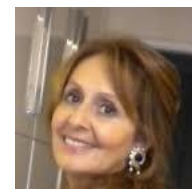




## IMPORTANCE OF ANGER MANAGEMENT IN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDHOOD

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### ABSTRACT

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Anger, although it is a natural emotion, when it cannot be managed, individuals experience extremely serious problems; at an extreme, they might even engage in criminal behaviors. The behaviours of people have some physical, hormonal, environmental, psychological and social causes that have positive or negative effects on anger. In this respect, it is crucial to understand the reasons for anger in preschools, which are an essential period in the formation of personality. The perfect behaviors of mothers, fathers, caretakers and other members of the family as well as the model behaviors of teachers and school administrators all can have an impact on the child. People dealing with an obstinate child or one throwing a temper tantrum may also become angry. In such cases, adults have an obligation to manage their anger as well as to help the child control his/her anger. The training received and the model samples encountered in the preschool period are significant determinants of the anger behaviors displayed in adulthood. When the fact is considered that there are teenagers or young adults who face serious problems due to instant loss of their tempers and even commit murders, the necessity of anger management training and proper model behaviors in the preschool period becomes more essential.

**Contribution/Originality:** Violent behavior in society is the result of uncontrollable anger. Although there are many reasons for uncontrollable anger behaviors, it is also something can be learned. In the pre-school period, where the learning potential is highest. Therefore, this article, however, will contribute to studies on anger management in the pre-school period.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In general terms, anger is a natural emotion that can be felt by everyone, when the needs and desires of the individual are hindered and when a threat to oneself is perceived (Averill, 1983; Eisenberg and ve Delaney, 1998). If it is an uncontrolled behavior, it can lead to extremely serious problems that range from simple conflicts to behaviors that constitute a major crime. Physical, hormonal, environmental, and psychological factors are a few of the factors influencing acts of anger. Learned behaviors are another vital factor that should be considered when analyzing anger management. This fact gives a lot of responsibility on the parents, caretakers, teachers, and administrators who are responsible for raising the child. When it is considered that the preschool period is vitally important for the formation of a child's personality, it is necessary to understand the reasons underlying the anger behaviors of the children during this period and how they should be raised as individuals who can manage their anger.

Moreover, the people who have to deal with the child in the case of obstinacy and or a temper tantrum may also become angry. In such cases, adults have the obligation to manage their own anger as well as help the child to control his/her anger. The training received and the model samples encountered in the preschool period are significant determinants of anger behaviors displayed in adulthood. When teenagers or young adults who face serious problems due to instant loss of their temper and even commit murders, the necessity of anger management training starting from the preschool period becomes more and more essential.

Anger is evaluated under two sub-headings as "state anger" and "trait anger". State anger occurs in certain events and situations. Experiencing of frequent state anger can turn into constant trait anger (Spielberger, 1991). It is also possible to talk about state and trait anger in respect of preschoolers. As for anger management, it is the ability of an individual to express his/her anger without harming himself/ herself or his/her environment.

Hindering of needs and desires is one of the important reasons that constitute the basis of the anger behaviors seen in children of 0-6 years old. Before the children start to speak, a time when they are not able to express their wishes and needs, the anger behaviors can increase.

It is also important for parents, teachers, caretakers and other members of the family to understand why children are angry and to know how to treat these angry children. In the preschool period, the people responsible for raising of children should be aware of the needs of the children and know how to act towards a child having a temper tantrum. Anger behaviors in children can be in the form of self-harm, such as throwing themselves onto the floor and lying flat, or hitting or attacking their parents, or damaging their surroundings (Balkaya, 2001; Soykan, 2003). It is important is that the people who deal with children in these situations know how to solve the problems.

**Purpose of the study:** The aim of this study is to provide suggestions and information to parents, teachers, and childcarers, who are responsible for a raising child, in regards to reasons of anger in children and anger management.

**Study Pattern:** Study pattern is based on scanning of a literature related to reasons of anger and stubborn behavior of pre-school children and anger management.

## 2. CAUSES OF ANGER IN PRE-SCHOOL CHILDHOOD

There may be many causes for a child's anger such as pain, insomnia, gas pangs, need for attention, especially sibling jealousy, strict rules set by parents or caretakers, learned anger behaviors, extreme cold and hot, excessive noise, airlessness, hunger, thirst, and clothes restricting their movements. The attitudes, behaviors and communication patterns of parents, teachers, and caretakers, and the individuals who are in contact with the child in the family may play a decisive role in the child's behavior that involves anger and aggression. Some diseases or physical problems can also be the reasons for angry and aggressive behaviors. In a study conducted on aggressive and criminal adults, the pre-prandial blood glucose values of these criminals were compared. Blood glucose levels were found significantly lower in the study than in the control group. [ $p=0.08$ ,  $p<0.05$ ]. Glucose levels were found to be significantly lower at  $p < 0.05$  level in the psychoactive substance users, criminals and those with conduct behavioral disorders (Oral *et al.*, 1992). Similar reasons may also be the case for angry children.

