

Emotional Disturbance among Primary School Children

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Abstract: *Some adults exhibit different degrees of emotional disturbance which negatively affects their relationship with spouse, children, colleagues and other members of their social circle. Disturbingly, such attitudes would have been identified and ignored by their teachers at primary school level when it could have been much easier to manage than in adulthood.*

Keywords: Emotional disturbance, Primary school, children, Aggressive, Withdrawn

1. Introduction

In reality individuals exist emotionally, at different points in the continuum between severe maladjustment and perfect adjustment. A primary school child can be placed anywhere along this continuum. Though „normal individuals” are seen as perfectly adjusted, „emotionally disturbed individuals” are seen as severely maladjusted. As a statement of fact, everyone has emotional ups and downs. Hence, an emotionally disturbed child may sometimes appear normal and a normal child could also appear emotionally disturbed [1].

In the words of [1], a pupil is considered emotionally disturbed based on the behavior exhibited, age of the child and the presence of an observer. On the behavior exhibited, a pupil who responds to any frustration in dealing with his peers by striking out physically may be considered emotionally disturbed. On the age of the child who exhibits a behavior, a pupil who cries because of hunger is more likely to be considered emotionally disturbed than another who cries because he/she was scolded. On the presence of an observer, the issue of whether the child is emotionally disturbed or not will not arise if no one is observing the behavior of the child. In short, for a behavior to be considered abnormal, it must affect either the person exhibiting the behavior or one who is in contact with the child.

Specifically, emotional disturbance (ED) is the term used to describe the category of special need and class of exceptional children whose consistent behavior is considered unacceptable and capable of endangering not only their growth and development but that of others [1,2]. Though sometimes denied by parents and seen as a burden by teachers, this condition which is of two (2) types; aggressive and withdrawn, requires the modification of these pupils classroom conditions, as well as the services of guidance counselors to enhance the early identification and management of ED among individuals. Identification of ED among primary school children is paramount because when exhibited in adulthood, it brings about embarrassment and affects all-round communication of the individual [1,3]. The areas that could be affected include relationship with spouse,

children, colleagues and other members of the individual's social circle.

It is imperative for teachers to understand the problem of ED among pupils, because they are the first to suspect that pupils have undiagnosed ED. This will help them to closely observe and take up other responsibilities which are often limited to guidance and counseling, since early identification will facilitate early initiation of management for the ED.

2. Definition

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in [2] defined ED as a condition that involves the exhibition of one or more of the following behaviors to a marked degree and over a long period of time, to the extent that it adversely affects a child's educational performance leading to:

- Inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
- Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationship with peers, teachers and others
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feeling under normal circumstances
- General pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
- The development of physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems”.

3. Classification

ED among children can be classified into two main categories, namely; withdrawn and aggressive children. Moreover, both may either be mild, moderate or severe in degree [1,2].

a) The Withdrawn

A child is said to be withdrawn when the child is mentally and socially alienated to the environment. In such case, the child is often unwilling and afraid to participate in social and intellectual activities going on in the classroom, even though he/she is not mentally retarded. Hence, the pupil exhibits non-goal oriented but self-stimulating behaviors like arranging, disorganizing, and rearranging things. On observation, withdrawn pupils are seen to stay alone, play alone, work alone and associate with none of their mates.

The Emotionall Disturbed Child

Léo Pomar



The Emotionall Disturbed Child:

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