Keep on Guard Against Violent Communication (Verbal-Abuse) within Early Childhood Education

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Abstract This paper explores the forms of hardness in communication that occurs in early childhood education as well as trying to provide some alternative ways to escape from that violence. The form of violent communication done in schools is sneering, belittle, giving profanity, directly and excessively criticizing, threatening, painfully sarcastic, threatening, yelling, making scapegoats for problems that are not clear, scolding with redundancy, and blaming for something that children cannot do. The actions that can be used to prevent violent communication or verbal-abuse are teachers have to **understand the children' thoughts and** feelings. When children are expressing their ideas, teachers must listen and give them a full attention. With those actions, teachers can bring a significant way to build compassionate, empathy, and quality of relationship among them.

Keywords: Violent Communication, Early Childhood Education,

Introduction

The term violence refers to the actions or words which are intended to hurt people. This term recently has become more and more familiar around us. Violent communication as a part of verbal abuse might be highlighted as a devastating effect on developmental psychology in children infancy. In some studies, violent communication (further, it is called as *verbal abuse)* turns out to cause strong influences on children mental development. Even, this violence can lead to inferior feeling and make them state of being inferior. Based on a survey conducted by several researchers, verbal-abuse can damage the emotions and even lead children at risk of depression and anxiety[1]. Despite the fact that verbal-abuse does not give any traces or mark, verbally abused children as victims will suffer to have lower self-worth and low self-esteem. Moreover, they will

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[1]Vardigan, Benj. *Yelling at Children (Verbal Abuse).* January Monday, 2016. https://consumer.healthday.com/encyclopedia/children-s-health-10/child-development-news 124/yelling-at-children-verbal-abuse-648565.html(accessed on October, Monday, 2016).

grow up to become a low self-esteem adult[2]. Therefore, among the various impact of violence, violent communication is the most shattering thing that can obstruct children' mental development.

It cannot be denied that verbal-abuse often occur in the environment of children. Even this violence tends to be done by people nearby such as parents, family, teachers, and friends, in their school environment. Verbal-abuse should be taken into account because children are a part of the future generation. This nation will rely on the children quality. Fortin & Chamberland (1995)[3] also state "*verbal violence is more likely to be transmitted intergenerationally than is physical violence, perhaps because it is associated with a psychological dynamic*". Unlike a physical abuse, verbal-abuse has the potential to take root or genetically grow time to time. For this violent is not easily to recognize thus this violence will naturally be transmitted as an addition, a study also found that children victims of verbal abuse tend to be more aggressive towards themselves and even have a high sense of pessimistic toward the future. Finally, the impact that often arises is that children will potentially suffer from mentally fragile as well as easily escape from reality. Easily disappointed, choosing to suicide are the other forms of impact of the verbal abuse.

Some researchers have proved that verbal-abuse occurring in children potentially gives significant impact to the development of children interpersonal relationships. This happens because the development of their interpersonal encounters problems due to personality disorders. Additionally there is a tendency that verbal-abuse is regenerative. This form of verbal violence will be handed down from generation to generation when this case will not be immediately stopped.[4] Bandura (1977)[5] through his *Social Learning Theory* also proves that verbal-abuse and emotional-abuse are causing something to continue in which it will not be easy to stop. Yet, it would appear as an ongoing basis. For instance, children victims of abuse will potentially have a seed to do the same thing to her or his friend who incidentally is below from some aspects.

Realizing the dangerous of verbal-abuse as a part of violent communication toward the children in the early childhood education, it is therefore important to discuss about this issue. Add to this, seeing there is an almost complete lack of observational research about verbal-abuse, this paper aims to explore and to expand the following points: (1) what are the characteristic of verbal-abuse happen in the early childhood education which done either by teacher and students, and (2) what are the actions to prevent verbal-abuse in the early childhood education.

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[2]Noh, C. H., & Wan Talaat, W. I. (2012). Verbal Abuse on Children: Does It Amount to Child Abuse under the Malaysian Law? *Asian Social Science Vol.8, No.6;* P.224

[3] Roth, Debra Helen. *Adult Reflections on Childhood Verbal Abuse.* A Thesis, Saskatoon : the Degree of Master of Education in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education University of Saskatchewan, 2004. P.20.