In a study conducted with a group of 72 children (ages between 1 and 6) exhibiting severe aggressive behaviors and a control group consisting of 72 healthy children who do not aggression problems; it was observed that the education levels of the mothers and the anger management skills of the fathers of the children executing aggressive behaviors were meaningfully low. Findings related to severe depression in the mothers of the aggressive group during their pregnancy period indicate that some characteristics of the parents are the causes for the aggressive behaviors of the children (Sutcu *et al.*, 2010; Ekinici *et al.*, 2011; Ching-Sheue and Jia-Yi, 2017; Dong and Lin, 2017).

### 3. ANGER AS A LEARNED BEHAVIOR

Factors that may cause anger and anger behaviors in children who are raised in different cultures and environments are variable. It is the fact that tolerating aggressive behaviors in boys is culturally normalized in many countries because the expression of anger behaviors equates to physical force and strength in men. Being raised in such a setting may encourage aggressive behaviors in boys (Sharkin, 1993; Balkaya, 2001). In contrast, other researchers determined that girls raised with the understanding that uncontrolled anger is not appropriate for women to have less aggressive behaviors (Sharkin, 1993; Evers *et al.*, 2005; Zhu *et al.*, 2017; Fehmi *et al.*, 2018).

It is also possible to see repressed anger, outright anger and passive anger behaviors in children. However, in the first three years between 0-6 years of age, repressed or passive anger behaviors are not common. Pretending not to be offended, or the refusal of others' help even though it is really needed, are some examples of repressed anger behaviors. These are mostly seen after the pre-school education period.

Cartoons or other TV programs and events watched on television or the internet for extended periods during the pre-school period may also trigger aggressive behaviors.

Another reason for the anger behaviors is stress situations a child may encounter. Research by Diong *et al.* (2005) found a correlation between the emotion and expression of anger and the high level of stress experienced by the child. For instance, communication problems that children experience with their parents and caretakers is a typical reason for stress resulting with anger.

### 4. OBSTINACY AND ANGER AS DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

Obstinacy is very common in children between the ages of 3-6. It is a period during which children often insist on their wishes or ideas. A child tries to discover his/her own existence, wants to do everything by himself/herself, and wants to maintain these behaviors for the pleasure of success.

Although obstinacy is normal at this age, the attitudes of parents or caretakers towards this abstinent behavior are very important. To have a continuous strict attitude towards a child will nourish obstinate behaviors that can turn into a personality trait. This problem can continue into adulthood. Children who persistently insist on their own ideas and wishes may experience serious communication problems in the future. Especially in the pre-school period, children should not be allowed to use their anger and aggressive behaviors to get what they want. Once it is allowed, it will be difficult to break this cycle. For this reason, from the first months, children must be taught that angry behaviors will not be allowed.

Influence of Parents, Caretakers, Other Family Members and Teachers on the Anger Behavior of Children in the Preschool Education Period. Aggression may increase when children are not able to speak or express their needs and wishes (Yavuzer, 2013; Chianese, 2018; Dunst *et al.*, 2018). Those who educate children should understand this and know the developmental stages of children. Children should be monitored carefully and the most basic physiological, psychological and social needs should be met. Due to the energy that accumulates during this period, the level of frustration should be minimized by meeting their needs such as encouraging them to join social activities. Adults are expected to set good models for children, to help them establish good communication with their surroundings, and not to encourage anger and obstinate behaviors. It should not be forgotten that how we act is more important than what we say. Clear messages should be given to children so that they do not become frustrated which can trigger obstinate, angry or aggressive behaviors. It is necessary to be patient, calm and tolerant around children who are acting obstinately and throwing a temper tantrum. In the presence of such angry behaviors by a child; to argue, to shout, to threaten or to negotiate with the child might reinforce these angry behaviors. It may be useful to wait quietly for the child to calm down, to listen to him/her in an effective way and to understand how he/she feels at that time, but without compromising. Another way to calm down the child is to attract his/her attention to other issues that he/she has been interested in previously, and sometimes to change the

environment (Wilde, 1995; Wilde, 2006; Hayes, 2012). In such a situation, a child who cries and has thrown himself/herself to the ground may change his/her behaviors within a few seconds.

