

Violence rooted from school and family: Voices of Vietnamese insiders

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Abstract

The article aims to point out a social phenomenon in Vietnam currently which is recognized as both visible and invisible violence from parents and teachers to their children or learners at different levels of general education¹⁶. The focus of this study is to interpret violence as a result of parents and teachers' excessive demand on the study of their children or learners. A survey was employed to collect data from 265 primary and high school students about the behavior of their parents and teachers on issues related their learning to clarify the research problem. The findings analyze the phenomenon from emphasizing the forms of violence significantly resulting from teachers' behavior when young learners make mistakes at school and parents' concerns and behavior towards their children's learning; simultaneously, the consequences of this type of violence are also examined from the insiders' voices of the learners in a comprehensive picture for various types of violence. These forms of violence may not be recognized in other contexts, but in Vietnamese families and schools. The results of the article can contribute considerably to not only raise awareness in Vietnam specifically and in Asia generally about of the notions of violence on our young generation but also recognize the needs of young generations in their learning.

Keywords

violence, violence at school in family, requests on learning, penalties, behavior, attitudes, young learners, trauma

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¹⁶ General education includes primary education, lower secondary education, and upper secondary education (according to General Provisions in the Education Law 2005 of Vietnam)

Introduction

Vietnam with its own characteristics of historical conditions and ethnic characteristics have formed a common concept of education; of which learning means to escape poverty or learning is to change one's life. In this sense, learning became the highest mission of many Vietnamese people over the history of Vietnam under the hardships causing by wars and oppression from different invaders. As a matter of fact, every child at that time was expected to have better life than his or her parents and the best and unique way to obtain that expectation was “studying”. Simultaneously, to be different from the others and easily to be recognized in the society, children were required to study hard and try best to get the highest scores or highest results in their study. Such a thought is still so popular that it has become a cultural feature of the country. The situation has even become more serious due to the fact that children's obedience to their parents in traditional families still remains the same in Vietnam currently (Tran, 2016). It is common that Vietnamese parents tend to impose their wishes on their children; i.e., what to study or what should and shouldn't do (Anh Thu, 2015). These things lead to a series of consequences on children both mentally and physically. A letter sent to leaders, parents and teachers by a junior high school student via Vietnamnet- one of the leading official electronic newspapers in Vietnam on 22 September, 2016 is a living proof for the mentioned points:

“.....For many years, our students' lives have just been involved getting up, going to school, having extra classes, returning home and the process has been repeated and repeated. Over years, my passion for learning has gradually disappeared. I have started to get exhausted, depressed and desperate when I have heard the word LEARNING..... The friend sitting next to me, each of her school days begins from 5.30 am until 11 pm. She is exhausted, I know that.....”

Tran (2018) clarifies this student's confession further by stating that “the biggest daily concern of parents is whether their children do homework or not causing their children to be stressed and tired”. Children are not only the oppressed at home but their roles at schools are also underestimated. They usually play the passive role in class or mainly study under the teachers' control. Regarding this, Confucian education which was introduced to Vietnam over 1000 years ago when Vietnam was under the domination of China contributed to the formation of the ethical foundation, traditional values, and the identity of Vietnamese people. Till now, this education seems to hold its value and the best overview of Vietnamese education is reflected from Confucian teaching and learning in Starr's (2012) research as follows:

“....These included teacher-centered whole class teaching, very large classes, apparent passivity on the part of learners with low levels of active learner participation, and much use of teacher-led chanting, rote learning and mimetic methods” (p. 4)

It is also noted that in Confucian education, every teacher was so powerful that rights to punish his/her young students was ruled if they didn't obey or focus on the lesson. The finding that methods of teaching and learning in Vietnamese educational context are out of date (Chu, 2008) may be a consequence of this education. In his research about Vietnamese education, the researcher suggests that curriculum at all academic levels need to be officially considered due to the fact that it is so heavy in time limit, inadequate in scientific aspect and not practical for real life. More importantly, according to Phu Hop Mai et al. (2008), one of the most serious problems or a big concern in Vietnamese education now is school violence. A question is whether the

imposition of parents and teachers on children's or students' studying and rigid curriculum are a part of violence at school or from family, but it cannot be denied that "school is a place of hardships and sufferings for many children; and their childhood is being "stolen" by a heavy, boring, and impractical curriculum" (Chu, 2008).

In general, within the scope of this study, the author does not focus on analyzing the aforementioned drawbacks of Vietnamese education but employ them as a main reason leading to a demand of deeply analyzing the forms of violence against children rooted from family and school.

