

SOCIJALNA PEDAGOGIJA

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Sad

Primljen: 25. 01. 2025.
Prihvaćen: 30. 01. 2025.

UDC: 159.923.5:316.624.2/.3
DOI:10.19090/ps.2025.1.61-74
Pregledni naučni rad

PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: EXTERNALIZED FORM AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS⁶

Abstract

Children's behavioral problems represent a domain that attracts attention from various perspectives. As they are a significant factor in the overall understanding and analysis of each child's development, they become the subject of many considerations that result in different interpretations and explanations, which ultimately contribute, among other things, to theoretical and empirical complexity. This paper aims to examine terminological inconsistencies in the formulation and interpretation of children's behavioral problems, with a particular focus on the externalized form of social behavior issues. Special attention is given to analyzing its various manifestations and characteristics through the lens of plentiful theoretical and empirical findings. Taking into account the research trends that suggest a strong correlation with multiple influencing factors, the paper also highlights key determinants of children's social behavior problems. Some of the key conclusions highlight the relevance of a clear distinction between concepts that are closely related but not synonymous, accurately positioning different forms of externalized behavior in relation to other types of children's social behavior, and recognizing the strong connection between this form of social behavior and children's overall development. Since its effects are evident within personal, familial, peer, and institutional contexts, the timely identification of behavioral problems and the implementation of specific support measures and interventions for children, families, and the community emerge as a necessity.

Keywords: children's behavioral problems; externalized behavior; aggressive behavior.

Introduction

The pursuit of understanding children's social development has persisted for decades. Within this framework, particular emphasis is placed on the need to analyze children's social behavior, its forms, characteristics, and correlates, along with associated factors. However, despite the continuous research and study in this field, certain ambiguities, uncertainties, and inconsistencies still exist - both in understanding acceptable forms of children's social behavior and in theoretical and empirical analyses focused on unacceptable forms.

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⁶ This paper is part of the dissertation *Social Behavior and Peer Status of Primary School-Aged Students*, defended on September 9, 2022, at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad.

Socially competent behavior in children, or acceptable forms of social behavior, is a domain that, compared to unacceptable forms, is significantly more complex in its conceptualization and interpretation (Radovanović, 2023). In contrast, unacceptable forms of children's social behavior are theoretically presented in a much clearer and more precise manner. However, certain aspects still require further analysis and synthesis from a pedagogical perspective. Differences in formulation and interpretation are often influenced by the scientific discipline, the theoretical stance of the author, the research objectives, the methodological framework of the study itself, and similar factors. These elements, among others, contribute to the complexity of both theoretical and empirical understanding of this form of children's social behavior, recognized as a crucial factor for their development and overall functioning across different ages.

Considering the above, this paper focuses on analyzing terminological inconsistencies related to unacceptable forms of children's social behavior, with particular attention given to the term that appears to be the most appropriate - children's behavioral problems. This concept is examined through the lens of terminological differences and the most common classifications of its forms, while the externalized form, along with its manifestations and characteristics, is explored in greater depth. Given that various studies (Coelho, Neves, & Caridade, 2020; Henricsson & Rydell, 2006; Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018; Klarin, Miletić, & Šimić-Šašić, 2019; Margetts, 2005; Montroy, Bowles, Skibbe, & Foster, 2014) demonstrate a close relationship and interdependence between behavioral problems and other aspects of children's development and functioning, these issues are also analyzed and synthesized in this study.

Terminological Interpretations of the Concept of Children's Behavioral Problems

Owing to terminological differences, a certain inconsistency and variation can be noted when examining terms employed to identify and analyze behaviors that are deemed unacceptable. Some of the commonly used formulations include: unacceptable, maladjusted, risky, undesirable, delinquent, violent, problematic, antisocial, asocial, aggressive, maladaptive, emotional and behavioral problems, behavioral problems, behavioral disorders, externalized and internalized behavioral problems/disorders, among others. While some of these terms are synonymous regardless of the context in which they are used, in other cases, certain differences in meaning and interpretation are inevitable.

Variations are primarily recognized across different scientific disciplines, specifically law, medicine, psychology, sociology, special education, pedagogy, and other related fields. Some authors, such as Žunić-Pavlović and Pavlović (2007), have analyzed the term "behavioral disorders" through the lens of legal, medical, special education, and empirical approaches, highlighting the risks associated with the incorrect choice of terminology, which can lead to stigmatization, segregation, and the devaluation of children. They also emphasized the need for precise definitions that would enable the proper implementation of research, the comparison of results, and the planning of concrete preventive and intervention measures.