In addition, making the child feel that he/she is unconditionally loved by touching and hugging him/her may also reduce his/her anger and aggressive behaviors. Emphasis on behavior rather than the personality of the child may also reduce unwanted behavior.

## 5. ANGER MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Research using control groups indicates that "Anger Management Training Programs" provided to children and adults are effective (Sahin, 2005). In cases where the anger cannot be managed, aggressive behaviors may occur in children as well as in adults. The content, duration, and severity of the aggressive behavior are related to the level of frustration of the children and with the environment in which the child is raised.

Adolescent anger management techniques and anger management techniques for preschool children differ. For this reason, it is important to get to know the children in the pre-school period and to try to understand in which cases they most often become angry. Not falling into the trap of children using their temper tantrums to get what they want is one of the most important anger management strategies. From the first months onwards, to react calmly to displays of uncontrolled anger by children should be considered as a preventive method.

In the pre-school period, it is easy to redirect children's attention to something else. To guide the attention of the child, including during anger situations, to other places and directions that he/she finds interesting. In addition, the quality of communication established with the child is essential to help prevent angry behaviors. While anger is related to a great extent with frustration, knowing and meeting the basic needs of children can help to reduce or stop their anger. Some activities such as unwinding a ball of yarn, opening a stuck lid of a jar, painting an area without x's and o's, etc. may also increase patience and tolerance levels of children.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As with adults, anger in pre-school children is a natural emotion. It is essential that individuals express their anger without giving harms themselves or their environment. Therefore, parents, teachers, and caretakers who are responsible for children need to know the developmental characteristics of children and the factors that which can cause them to become angry together with anger management techniques.

In this regard, it is also essential for adults to demonstrate model behaviors by taking into account the learnable side of anger behaviors, and keeping children away from TV series or computer games, which involve aggression and violence. Parents or teachers should address the unapproved behavior of 0-6 years old. Reactions of parents or teachers should be consistent and should not interfere with negative behaviors including anger, threats, and punishment. Intervention at the right time is crucial. Sincere, understanding, patient and kind approach of parents and teachers will lead the students to think positively as well as motivate them. Also, it will prevent the problems caused by anger. In the process of communication with students, using a violence-free and threat-free language will make students feel safe. According to Rosenberg, non-violent communication helps us to connect with self and other people by emerging natural compassion within us.

It makes us aware of what we observe, what we feel, what we need, and what we want to enrich our lives. It nourishes sincere listening, respect, and empathy as well as shares a mutual desire. Based on Rosenberg's definition of non-violent communication environment is provided, it is hardly possible to have uncontrolled anger, violence and aggressive behavior. What is essential is the adoption and implementation of non-violent communication in the family, school and life-related relationships (Mertoğlu, 2018).

It may be beneficial both for the people responsible for child care to be trained to manage their anger and furthermore to be supported with training provided by the Ministry of Education.

Parents and teachers should be able to demonstrate the necessary sensitivity in this regard, considering that children between 0-6 years of age can learn anger behaviors from their parents or teachers.

The existence of effective anger control programs and therapies in the literature shows that we are not desperate in this situation.

There are also a number of school-based anger control programs in order to reduce anger and aggressiveness in children. For example, "*Anger Coping Program*" (Larson and Lochman, 2002) "*Coping Power Program*" (Lochman and Wells, 2002) "*Chill Out*" program prepared by Feindler *et al.* (1984) and "*Brain Power*" program which is used by Graham and Hudley (1994) (Transferred: Sutcu *et al.* (2010)).

Wilde states that awareness of the physiological changes, such as fast heartbeat, blushing, sweating, of preschool children, may help them to control their anger or leaving the environment that caused an anger. Also, if children pay attention to the things that make them happy rather than to pay attention to things that make them angry, they can prevent anger. Violent and aggressive behaviors are the result of uncontrollable anger behaviors. Although there are many reasons for uncontrollable anger behaviors, anger, and aggressive behaviors can be learned from role models, especially for 0-6 years old. Therefore, parents and teachers have significant responsibilities in that manner. Consequently, it is important to be able to control the anger of those who are responsible for raising children and children in the pre-school period. Violence and aggressiveness are the results of significant uncontrollable anger behavior. Although, there are many reasons for uncontrolled anger behavior, as anger can be learned especially for ages between 0-6, parents and teachers have a great responsibility. Therefore, in the preschool period, people who are responsible for raising a child should have knowledge about both how to control their anger and how to control children's anger behavior. Our study will help parents, childcarers, and teachers who have a responsibility in this regard.

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