

Positive Confrontation of Fears in Childhood

Ph. D c. Fitnet Hasekiu

"Aleksander Xhuvani" University, Elbasan, Albania

Faculty of Education Sciences

E-mail: neta_hasekiu@yahoo.com

Abstract: Fears are part of the human being. Many childhood fears are natural and tend to develop at specific ages. For example, many children are afraid of the dark and may need a nightlight to sleep. In most cases, they will grow out of this fear as they get older. The bases to confront a feared situation are built in the childhood. The child is not always able to find the best way to control his fear, so is the responsibility of the parents or of the other attachment persons to help them. According to the Child Anxiety Network, the imaginaty things such as ghosts, monsters, the dark, sleeping alone etc are extremely common and considered normal at the children aged 3 – 4 years. Most of the parents or the attachment persons tent to stop their children watching cartoon movies with terrific characters such as ghosts, monsters etc. In general there is the thought that when children watch such movies, they feel intimidated and react aggressively to the environment and people around them. But is that true? I am of the opinion that during the watching of such movies, always in the company of parents or attachment persons, children unconsciously process their fears; in this way they give an image to their fears and learn to handle them. Certainly, the parents or other attachments persons should be near the children, when they watch such movies, so the children feel safe and protected. I have conducted a research whose hypothesis is: If the children aged 3 – 4 year watch in the presence of parents or other attachment persons movies with terrific cartoon characters, they reduce and manage their fears. The results of this research confirmed the hypothesis.

1. Introduction

Fears are part of being human. They influence consciously and unconsciously, driving us to certain behaviors. Fear is a redirection of feelings. When they aren't processed, they may be shown through our body. Fear is associated with physical signs such as: shaking hands, sweating, gentle agitation, insomnia, night terror and urination, aggression, etc., which indicate that something is wrong. But fear itself remains invisible.

Fear is a little studied phenomenon, but it accompanies us throughout life. The bases to confront a feared situation are built in the childhood. Children aren't always able to find the best way to control his fear, belongs to the parents or other attachment persons to help them.

2. Purpose

It's observed that parents or other attachment persons tend to stop their children aged 3-4 to watch cartoon movies that have terrific characters. In general there is the idea that when kids watch such movies, they feel intimidated and react aggressively to the environment and people around them. But is it true? Or maybe when parents stop their children aged 3 -4 to watch films with terrific characters, they unconsciously suppress the fear of scary figures like ghosts, etc. they transfer that fear somewhere else and reflect insomnia or aggression? The purpose of this qualitative empirical study is to determine whether during the watching of such films, always in the company of parents or other attachments persons, children unconsciously process their fears, thus making possible a positiver and healthier coping with their fears. Children unconsciously feel and understand that movies with terrific cartoon do good to them, cause this way they give an image to their fears and so they learn to handle them. Certainly, parents or other attachment persons should be near the children, when they watch such films, cause this way they feel safe and protected. Hypothesis is: if children aged 3-4 years watch at the presence of parents or other attachment persons movies with terrific cartoon characters, they reduce and manage their fear for these characters.

3. Methodology

To prove the hypothesis in a scientific way, in this study were carried out two types of research: the participant, confidential and structured observation and the experiment in an unpublic kindergarden in the city of Elbasan.

- 1) *The population:* The theoretical population of this empirical scientific study is: the children aged 3-4 in the city of Elbasan.
- 2) *The sample:* A total of 32 children who attend the first groups in the kindergarden "Tomy & Jerry" Elbasan. This kindergarden was selected in a noncasual way. It was selected a non-public kindergarden, because in a nonpublic kindergarden the children have more and more often the opportunity to watch different movies, among them, also movies with terrific cartoon characters. These kindergardens are also rich in toys, as well as facilities for playing. In a nonpublic kindergardens children seldom are beeing punished in physical or psychological way, which affects the most reliable measurement and objective signs of aggression that children can display without fear of punishment by the educator after seeing the movie with terrific cartoon characters. The selection of the children in terms of gender, social, cultural and family background was casual, so that the data were more objective, reliable and valid.
- 3) *Methodological steps of the research:* The study was complied with all appropriate methodological steps, and almost professional ethics. The followed steps are listed below:
 - a) The development of the hypothesis
 - b) The determination of the theoretical population on which the experiment was conducted.
 - c) The construction of the sample.
 - d) The realization of the pre - test for defining the hypothesis and the technical check of the hypothesis.
 - e) The realization of the study in the kindergarden. To perform this experiment was taken permission from the Regional District of Elbasan, and permission from parents of children involved in the experiment, to whom was explained in details the goals, objectives and the modalities of the experiment within this study. Also they were insured for their children's anonymity and were asked not to speak with their children prior to the experiment, so that they are not influenced in their reactions from their parents.
 - f) The data entry on the tab of structured observation and then their processing in SPSS program.
 - g) The interpretation of the data.