1. Literature Review

The concept of violence is not new to many research contexts, including Vietnam. However, the majority of studies focus on the visible acts rather than the invisibility of violence. The concentration of this matter is mainly on the penetrators or victims of school violence or violent situations related to school with power usually in one side (Cuellar, 2016; Lesneskie and Block, 2016; McDonald, 2014; Mncube and Steinmann, 2014; Joyce, 2013; Georgiou, 2009; Estévez, Jiménez, and Musitu, 2008; Ricketts, 2007; Eisenbraun, 2007; Hudson, Windham, and Hooper, 2005; Carney, Shannon, and Murphy; 2005; Benbenishty, Astor, and Zeira, 2003; Mayer, 2002; Chisholm, 1998; May, 1972), "at-risk victims" in domestic violence or that of in the family to the weaker sides (Hiitola and Hautanen, 2016; Hill, 2005; Fantuzzo, Mohr, and Noone, 2000; Bermann, 2000; Kocourková and Koutek, 1998; Heron, Javier, McDonald-Gomez, and Adlerstein, 1994; Hartman, 1987) and the victims of the groups of "traditional oppressors" as teachers, elderly, and parents (Magalhães, Castro, Ruido, and Lopez, 2016; Coogan, 2011; Chen and Astor, 2009).

According to Collis and Webb (2014), the invisibility can be recognized because of the visibility. As for violence, in a broader and different aspect of violence in the contexts of human, the power is visibly connected with the act of violence on weaker people.

"In many other cultures, it is hearing that holds a privileged relationship to knowledge and understanding; but in Australia, this peculiarly Western perspective of visibility is a metaphor that sets in place mechanisms of power and processes of knowledge formation." (p.493)

When reviewing literature about invisible *domestic violence to vulnerable children*. Fantuzzo, Mohr, and Noone's (2000, p. 10) implies the invisibility of domestic violence not being explored (p.11), but not the invisibility of the act of violence with less physical acts, of which more mental trauma may affect children, as what focuses of this study are about. The children's invisible trauma from the acts of violence from teachers and parents may not be properly recognized in the context of Vietnam when limited researchers have raised this research matter. That type of trauma is possibly compatible with the repeated exposure of invisible violence to the child in a long time, as follows.

"Two types of child traumatization. The first can be described as an unpredictable event similar to a shock, the second as a result of repeated exposure of the child to longitudinal traumatization." (Kocourková & Koutek 1998, p. 435)

The invisible trauma may be the result of the long-term repetition of oppressed actions to children both at school and at home. If children perspectives about their teachers and parents' actions to their learning and problems in this study which imply to be causes of possible invisible trauma to children. Joyce (2013) confirms the aspect of “being exposed to violence” can become models to violent behavior at home and school when they are young and the thoughts have been nurtured until they become teachers or parents.

While “children are exposed to violence on the way to and from school” in the research context of Chisholm (1998, p.138), parents or grandparents are responsible to take children forward and backward between school and home so that the exposure to violence falls into other factors in the classroom or at home, but not on the way to school. Chisholm implies that children are both the victims and the perpetrators of violence. They can be the victims of violence by their friends, their teachers, their neighbors, or even people in their family.

In Carney, Shannon, and Murphy (2005, p.32), young children at school may encounter different forms of *bullying, verbal teasing, and harassment, or minor theft*. In addition, Cuellar (2016) finds that the exposure of violence negatively affects the young children's mentality. This idea is also compatible with Eisenbraun (2007) that violence in educational environment hurt students' feeling of safety and the belonging senses. Young people commit or *may be exposed to violence* not only at school (Hudson et al., 2005, p.135).

In fact, it is obvious or traditionally believed that the responsibility for educating would not be only from the school, but also in the family with significant influences on childhood development. Both the school and families share major roles in any circumstances regarding violence to or from young people with and without the visibility of evidence for the sources of the research phenomenon. In a different study, Joyce (2013) confirms a fact that violence at school is unexplainable phenomenon with the results of what children may experience here and there. Any single behavior may be facilitated from different causes and effects in different situations.

However, they will not only the victims when they turn to learn how to deal with their reality that being perpetrators to the weaker people will relieve their feelings a bit. This idea may be compatible with Freire (2005) about the reaction of the oppressed when being the oppressor. They would not stop the similar actions that they used to bear but tend to duplicate or escalate that sense of violence to the current oppressed people, in this case the victims of violence. The series of reactions will be repeated to different generations of the same philosophical perspectives.