Since it is neither possible nor necessary to analyze all the mentioned terms, distinguishing between certain key ones is considered desirable. The term predominantly used in medical and socio-pedagogical circles is 'behavioral disorders' (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007; Ilić, 2019; Žunić-Pavlović & Pavlović, 2007). Buha and Gligorović (2013) highlight the phrase 'challenging behavior,' explaining it as a reaction to environmental factors rather than a personality trait. Another relevant term is 'maladaptive behavior,' which is primarily used in psychological and special education contexts—for example, by Buha and Gligorović (2013)

and Petrović (2015) - and is mostly applied as a synonym for undesirable forms of behavior manifested in both externalized and internalized forms.

Authors Žunić-Pavlović and Pavlović (2007) highlight that the frequent use of certain clinical terms (e.g., emotional disorders, behavioral and emotional disorders, adjustment disorders, etc.), frequently further complicate the understanding of the concept of behavioral problems. To reduce stigmatization, they also point to the efforts of other authors who employ terms such as children at risk, problematic children, and educationally neglected children, among others. Although these efforts have led to some progress, it is vital to emphasize that such formulations are inadequate from a pedagogical perspective, as they contribute to labeling the child's personality rather than highlighting behaviors that are problematic and unacceptable at a given moment. The same applies to all other terms found in various sources and communication contexts.

It is particularly noticeable that some authors use the terms *children's behavioral problems* and *behavioral disorders* interchangeably and synonymously, regardless of the scientific discipline. However, for a behavior to be classified as a disorder, it must involve "significant deviations, harmful effects, and the need for intervention" (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007:130). The key characteristics include "recognizability, multiple determinants, diverse manifestations, multiple negative consequences, and predictive value for the development of more severe disorders at an older age" (Žunić-Pavlović & Pavlović, 2007: 56). Additionally, certain criteria (such as duration, intensity, environmental influences on the manifestation of the disorder, the presence of multiple disorders, etc.) contribute to distinguishing disorders from certain deviations in everyday behavior (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007). Thus, it can be concluded that isolated instances of socially unacceptable behavior do not necessarily indicate the presence of a behavioral disorder (Ilić, 2019) and that the terms *behavioral disorders* and *children's behavioral problems* cannot be used synonymously.

Considering the above, and in an effort to avoid labeling a child's personality while emphasizing behavior that is (un)desirable in a given situation - whether developmentally conditioned and/or expected—the term that emerges as the most appropriate is *children's behavioral problems*. These can be broadly defined as "forms of behavior that, in a given culture, are considered aberrant and are of such intensity, frequency, and duration that they threaten the physical safety of the individual or those in their environment" (Emerson & Einfeld, 2011, as cited in Buha & Gligorović, 2013: 204). This formulation positions the term as "an umbrella concept encompassing a continuum of behaviors, ranging from simpler forms of lesser severity and harm to oneself or others, to those established and/or sanctioned by regulations, often with more serious consequences and requiring treatment" (Koller-Trbović, Žižak, & Jeđud-Borić, 2011, as cited in Bouillet, 2014: 12). Since it is presented as a multidimensional concept, certain subdivisions and classifications have been identified to provide a clearer understanding of the specific forms of behavior it encompasses.

Classification of Children's Behavioral Problems

Although various classifications of children's behavioral problems have been proposed, a significant number of authors (Brajša-Žganec, 2003; Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007; Buha & Gligorović, 2013; Duncan & Magnuson, 2011; Henricsson & Rydell, 2006; Hukkelbert, Keles, Ogden, & Hammerstrøm, 2019; Ilić, 2019; Liu, 2004; Klarin et al., 2019; Mihić & Bašić, 2008) emphasize that two broad dimensions are most commonly distinguished: externalized and internalized forms of children's behavioral problems. This classification originates from Achenbach's (1991) construct of externalized and internalized problems (as cited in Mihić & Bašić, 2008), which was derived through the analysis of subscales related to withdrawal,

somatic complaints, anxiety, depression, social problems, attention problems, delinquent behavior, aggression, and similar issues.