4. The conductions of the experiment

To verify the hypothesis was conducted the following experiment.

I went to the kindergarden and in the presence of the educators I talked with the children about some scary figures like ghosts or bugaboo.

Then I divided the children into two groups. Always in the presence of educators, one group was left to watch a cartoon movie with bogeyman and ghost images and the other group a movie without these characters.

The group of children who saw the movie with cartoon images of ghost and bogeyman is the experimental group, while the group of children who saw the movie without these characters is the control group.

The independent variable is the cartoon movie with scary figures, which plays the role of the cause, while the dependent variable, which plays the role of effect, are the reactions or behaviors performed by the experimental group and after they saw the movie with ghost images and bogeyman .

After having seen the movie, the two groups were came together and were left to interact with each - other. Then, after about 45-60 minutes interaction, I talked again with the children of both groups together about the bugaboo and ghosts images.

The entire experiment was recorded by video, from the first moment when the children started the day in kindergarden, when they interacted with each other before talking about the bogeyman or the ghost, when we first talked about the ghost and the bogeyman, when they interacted after the talk about the bogeyman or the ghost, when the two groups saw the two types of film, when they interacted together after having watched the two films, when we talked again about the ghost and the bogeyman.

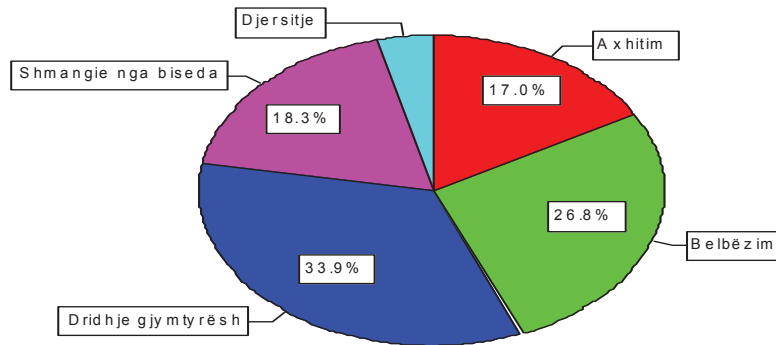
Of course, none of the children knew the fact there was conducted the experiment and that there were being recorded by video. I told them, I was their new educator and I always interacted with them in a close cooperation with their educator.

5. The data analysis

The data recorded by the video are interpreted.

It was interpreted the behavior of children during interaction with each other before the conversation, their emotional state. The children were relaxed; they interacted actively with each other. Then it was interpreted the reaction during the conversation about the bugaboo and ghosts figures. The management of the fear became measurable through the reaction of children such as: the limb's tremors, stammering, sweating, agitation, aggressive signs that appear when cited figures such as ghosts or bugaboo. It was observed that 33.9% of children had limb's tremor, 26.8% stammered, 17% of them were agitated, 18.3% of children tried to avoid this conversation and 2.5% of them sweated.

1. Chart: The review of the fear's signs of the children during the first conversation about scary figures.



Their interaction after this conversation was lukewarm. They were frightened and in order to hide that, they sometimes exhibited aggressive feelings toward each other.

Then becomes the interpretation of the behavior while the two groups were watching the two kinds of films.

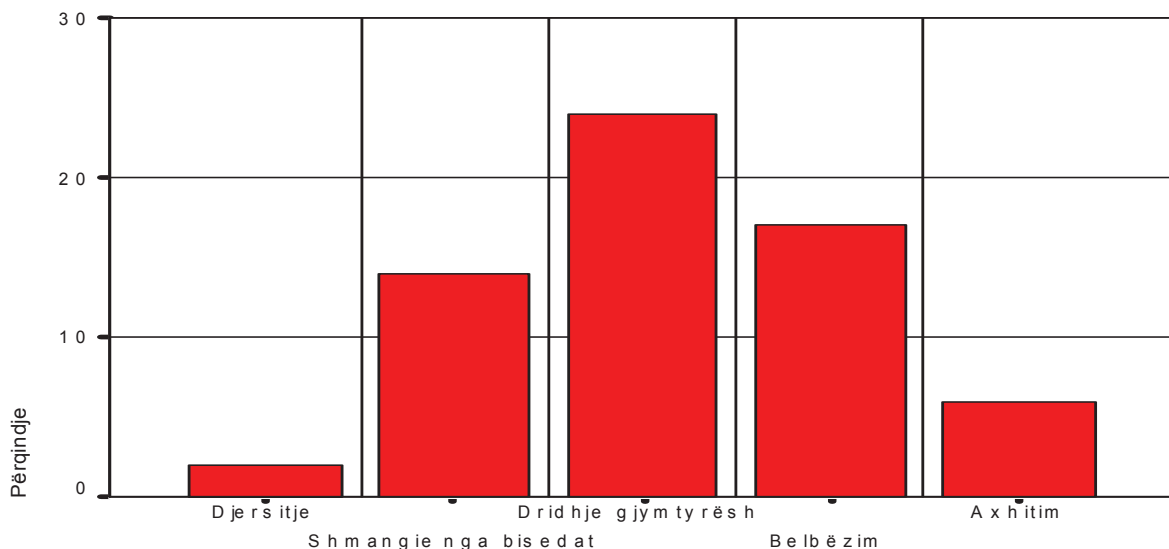
Initially the experimental group felt fearful, crouched around the educator, but after about 15 minutes and after some hugs, smiles from the educator and I, children began to feel calmer, more selfconfident, and even began to laugh with each other. Some of them even imitate the bogeyman and ghost images, but without feeling afraid.