Still complicated to understand the phenomenon of violence, the following explanation of this term shows an idea.

“Violence is a uniting of the self in action. It is an organizing of one's powers to prove one's power, to establish the worth of the self. It is risking all, a committing all, an asserting all. But it unites the different elements in the self, *omitting* rationality... Whatever its motive or its consequences may be within the violent person, its result is generally destructive to the others in the situation.” (May, 1972, p. 188)

As described in Chisholm (1998), the acts of violence may be of causes from dealing with different levels of *stress, anxiety, fear, frustration, and anger* (p.142). In Hiitola and Hautanen (2016), violence which is caused by parents or their conflicts with the power on the parental side could be interpreted as the failure of protecting children. From a similar view, Hartman (1987, p. 62) raises the sensitivity of violence in the family regarding the tension and political conflict in that research context that *violence has primarily been used by men to oppress women*. This idea is not too different from Freire (2005) about the concept of the oppressors' power on keeping their control to the oppressed. From that, *violence is used by adults to control children, by older siblings against their younger brothers and sisters and by adult caretaking children to control their ageing, ill and dependent parents* (p.63). This idea is also described in Herron et al. (1994) as a consequence of endorsing violence in context of a society. In *tackling violence at home*, Coogan (2011, p. 350) focuses on *either a direct victim of domestic violence or abuse or as secondary victims, as witnesses to domestic abuse*. Similarly, Benbenishty, Astor, and Zeira (2003) confirms the cases that domestic violence aiming to children with visible actions such as cursing, humiliating, ridiculing, pinching or slapping, kicking, pushing and shoving the victims

In a different aspect, looking at violence from the perspective of the causes of revenge actions is found with peer factors. The violence just happens when

“A child that looks different than the rest, is disliked and isolated by peers, is not effectively monitored at home, and has the tendency to blame factors other than the aggressor when asked to explain aggressive acts.” Georgiou (2009, p. 114)

In addition, violence can also be led by various sorts of fear (Waghid, 2010). such as fear of peer opinion, fear of the perpetrator, fear of family response, fear of being “found out” as gay or lesbian, or even fear of being known as the users of drugs or alcohol (Hill, 2005, p.174).

As stated in the rationale of this study, much research commonly deals with the obvious phenomenon or the acts of violence on the victims with clear or obvious evidence. However, limited research was found about the invisible trauma caused by the teachers in the daily praxis in the classroom and the parents at home. The aforementioned cases of teachers and parents may not be able to recognize their “non-aggressive” violence with the oppressing manners of the oppressors to the oppressed young children. The major difference among visible violence from the review of literature and invisible violence in this study is that the acts of teachers and parents on the oppressed young children may commit invisible violence or would give some minor physical punishments, which would not directly cause obvious attack physically to be recognized on the children's bodies. The oppressing thoughts and pressure on learning, behavior, and mistakes may impose to children at different degrees.

2. Methodology

The study was to figure out visible and invisible violence against young learners resulted from teachers' behavior when students make mistakes and from parents' concerns and behavior towards their children's learning. It also concentrated on the consequences of this kind of pressure in learning on learners. Due to the purposes of the study, the two following questions were asked:

1/ Does teachers and parents’ behavior or expectations on issues of young learners’ learning cause any forms of violence?

2/ What are possible traumas to young learners from violence at school and at home?

The participants of the study are 265 students of grades 3 to 12 (between the ages of 9 and 18), hereby called young learners from a large number of schools in three provinces Vinh Long, Tien Giang and Dong Thap in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Learners at this age were selected to ensure they are able to understand and respond to the questions on issues related to their learning from the survey. They share the similarity that they are studying in public schools which are under the management of the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam.

A survey with five questions was written in Vietnamese and carefully explained to the participants so that they could understand the questions thoroughly and respond to them properly and sufficiently. The data gained was translated into English by the researcher and checked by a colleague who holds a doctoral degree in Pedagogy and is fluent in both languages.