- *Externalized forms of children's behavioral problems* refer to a group of behaviors that include antisocial behavior, rule-breaking, impulsivity, attention problems, aggression, and similar issues (Duncan & Magnuson, 2011). These behaviors are characterized by a lack of self-regulation and are directed toward others (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007). They involve behaviors that are harmful to others, such as impulsivity, hostile defiance, and destructive actions (Henricsson & Rydell, 2006) and are most commonly associated with difficulties in recognizing and regulating various emotions (Brajša-Žganec, 2003).
- *Internalized forms of children's behavioral problems* also encompass a broad range of behaviors, including anxiety and depression, behavior characterized as withdrawn, somatic issues, and others (Duncan & Magnuson, 2011). These behaviors are often associated with emotional states such as sadness, guilt, worry, loneliness, and social withdrawal (Henricsson & Rydell, 2006).

Broadly speaking, externalized forms of children's behavioral problems involve undercontrolled behaviors directed outward, toward others, while internalized forms are directed inward, meaning that their consequences are most often experienced by the individual child.

It is important to note that this dichotomy is neither perfect nor absolute. For example, children's internalized behavioral problems can negatively impact others, including parents, siblings, peers, caregivers, and teachers, while children who exhibit externalized behavioral problems not only affect their environment negatively but may also experience personal distress (Liu, 2004). In some cases, these forms of behavior co-occur and manifest together (Brajša-Žganec, 2003) with varying degrees of intensity. Certain researchers, based on findings from multiple studies, conclude that these behavioral patterns influence one another over time -internalized behaviors can predict later externalized behaviors and vice versa (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2017).

Although some studies indicate that internalized forms of behavior are more prevalent than externalized ones, particularly in the school setting (Gritt et al., 2014), research on behaviors that influence and shape children's development and progress more often focuses on externalized forms. This is largely due to their visible impact on the environment, as well as the difficulties in identifying and "assessing" internalized behaviors across all age groups (Duncan & Magnuson, 2011; Šaljić, 2014). It is important to note that behavioral problems identified at an early age predict behavioral difficulties during adolescence (Margetts, 2005). A clear distinction between these forms of behavior is often challenging due to their co-occurrence, as well as the presence of other behaviors that frequently 'mask' them. Considering the above, the following section will focus on externalized behavioral problems in children.

Externalized Forms of Children's Behavioral Problems

Certain authors (Hukkelbert et al., 2019; Liu, 2004) point out that the terms externalized forms of behavioral problems and antisocial behavior are often used synonymously, while others (Duncan & Magnuson, 2011) define antisocial behavior as a dimension of externalized behavioral problems. In this regard, it is frequently stated that the search for a universal definition of antisocial behavior is still ongoing (Žunić-Pavlović, Kovačević-Lepojević, & Pavlović, 2009). For some authors, antisocial behavior represents the broadest term, encompassing all "forms of behavior that violate a given society's value system and norms" (Šaljić, 2014: 7), and as such, it typically "elicits a spontaneous and/or organized societal

reaction” (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007: 126). Such behavior is a consequence of inadequate socialization, is destructive, harmful, and results in negative social outcomes (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995, as cited in Merrell, 2002). Within sociology, these forms of behavior are referred to as deviant behavior, whereas from the perspective of law and criminology, the term delinquent behavior is used (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007).

Depending on the research context, externalized forms of behavioral problems are more commonly used to describe less severe, disruptive, and destructive behaviors in children (Hukkelbert et al., 2019; Liu, 2004), while antisocial behavior in some children can be highly stable and persistent. In this regard, Moffitt (1993) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between temporary and stable manifestations of antisocial behavior. It is also important to note that certain forms of antisocial behavior in early childhood, despite eliciting moral disapproval and reactions from the environment, can be considered “normative developmental processes” (Žunić-Pavlović et al., 2009: 405). In this context, specific risk factors for behavioral problems have been identified and grouped by Spanish authors into four broad categories (Coelho, Neves, & Caridade, 2020): individual factors (e.g., IQ level); environmental and social factors (family, peers, and community); genetic and physiological factors (family history); and factors indicating comorbidity with other disorders and forms of behavioral problems.

When it comes to specific forms of externalized behavioral problems, the following classification is distinguished (Liu, 2004):

- *aggressive behavior*;
- *delinquency*;
- *hyperactivity*.

