



## Aggressive Behavior in Children: A Review of the Literature

Muhammad Naufal Fairuzillah<sup>✉1</sup>, Aan Listiana<sup>✉2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

✉ <sup>1</sup>[naufalfairuzillah@upi.edu](mailto:naufalfairuzillah@upi.edu), ✉ <sup>2</sup>[aanlistiana@gmail.com](mailto:aanlistiana@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** This study is a literature review devoted to describing how aggressive behavior occurs in children and certainly how educators' strategies to handle this issue. Lately, many negative behaviors have been found in children which may stimulate them to be aggressive to others, it has shown some negative indication. Aggressive behavior in children is not only limited to physical actions, but also includes oral actions. While, the main factors that cause children to be aggressive are the role of family environment, school environment, society & cultural environment, and biological factors. This behavior has an adverse effect on the performers and the victims from aggressive acts. Parents and educators are responsible for their children's behavior and character that can rectify their deviations and encourage good relation with others. It is very important for parents and educators to anticipate their children not to be aggressive because it will affect the children's character in the future.

**Keywords:** Aggressive, behavior, children, character

**INTRODUCTION** ~ The development of responsible behavior has been becoming one of objectives in global education, responsible behavior entails self-motivation and self-guidance (Bear & Izard, 2003). Therefore, education is not only teaching any academic domain to students, but also building their responsible behavior and noble character. One of variables which is found to be a complicating factor in children is about aggressive behavior.

Lately, many negative behaviors have been found in children due to their negative aggressive behavior. The reality is that there are many cases of children who speak disrespectfully, commit physical violence, bully among peers, oppose teachers and parents, even fight until the victim dies. Several cases occurred no long ago in Garut, Palu, and Sukabumi Indonesia, where two children fought until the victim dies (Kompas, 2017; Detik, 2018; Liputan6, 2011). The other case, an elementary school student determined to

point a knife at the teacher's body (Suara, 2018). How terrible the children's actions are as a result of uncontrolled aggressive behavior.

Information on the aggressive behavior of children presented by media, on the one hand, has indeed had a positive effect on information dissemination and increased people awareness. But on the other hand, the news exposure to aggression can actually inspire people to act aggressively (Rahman, 2014). Among the most vulnerable to become victims of exposure to aggressive behavior include children who are brilliant age in modeling anything that happens in their environment. The situation will look even more worrying when children's movies and games also turn out to be a lot of aggressive scenes.

Actually, aggressive behavior can be viewed from two angles; the first is negative intention (instrumental aggression), and the second is positive intention (hostility aggression) (Derlega &



## ICEE-2

Janda, 1986). The meaning of aggression itself is behaving in an angry and violent way towards another person (Baron & Byrne, 2003; Taylor & Peplau, 1997). In the other hand, it is determined to win by using forceful action to win or achieve success. The aggression in the first sense is an attacking behavior to obtain any desire by damaging, injuring, or hurting others (Cambridge, 2005). While, the aggression in the second sense is an attacking action to achieve success even though it is blocked by various obstacles without hurting or injuring others. Therefore, the aggression in the positive term (bad sense) can be prosocial aggression, that is aggression in accordance with applicable social norms. Meanwhile, the negative term (bad sense) can be antisocial aggression, that is aggression that is not in accordance with applicable social norms.

Parents and teachers are responsible for their children's aggressive behavior. They must be involved in keeping their children from negative aggressive behavior. If the children appear to have aggressive behavior in certain activities, parents should direct their children's aggressive behavior toward positive goals. Parents can use information about parental effectiveness and structure evaluative reactions about their children's behavior (Dix & Lochman, 1990). Besides, teachers may apply some models that facilitate the development of children's social competence or prevention program that trains the teachers to use strategies to reduce aggression and increase prosocial

behavior in peer interactions (Girard, Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2011; Frey, Hirschstein, & Barbara, 2000).