The data collected from the surveys were qualitatively analyzed regarding a variety of types of violence from school and family. The extracts were then coded randomly among participants from different schools and provinces and the coding methods for each concept as in the following:

Code	Extracts	Coded for
VL224-5-TB	“My teacher punishes me when I make a mistake. For a small mistake, I was asked to stand up in front of the class door. For a serious mistake, my teacher hit my left hand two times and for the most serious mistake, my parents were summoned to school”	VL = Vinh Long 224 = The participant 224 5 = Grade 5 TB = Behavior of teachers
TG025-7-PB	“...my parents scolded me for my bad learning result”	TG = Tien Giang 025 = The participant 025 7 = Grade 7 PB = Behavior of parents
DT032-9-LF	“The first feeling is disappointment, then shame and fear”	DT = Dong Thap 032 = The participant 032 9 = Grade 9 LF – learners’ feelings

The coded extracts would be considered in terms of physical and mental violence or invisible violence caused by teachers and parents’ behavior and expectations on young learners’ learning. The levels of trauma were also concentrated to figure out the consequences of violence on the psychology of the young learners.

3. Findings

The data analysis showed different forms of violence resulted from teachers' punishment when learners made mistakes while studying at schools. The penalties used by teachers were very diverse and inhumane, recognizing as punishing learners directly by hitting them or forcing them to carry out some missions or involving parents' roles in adjusting their children's behavior. Besides, the common protocol in daily communication between parents and children, which linked to parents' top concern, was their children's learning. This was also a form of violence against grade-schoolers at home. As a result, the violence at school and at home, which may not be realized by the mentioned adults, gradually leads to psychological trauma for young learners. The findings would be presented in terms of (1) physical and mental violence from teachers when their learners make different types of mistakes and from parents when they put too much expectations on their children's learning, and (2) the mental trauma due to violence from school and family.

3.1. Physical and mental violence when making mistakes and parents' behavior and expectations on children's learning

Regarding the ways teachers behaved when grade-schoolers made mistakes, only 8 out of 265 participants (VL019-3-TB, DT068-7-TB, TG092-11-TB, VL039-7-TB, DT184-9-TB, VL220-6-TB, VL240-5-TB, and VL241-4-TB) confirmed that their teachers did not do anything to penalize them when they make mistakes. On the other hand, the remaining number of 257 participants, accounting for 97%, showed that their teachers usually punished them in a variety of both physical and mental ways. In fact, forms of punishment were very diverse but quite similar among the research contexts.

Depending on the severity or types of mistakes, teachers offered different forms of punishment. Many learners from three research sites reflected this common principle among teachers in the implementation of penalties for students (VL224-5-TB, TG008-8-TB, VL014-9-TB, DT030-9-TB, VL244-5-TB, VL031-10-TB, DT032-9-TB, TG177-9-TB, DT161-8-TB, VL241-4-TB).

“Depending on the case [*small or serious mistake*], teachers have specific penalties, for example, sometimes my friends and I cannot retell a learnt lesson [*in Vietnam K-12 learners are asked to learn by heart lesson content taught by teachers at home and retell it in the following class*], teachers ask us to rewrite that lesson from 10 to 50 times” [VL031-10-TB]

“For a minor fault, we will be reminded and criticized in front of the class. For a bigger one, we will be criticized “under the flagpole” [*in front of the school*] and for the most serious one, we will be disciplined and expelled from school (I am afraid of this level of punishment most)” [DT032-9-TB]

“Teachers reprove us for minor faults. If the faults are bigger, they will inscribe the violator's name on the register [*every class has a register for teacher to note about the learning situation of the class and the notes will be one of the bases for teachers to evaluate their students' conduct*], ask parents to school, or threaten” [TG177-9-TB]

In Vietnam, parents will be summoned to school for a mistake at school of their child. A teacher has the right to evaluate his student's conduct (the manner in which that student behaves) well or

badly, and this which belongs to a moral aspect more or less infringes on human rights. Of the 10 extracts above, up to six extracts indicated that asking parents to school was the highest level of punishment, which would be reserved for the most serious mistakes or faults by young learners and they were usually afraid of this penalty most. This demonstrated parents’ oppressing power rather than the nurtured parenting solutions to their children.

To further explain this phenomenon, parents in Vietnam are responsible not only for raising their children but also for educating them within the chaos of social philosophies and the influence of various perspectives of education. Such an irreplaceable role of parents is utilized radically at school to manipulate students in certain ways regardless of its negative influence against children’s development at different senses. In other words, parents and teachers are the ones who can intervene directly in children’s learning by any means even if that means causes any injuries to children.