Delinquency is not easy to define, as it represents a broad and heterogeneous concept (Liu, 2004) that refers to violations of the law, specifically “behaviors that fulfill various elements of criminal or misdemeanor norms” (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007:127). Another notable form of behavioral issues is hyperactivity, which can be described as a “developmental disorder characterized by a lack of behavioral inhibition, manifested through an inappropriate level of attention, excessive activity, and impulsivity” (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007:211). It is most commonly identified or diagnosed during primary school age (Liu, 2004). Particular emphasis is placed on distinguishing hyperactivity from so-called excessive activity in children, which often represents a normal developmental characteristic in early childhood (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007).

Special attention is given to *aggressive behavior* and the interpretations related to its forms. Broadly speaking, it can be defined as “a wide range of specific actions characterized by causing harm or injury to other people or objects” (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007:201), whether physically and/or psychologically (Berkovitz, 1993, as cited in: Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000). It is manifested through a variety of acts, and besides the most common distinction between physical and verbal aggression, the following classifications can also be observed:

- *Direct and indirect aggression* - Direct aggression refers to behaviors where an individual directly attacks the victim, either verbally and/or physically. By comparison, indirect aggression involves socially manipulative behaviors aimed at harming another person indirectly (Lagerspetz, Björkquist, & Peltonen, 1988; Salmivalli et al., 2000).
- *Physical, psychological, and social aggression* - It is observable that physical and verbal aggression belong to the category of direct aggression, while social aggression falls under the domain of indirect aggression (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007).

- *Overt and relational aggression* - Building on the points mentioned earlier, overt aggression, defined by its direct nature, and relational aggression, characterized by its indirect approach, can be frequently identified (Crick, 1996; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).
- *Aggressive play* – This behaviour refers to a type of aggression that arises from specific forms of play during which children may even sustain injuries (Bouillet i Uzelac, 2007; Đuranović i Opić, 2018);
- *Reactive and proactive aggression* - Reactive aggression is defined as defensive behavior, serving as a response to actual or perceived provocation, while proactive aggression involves the use of coercion or harm to achieve specific goals (Hubbard, McAuliffe, Morrow, & Romano, 2010; Jambon, Peplak, Colasante, & Malti, 2019);
- *Instrumental, hostile and emotional aggression* - The primary purpose of instrumental aggression is to achieve specific goals (Brajša-Žganec, 2003; Vasta, Haith, & Miller, 2005), and certain authors would define it as aggression directed toward objects (Salmivalli et al., 2000). On the other hand, the main aim of hostile aggression is to inflict harm and pain on another person (Vasta et al., 2005), whereas emotional aggression is triggered by emotional changes within the very organism (Brajša-Žganec, 2003).

Research, such as that conducted by the Croatian author Keresteš (2004), shows that teachers perceive direct forms of aggressive behavior as “more serious” and “more aggressive” compared to indirect patterns of aggression. Nevertheless, it is considered more appropriate to discuss the contexts and consequences of different types of behavior, as “subtler” and less tangible forms can significantly impact a child’s mental and overall development. Relational aggression stands out as particularly interesting, yet “threatening,” since it is defined as “a form of aggressive behavior aimed at intentionally damaging or threatening a relationship” (Pellegrini & Roseth, 2006:269). Children of different ages describe the sensation as hostile, harmful, emotionally distressing, and often triggered by anger (Ostrov, Crick, & Stauffacher, 2006). The given definition includes direct relational aggression, such as telling a peer they will not be invited to a party or directly threatening to end a friendship unless certain demands are met, as well as indirect aggression, for example, ignoring a peer or spreading false information about them (Ostrov et al., 2006; Pellegrini & Roseth, 2006). Damaging relationships or making threats serves as a means of causing harm (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), while manipulation and social exclusion stand out as significant behavioral tools (Crick, 1996).

Certain theorists and researchers (Crick, 1996; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Ostrov et al., 2006) point to clear gender differences in this type of aggression. Specifically, girls are more likely to exhibit relationally aggressive behavior compared to boys, who often resort to other forms of aggression. Nevertheless, some report different findings (Đuranović & Opić, 2018; Lansford et al., 2012; Stauffacher & DeHart, 2006). For instance, a study conducted in nine countries with children aged 7 to 10 revealed that boys are more likely to exhibit physical aggression, while no gender differences were found regarding relational aggression (Lansford et al., 2012). Similarly, a study examining differences in relational aggression between siblings and within peer groups found no significant gender differences (Stauffacher & DeHart, 2006). Krnjajić (2002) suggests that differences in aggressive behavior patterns cannot be explained by the intensity of aggressive drives but rather by the way aggression is expressed.

