

ADJUSTMENT AND BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Adaptation is adjusting according to the environmental conditions in which the individual lives. Behavior is an individual's observable actions. During the developmental period, children acquire different skills. He may need some help with acquiring these new skills. The issues faced by children in developmental stages are diverse. If children encounter obstacles in solving issues during their developmental period, the solution to these problems, considered normal, is postponed to the following developmental periods and later ages. The issues that arise in this situation are called adjustment and behavioral disorders. This study aims to examine adjustment and behavior problems in children.

Keywords: *Adjustment, Disorders, Behavioral Disorders*

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INTRODUCTION

According to Yavuzer (1998: 241), adaptation is the ability of an individual to establish a balanced relationship between themselves and the environment they are in and maintain this relationship. In other words, a person can be at peace with himself and his environment to establish and maintain healthy relationships.

On the other hand, behavior is all the individual's actions that can be directly observed by other people outside. According to the Dictionary of Psychology, behavior is an action to conform to the environment. (Hançerlioğlu, 1993).

As soon as an individual is born, it is necessary to enter a physical and social environment and show adaptive behavior to the environment. It provides the social development of the individual's adaptation to the physical and social environment in which he lives. (Ülgen & Fidan, 1997)

The balanced upbringing of children in terms of their behavior forms the basis of a healthy and successful society. While the growing and developing child constantly strive to adapt to his environment, he also encounters new problems brought about by development and adaptation. (Koknel 1981; Hakbile 1984)

Child development; is a process of change in which the child reaches more complex levels in acting, thinking, feeling, and relating to others. (Aydoğan, 2006)

Every child's development is unique, and therefore every child is different. It is known that the first years in the development process have very critical importance for the child's social, emotional, cognitive, (Nuredin & Nuredin, 2023)and language development.

Children acquire new skills following their physical and mental development in each new developmental period. However, not every skill is acquired easily and in a short time. Some skills, such as language skills and toilet habits, are acquired after long trial and error attempts by the child, with the family's patience, support, and encouragement. If the child does not find the help he expects from the family, encounters obstacles, or has physical deficiencies, he will fall behind his peers in acquiring new

skills. This stay will make it difficult for the child to adapt to himself and his environment and lead to behavioral disorders. (Çankırılı , Kötü Çocuk Yoktur, 2020)

When the negative effects of the immediate environment are added to the natural difficulties brought by the developmental stages, the child may often experience emotional disorders as a reaction to them. These negative reactions are called "**adjustment and behavioral disorders**". (Yavuzer, 2004)

Development is continuous and happens gradually. Each stage in development is affected by the previous step and forms the basis for the next. For example, the baby's crawling and holding on to a place constitute the basis of walking, forming the origin of running.

Behavioral problems can occur at any developmental stage of the child. These behaviors usually occur in response to a situation. It is more common in children whose emotional needs are not met, parental neglect, stress response, boredom, love, and security needs are not met.

The majority of children show various problem behaviors during their development. Before considering the problems and incompatibilities that arise in the child as behavioral problems, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of the period in which the child is living. A symptom or behavior thought normal for any age or period may not be normal for another generation or period. For example, wetting the bed from time to time until age four or five is a negligible situation; seeing that this behavior continues in older generations is a harbinger of a problem. (Aral & Baran, 2011)

When interpreting a conduct disorder, psychologists consider the child's age and the severity of the event that led to the conduct disorder. For example, thumb sucking in infants up to two is not a behavior disorder that should take too seriously. While neuropsychologists say this is the continuation of a habit in the womb, developmental psychologists consider it an attempt to get to know the environment and the body. When a three-year-old child's wish is not fulfilled, crying and whining, lying down and rolling is given to the lack of education and is not very strange. However, the same movements are considered a behavior disorder in a ten-year-old child. (Çankırılı, Ana Baba Okulu, 2012)

For a behavior to be qualified as a disorder in children, It is necessary to consider points such as age appropriateness, intensity, continuity, and sexual role expectation of the behavior.

Age Appropriateness: Each developmental period has its unique behaviors. For this reason, the characteristics of the child's developmental period should be well-known and evaluated correctly.

Intensity: It should be evaluated if the behavior that can be considered a habit disorder harms the environment as much as the child himself. For example, wetting the bed each night can be considered a school-age problem.

Continuity is the condition of the child to continue a certain habit persistently and for a long time.