[4] Roth, Debra Helen. *Adult Reflections on Childhood Verbal Abuse.* …. P.46.

[5] Roth, Debra Helen. *Adult Reflections on Childhood Verbal Abuse.* … P.58-59.

Discussion

The Nature of Early Childhood Education

Children are full human beings in their own right, deserving the best that life can provide at every single stage of their development. Being raised in a great variety of social arrangements, children are facing very different challenges in their daily lives. Children must have different dreams and aspirations for their futures. Although sometimes they faced extremely difficult in their daily lives and dealt with unimaginable situations as well as catastrophes such as extremely difficult daily lives, in spite of the fact, children have the capability of responding to positive communication, and of developing to their full potential.[6] Richman (1993) stated that the life of very young cildren depends on the family and people who care for them. Their development will also rely on the attention and care they are given.[7]

Fien (2001) stated that early childhood education must play a role in imagining new ways of living and transforming existing patterns.[8] Children development is truly rely on their social interaction. It is in line to the concept of ZPDs, the idea proposed by Vygotsky that is indeed social interaction in which there are adults whose roles of supporting children in learning is important. It is scaffolding that is its aim is to support the children in their efforts towards the level at which they are capable of working. In the process, Greenfield (1984) called it as a graduated assistance in which the adult or more expert peer gradually releases control to the child as she or he becomes more able to accept responsibility for task completion.[9]

In line to the idea, social existence gives a pivotal contribution. Through the relationship between parents, family, and social life interaction, children will internalize their commonly thought-forms.[10] As an addition, young children also appear to be willing toward positive motivation related to cognitions.[11] Realizing that children' development will depend on the social context where they are educated and trained

[6] Kolucki, B., & Lemish, D. (2011). *Communicating with Children Principles and Practices to Nurture, Inspire, Excite, Educate and Heal.* New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), P.3.

[7] Richman, N. (1993). *Communicating With Children Helping Children In Distress.* London: Save the Children Publisher, P.6.

[8] Davis, J. M. (2008). A case for participatory, whole-of-settings approaches. In I. P. Samuelsson, & Y. Kaga, *The contribution of early childhood education to a sustainable society* (pp. 18-24). Paris: UNESCO, P. 19.

[9] Jordan, B. (2004). Scaffolding learning and co-constructing understandings. In A. Anning, J. Cullen, & M. Fleer, *Early Childhood Education Society and Culture* (pp. 31-42). London: SAGE Publications Ltd, P. 32.

[10] Latham, D. (2002). *How Children Learn to Write: Supporting and Developing Children's Writing in Schools.* London: Paul Chapman Publishing, P. 34 .

[11] Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (2000). *The Science of Early Childhood Development.* National Academy Press: Washington, D.C., P. 153.

therefore teachers as a caregivers will naturally influence to the children development. In a short line, children will really depend on the teachers' actions included their verbal styles during the entirely communication during the teaching and learning process.

Seeing the nature of children' development, verbally input from either teachers or other children will directly influence to their life. Either good inputs or bad inputs will automatically influence to their development and will directly give effect to their life. When children become the victim of verbal-abuse, after all the troubles they experience, they must feel disposed to involve in their social interaction. Therefore, both verbal and non-verbal inputs provided by teachers must be seriously considerable for those are the elements of early natural intervention that enhance social and emotional development. They are just as important as the components that enhance linguistic and cognitive competence.[12]

Verbal Abuse (Violent Communication)

There are a number of definitions on verbal-abuse. Grady (2003) defines that verbal abuse is "words that attack or injure an individual, words that cause one to believe an untrue statement, or words that speak falsely of an individual". While Judkins-Cohn (2010) highlight that verbal-abuse refers to "any communication through behavior, tone, or words that are intended to humiliate, degrade, or disrespect an individual, leaving the recipient feeling emotionally hurt".[13] Since verbal-abuse is a part of violence verbalizes, the Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations also defines violence as "any behavior that results in injury whether real or perceived by an individual, including but not limited to verbal abuse, threats of physical harm, physical harm and sexual harassment'.[14] Whereas Tan, M, & A, (2013) point out that verbal aggression that is drawn from the literature refers to rejecting, demeaning, ridiculing, cursing, terrorizing, criticizing, and insulting.[15]

Verbal-abuse is a kind of hitting someone with language. This action doesn't leave evidence of physical battering therefore it is not easy to recognize that violence indeed it is much more difficult to see since there are rarely any visible scar. Although verbal abuse does not leave any outer mark or proof, a verbally abused victim usually suffers by

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[12] Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (2000). *The Science ...* P.11.

