



Verbal violence and methods of social control of children a sociological approach

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Abstract

This article addresses the phenomenon of verbal abuse toward children, considering it as one of the forms of negative social control that reflects power relations within the family structure. It explains that words can shift from being a means of communication to a tool of symbolic domination, leaving deep psychological and social impacts on the child's personality. The article discusses the phenomenon through various sociological approaches, such as functional, symbolic interactionist, and critical theories. It also shows how verbal abuse leads to the reproduction of submission and domination instead of fostering conscious discipline. The article concludes with the necessity of adopting positive social control based on dialogue and nonviolent communication, which promotes the respect and humanity of the child.

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1. Introduction

Verbal abuse is considered one of the most common forms of symbolic violence in the socialization process of children. It takes the form of language that disguises itself behind the intention of discipline or guidance, while carrying coercive and exclusionary messages that profoundly affect personality formation and psychological and social balance. A word, even if seemingly simple, carries a symbolic power to harm and dominate, and its effects can surpass physical violence due to the scars it leaves in consciousness and emotions. From the perspective of family sociology, verbal abuse cannot be separated from the context of social control, as every interactive relationship between adults and children involves some form of monitoring, evaluation, and guidance. What distinguishes this phenomenon, however, is the slippage of discourse from a tool of educational control to a means of symbolic coercion, especially when balance between authority and dialogue is absent.

This article aims to provide an analytical sociological approach to the phenomenon of verbal violence directed at children, by linking it to the concepts of social control and upbringing, and examining its effects on the social and psychological development of the child, within a perspective that interprets the phenomenon in its structural and cultural dimension,

rather than solely in its individual dimension.

2. Study Problematic and Objectives:

2.1 The central problematic revolves around the following question:

How do manifestations of verbal violence appear in children's socialization relationships, and what are the limits of its overlap with social control methods as a symbolic practice with contradictory educational and social functions?

From this problematic, a set of questions arise:

1. What is meant by verbal violence from a sociological perspective?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between verbal violence and mechanisms of social control for children?
3. What impact does violent discourse have on the social and psychological development of the child?
4. How can an alternative positive pattern of social control be built based on nonviolent communication? As for the objectives of the article, they are:

- Clarifying the theoretical concepts of verbal violence and social control.
- Analysis of the phenomenon in light of classical and contemporary sociological approaches.
- Highlighting the psychological and social effects of verbal violence on children.

•Proposing educational and sociological alternatives to achieve effective and humane social control.

First: The Conceptual and Theoretical Framework:

1.The Concept of Violence:

There are many definitions that have addressed the concept of violence, varying according to researchers' perspectives on social issues, as well as the different viewpoints and angles from which each researcher approaches their topic.

1-1- Linguistically: It is defined as "disobedience to command and lack of gentleness, which is the opposite of kindness; it is harshness and rudeness." To handle something violently means to deal with it forcefully, with severity and difficulty. A violent person is someone who is not good at riding and has no gentleness in riding horses.

1-2- Concept of Verbal Violence:

Verbal violence is the use of language—whether in words, tone, or insinuation—in a manner that causes psychological or symbolic harm to others. This includes insults, mockery, cursing, belittling, threats, or deliberate ignoring. Pierre Bourdieu (1998) believes that language is not merely a tool for communication but also a tool of power and dominance, through which symbolic control is exercised within social fields. From this perspective, verbal violence becomes a form of symbolic violence that quietly permeates and reinforces the child's

subjugation to the prevailing value system without conscious resistance.

2-Violence from a terminological perspective:

1.2.1: From a social perspective: We start the social definitions with the definition of a modern Arab researcher, who defines violence as "a social behavior aimed at causing harm and damage to the targeted individuals through the use of armed and unarmed forms of coercion.

As for Philippe Brenot, in his book *Society and Violence*, he argues that violence is the force that directly attacks other people's persons and experiences with the intent of controlling them through death, destruction, and defeat. Among the most important definitions of violence from a sociological perspective is the definition by the Conference on the Social and Criminal Dimensions of Violence in Egyptian society, which states: 'Violence is any physical or moral act carried out directly or indirectly, targeting physical or psychological harm, or both, to an individual, group, or society, including its various institutions. Violence takes on many and diverse forms, whether moral, such as threats and marginalization, or physical, such as fighting, assaulting people and property, and both physical and moral violations simultaneously.'

3- The Concept of Social :

Social control refers to the set of means used by society to ensure compliance with values and norms, whether these means are formal (legal and

institutional) or informal (educational and ethical).

Durkheim (1895) believes that control is a fundamental condition for the existence of society, as it preserves cohesion and prevents deviance. In socialization relationships, this control is manifested through guidance, reward, punishment, and evaluation. However, these mechanisms can turn into coercive practices when pedagogical awareness is absent, transforming control into authoritarianism and words into a means of disciplining rather than evaluating.