Sexual Role Expectations: Habit disorders of children should be addressed and examined according to their sexual identities. While it is normal for boys to be more aggressive than girls and for girls to be more afraid than boys, it should be noted when the opposite is observed as continuous behaviors. (Avşaroğlu, ve diğerleri, 2015)

Each developmental stage has its unique requirements. Knowing about child development helps to meet these needs fully. Understanding the characteristics of children's developmental periods; will support a healthier approach to getting to know children well, monitoring them, and identifying the failing aspects of their development. In addition, this will be effective in discovering and supporting their talents. (Kaya, Dikici, & Akkoç)

Causes of behavioral disorders

- Attract attention
- Gaining strength against parents
- Desire for revenge
- Inadequacy
- Not satisfying basic needs
- Physical and emotional violence
- Perfectionism
- Excessive prescriptiveness
- Physiological problems, heredity
- Wrong Education

The most suitable environment for developing the child and gaining personality continues its positive effect when many problems are solved, and obstacles are overcome. Creating a positive climate depends on trusting, understanding, and loving approaches. The child, who cannot find this environment, becomes insecure and overwhelmed with complex emotions, thoughts, and contradictions. He does not believe and trust those around him, assuming that no one loves or wants him.

Performs unnecessary behaviors to attract the attention of adults. These disrupt the child's adaptation to the environment after a limit. Such disorders include constant bad temper, irritability, incompatibility, lying, quarrelsomeness, disobedience, anxiety, and fear. As the age ages, such behaviors become a disorder of adaptation to the environment and society. (YAVUZER, 2004)

Repressive, over-disciplined, and overprotective parental attitudes can also lead to adjustment and behavioral disorders.

According to studies, when parents cannot balance their attitudes and feelings, many negativities occur in children. (Çakaloz, Pekcanlar Akay, Böber, Eminağaoğlu ve Günay, 2007).

A child's problematic behavior may express something not right or unmet needs. There may be reasons such as hunger, boredom, sadness, anxiety, anger, and insecurity behind this behavior. Sometimes, children may behave this way because they do not know how to behave. For example, the child wants to get someone's attention or finish an activity they do not like. However, he needs to learn how to act in a difficult situation or which words to express himself by choosing. Therefore, he tries to tell himself by kicking or hitting someone. (İşmen Gazıoğlu, 2012)

The role of the family

The parent-child relationship is extremely important in the child's personality development. While the child struggles to adapt to the physical and social environment surrounding him from birth, he receives the greatest support from his parents.

The family factor affects the child in different ways, along with all the family members in terms of development. The family has to meet certain

needs of its members. According to Cüceloğlu (1993), these basic requirements are; a sense of being valuable, an environment of trust, a sense of closeness and solidarity, responsibility, learning to overcome difficulties by struggling, the environment of happiness and self-realization, forming the foundations of a healthy spiritual life. (Yenibaş, Çocuk gelişimi Eğitimi ve Sağlığı)

Family harmony, the attitude and approach of the family towards their child, form the basis of the child's behavior towards their environment and their perspective on life. The child develops by observing, modeling, and imitating his parents.

The emotional bond the parents establish with the child, the value given to the child, and the proper fulfillment of her needs play an important role in developing the child's self-confidence.

Creating a positive environment for the child depends on trusting, understanding, and loving approaches. Creating a sense of trust makes the child feel good psychologically and establishes a healthy bond. The child who cannot find this environment becomes insecure.

Erikson argues that the most important tasks of infancy are the development of basic trust in others. In the first year of life, the fact that the dependents cannot meet the baby's basic needs regularly effectively develops the baby's sense of "confidence." If the period is spent healthily, the feeling of "basic trust" is acquired. Acquiring the "basic sense of trust" plays an important role in the mother's giving the baby the peace she needs and in the individual's display of consistency in his belief. (Gürses & Kılavuz, 2011)

Babies with secure attachment in the future pre-school period; appear to be competitive, self-confident, friendly, independent, and successful in solving problems. On the other hand, it has been observed that those who show insecure attachment are children who seek attention in the pre-school period, need constant approval, and cling to the adult to the degree that prevents the relationship of the attached adult with other children.(Yavuzer,2018:43)

In cases where the baby's needs, such as nutrition, love, and protection, are met promptly without delay, the child will develop a sense of trust in his environment. In cases where the child's need for care and love is not

met consistently, the child will have feelings of distrust and a hostile perception of the environment in the coming years. (Aydın, 2010)

It allows children to grow up with love and understanding among harmonious family relationships in a safe family environment, to mature, gain personality and become self-sufficient. As children are loved, their trust develops and strengthens, and their self-esteem increases. (Güven, ve diğerleri, 2014; 6)

When families establish positive and warm communication with their children and pay attention to their children's feelings and needs, children show fewer problem behaviors. At the same time, children's problem-solving skills develop. (Özbey, 2009)

Problems for the family, erroneous parental behaviors, and unresolved problems accompanying these behaviors cause behavioral disorders in the child.