Regardless of the specific classifications of externalized behavioral problems in children, authors and researchers often focus on analyzing the specific factors that influence these problems.

Determinants of children's behavioral problems

From a developmental perspective, certain forms of externalized behavioral problems can be observed as early as 12 months of age (Žunić-Pavlović & Kovačević-Lepojević, 2011). Research findings indicate that with increasing age, there is a noticeable rise in aggressive behavior, depression, and anxiety (Vasta et al., 2005; Klarin et al., 2019; Coelho et al., 2020).

The age of children emerges as a significant factor. An Italian study, which included children aged 8 and 9 and involved assessments by parents and teachers, indicates that more than two-thirds of children exhibit various forms of behavioral problems (Gritt et al., 2014). Research generally highlights the stability of behavioral problems over time. Authors who examined the relationship between behavioral problems and other factors during the first six years of elementary school emphasize the stability of behavior over time, particularly for externalized behaviors (Henricsson & Rydell, 2006). Regarding gender differences, researchers point out that girls are more likely to exhibit internalized behaviors, while boys more frequently display externalized forms (Brajša-Žganec, 2003; Coelho et al., 2020; Mihić & Bašić, 2008). Gender differences are also evident when analyzing specific forms of externalized behavioral problems, some of which were discussed in the previous section. However, regardless of variations across different studies, it is evident that gender plays a significant role in shaping various forms of aggression (Cillessen, Lansu, & Van Den Berg, 2014; Keresteš, 2006; Underwood, Galen, & Paquette, 2001; Vasta et al., 2005), particularly relational aggression. These differences, among other factors, represent significant data for planning prevention and intervention measures, especially considering the widespread gender stereotypes.

Family structure is recognized as one of the essential factors in the context of analyzing the dimensions of behavioral problems. Based on several studies, Brajša-Žganec (2003) concludes that children from single-parent families are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems. This is further supported by other studies, particularly a Czech study (Kuruczova et al., 2020) and a Dutch study (Sillekens & Notten, 2020), which highlight the connection between the “new” family structure - specifically, parental divorce - and externalized behavioral problems in both children and adults. It is also important to point out findings from other research (Jogdand & Naik, 2014; Kokanović & Opić, 2018) that suggest different conclusions, namely that there are no differences in the prevalence of these behaviors based on family structure.

In addition to family structure, research indicates that family interactions are closely correlated with behavioral problems. Strong parental control fosters the development of aggression, depression, and anxiety, while a family environment characterized by conflict provides “fertile ground” for the development and manifestation of these behaviors (Klarin et al., 2019). Furthermore, frequent interparental conflicts are strongly associated with children’s behavioral problems (van Dijk, van der Valk, Deković, & Branje, 2020). The quality of relationships within the parental, partner, and sibling dynamic significantly influences and shapes children’s social experiences and subsequently their behavior (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2017; Klarin, 2002; Kuruczova et al., 2020; Ostrov et al., 2006; Zuković, 2012).

A study conducted in Japan on the relationship between parenting styles and behavioral problems found that an authoritarian style influences externalized behavioral problems in both girls and boys, while a permissive style affects the manifestation of externalized behaviors only in boys (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018). Significant predictors of internalized behavioral problems include gender, age, (dis)satisfaction with the family, and a sense of social support, while (dis)satisfaction with the family stands out as a significant predictor of externalized behavioral problems (Klarin et al., 2019). All of these highlight the importance of family

flexibility and adaptability, which are recognized through the family's readiness and ability to balance during challenging periods and changes (Zuković, 2012).

Externalized and impulsive/hyperactive behaviors at the beginning of school were linked to peer victimization three years later and similar behaviors in the 6th grade, according to the results of several studies (Margetts, 2005). Children who exhibit externalized behaviors tend to achieve poorer results, as such behaviors lead to and result in lower academic achievement and generally underdeveloped work habits and skills. Additionally, aggressive and destructive behaviors are most often closely and consistently correlated with peer rejection. Withdrawal and shyness are also associated with low acceptance by peers (Henricsson & Rydell, 2006).