### **How Aggressive Behavior Occurs in Children**

Aggression is one form of behavior that is maladaptive or in-congruence (Werner & Crick, 2004). This behavior is not occurred by itself; aggression arises as a result of certain stimulated stimuli that can cause frustration, usually associated with strong discomfort (Wiggins, 1995). Feelings of frustration can basically be seen since that child is born as a result of certain situations. These feelings are usually associated with strong unwell feeling will give certain reactions (Susanto, 2015). At the beginning of early childhood development, there are actually many things that can make him feel uneasy, because at that time the child has great emotional dependence on the environment, especially his mother. The complexity of understanding aggressive behavior fosters several approaches in attempting to explain the causes of this behavior. As for the causes how aggressive behavior in children occurs, generally the author divides it into four factors:

#### (1) Family Environment

Family is the first place and foundation of children's psychology and social development. Family factor is one the critical roles that is allegedly related to aggressive behavior in children. To achieve their development, they need



## ICEE-2

affection, attention, and protection from their parents (Nisfiannoor & Yulianti, 2005). From several research on the aggressive behavior such as, said (Soccol, et al., 2014) that children behaving aggressively tend to be raise in non-harmonious family relationships. Another research conducted by Nisfiannoor & Yulianti (2005) that the children who were form divorced families are more aggressive when compared to other children from whole families. Thus, non-harmonious family relationships and divorce among parents has negative impact on children, especially in behavior.

Parenting adopted by parents in caring for their children contributes to the emergence of aggressive behavior (Mrug, et al., 2008). Gordon (1975) classified parenting model into three types, namely authoritarian, permissive, and democratic. The authoritarian type is often hostile, uncooperative, dominating, abusive to children, physically punishing, not giving freedom, forming unilaterally disciplined, snapping, and cursing. The permissive type, its characteristics are not to bother, not caring, not paying attention, giving up on the situation, releasing without control. The democratic type, the characteristics are accepting, cooperative, open to children, teaching them to develop self-discipline, honesty, and sincere in dealing with children's problems, giving them positive rewards, being friendly and fair, and giving love and affection to them. Based on those characteristics, the authoritarian and permissive types are seen as bad parenting, while the

democratic is seen as good parenting. Thus, the authoritarian and permissive parenting tends to make children behave aggressively.

### (2) School Environment

School or formal education helps children become a reliable and superior generation. This level provides early education programs that are needed by individuals in adjusting to their environment and determining the next life (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010). Therefore, school education has positive long-term effects, one of the long-term effects is to build noble character and good behavior. Yet, if the school cannot optimize its roles toward the students, it may be that character will not be formed and instead will behave badly.

School is a new environment for children after family environment, children will meet and interact in that environment with their peers who have different characters and behaviors. Peers in the school environment should ideally act as partners in the process of achieving educational programs. However, the facts based on the results of interviews conducted by Irvan (2013) revealed that there were some students who engaged in aggressive acts at school due to the influence of their peers.

Children's negative behavior is a big challenge for teachers in educating them in the school. This negative behavior must be a concern of teachers because it can



## ICEE-2

threaten a conducive classroom situation and influence peers who behave well. The results of a survey by Hakim (2013) to 302 teachers from 79 kindergardens in Sleman Indonesia showed that 91% of teachers stated that aggressive behavior within preschool students was still prevalent. From the results of the interview to the principals is known that the teachers so far have never received a training related to handling negative students' behavior, especially aggressive behavior. So, schools often ignore the existence of aggressiveness that makes students as negative aggressive actors gain reinforcement to intimidate other students. This issue is supported by Novianti (2008) opinion that the level of supervision in schools determines how many and often aggressive acts occur.

### (3) Society and Cultural Environment

Society as one of the educational environments is intended to foster good community members and based on norm values. There are socio-cultural norms that must be followed by citizens which influence and determine personality in character and behavior (Ahmadi & Uhbiyati, 2001), usually these norms are rules passed by previous generations. According to Afiah (2015) cultural factors play a role in aggressive behavior in certain societal environments, although actually the behavior is spiritually knighted and on the basis of maintaining honor, even the aggressiveness that occurs often leads to death. Hard character in the

society has been formed because the culture that has existed for generations.

The environment outside the family and school that plays a role in the development of children's behavior is the society environment. Children who are rejected and have a low-quality relationship with the community environment tend to make aggressiveness as an interaction strategy (Susantyo, 2011). Meanwhile, children who are aggressive and have anti-social behavior will be rejected by their community, so they choose to join with peers who have the same behavior as they do, which will actually aggravate their behavior.