From what has just been analyzed, a part of an overall picture of teachers’ violence against young learners is revealed. In this respect, different levels of teacher’s punishment for students helped clarify the research problem and more importantly, various forms of chastisement recognized from the extracts reflect the seriousness of the violence on both physical and mental aspects of young learners. It can be said that applied penalties from teachers were very diverse ranging from less serious influences to terrible ones. For the first category, it included some variations such as *inscribing the violator’s name on the register, sweeping the classroom for the whole week, cleaning up the classroom or the school yard, dumping the trash, cleaning the board, standing, dictating, doing public work, calling parents to school, writing a paper of self-examination, run with high thigh and etc.* (TG044-11-TB, DT043-12-TB, VL042-12-TB, TG041-9-TB, VL040-9-TB, VL040-9-TB, VL023-3-TB, VL037-8-TB, VL034-7-TB, VL026-9-TB, DT183-10-TB, TG027-7-TB, TG83-6-TB, DT103-5-TB, TG185-10-TB, DT178-11-TB, DT175-11-TB, VL172-6-TB, VL169-8-TB, VL170-8-TB, VL234-5-TB...). The other forms of chastisement, which were extremely inhumane, may not have been experienced or imagined in other cultures, especially in western ones. Frankly speaking, teacher’s punishment in this level which was really violence against children destroys them both literally and figuratively. The following extracts would provide vivid examples for the situation:

“Teachers (male and female) punish us by forcing us to *thụt dầu* (two hands cross the shoulders and hold ears in the opposite side while standing up and sitting down continuously for many times), hitting, and asking us to stand in a corner of the classroom” (VL011-8-TB)

“Hold the pen in our mouth, be spanked [*slap with a flat object on the buttocks*]....” (VL006-7-TB)

“..... kneel at the flagpole [*in front of the school*]..... be kicked out of the class” (VL237-5-TB)

“My male teacher usually scolds at us.....” (VL240-5-TB)

“...hit the hand or lie on the table to hit the butt” (TG214-9-TB)

A variety of visible forms of serious violence were exposed from the extracts from a numbers of young learners in different grades such as *beating, spanking, humiliating, ridiculing, hitting,*

pinching, pinching ears, scolding, criticizing, cursing, threatening, or forcing learners to kneel, stretch hands, or push-up, and “thụt đầu” (TG196-9-TB, VL143-4-TB, TG199-7-TB, VL222-8-TB, TG210-7-TB, TG209-7-TB, VL025-7-TB, VL024-4-TB, VL240-5-TB, VL033-7-TB, VL029-8-TB, TG176-9-TB, DT174-9-TB, TG173-9-TB, VL020-3-TB.....). Accordingly, this discovery is compatible with Benbenishty, Astor, and Zeira’s (2003) findings about domestic violence in their study and it influences more from school as in the current research contexts. It is worth noting that 125 feedbacks from the participants (47.2%) indicated that teachers used the penalty methods of hitting, beating, slapping, or spanking to deal with children’s mistakes. Specifically, this type of punishment was carried out with a variety of discouraged physical actions on children like hitting hands with a ruler, lying on the table to hit their butt with a wooden stick, spanking, self-slapping on cheeks, slapping on the mouth and so on. Consequently, and “coincidentally”, a severe child abuse has just taken place in the context of Vietnamese education, a sixth grader was slapped 231 times for his “one mistake” (Dang, 2018). This abuse was due to a fact that a 6th grade child said “bad words”¹⁷ and because of this reason his teacher ordered each of his twenty-three classmates (out of 26 in total) to slap on his cheeks for ten times. Hence, that victim got 230 “real strong slaps” from his friends (3 out of 26 students didn’t slap him because they came back home to take their books right at that time). Two hundred and thirty strong slaps are meant to be done because his teacher asked if someone pretended to slap, that person must get slaps in return from the victim. Importantly, the last slap was noteworthy done by the teacher herself when she heard the victim yell at the early end at her “evil face” that “I hate you”. The statement “I hate you” which a student is not allowed to say to a teacher regardless of any circumstance is one of the eloquent demonstrations for how Vietnamese learners are oppressed at school, and accordingly, how they are physically and mentally damaged. The following extracts would clarify the matter:

“... for the most serious mistake, we will be disciplined and expelled from school (I am afraid of this level of punishment most)” [DT032-9-TB]

“Teachers punish us. I study in the afternoon from 12:15 to 16:45 pm and I have been sent to collect. Sometimes, it is very hot and we feel extremely tired. I am afraid that type of punishment..... I used to wear a pair of sandals in a physical education class because my sneakers were wet and I was forced to collect garbage all over the school yard and I got sick that time” [DT238-6-TB]

“...I felt sad when my teacher punished me...” [DT246-4-TB]