[13] Judkins-Cohn, T. (2010). Verbal Abuse: The Words that Divide Impact on Nurses and Their Perceived Solutions. *Southern Online Journal of Nursing Research Volume 10– Number 4* ,1-14.

[14] Ahmed, A. (2012). Verbal and physical abuse against Jordanian nurses in the work environment. *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal EMHJ La Revue de Santé de la Méditerranée orientale.Vol. 18 No. 4*, 318-324. P. 319

[15] Tan, I. L., M, M., & A, R. (2013). Verbal Abuse and Internalizing Problems in Early Adolescence: Negative Attributional Style as Mediator. *Social Sciences & Humanities*, P. 133 – 146, P. 138.

having lower self-worth and low self esteem.[16] Surprisingly, because the lost of marks left on part of the body after that violence, verbal abuse likely frequently ignored.

As a part of communication, verbal-abuse as the action of violence using language, it is found to be peril because it relates to negative cognitive style. Verbal abuse is much more dangerous than physical or sexual. In the context of early childhood education, the example of verbal abuse actions that are commonly done by teachers based on the empirical observation from Affizal (2008) are undermining, blocking and diverting, or **negative evaluation, predicted students' low self**-worth and self-esteem. Children who are being the victims of verbal abuse sometime likely to show some negative emotional problems and social adjustment.[17]

Calling a nickname that does not match to the real name of the students or calling them with a sneer, belittle, giving profanity, directly and excessively criticizing, threatening, painfully sarcastic, threatening, yelling, making scapegoats (a person who is blamed for something that someone else has done) for problems that are not clear, scold with redundant, and blamed for something they cannot do, are part of verbal-abuse. Furthermore dealling with verbal-abuse action, here are the following types of those abuses. These examples can plainly used to observe on how either teacher do abuses to children and children do abuse to the other children.[18]

1. Abusive anger; this kind of abusive is very scary and threatens children emotionally and physically. The abuser will down in fear and giving strong control in the entirely situation such as abusively angry, speaking loud, obscene, and pointed finger or hands.

2. Threatening behavior and words; abusers use threatening words and behaviors to gain control, explicitly communicate or imply that one must do as they say. Kicks a chair and punches cabinets while saying are the example. Sometime the sharply **question like "Do you know what I could do to you?" frequently appeared.**

3. Ordering & demanding; abusers will directly control and order to around and demand compliance and/or certain behaviors. When what they said is exactly done, they feel that their control over someone else is getting on. Watching victims follow his/her instructions makes her/him feel powerful.

4. **Name Calling; Abusers call victims' names for two reasons: either to humiliate or to deny.**

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[16] Noh, C. H., & Wan Talaat, W. I. (2012). Verbal Abuse on Children: Does It Amount to Child Abuse under the Malaysian Law? *Asian Social Science Vol. 8, No. 6;* 224-228.P. 224.

[17] Tan, I. L., M, M., & A, R. (2013). Verbal Abuse and Internalizing Problems in Early Adolescence: Negative Attributional Style as Mediator. *Social Sciences & Humanities*, P. 133 – 146, P.134.

[18] Anonymous. (2015, March Monday). *How to Identify Verbal Abuse.* Retrieved October Tuesday, 2016, from verbal abuse journals: http://www.verbalabusejournals.com

5. Accusing & blaming; abusers will constantly turn victims' pain around on by accusing and blaming.
6. Judging and criticizing; abusers judge and criticize victims to put them on the defensive and thereby gain control over the situation or conversation.
7. Undermining; abusers undermine victims by attempting to make them believe that they are unworthy of their respect.