Besides, violent movies and games scenes cause significantly increase children and youth aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). Meanwhile, video game industries deny the harmful effects of their products. The fact that some highly publicized youth killings were committed by individuals who habitually played violent video games is not strong evidence that video games increase aggression.

### (4) Biological Factor

In biological view, aggressive behavior is caused by increasing hormone testosterone. However, the increase of the hormone testosterone has not been able to directly produce aggressive behavior yet. The hormone in this case acts as an antecedent, so there needs an external trigger. Aggressive behavior also can be caused due to anatomical abnormalities,



## ICEE-2

for example abnormalities in the brain nerve tissue (Durkin, 1995). In another view, the tendency of aggressive behavior is part of genetic inheritance of the individual which inherited from his parents or family members (Krahe, 2013).

### **Strategies to Handle Aggressive Behavior in Children**

Basically, aggressive behavior is normal for children in a stage where they often show aggressiveness that arises with a little provocation, of course it is still in reasonable action. These actions are almost always associated with the fact that they did not get what they want (Pearce, 1989). There are many ways to love and care for children, but one of the less tangible ways is to teach children to control themselves which will develop their confidence and self-esteem. Not a few young people who regret having committed fatal actions, such as tantrums, damaging something, or hurting others that are triggered by uncontrollable aggressiveness (Syukur, 2011). Sometimes, the actor himself does not realize why he can do such improper actions. Therefore, the aggressiveness is one form of emotion to watch out for. Some strategies that educators and parents can do to handle aggressive behavior in children are:

#### (1) Prevention

Valuable prevention strategy for educators in mitigating the negative behavior of children is important since early years (Chase, Rhodes, & Kellam,

2002). They need to avoid the situation that can cause children's aggressive behavior. According to Femmi (2015), the tasks that teachers and parents do as the efforts to prevent aggressive behavior and emotional development of children are: (1) Be a good model (2) Introduce & practice emotional regulation (3) Respond to children's feeling (4) Apply discipline with the concept of empathy (5) Increase active, creative, and effective learning. In addition, the educators should optimize moral education to their children. According to Ulwan (2007) that moral education, not only to define right or wrong thing, but more than that. It can be internalized habituation about what is right, so that children can understand about the right and wrong by themselves.

#### (2) Diversion

Conducting a diversion is channeling negative aggressive behavior to positive aims, such as children who like to damage objects or kick and hit friends divert it to positive activities, those are playing drama, soccer, martial art, etc. In addition, children who like to curse, insult, or ridicule others, motivate them to divert their behavior to reading poetry, singing, telling stories, etc. Thus, the children will be satisfied, accepted by the community, and felt a pride for themselves (Setiawan, 2010).

#### (3) Apologizing

This apology marks the end of aggressiveness and helps children to



## ICEE-2

behave normally. Aggressive actions are put in the past and the children can make a fresh start. The main reason for apologizing is to help children learn that it is wrong to behave aggressively and understand emotional regulation (Breakwell, 1998).

### (4) Punishment

Giving punishment aimed to correct the offenders, take care of human right and as a warning (Karnaen, As-Shidqi, & Mariyat, 2014). One example of effective punishment to Children who exhibit aggressive behavior is time out, the children are asked to go to a place, then stay there for a short period of time (Breakwell, 1998). This such a punishment is designed to assuage the aggression naturally.

### (5) Debriefing and counseling

Debriefing is an attempt to enable children's aggressive behavior to tell and explain the incident that make occurred due to their actions. It allows the children to remember the details of the incident, so that it can fulfill therapeutic interests. Besides, counseling is a process of applying procedures that have been specified in the prognosis and conducting an evaluation of the listed indicators in the prognosis (Damayanti & Aeni, 2016). Both are alternative methods for children's aggressive behavior.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study above, the author tried to make several important conclusion and recommendation related to the topic, as follows:

Aggressive behavior refers to a range of behaviors that can result in physical and psychological suffering to others or damage an object. Another meaning, determined to win to achieve success or goals. The cause of the emergence of this behavior is complex, it can be observed from various approaches. Based on the several literatures, environmental and biological influences are the main causes. The author divided the environmental factors into three scopes: family, school, and society and culture. Negative behavior in children must be concern of parents and teachers. Prevention strategy in mitigating negative aggressive behavior since early childhood is important. There are several formulas to prevent aggressive behavior in children, one of them is optimizing moral education since early years. The educators should shift children negative behavior into positive aims. It will be very beneficial for them and keep environment away from their danger. Other alternative ways to deal with children behaving aggressively are apologizing, giving them a punishment, and debriefing or counseling.