In contrast, young learners are required to obey and comply unquestionably with school rules and violent genres, which have been employed to achieve such an expectation or to maintain the available orders in one school. From this, it follows that teacher in this scandal may be under the pressure from a bunch of “untold requirements” from the school administrators about how to assure “teaching quality” for both academic and non-academic purposes and how to make “the oppressed”¹⁸ obedient. Although underlying cause of this affair would not be the focal point analyzed in this study, the phenomenon can be asserted that the teacher’s behavior or violence against her learner should be worth condemning and sentencing. As can be seen in Vietnam, due to the facts that teacher holds a decisive role in ensuring the “quality of education in the classroom” (found in Article 15 of Chapter I of the Law of Education 2005 No. 38/2005/QH11

¹⁷ words that he was not allowed to say in his school

¹⁸ Learners and people in the lower rank of the system hierarchy in an educational institution

dated June 14, 2005) and the influence of Confucianism which highlights the central roles of teacher in adjusting ethical behavior of learners, teachers in the research contexts tended to overuse a large quantity of violent forms as aforementioned to conveniently fulfill their “assigned controlled and oppressed missions”. Some violence seems to be weird but their vulnerability to learners is not less than the others as follows.

“My male teacher threatened that if I did not wear a belt again, he would take off my pants and throw it into the trash [*his fault was not to wear a belt when going to school*]” [TG196-9-TB]

“... my teacher asked us to gather 1,000 leaves of flame tree [*in Vietnam, there is at least one flame tree on any school grounds*]” [DT51-8-TB]

Another important aspect is that the learners’ faults or mistakes were severe enough for being punished with aforementioned forms by their teachers. The mistakes or faults can be classified into three types of infringement as (1) breaking regulations that aims to force learners to participate in the learning process, (2) using taboos in the classroom, and (3) violating ethical standards.

Similar to punishment forms, schools which were represented by teachers or teachers themselves offered a number of rigid and bizarre rules for young learners. Accordingly, a number of things that “the oppressed learners” were not allowed to do because it would violate the regulations which were *understood* to ensure the educational quality as follows: *going to school late, not being able to retell the lesson correctly in the manner of rote learning, not doing homework assigned by teachers, talking to each other during class, not taking note during class, and not concentrating when studying in class*. The second type included mistakes or faults such as *not wearing a belt, not weeping the classroom, having snacks in class, bringing food to class, not wearing a badge, not wearing sneakers in physical education class, forgetting notebooks at home, playing truant, littering and etc*. The third type of violation on ethical standards which was to adjust young learners to be future obedient citizen or educate them to comply with school rules and regulations could be identified as *swearing, saying bad words, being disrespectful to teachers, or fighting with each other*. To some extent, some of these regulations or rules should be considered carefully for the possibility of violating the law of children rights and human rights or not respecting one’s dignity; especially they may make young learners become dependent and obedient unnecessarily.

In addition to being physically and mentally abused by teachers at schools with a significant amount of penalties due to their poor academic performance, the primary concern of the majority of parents at home was also about their children’s learning or what is called educational quality of family demands. An unexpected number of 221 responses towards the surveyed question about what parents talked or required from their children demonstrated for the findings. Actually, up to 83.4% of the participants voiced their reality on their parents’ main concern about their learning. These participants were assigned a series of duties related to learning by their parents as *learning better or studying well, having good scores, trying to study hard, trying to study best, having to achieve the first place in class or at school*¹⁹, *studying harder, learning by heart, getting good*

¹⁹ *in Vietnamese education, students are publicly ranked in accordance to the levels of how good they are in their learning*

marks, having to keep silent while studying, studying well for every single subject, studying well for supporting oneself or parents when they get older, and practicing for writing more beautifully. Such a concern from parents was truly a burden on a majority of learners' shoulders or a big pressure to them. In most cases, violence may appear against their children when they insulted or compared their learning capacity with the others.

"My parents usually ask me "Why are you so stupid?" and tell me that "I pay for you to study, not to disturb in class. Let try to study hard and properly". My parents ask me to study well" [VL260-10-PB]

"They ask me to study hard in order to be not inferior to my friends" [DT249-8-PB]

"My parents often complain that why I cannot study as well as other parents' children and they ask me to be the best student in class" [TG74-7-PB]

".....My parents usually compare me with my elder sister" [TG204-10-PB]

" they criticize me and always compare me with "the children of other families" [TG185-10-PB]

It should be noted that twelve out of the remaining of 44 participants gave no response to this question or the question was left blank without any reasons and other fourteen answers were just "no" or "yes" without any explanation or illustration. The rest participants shared the common ideas that their parents paid attention to how much and when they were allowed to watch television, asked them to be obedient, gave them no permission to love while studying, or advised them not to idolize singers or movie stars too much and so on. Exceptionally, as a matter of fact, one case frankly shared that the relationship with his parents was problematic:

"... I rarely talk with my parents. It is perhaps my parents and I cannot get along with each other well. If there is any conversation between us, it will be about my study of which my parents usually complain a lot....." (TG185-10-PB).