Secondly: *Verbal Violence as a Social Phenomenon* Verbal violence is not merely a momentary reaction or an individual behavior, but rather the result of a social and cultural structure that reveals the use of language as a reform tool. Many educational traditions are based on the notion that "a harsh word educates" and that "verbal strictness is a sign of care," concepts that reinforce a culture of discipline rather than a culture of communication.

Verbal violence manifests in different forms:

- * Using insulting words (such as stupid, failure, lazy).
- * Constant scolding without explaining the reason.

- * Mocking the child's behavior or appearance.

- * Threatening or making negative comparisons with others.

These forms produce (asymmetrical interactions) between the two parties, and establish a hierarchical relationship that subjugates the child psychologically and

Third: Socialization of Children as a Space for Regulation

Socialization is the process through which an individual acquires the standards, values, and ways of thinking and behaving of society. It involves multiple institutions, the most prominent of which is the family environment with its educational and symbolic interactions.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasizes in his ecological theory of development that a child is influenced by multiple levels of overlapping social environments, and that the discourse directed at them in their immediate surroundings leaves a long-term impact on their personality and future interactions. Therefore, social regulation during childhood forms the foundational basis for building social conscience and the ability to conform to rules. However, this regulation loses its effectiveness when carried out through verbal humiliation, as it creates apparent compliance without internal conviction.

Fourth: Verbal Violence as a Mechanism of Social Control

Many adults use verbal violence as a means to control children's behavior, believing that harsh language leads to quick discipline. However, educational and psychological studies indicate exactly the opposite. According to Bandura (1977), children learn behavior through (modeling and observation), meaning they tend to imitate the behavior that is demonstrated before them. Consequently, when a child is exposed to violent speech, they develop a tendency toward (verbal violence itself) in their interactions with peers. Baumrind (1991) also asserts that an authoritarian style of discipline generates either rebellious or pathologically submissive personalities, whereas dialogue-based discipline fosters maturity and independence. Verbal violence, therefore, is not only a means of control but a mechanism for reproducing violence within the social system. It implants a coercive model of interaction, making words a tool of domination rather than understanding.

Fifth: Sociological interpretations of verbal violence

1-The Structural-Functional Perspective:

Functionalists (such as Durkheim and Parsons) consider social control essential for the continuity of society. However, excessive use of it leads to the

disintegration of values and the weakening of moral cohesion. Therefore, verbal abuse is considered a functional disorder within the educational system because it undermines the emotional cohesion necessary for the success of the socialization process.

2-The symbolic interactionist perspective:

This perspective (Blumer, 1969) focuses on the meanings that individuals assign to their actions during interactions. Language in this context is a means of constructing social meaning. When used in a derogatory manner, it alters the child's self-image and makes them perceive themselves as "deficient" or "rejected," which later affects their social identity.

3-Critical Perspective:

From Bourdieu's point of view (Bourdieu, 1998), verbal violence is a form of symbolic violence exercised by the holder of linguistic power over those of lower status. Here, the word is not a tool for communication but a means to reproduce social hierarchy, forcing the child to comply without discussion.

Sixth: The psychological and social effects of verbal violence

Psychological and sociological literature confirms that verbal violence has deep and lasting effects on the psychological and

social development of the child, most notably:

1. Low self-esteem: The child develops a persistent feeling of inferiority and incompetence.
2. Anxiety and fear of making mistakes: The child associates behavior with verbal threats and avoids taking initiative.
3. Social withdrawal or aggression: As a result of ongoing tension between submission and the desire to resist.
4. Communication disorder: The child loses confidence in dialogue and relies on silence or stubbornness.
5. Reproduction of violence: Compulsive speech transforms into a behavioral model in future interactions.

A field study conducted by Fatima Zahra Abdul Rahman (2019) on a sample of children in Algerian primary schools indicates that more than 60% of children subjected to verbal abuse exhibit difficulties in social interaction and a tendency towards isolation.

Seventh: Towards Positive Social Discipline:

Building humane social discipline requires reconsidering the tools of communication and evaluation through the following principles:

1. Shift from punishment to understanding: education is based not on deterrence but on awareness.
2. Use positive discourse: focusing on desired behavior rather than humiliation.
3. Train adults in nonviolent communication (Rosenberg, 2003), which connects emotions with constructive expression.
4. Enable children to express their opinions and feelings in an environment of mutual respect.
5. Integrate emotional education into social upbringing as a means to develop social and emotional intelligence.

With this approach, social regulation transforms from a tool of authority into a means of educational interaction that contributes to building balanced individuals capable of self-discipline and social responsibility.

4. CONCLUSION

Sociological analysis reveals that verbal violence directed at children is not a transient linguistic phenomenon, but rather a structural mechanism for reproducing patterns of coercive control within society. While social regulation is necessary for maintaining cohesion, practicing it in a violent manner strips education of its human essence and transforms it into a system of blind obedience. Therefore, approaching the phenomenon through the lens of family sociology highlights the need for communicative education based on dialogue and respect, balancing authority with compassion, and correction with freedom. Perhaps the first steps toward reform begin with the awareness that words, like actions, carry a dual power: they can either build a person or destroy their symbolic being.

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