## REFERENCES

- Afiah, N. (2015). Kepribadian dan agresivitas dalam berbagai budaya. *Buletin Psikologi*, 23(1), 13-21.



**ICEE-2**

- Ahmadi, A., & Uhbiyati, N. (2001). *Ilmu Pendidikan*. Jakarta: PT Rineka Cipta.
- Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2001). Effects of violent video games on aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, physiological arousal, and prosocial behavior: A meta-analytic review of the scientific literature. *Psychological science*, 12(5), 353-359. doi:<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-9280.00366>
- Baron, R. A., & Byrne, D. (2003). *Social psychology: Understanding human interaction* (10 ed.). USA: Ally & Bacon.
- Bear, G. G., & Izard, C. E. (2003). Responsible behavior: The importance of social cognition and emotion. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 18(2), 140. doi:<https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1521%2Fscpq.18.2.140.21857>
- Breakwell, G. M. (1998). *Coping with Aggressive Behavior: Mengatasi Perilaku Agresif*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius.
- Cambridge, D. (2005). *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary*. Cambridge University Press.
- Camilli, G., Vargas, S., Ryan, S., & Barnett, S. W. (2010). Meta-analysis of the effects of early education interventions on cognitive and social development. *Teachers college record*, 112(3), 579-620.
- Chase, M. G., Rhodes, W. A., & Kellam, S. G. (2002). Why the prevention of aggressive disruptive behaviors in middle school must begin in elementary school. *The clearing house*, 75(5), 242-245. doi:<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00098650209603948>
- Damayanti, R., & Aeni, T. (2016). Efektivitas konseling behavioral dengan teknik modeling untuk mengatasi perilaku agresif pada peserta didik smo negeri 07 Bandar Lampung. *KONSELI: Jurnal bimbingan dan konseling*, 3(1), 1-10. doi:<http://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/konseli/article/view/572/1257>
- Derlega, V. J., & Janda, L. H. (1986). *Personal adjustment: The psychology of everyday life*. New Jersey: Scott Foresman & Company.
- Detik. (2018, 7 24). *Bocah Kelas 6 SD di Garut Tewas Berkelahi dengan Teman Sekelas*. Retrieved from <https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-barat/d-4130044/bocah-kelas-6-sd-di-garut-tewas-berkelahi-dengan-teman-sekelas>



ICEE-2

- Dix, T., & Lochman, J. E. (1990). Social cognition and negative reactions to children: A comparison of mothers of aggressive and nonaggressive boys. *Journal of Social Clinical Psychology, 9*(4), 418-438.  
doi:<https://guilfordjournals.com/doi/abs/10.1521/jscp.1990.9.4.418>
- Durkin, K. (1995). *Developmental social psychonology: From infancy to old age*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Femmi, N. (2015). Perkembangan sosialemosi pada anak usia prasekolah. *Buletin psikologi, 23*(2), 103-111.  
doi:<https://journal.ugm.ac.id/buleti npsikologi/article/view/10567>
- Frey, K. S., Hirschstein, M. K., & Barbara, A. G. (2000). Second Step: Preventing aggression by promoting social competence. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 8*(2), 102-112.  
doi:<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/106342660000800206>
- Girard, L. C., Girolametto, L., Weitzman, E., & Greenberg, J. (2011). Training early childhood educators to promote peer interactions: Effects on children's aggressive and prosocial behaviors. *Early Education and Development, 22*(2), 305-323.  
doi:<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10409281003668060>
- Gordon, T. (1975). *Parent Effectiveness Training: The Tested New Ways to Raise Responsible Children* (13 ed.). New York: New American Library.
- Hakim, Z. A. (2013). *Pelatihan Program "Temanku Sahabatku" dan Penerapan Strategi Serta Teladan Guru dalam Membentuk Kelas yang Bersahabat*. Yogyakarta: Doctoral Dissertation - Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Irvan, U. (2013). Kepribadian, komunikasi, kelompok teman sebaya, iklim sekolah dan perilaku bullying. *Humanitas: Jurnal Psikologi Indonesia, 10*(1), 49-60.  
doi:<https://www.neliti.com/publications/24533/kepribadian-komunikasi-kelompok-teman-sebaya-iklim-sekolah-dan-perilaku-bullying>
- Karnaen, A., As-Shidqi, H., & Mariyat, A. (2014). The policy of moral education on KH Imam Zarkasyi's thought at Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 3*(1), 163-182.  
doi:<http://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/tarbiyah/index.php/JPI/article/view/1162/1058>
- Kompas. (2017, 8 8). *Berkelahi dengan Temannya, Siswa SD di Sukabumi Tewas*. Retrieved from [kompas.com](http://kompas.com):