Based on the description above, verbal-abuse as part of violent communication, in fact it can be formed either in verbal or in non-verbal. Whereas the expressions that are commonly turn up in verbal abuse are like the expressions of *you are crazy*, *stop talking, you are stupid, you don't deserve better, your feeling are dumb,* and so forth. Violent communication such as materialized in verbal-abuse has probably gone through something bad. It will likely give negative impacts to children if the violence happens on and on in their life.[19]

One of the terms relates to verbal-abuse is verbal abuse sign. It is the observation about the person who is verbally abusive toward its colleague. Things the verbal abuser does and says that affect the thinking, beliefs, or emotion. Meanwhile verbal abuse symptom is the observation about something inside.[20]

Verbal abuse signs	Verbal Abuse symptoms
showing strong disapproval and not showing respect	Nervous when approaching them with a certain topics
Insult other ideas and Engaging in long conversation about things that the colleague disagree,	Insulted because of their use of language
Saying the almost real thing but leaving and wanting to defend	Need to tell about innocent events

Some Actions to Avoid Verbal-Abuse

This section offers some actions with corresponding both theoretical and practical examples for early childhood teachers to address and prevent verbal-abuse in classrooms and schools. Some are basic actions that teachers can immediately begin implementing in the classroom, such as using polite language and eliminating some

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[19] Fakih, T. (2015, October Monday). *Verbal Abuse and Relationship.* Retrieved November Saturday, 2016, from The Michigan Journal: www.michiganjournal.org

[20] Holly, k. (2016, July Tuesday). *Verbal Abuse Sign and Symptoms Cause Emotional Pain.* Retrieved November Saturday, 2016, from Healthyplace American's Mental Health Channel: www.healtyplace.com

harshness utterances. Furthermore, since being abused verbally was defined as being shouted, contemptible, undermining, and so forth in which those are part of the communication acts thus teachers must understand and internalize the central principles for producing communication for children.

Discussing about verbal-abuse cannot be separated from the issue of communication. As verbal relates to the spoken activities using words thus it is a part of communication. Communication can be understood as process involving; (1) trying to understand the other person thoughts and feelings when they are expressing the idea, and (2) the way to respond in a helpful way. From the two points of views, it can be understood that when doing a communication, a participant needs a particular skill.[21] The ability to understand the other people' thought and feelings as well as the way to respond it are the basic requirements to build a good communication.

Dealing with communication for children, it should be considered about respecting during the communication with them. It is important to think the efforts of respecting children's privacy and dignity as well as fostering their self-esteem and confidence. In this discussion, efforts are made to provide children a "voice," It must be more than a taken attempt that reflects the perspective of adults: it should support their holistic development or problem-solving skills.[22] Based on the idea proposed by Kolucki & Lemish (2011) there are some central principals in making a communication with children, they are;[23]

a. "Communication for children should be age-appropriate and child friendly," and is supported by guidelines to use child-appropriate language, characters, stories, music and communicating with children: Introduction humor; encourage and model positive interaction and critical thinking; and use special effects judiciously and wisely.

b. "Communication for children should address the child holistically," and is supported by guidelines to use an integrated rather than single-issue approach to communication offer positive models for adults in their relationships with children as full human beings in their own right; and create "safe havens."

c. "Communication for children should be positive and strengths-based," and is supported by guidelines to: build self-confidence as well as competence; use positive modeling; include children as active citizens learning about and modeling social justice; and *do no harm*.

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[21] Richman, N. (1993). *Communicating With Children Helping Children In Distress.* London: Save the Children Publisher. P.6.

[22] Kolucki, B., & Lemish, D. (2011). *Communicating with Children Principles and Practices to Nurture, Inspire, Excite, Educate and Heal.* New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), P.4.

[23] Kolucki, B., & Lemish, D. (2011). *Communicating with Children Principles and Practices to Nurture ...*

d. "Communication for children should address the needs of all, including those who are most disadvantaged," and is supported by guidelines to: [1] Kolucki, B., & Lemish, D. (2011). *Communicating with Children Principles and Practices to Nurture, Inspire, Excite, Educate and Heal.* New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), P.4.

e. [1] Kolucki, B., & Lemish, D. (2011). *Communicating with Children Principles and Practices to Nurture …*

f. reflect the dignity of each and every child and adult; be inclusive: celebrate and value all types of diversity; ensure communication is free of stereotypes; and reflect and nurture the positive aspects of local cultures and traditions.