The study results about parents' behavior towards their children's learning outcomes helped strengthen the previous findings. In this sense, almost all of the participants (except 10 responses about their parents' indifferent actions or behavior with both good or bad study results) expressed the same ideas that their parents treated them in two completely different extremes depending on how good they studied at school. When they got high marks [*in Vietnam, learning capacity of a student has been assessed through marks or scores*], the extreme of satisfaction was found among the parents. From that, they would employ some rewarding policies to remain or enhance their children's good study spirit such as *praising, encouraging, leading them out to eat or travel, or letting them participate in recreational activities*. On the contrary, it would be really catastrophic if the young learners couldn't achieve the desired results in their learning. Another type of extreme seen from the participants' parents was their dissatisfaction or anxiety about their children's academic performance, and as a result they would use violent forms to manipulate their children's education. Both mental and physical violence against children from parents was quite similar to the ones from teachers recognized as *complaining, scolding, whipping, punishing for labor, interrogating if they have known their fault or not* [*fault here is recognized as studying badly*].

In a word, young learners were under the tremendous pressure from parents and teachers about their learning. Except for some odd reasons, teachers and parents believed that the “educational methods” represented by a variety of punishment forms they used were to help students learn better and become good persons in the future. From this, it follows that teachers and parents have not fully thought of what they have behaved to their children as a form of abuse or violence against them. With or without their notice, such behavior may cause invisible trauma to the young learners. For further discussion about the findings of trauma from the aforementioned forms of violence, the next part would present how the participants become victims of violence from school and family.

3.2. Trauma in young learners due to violence from school and family

Resulted from a variety of requirements and pressure from teachers and parents about their learning which were identified from many forms of violence, an equal number of traumas were found from the participants. Of all, negative feelings about themselves were the most popular results among young learners in the study. It can be said that the consequence of violence against young learners was so serious and worth considering. An unbelievable number of 233 from different age groups out of 265 respondents in total shared about mental traumas in multiple levels they have been experiencing when they got low marks or bad grades. Unexpectedly, that phenomenon seems to be assumed as just a “normal” reaction²⁰ as in the following extracts:

“I feel extremely sad” [VL084-6-LF]

“I am very embarrassed” [TG127-3-LF]

“I feel sad and helpless in learning” [TG053-10-LF]

“Feeling like going mad” [VL035-7-LF]

“I feel regret when I get bad grades” [VL033-7-LF]

“I feel so bad and stupid” [DT016-10-LF]

“...I feel like falling into the abyss” [TG184-9-LF]

Nevertheless, the real problem cannot be seen by its appearance. The causes of participants’ reactions towards their unexpected learning results were scrutinized in different categories to make clear the viewpoint. The first one would be a sense of guilt that overwhelms their soul:

“I felt terribly guilty as if throwing my corpse into the Ganges also could not wash away my sin” [TG058-11-LF]

“I feel guilty about myself and my parents” [TG204-10-LF]

“I have faults with myself, family and society” [TG196-9-LF]

“... feel frustrated, depressed, stupid and make parents disappointed” [VL007-6-LF]

²⁰ It should be noted that it is “normal reaction” here just because academic scores are being used to assess learner competencies in the research contexts.

“I feel humiliated for me and have faults with my parents and teachers” [TG143-4-LF]

Secondly, the normal reactions of disappointment about themselves as aforementioned were pushed to a higher level of hopelessness as follows:

“The first feeling is disappointment, then shame and fear” [DT032-9-LF]

“...ashamed, self-deprecating; sad and regretful” [VL241-4-LF]

“... sad, under pressure, and scared” [VL260-12-LF]

“...feel defeated in front of everyone” [DT030-9-LF]

“sad and feel lost face when the score is poor” [TG113-5-LF]

“I am sad and afraid of going to school, my feeling is so bad” [TG046-11-LF]

“... about to faint and feel extremely sad ...” [TG089-12-LF]

“I feel useless and inferior to my friends” [TG179-11-LF]

“I don't want to go home” [VL034-7-LF]