Regarding the relationship between specific forms of acceptable behavior and behavioral problems, authors note that low levels of prosocial behavior are associated with both externalized and internalized behavioral problems in elementary school-aged children and vice versa (Henricsson & Rydell, 2006; Hosokawa & Katsura, 2017; Hukkelbert et al., 2019). Namely, a low level of social initiative is linked to internalization problems (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004). This finding was confirmed again in a follow-up study conducted two years later (Henricsson & Rydell, 2006), which emphasized that prosocial behavior predicted lower levels of externalized and internalized behavioral problems in subsequent measurements.

These forms of behavior, particularly externalized ones, are stable over time and, when combined with poor peer relationships and low academic achievement, pose an additional risk for the development and manifestation of significantly more complex behaviors later in life (Henricsson & Rydell, 2006; Montroy et al., 2014). Conversely, peer acceptance facilitates and positively influences the development of children with behavioral problems (Henricsson & Rydell, 2006). Therefore, the need to monitor and analyze various factors that directly or indirectly influence and shape all aspects of children's behavior, especially those identified as unacceptable, emerges as particularly significant.

Conclusion

The manifestation of behavioral problems greatly hinders the acquisition of new, adaptive skills and negatively affects the overall interaction of the child with their environment (Buha & Gligorović, 2013). It is associated with peer conflicts and unsupportive teacher-child relationships (Montroy et al., 2014), which together can disrupt the process of acquiring academic knowledge (Malecki & Elliot, 2002). Regardless of the specific developmental aspects that behavioral problems may adversely affect, their consequences generally reflect on mental health later in life (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018).

Children with behavioral problems are at an increased risk of experiencing a negative and unfavorable developmental trajectory, which may include academic failure, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, interpersonal issues, and health problems (Hukkelbert et al., 2019). These difficulties can affect the overall functioning of children in family, institutional, and peer contexts, highlighting the inevitable need for planning and implementing specific forms of support. This includes ensuring terminological consistency and precision, as well as developing concrete measures aimed at strengthening the capacities of children, parents, and practitioners.

The Australian national initiative for the mental health of children and young people (KidsMatter), now known as (Be You), highlights four framework components for strengthening protective factors and minimizing risk factors to support and nurture children's well-being (Kids Matter, 2012):

- Creating a sense of belonging;
- Developing social-emotional skills and competencies;
- Building partnerships between families and institutions;

- Providing additional support for children experiencing difficulties in psychosocial development.

When it comes to specific forms of support, there is a wide range of programs, models, strategies, frameworks, and various prevention, intervention, and correction measures. These may be directed toward the child as the central factor, while some are also oriented toward other members of the system who synchronously influence the shaping of the child's social experience, such as the family, parents/guardians, siblings, close family members, and all significant adults in the child's life. Attention should also be directed toward practitioners who directly or indirectly influence and shape the social experiences of all children. An important finding highlights the advantage of implementing programs within regular curricula, specifically the integration of universal and targeted approaches, as well as the need for the overall ethos of the institution to align with the set objectives. A step further would involve program-based procedures, such as curricula and frameworks, which constitute one of the essential elements of an institution with an educational mission, leading to the ultimate level - legal regulations enacted by relevant institutions.

It becomes obvious that positive outcomes are achieved through timely and continuous efforts, beginning during the family period, followed by preschool and school years, and continuing throughout later stages of development and growth. Forms of support are needed for children, parents, and practitioners, who together form the links in a chain essential for the development, functioning, and overall well-being of the entire community.

PROBLEMI U SOCIJALNOM PONAŠANJU DECE: EKSTERNALIZOVANI OBLIK I NJEGOVE KARAKTERISTIKE

Apstrakt

Problemi u ponašanju dece predstavljaju domen koji iz različitih perspektiva privlači pažnju. Kako su važan faktor za sveopšte razumevanje i analizu razvoja svakog deteta, tako čine predmet mnogih promišljanja sa različitim tumačenjima i interpretacijama koje na kraju, između ostalog, doprinose teorijsko-empirijskoj kompleksnosti. Razlike u formulaciji i tumačenju su često uslovljene naučnom disciplinom, teorijskim opredeljenjem autora, ciljem i metodološkom organizacijom istraživanja i sl. Neadekvatan izbor terminologije može da rezultira stigmatizacijom, separacijom i devalviranjem dece, ali i da oteža adekvatnu realizaciju istraživanja, komparaciju rezultata i planiranje konkretnih mera prevencije i intervencije.

