002). In 2007, more than 668,000 young people aged 10 to 24 were treated in emergency departments for injuries sustained from violence (David-Ferdon, Haileyesus, Liu, Simon, & Kresnow, 2010).

2. An Issue to Ponder

Globally it has become a burning issue for the government agencies to control increasing incidents of aggressive behavior especially in youth. Therefore, the purpose of writing this scholarly paper is to highlight the factors that are associated with violent behaviors among today's youth.

3. The Social Learning Theory of Bandura and Walters

Behaviorists have studied the human's behaviors and found that, like animals humans have tendency to learn and unlearn new behaviors, if conditions are provided to them (Sheldon, 2015). In order to understand violent behaviors in humans many theories have been put forwarded by behaviorist and psychologists. According to social learning theory by Bandura and Walters "violent behavior is acquired and maintained primarily through (a) observational learning (e.g., viewing aggressive behavior modeled in real life and in the media), (b) direct experience (e.g., receiving rewarding or punishing consequences for violence), and (c) self regulative influences (e.g., applying self-reward or punishment and engaging or disengaging one's aggressive behavior from evaluative self-reactions)". Factors that are significantly associated with learning of violent behaviors in youth can be categorized into two groups: one is individual factor (e.g., temperament, low intelligence, and disruptive behaviors) and the other is contextual factors (e.g. school, family, peers etc.) (Bandura, 2014). Temperament is the foremost and an underlying reason for the initiation of an aggressive attitude which is "constitutionally based individual difference in emotional, motor, and attention reactivity and self regulation" (Schore, 2015). It is an individual attribute to respond emotionally and

behaviorally in its environment according to perceived stimuli.

4. Factors Contributing to Youth Violence

4.1 Uninhibited Temperament

Fearless and uninhibited temperament is a risk factor identified in youth for aggressive and violent behavioral problems. Youth with this type of temperament are at greater risk because they do not respond as readily to parenting technique of reinforcement and punishment. In childhood they are thrill and adventure seekers and drawn towards daring activities. According to one study "A fearless, uninhibited temperament is associated with low heart rates; low heart rates have been found in children and adolescents with aggressive conduct disorder" (Frick, Ray, Thornton, & Kahn, 2014), if youth is predisposed to low socioeconomic status and antisocial peer group, a fearless uninhibited temperament adds fuel to the fire and can lead to violent behavior.

4.2 Behavior and IQ Level

Another factor associated with violence is intelligence level. Youth going to school with lower intelligence level are prone towards poor school achievements and are highly involve in class disruptive behaviors. One reason could be that low grades lead to aggressiveness and disruptive behaviors in youth or aggressive behaviors lead to low grades achievements. A study found that IQ is no longer a significant predictor of aggression at age 30, once the effect of aggression at age 8 had been extracted (Olson, Lopez, Lunkenheimer, Chang & Sameroff, 2011). They postulated that low IQ may contribute to the early development of aggressive behavior patterns, but once these are established, low IQ plays a minimal role in the further trajectory towards antisocial behavior. However, an analysis suggested that the role of early disruptive behavior in school is contributing to later delinquency in adulthood (Moffitt, 2017).

4.3 Youth and their Social Context

Contextual factors also play significant role in breeding grounds for aggressive behaviors. They contribute to the developmental outcome of the youth. Parental influence

and family context is the most important and foremost one. The use of aversive and aggressive style as parental reinforcement can in turn lead to learn aggressive behaviors (Kawabata, Alink, Tseng, van Ijzendoorn, & Crick, 2011). The parenting practice of harsh physical punishment has been specifically implicated in the development of aggressive behavior patterns in youth (Gershoff et al., 2010). Through these practices of parenting children learns to adapt the aggressive way to solve their problems. Ultimately parents fail to teach their children social skills that are necessary to solve daily conflicts and youth ends in disruptive behaviors. Longitudinal studies of aggressive behavioral problem have shown consistency of aggression over three generations and consistency of punishment patterns over two generations (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 2017). Thus development of aggressive behavior from home is then readily transferred to the school and peers.