To avoid verbal-abuse, teachers must understand the essence of communication. Richman (1993) highlighted some values to be considered when making communication with children. They are *moral support, someone to confide in, a sense of relief, coming to terms with experiences, communicating in a group, and the important of different kinds of communication.*[24] Those values must be taken into account since teachers must fully recognize children in the entirely stage of their development. Furthermore, teachers should also realize to the children' uniqueness and skills, as well as their personal voices that deserve to be listened to with respect and empathy.[25]

The following are the practical implications for communication with children proposed by Kolucki & Lemish (2011). They are (1) use loving tones and simple language, (2) model a spirit of inquiry and desire to learn, (3) model safe exploration, curiosity and confidence in new-found skills, (4) adapt to the child's growing attention span, (5) be playful and portray learning through play, (6) use lots of repetition, rhythm and song, (7) keep a varied, but not too fast, pace, (8) use everyday experiences; stories of other children, families, animals and typical daily activities and routines, (9) use "pretend", open-ended and imaginative play, (10) present and reinforce daily healthy self-care habits, (11) present children, similar and different than themselves, playing and working together as equals, (12) present loving and caring adults and secure relationships, (13) encourage activities: singing, clapping, dancing, movement, (14) involve "question and answer" interactions and encourage talk, (15) present progressive and non-stereotypical gender language and portrayals of both children and adults (16) show simple examples of children, with the help of loving adults, expressing a wide range of emotions, mastering their fears and dealing with difficult issues in healthy ways, (17) include examples of confident and resilient children who are fair and who

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[24] Richman, N. (1993). *Communicating With Children Helping Children In Distress.* London: Save the Children Publisher, P. 8-9.

[25] Kolucki, B., & Lemish, D. (2011). *Communicating with Children Principles and Practices to Nurture …*P. 4.

stand up for themselves and for others, and (18) present children making simple choices and expressing their creative opinions.[26]

Violent communication in the form of verbal-abuse is one of the common types of emotional abuse formed of abusive behavior involving the use of language.[27] It can be holistically handled by the teachers when they truly reconsider their communicating acts. One of the ways to avoid verbal abuse is that building a relationship with children. Designing supportive and inclusive environment where children can feel confident, secure, and successful communicator.

To avoid the verbal-abuse in early childhood education, teachers must be a good model both as a communicator and a listener. Being a good communicator means teachers must be able to be a good model when making a communication with children such as helpful, friendly, playful, loving and caring. Teachers must be able affect the children' world through their ability in listening to the children' speaking, fidgety, and restless.

Concluding Mark

Having described the dangerous of verbal-abuse as a part of violent communication in the children' life, therefore;

1. The characteristic of verbal-abuse that are commonly happen in school are undermining, blocking and diverting, or giving negative evaluation, predicted students' low self-worth and self-esteem, calling a nickname that does not match to the real name of the students or calling them with a sneer, belittle, giving profanity, directly and excessively criticizing, threatening, painfully sarcastic, threatening, yelling, making scapegoats for problems that are not clear, scold with redundant, and blamed for something children cannot do.

2. Some actions that can prevent verbal-abuse in the early childhood education are teachers start trying to understand the children' thoughts and feelings. When children are expressing their ideas, teachers must be carefully and be patiently listen to and give them a full attention. Teachers should give and perform a good way to respond children' speaking and expression. With those actions, teachers can bring a significant way to build compassionate, empathy, and quality of relationship among them.

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[26] Kolucki, B., & Lemish, D. (2011). *Communicating with Children Principles and Practices to Nurture …* P. 19.

[27] Noh, C. H., & Wan Talaat, W. I. (2012). Verbal Abuse on Children: Does It Amount to Child Abuse under the Malaysian Law? *Asian Social Science Vol. 8, No. 6;* P.224.

[27]Roth, Debra Helen. *Adult Reflections on Childhood Verbal Abuse. …* P.20.

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