Children with problem behaviors may show restlessness, carelessness, insecurity, cowardice, emotional inconsistency, antisociality, and academic failure. (Kanlıkılıçer, 2005)

BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

Behavioral disorders are: nail biting, thumb sucking, bed wetting (enuresis), stool incontinence (encopresis), lying, and stealing.

Nail biting

Nail biting is called **onychophagia** in medicine (Ghanizadeh, 2011). Nail-biting behavior is especially common in childhood, a condition that can be seen together with various psychological disorders in adulthood.

The authoritarian and oppressive family structure, communication problems within the family, the parents' incompatibility, the child's constant scolding, insufficient care and love for the child, and the presence of a role model in the family with nail-biting behavior are important risk factors. Tension, aggression, anger, distress, sadness, anxiety, fear, worthlessness, and insecurity in children can cause onychophagia. (Ocakçı & Karakoç, 2013) Children who cannot easily express their distress, anger, or fear are punished directly for their aggression toward

themselves by biting their nails. Nail biting, which starts with tension, stress, and anxiety, turns into a habit after a while.

Nail biting is a behavior that can acquire through imitation. The child sometimes exhibits this behavior by seeing it from his surroundings, and sometimes he drives the nail-biting behavior as a relaxation method. Children who exhibit this behavior should not be punished. It is necessary to try to keep the child's hands busy and to determine in which situations the child bites nails.

Finger Sucking

Sucking is a nurturing and calming action for babies. It is one of the most important reflexes that children have from birth. Thumb sucking is a normal behavior seen in children ages 3-4 without any psychopathological factors. If it continues or reoccurs at later ages, it is considered a problem.

If thumb sucking continues after the age of four, this may cause permanent damage to the new teeth and permanent visual impairment. In addition, infections and calluses on the fingers may occur due to prolonged thumb sucking. Parents of a child who continues to suck their thumb after the age of four should pay attention to the following:

- It should be observed thoroughly what comforts the child and what causes stress and anxiety. Should take measures to mitigate this situation.
- The child should be encouraged to play games (water, sand, clay games, etc.) that will relieve tension.

They should take measures to remind the child not to suck their thumb. For example, sticking a colored Band-Aid on your finger can work very well. (İşmen Gazioğlu, Canel, & Deniz, 2018)

Thumbsucking children may have too little or too much time to breastfeed. This problem is more common in anxious children who have childlike behaviors, are easily offended, are emotional, introverted, cannot express themselves verbally, cannot achieve comfortable success in other areas, and have a defensive reaction against stress in the form of regression. (Abalı, 2012)

Children are not as strong as adults in dealing with their problems. They may show fear, hunger, thumb sucking during separation from the mother,

falling asleep, playing with or biting lips, or plucking. For example, An eleven-month-old baby who has started kindergarten may intensify finger-sucking behavior with the fear and anxiety of being separated from her mother. Finger-sucking behavior at later ages can be caused by reasons such as divorce, the death of one of the parents, being away from home for a long time, anxiety, and jealousy. (Bakanlık, 2014)

Bed-wetting (Enuresis)

Bedwetting in children is divided into daytime and nighttime bedwetting. Bedwetting behavior at night is called Enuresis Nocturna. It is the incontinence of urine during sleep or awake due to physiological or psychological reasons.

Bedwetting is a common condition in children. Urinary incontinence is a heavy psychological burden for the child. It is recommended to be treated at the age of 6-7 years, as it may cause a decrease in the child's self-confidence and other psychological problems. (ÖNEM, 2011) Enuresis is the repeated involuntary or voluntary discharge of urine on clothing or bedding. Studies on the etiology of the disease agree with the opinion that there is a family predisposition. To be diagnosed with enuresis, it is anticipated that the described condition must occur twice a week for at least three consecutive months, cause clinically significant distress, and lead to impairment in both community and other functional domains. (Bodur & Sosyal, 2005)

Enuresis reduces the child's self-confidence and can cause embarrassment and psychological problems. The wrong attitudes of families and society do more harm than the enuresis itself. The punishment methods are used to leave traces on the child that will last a lifetime. For these reasons, the basis of the approach to the child with enuresis should be to overcome the problem without damaging the child's sense of self. (Dönmez, 2004)

Situations such as giving wrong and oppressive toilet training, the conflict between parents, and having a newborn sibling can cause bedwetting in children.

With the help of a specialist, one should check whether psychological or physiological reasons cause the problem. And be aware that bedwetting is

an involuntary behavior. The child should never be blamed or punished for this behavior.

Fecal Incontinence -Encopresis

Fecal incontinence or Encopresis is the voluntary or involuntary dropping of poop in inappropriate places, even though the child is old enough to hold her stool.