4.4 Corporal Punishments and Young Minds

The second most interactive place for youth with the social environment is at school. Where youth learns social norms to live in society but it can also be a source of owing an aggressive behavior like reflecting in context of Pakistan; imposition of behavioral routine and conformity through corporal punishment is common causes of school violence. It is mostly believed that corporal punishment is considered necessary to maintain discipline, build character, and facilitate learning. It is also acceptable as part of the culture and said to be good for the morale of teachers as they feel in command (Lee, Perrson, Taylor & Guterman, 2011). The psychological impact on the behavior of youth due to corporal punishment can be worst and can lead to serious conclusion. When you beat a child, you show them it is alright to beat others. When you slap them, pinch them, twist their ears, you teach them that violence and anger are the preferred ways to solve problems. When you beat with the intent of teaching them a lesson, you tell them they are failures and that they do not deserve your respect (Messerchmidt, 2017). This behavioral reinforcement from the elders leads to violent and aggressive behaviors in the youth.

4.5 Peers and Reference Groups

Another contextual factor that influences the aggressive behavior in our youth is their peers or reference groups (Bukowski, Laursen, & Rubin, 2018). A child that enters in the school life with few social skills, poor parenting will encounter problems in adjusting, and interacting with their peers. Aggressive child will exhibit aversive behavior like threatening others, hitting, and insulting others etc. These all behaviors results in peer rejection which can be seen in the form of exclusion from their peer group.

Although aggressive children may be disliked by some classmates, they appear to established relationships with their peers like themselves in coercive cliques (Rubin, Bowker, McDonald, & Menzer, 2013). It is also seen that rejected children are less associated with the skill full members of social groups and more with other rejected children. This limits their opportunity to learn more positive behaviors and they indulge themselves in more aggressive behaviors. It again gives favorable opportunity to develop aggressive behavior in youth.

5. Effect of Bullying

Another factor mingles while reflecting on youth in peer is bullying. It is repeated infliction of harming younger, smaller, or less powerful peers. Students who engage in bullying behaviors seem to have a need to feel powerful and in control. They appear to derive satisfaction from inflicting injury and suffering on others, seem to have little empathy for their victims, and often defend their actions by saying that their victims provoked them in some way.

Studies indicate that bullies often come from home where physical punishment is used, where the children are taught to strike back physically as a way to handle problems, and where parental involvement and warmth are frequently lacking. Students who regularly display bullying behaviors are generally defiant or oppositional toward adults, antisocial, and apt to break school rules (Lucas, Jembro, Tindberg, & Janson, 2016).

Both the bully and the victim are affected by bullying (Tremblay et al., 2011). Effects on victims include physical injury, difficulty in concentration, physical symptoms (e.g., nausea, anorexia, etc.), symptoms of anxiety or

depression, poor self-esteem, and high rates of school absence (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). In a couple of months, nearly six girls have committed suicide from January to April 2010 due to bullying by boys (Dawn, 2010). Not only victims but bullies themselves have profound effect because they themselves are indulging in criminal activity in long run. Majority of those characterized as bullies in their school times had at least one criminal conviction in their 20s. (McAra & McVie, 2010). Chronic bullies seem to maintain their behaviors into adulthood, negatively influencing their ability to develop, and maintain positive relationships (Baughman, Dearing, Giammarco, & Vemon, 2012).

6. Prevalence of Emotional and Behavioural Problems

In Pakistan, scarce researches have been conducted that can identify the factors which are involve directly in youth violence but a study which the authors found was related to prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems among primary school children in Karachi, Pakistan, that was took place in 2006. It identified abnormal behavioral problems through strength and difficulty questionnaire and results were as follows:

"Parents rated 34.4% of children as falling under the abnormal category on SDQ, slightly higher estimates 35.8% was reported by the teacher. The findings suggest a striking difference between the informants' ratings as well as gender wise difference in prevalence of common child mental health problems".

Moreover, it was found to be higher than reported in studies from other countries (Syed, Hussein, & Haidry, 2009, p. 623)

Conclusion

Although, many Governmental and Non Governmental Organizations are working to overcome the challenges faced by youth today leading to this vigilant behavior, the urgency of need to solve the issue still remains the same. A significant progress on national and international level has been made in analyzing the major factors of youth's involvement in violence; more work is needed to be done for specifying the developmental sequences that leads

to such behaviors. There can be lot more other factors that develop violence among youngsters, the youth being the nation's representatives and responsible citizens need to contribute more actively towards reducing violence amongst youth through adopting multiple tactics. Considering youth as the building blocks for a nation to progress, developing sound strategies of awareness and changing social behavior can contribute towards a life changing experience for them and enable them to live in a better manner and construct a better nation.

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