U svetlu navedenog, pažnja ovog rada usmerena je ka sagledavanju terminoloških neusaglašenosti u formulaciji i tumačenju problema u ponašanju dece. Posebno je apostofiran eksternalizovani oblik problema u socijalnom ponašanju i analiza njegovih vidova i karakteristike kroz prizmu različitih teorijskih i empirijskih nalaza. Imajući u vidu tendencije u istraživanjima koje ukazuju na blisku povezanost i uslovljenost različitim faktorima, ukazano je i na pojedine odrednice problema u socijalnom ponašanju dece.

Jedan od osnovnih zaključaka ukazuje na važnost pravilne distinkcije pojmova koji su u bliskom, ali ne sinonimnom odnosu. Posebno je primetno da se istovremeno i sinonimno koriste termini problemi u ponašanju i poremećaji u ponašanju, bez obzira na naučnu disciplinu. Pojava izolovanih oblika društveno neprihvatljivog ponašanja ne podrazumeva automatski postojanje poremećaja u ponašanju, te se termin poremećaji u ponašanju i problemi u ponašanju ne mogu koristiti jednoznačno. U nastojanju da se izbegne etiketiranje ličnosti deteta i težnja da se akcentuje ponašanje koje je u datoj situaciji (ne)poželjno, ujedno razvojno uslovljeno i/ili očekivano, problemi u ponašanju predstavljaju krovni pojam za

kontinuum oblika ponašanja od jednostavnijih do onih utvđenih i/ili sankcionisanih propisima i često težih po posledicama.

Polazeći od analize eksternalizovanih problema u ponašanju i njegovih oblika, u radu se spominju tri: agresivno ponašanje, delinkvencija i hiperaktivnosti. Opširnije je opisano agresivno ponašanje dece koje se manifestuje u širokom spektru dela koja su sažeto i prikazana.

Kao najčešći faktori rizika za ispoljavanje problema u ponašanju, izdvajaju se individualni faktori okruženja i društvene sredine, genetski i fiziološki. Pol dece, struktura porodice i porodične interakcije se izdvajaju kao važne odrednice problema u socijalnom ponašanju. Različiti oblici problema u ponašanju povezani su sa sukobima među vršnjacima i nepodržavajućim odnosima na relaciji učitelj-dete, pa tako udruženi mogu ometati proces usvajanja akademskih znanja. Takođe, bez obzira na pojedinosti u razvoju na koje problemi u ponašanju mogu nepovoljno uticati, njihove posledice se odražavaju na mentalno zdravlje pojedinca u kasnijem životu. Deca s problemima u ponašanju su pod dodatnim rizikom negativnog i nepovoljnog razvojnog puta na kojem mogu doživeti akademski neuspeh, depresiju, anksioznost, poremećaj ishrane, interpersonalne i zdravstvene probleme

Zaključuje se da ispoljavanje problema u ponašanju u značajnoj meri ometa usvajanje novih, adaptivnih veština i nepovoljno utiče na celokupnu interakciju deteta s okruženjem. Kako su efekti vidljivi u okvirima ličnog, porodičnog, vršnjačkog i institucionalnog konteksta, tako se kao neminovnost izdvaja potreba pravovremene identifikacije problema u ponašanju i implementacije konkretnih mera i postupaka podrške deci, porodici i zajednici.

Postoji širok dijapazon programa, modela, strategija, okvira i različitih mera prevencije, intervencije i korekcije. Oni mogu biti usmereni ka detetu kao centralnom faktoru, dok su određeni orijentisani i ka drugim članovima sistema koji sinhrono utiču na oblikovanje socijalnog iskustva deteta, npr. porodici, roditeljima/starateljima, sibličima, bliskim članovima porodice i svim značajnim odraslima u životu deteta. Važno je pažnju usmeriti i ka praktičarima koji na (ne)posredan način utiču i oblikuju socijalno iskustvo sve dece. Istraživanja ukazuju na prednost implementacije programa podrške u okvirima redovnog kurikulumu, kao i potrebe da celokupni etos institucije bude u skladu s postavljenim ciljevima intervencije. Korak dalje bi bili programski utemeljeni postupci, pa sve do krajnje instance, odnosno zakonskih regulativa donetih od strane nadležnih institucija.

Ključne reči: problemi u ponašanju dece; eksternalizovano ponašanje; agresivno ponašanje.

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