ICEE-2

- <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2017/08/08/19252521/berkelahi-dengan-temannya-siswa-sd-di-sukabumi-tewas>
- Krahe, B. (2013). *The social psychology of aggression*. Psychology Press.
- Liputan6. (2011, April 18). *Mainkan pistol ayah, anak polisi tembak temannya*. Retrieved from liputan6.com:  
<https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/330283/mainkan-pistol-ayah-anak-polisi-tembak-temannya>
- Mrug, S., Elliott, M., Gilliland, J., Grunbaum, A., Tortelore, S. R., Cuccaro, P., & Schuster, M. (2008). Positive parenting and early puberty in girls: Protective effects against aggressive behavior. *Archives of pediatrics & adolescent medicine*, 162(8), 781-786.  
doi:<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/article-abstract/379971>
- Nisfiannoor, M., & Yulianti, E. (2005). Perbandingan perilaku agresif antara remaja yang berasal dari keluarga bercerai dengan keluarga utuh. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 3(1).
- Novianti, I. (2008). Fenomena kekerasan di lingkungan pendidikan. *Insania*, 13(2), 324-338.  
doi:<http://ejournal.iainpurwokerto.ac.id/index.php/insania/article/view/301>
- Pearce, J. (1989). *Tantrums and Tempers*. Thorsons Publishing Group.
- Rahman, A. A. (2014). *Psikologi Sosial: Integrasi Pengetahuan Wahyu dan Pengetahuan Empirik*. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers.
- Setiawan, A. (2010). Penanganan perilaku agresif pada anak. *Telaah*, 89-96.  
doi:<http://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/jassi/article/view/3912>
- Soccol, L. S., Terra, M. G., Ribeiro, D. B., Teixeira, J. d., de Siqueira, D. F., & Mostardeiro, S. d. (2014). The routine of family relationships with a substance dependent individual. *Cogitare Enfermagem*, 19(1), 116-122.  
doi:<http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=483647660017>
- Suara. (2018, 11 8). *Tak Terima Ditegur, Wali Kelas SD Diserang Pisau Sang Murid*. Retrieved from suara.com:  
<https://www.suara.com/news/2018/11/08/142914/tak-terima-ditegur-wali-kelas-sd-diserang-pisau-sang-murid>
- Susanto, A. (2015). *Bimbingan Konseling di Taman Kanak-Kanak* (1 ed.). Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group.
- Susantyo, B. (2011). Memahami perilaku agresif: sebuah tinjauan koseptual. *Sosio Informa*, 16(3), 189-202.
- Syukur, A. (2011). *Beragam Cara Terapi Gangguan Emosi Sehari-Hari*. Yogyakarta: DIVA Press.



**ICEE-2**

Taylor, & Peplau. (1997). *Social Psychology*.  
. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Ulwan , A. N. (2007). *Pendidikan anak dalam Islam* (3 ed.). (J. Miri, Trans.)  
Jakarta: Pustaka Amani.

Werner, N. E., & Crick, N. R. (2004).  
Maladaptive peer relationships and the development of rational and physical aggression during middle childhood. *Social Development*, 13(4), 495-514.

doi:<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2004.00280.x>

Wiggins, J. A. (1995). Interaction structure, frustration, and the extensiveness and intensity of aggression. *Sociometry*, 28(1), 89-99.  
doi:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2786088>