“... life is unfair to me, nobody cares about me” [TG186-9-LF]

“...too much pressure to faint, afraid of returning home, afraid of meeting parents” [VL029-8-LF]

Similarly, in nature but more specifically, a number of participants pointed out the causes of traumas from teachers and parents' violence directly and this is compatible with the findings in the previous part of the study. The following extracts as vivid demonstrations were presented below:

“No one is happy when he or she gets bad grades ... I always disappoint about myself, it is so sad. I feel very anxious about what will happen if my parents know about my low score? Sometimes, I worry to burst into tears, especially when I knew my score in a good English student contest in which I failed” [TG185-10-LF]

“...uncomfortable; worried, sad and afraid of being scolded by my mother” [DT259-8-LF]

“I am afraid of being scolded by my parents” [TG199-7-LF]

“I feel uncomfortable and afraid of parents and teachers” [TG177-9-LF]

“I feel so down and afraid of being scolded by parents” [TG096-7-LF]

“... sad and afraid teacher will tell parents and parents will scold me” [VL234-6-LF]

“I am so sad and afraid that parents will know” [TG070-7-LF]

“I'm not allowed to go on vacation in summer [TG085-6-LF]

“I feel a meal full of chopsticks waiting for me at home” [VL027-7-LF]

Or just in one “simple” word of “speechless fear”:

“fear” [VL215-7-T, VL037-8-LF]

And this is the best way to avoid such a “fear”: “...I will learn the lessons again to better memorize” (VL213-6-T) because memorization saves the situation for quality in education in the research contexts. Learners who can memorize better may become the best of a class.

As can be seen from the analyzing data, young learners, who were in traumas, suffered a lot from not getting good results in their study. In other words, they have been living in fear and the feeling of guilt, which always exists in their minds. This finding is compatible with (Hill, 2005). It can be said that teachers or parents' violence against young learners resulting in their traumas has been so serious that it not only affects them in the present but also turns them into the oppressors of their children or learners in the future as a vicious circle (Joyce, 2013).

In general, regardless of any reasons, both teachers and parents need to consider carefully the appropriateness of what they do in relation with their learners or children. If not, what they act and do would be like “a sentence to death” or contribution to ruin” a child in both literal and figurative meanings.

Implications and Conclusion

A number of implications were drawn out from the findings of the study:

Teachers should properly use their power in punishing their students because it causes a lot of harmful consequences to the learners both physically and mentally, especially the psychological trauma (Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004). The ideology that teachers have rights to punish their young students if they don't obey or focus on the lessons and students must memorize the learnt lessons by learning by heart in Confucian education (Tran, 2009; Starr, 2012) should be eliminated. From that, violence at school can be partly reduced or removed and students have not been suffered from an obsolete learning style anymore (Nguyen, 2015).

The nurturing of a child for his comprehensive development includes both physical and mental aspects. Parents should be fully aware of this so that they are willing to reduce or not create any pressure on their children for whatever reason. Too much pressure will deeply hurt one or knock him down. The suggested reactions to any circumstances should a wing-wing solution which requires more dialogues and *equal roles in their real influences on each other on the two sides of every sort of communication about learning or else* (Nguyen, 2017a).

As adults, teachers and parents should be aware that learning well or not is a learner's matter, too much interference into one's learning process would not help change the situation but also causes a lot of unexpected results as knocking one down, violating human rights, ruining one's future, or even sentencing one to death. Otherwise, teachers and parents should respect their learners or children in the ways they are respected by the latter. In this sense, every child has different types of intelligence as well as identity, demands, and wishes; therefore, the adults should not require

the same things from different individuals or ask them to be obedient unless they want to turn children into “the oppressed” or “robots”, who just follow the orders from human (Biesta, 2013).

It should be aware that violence would lead to violence (Freire, 2005) as a vicious circle, it becomes a “culture of oppression” of a country in which the young learners as in this study have not been listened or cannot able to raise their voices in any aspects of life. As a matter of fact, generations of “fear” or “coward” people would not be able to decide on important things in their life and this would lessen one’s life quality.

More than ever before, as human beings, young learners’ ideas should be listened even the ideas could be negative or opposite to their teachers and parents (Nguyen, 2017b). Their distinctive features or identity must be respected so that they can fully promote their own strengths and talents, then this turns to contribute to the equality of a society or elimination of oppression existing many centuries ago from feudal regime in Vietnam.

Generally, people should join hands to change a situation that has long existed in Vietnamese society. From that, children can enjoy a happy life and learning at the fullest sense.

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