The control group saw a movie without scary figures and there we no changes in behavior.

It was observed that during interaction with each other, experimental group's children, felt more confident in conversations or games with other children.

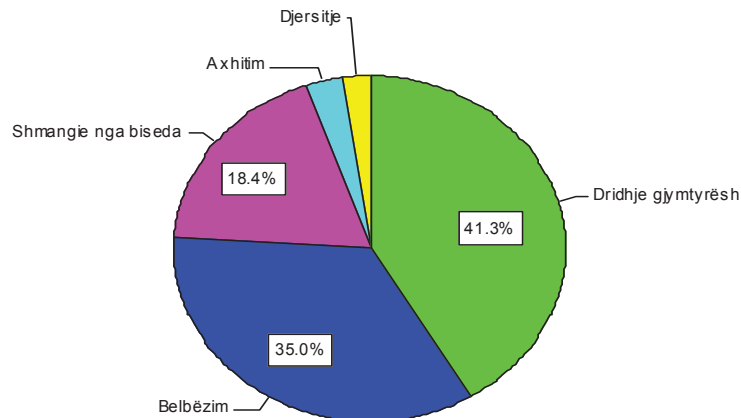
The largest difference was observed during the second conversation with children about scary figures. The experimental group's children were quiet, didn't show many signs of anxiety, even a few of them spoke joyful about these figures. 24% of children had limb's tremor, 17% stammered, 14% of children tried to avoid this conversation. 6% were agitated and 2% of them sweated.

2. Chart: The review of the fear's signs of the experimental group's children durig the second conversation about the bugaboo and ghosts images, after the presence of the independent variable



The control group's children reacted quite differently. They continue to feel even more scared. It was observed that 41.3% of children had limb's tremor, 35% stammered, 18.4% of children tried to avoid this conversation. 3.1% of them were agitated and 2.2% of them sweated.

3. Chart: The review of the fear's signs of the control group's children during the second conversation about scary figures.



As seen in the statistical processing of the data, the experimental group's children responded less afraid during the second conversation about scary figures than those of the control group.

About the effect or consequence of the film's watching were surveyed and interviewed children and parents who participated in the experiment. Parents of children who had seen the scary movie cartoon confirmed that their children were more active, more relaxed; they went to sleep without fear, even one of them claimed that her child had not urinated at night, which he did almost every night. Parents of children who hadn't seen the movie with terrific figures claimed that their children after the interview felt a little afraid of frightening images. They were not very active and some of them were afraid to go to sleep.

6. The limits of the study

This study contains a number of restrictions. *First*, the number of sample of this study is relatively small which may not allow generalization to all populations. *Second*, given the fact that this study has been conducted only by me, could have elements of subjectivity. *Thirdly*, the study does not fully take into account social and family support to children who are involved in this study. *Fourthly*, it was not fully respected the professional ethic, especially to control group's children.

7. Conclusions and suggestions

The data obtained by experiment, observation, surveys and interviews confirmed the link cause - consequence, so the hypothesis was confirmed. When children aged 3-4 years watch at the presence of parents or other attachment persons movies with terrific cartoon characters, they reduce and manage their fear for these characters. As result I suggest to parents and other attachments people to tend to teach their children to face their fears, always staying close to them, giving as much confidence, motivation, encouragement, understanding and strength. Coping with the scary object, a technique used in psychotherapy, otherwise known systematic desensitization in the presence of persons who give confidence and strength is a very efficient way for positive coping of fear.

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