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AGGRESSION – A CHALLENGE IN PRESCHOOL AGE

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Abstract: Preschool aggression is a complex phenomenon that manifests itself in both physical and social forms of behavior. It can be the result of individual characteristics, family dynamics, institutional factors. In the early years, aggressive behavior is often reactive - a response to frustration, lack of communication skills or imitation of models from the environment. Around the age of four, children begin to make logical connections, which allows for pedagogical and cognitive intervention. The family plays a key role through its attitudes, communication style and emotional support, while kindergarten is the first institutional context in which social skills and interaction patterns are formed. The large number of children in kindergarten groups, the weakened relationship between parents and educators and the lack of moral foundations can increase aggression. Effective prevention requires a partnership between parents and teachers, consistent strategies for managing behavior and promoting empathy and cooperation. In this way, aggression can be limited at an early age, and children can build sustainable skills for constructive social interaction that will accompany them in later stages of development.

Keywords: aggression, preschool age, challenge

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Introduction

Aggression is one of the most persistent and multifaceted phenomena in human history, which has always been a challenge to human thought and social experience. It has always provoked reflection – sometimes as a philosophical category, sometimes as a religious symbol or artistic motif that reflects the drama of human existence. In different cultures and eras, aggression has been perceived either as an inevitable part of human nature or as a destructive force that must be mastered through morality, faith or social norms. Modern scientific data show that aggressive behavior is extremely multifaceted and difficult to define unambiguously. The more facts accumulate, the more new questions and contradictions arise. This is natural, because aggression cannot be reduced to a single source or form. It can manifest itself as an instinct, as a reaction to frustration, as learned behavior or even as a specific style of communication. It is precisely this ambiguity that is the greatest challenge to science, which seeks to build a comprehensive concept of the phenomenon. From the point of view of social sciences, it is appropriate to consider aggression in the context of human relations. A person does not manifest aggression in isolation, but always in contact with others – in the family, in the group, in society. Here the clearest manifestations and the most informative data about its meaning are found. The interaction between the individual and the social environment shows that aggression can be both destructive and a signal of the need for attention, recognition or justice.

Discussion

The concept of aggression is characterized by numerous definitions, conditioned by different theoretical and

methodological perspectives. Its use in everyday language also shows significant variations.

R. Hristova-Kotseva considers aggression as a means of exerting influence and domination over others, as a form of behavior that violates established social norms, or as an action aimed at causing physical or mental harm [1]. On the other hand, aggressive behavior in children is defined as a purposeful action aimed at causing harm to another person or destroying someone else's property. According to R. Stoyanova, in the youngest children one cannot speak of aggression because they lack self-control and rational thinking skills; the manifestations are more of an experiment and expression of emotion. Significant signs of aggressiveness are observed around the fourth year, when the child is already making logical connections and can be influenced through approaches aimed at cognitive and behavioral development. It is important to distinguish between normal developmental stages and deliberate aggressive behavior, and to provide timely support [2]. Preschool children often show aggression through actions such as hitting, pushing, spitting, or shouting. Along with these physical manifestations, social forms of aggressive behavior are also observed - excluding a peer from a game or spreading negative rumors [3].

According to the study by Stack et al., aggression in preschoolers is mainly of two types - **physical** or **relational (social) aggression**. They include “biting, kicking, pinching, pushing, pulling hair, taking others' place on the playground” as physical aggression. Any action related to “teasing, gossiping, telling ‘secrets’, excluding peers from games and activities, taunting, name calling, embarrassing/humiliating someone in front

of others" should be classified as relational (social) aggression [4]. Children often use a variety of strategies to harm their peers, choosing those that most effectively thwart their social goals. This is more common among boys, according to Block, who engage in physical aggression aimed at asserting dominance and control [5]. In contrast, girls more often resort to social and relational forms of aggression that interfere with the pursuit of closeness and friendship. Some authors view aggressive behavior in preschool as a common and largely natural phenomenon resulting from the peculiarities of child development. Limited communication skills and insufficient self-control during this period often lead to aggression. Reasons for such behavior may be:

- frustration caused by the child's inability to express his desires and emotions through language
- imitation of aggressive models observed in the social environment, striving to assert personal boundaries and desires
- reactions associated with experiences of insecurity or fear [6].

In a number of cases, aggression in preschool age is reactive in nature and occurs as an immediate response to stressful situations or conflicts with peers. It should be interpreted not only as problematic behavior, but also as an indicator of the need for support in the development of communicative and social skills, which gradually build the basis for self-regulation and empathy.

Identifying the early factors that predispose to aggressive behavior is essential, since it is precisely through their timely recognition that the process of its development can be interrupted.

R. Navarro et al. bring to the fore the cognitive and emotional processes that form the basis of these manifestations. According to them, the child's behavior is shaped by key factors such as:

- his individual characteristics
- the immediate social and physical environment
- the influence of the community and the broader social context.

They emphasize the family environment, in which attitudes and patterns of behavior are built, which later guide social functioning in school and other institutions. The main factors for aggression here can be: the parents' attitude towards violence, the lack of effective communication in the family, the absence of emotional support and manifestations of moral alienation [7].

Another point of view is presented by Y. Todorov, who describes the influence of preschool institutions on children's aggressive behavior. Kindergartens are the first educational environment in which children are socialized outside the family, and therefore their influence on aggressive behavior is particularly significant. In the past, staff applied models of social learning, through which acceptable behavior was built through various methods. Today, however, the institutional model often encounters contradictory family attitudes and weakened moral foundations, which makes it difficult to control aggression. An additional problem is associated with the high number of children in the group, who create noise and tension and provoke aggressive reactions. This burdens the staff, leads to demotivation and reduces the effectiveness of pedagogical efforts. The lack of time and commitment on the part of parents further exacerbates the problem, and the relationship between parents, children and educators often remains insufficient. As a result, aggression manifests itself more

often and becomes a sustainable pattern of behavior. These early manifestations can be transferred to later age stages and become permanent personality characteristics. Therefore, kindergarten has a key role not only for education, but also for the prevention of aggressiveness. A consistent and supportive institutional model can direct children's energy towards constructive forms of interaction [8].

The systematic and daily efforts of kindergarten teachers are crucial for the prevention of violence and for creating conditions in which young children can lead productive, peaceful and happy lives. To achieve this, pedagogical specialists must build a deep understanding of the mechanisms of aggression, satisfy the basic needs of children and provide adequate models for dealing with conflict situations. This confirms the importance of effective approaches to identifying and managing aggressive behavior in early childhood [9].

Conclusion

Aggressive behavior at an early age is the result of a complex network of factors, but it is the role of parents and teachers that is crucial for its control and prevention. Parents are the first role models and, through their attitudes, communication style and emotional support, can build values in children that limit aggression. Defining precise rules of behavior, communication at home and working together with institutions are crucial for preventing aggression and dealing with negative emotionality [10]. Kindergarten teachers, in turn, have the task of creating a calm and supportive environment, implementing consistent behavior management strategies and promoting empathy, cooperation and respect for others. When the family and the institution act in partnership, their efforts complement each other and create conditions for building sustainable skills for constructive interaction. In this way, aggression can be limited at an early age, and children can be guided towards positive models of social behavior that will accompany them in the later stages of their development. The challenge of aggressive behavior at an early age can be seen not only as a risk, but also as an opportunity for the targeted development of social and emotional competencies that build sustainable patterns of positive interaction..

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