Uneasy situations such as the birth of a new sibling, separation from the mother, frightening events, hospitalization, and going to kindergarten cause regression in the child. It is particularly evident that the mothers of these children attached importance to cleanliness and meticulousness and had a punitive attitude. They applied the child's defecation education with an exact pressure method. In a way, the child both attracts his mother's attention and rebels against him with this behavior. (YENİBAŞ)

In a child who cannot keep his stool, family attitudes are first regulated to remove the pressures and avoid an overly meticulous attitude. The relationship of the family with the child should be made positive..

During the Treatment Process:

- Providing an environment where the child can freely express their feelings and thoughts,
- Taking measures to reduce domestic quarrels and unrest
- Avoiding actions such as scolding, frightening, punishing the child
- It is necessary to support the child to gain trust. (Avşaroğlu, ve diğerleri, 2015)

Lying

Since the child has yet to reach the mental maturity to distinguish unreal symbols from each other in the pre-school period (3-5 years), the imaginary things he tells cannot be considered lies. The stories he makes up to get attention are also far from false because his purpose here is not to deceive you but to try to keep you busy and spare time for him. (ÇANKIRILI, 2011)

The child learns to lie by imitating other children and adults. For this reason, we should pay attention to our verbal expressions in the presence of children and show sensitivity to protect them from this situation.

Reasons why children lie:

- The parents themselves lie to the child. For example, They say they are going on a trip and take them to the doctor.
- Parents making the child lie innocently. For example, A father who tells on the phone that he is not at home.
- The mother or father makes the child share in their lie and, as a result, makes a promise to the child in return for keeping his mouth shut..
- May need support in terms of self-confidence. They may be using lies to make themselves feel better.
- They may want to impress other children or adults and make themselves look different.
- Pressure the child to tell the truth and punish when the child tells the truth. As a result, the child sees that he is getting into trouble when he tells the truth. (Yenibaş, Çocuk Gelişimi Eğitimi ve Sağlığı)

Being a role model and giving children a voice before blaming and judging them is necessary. A behavioral disorder can be mentioned if there is a habitual lying behavior.

Stealing-Theft

A large part of stealing in children is due to the failure of the family environment to instill the necessary concepts and habits to respect property and property rights. The family should understand the meaning of property following the child's development. (Yavuzer,2005)

In the preschool period, taking things without permission, generally seen until 7-8, is not considered an adaptation and behavior disorder, "stealing behavior." Because their sense of ownership is not fully developed, children have trouble understanding that taking someone else's property without permission is bad behavior. (Çankırılı, Kötü Çocuk Yoktur, 2004)

Stealing-theft behavior is interpreted differently according to the developmental period of the child. The child must have reached primary school age for the stealing conduct to be considered an adjustment and behavior disorder.

The causes of this behavior disorder include:

- The child's sense of inadequacy towards himself.
- A sense of worthlessness.
- A lack of self-confidence.
- A feeling of jealousy. (Öz, 2002)

Wrong parental attitudes are also among the causes of stealing behavior in children. Should pay attention to the frequently repeated plays at school age.

CONCLUSION

Each developmental period has some unique needs. Especially in the first two years of life, love and close attention are important in gaining the basic sense of trust that forms the basis of the child's personality. For this, every child's need must be met on time and adequately, and the child must be allowed to play.

To be in good mental health and establish healthy relationships with others, the individual must meet his psycho-social needs. Needs such as being loved, being successful, being accepted, and being included in a group are psycho-social needs and important for the individual to feel good. When physical and psycho-social needs are not met on time, and adequately, negative behaviors can be seen in the individual. (Örmeci)

The common feature of adjustment and behavioral disorders is a lack of trust. The child does not have confidence in himself and his environment. Since he does not verbally express his troubles and concerns, he describes them through body language.

Parents should be aware of the child's developmental stages and characteristics and be sensitive to their needs. Instead of blaming and judging the child, they should learn their views and thoughts about their

negative behaviors. It is necessary to be conscious and knowledgeable to determine at what age the problems faced by the child are normal, short-term, and temporary. He should be allowed to discuss all kinds of issues with his parents. Unconditional love, accepting the child as they are, approaching with compassion and love, being a good listener, and making them feel valued are important.

Family harmony, the attitude and approach of the family towards their child, form the basis of the child's behavior towards their environment and their perspective on life. The child develops by observing, modeling, and imitating his parents. The emotional bond the parents establish with the child, the value given to the child, and the proper fulfillment of his needs play an important role in developing the child's self-confidence.

It allows children to grow up with love and understanding among harmonious family relationships, in a safe family environment, to mature, to gain personality and to be self-sufficient. As children are loved, their feelings of trust develop, strengthen, and their self-esteem increases.

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