

# Understanding Teachers' Views, Experiences and Their Strategies for addressing Aggression among Preschool Children in Botswana: The Case of the South East District

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## Abstract

Even in the early years of childhood life, some anti-social behaviours may manifest as aggression. Although the nature of aggressive behaviours may be justified or not, accidental or not, their prevalence in preschools is a problematic issue. Research links early childhood aggressive tendencies to detrimental effects on the psychosocial well-being of a child, either at an early age or later in life. Therefore, preschool teachers are tasked with the critical role of overseeing the development of children's social tools to regulate emotions during episodes that could lead to the manifestation of aggressive tendencies. Using a qualitative cross-sectional case study design, the researcher's purposefully and deliberately explored six teachers' perceptions of aggressive behaviour as well as pedagogical practices used to demotivate the manifestation and prevalence of aggressive tendencies. Data were collected from teachers, journals, and a focus group interview session in the South-East district of Botswana, specifically in Ramotswa, to accomplish this study. The social learning theory (Bandura, 1973) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory were used to understand teachers' views, experiences, and strategies in addressing aggression to understand the

problem studied. The findings illuminated that various forms of aggressive tendencies are rife in preschools with varying degrees of violence. This made teachers realise that there are thwart episodes of students' aggressiveness through differentiated, individualistic, and educative classroom management practices. Based on these key findings, the study concludes that there is a need for collective input from parents, teachers, and relevant stakeholders in efforts to prevent the emergence of and combat aggressive tendencies.

**Keywords:** Aggression, Aggressive tendencies, Preschool teachers, Social learning theory, Botswana

## 1. Introduction

The development of social skills is recognised as one of the cornerstone elements of early childhood education (ECE) in Botswana. As foundational social competencies are established during preschool years, educational settings become critical environments for nurturing positive interactions and emotional regulation among young learners. In this context, understanding teachers' views and experiences regarding aggression among preschool children is paramount, as it not only affects the individual child's development but also influences the overall classroom climate. In the context of the relationship between behaviour and the classroom environment, this study aims to explore these dimensions, particularly focusing on proactive strategies that teachers employ to mitigate aggression, a prevalent issue in many preschool settings. Preschools serve as crucial social environments where children first engage with peers and authority figures, laying the groundwork for social skills that extend beyond early education. It is within this framework that the emotional and social interactions of young children occur, shaping their ability to respond to complex social stimuli. Falla, Duenas-Casado, and Ortega-Ruiz (2023) emphasise that preschool settings offer unique opportunities for children to practice and refine their social skills. Moreover, the ability to manage emotional responses can either foster harmonious relationships or lead to antisocial behaviours, such as aggression (Waller, Hyde, Baskin-Sommers, & Olson, 2017).

Aggression is defined as any behaviour that inflicts harm on another (Hay et al., 2021), manifests in various forms, and understanding its typology is essential in addressing it within educational contexts. Current literature offers multiple perspectives on aggression, categorising it into subtypes based on intention, duration, and origin. For instance, Waschbusch et al. (2024) describe reactive aggression as impulsive behaviour due to perceived provocation, contrasting with proactive or instrumental aggression, which serves a strategic goal (Boccardo et al., 2021; Burgman et al., 2018). These definitions indicate that aggressive episodes often emerge unexpectedly, sometimes escaping the notice of teachers (Falla et al., 2023).

In light of the above, the relevance of addressing aggression in early childhood cannot be overstated; unchecked aggressive tendencies can result in long-term socio-emotional difficulties, academic challenges, and can pave the way to peer victimisation and bullying (Hay et al., 2017; Venter, 2012). Compounded by cultural beliefs such as 'lore lo ojwa lo sale metsi (that children are better taught respect at an early age because it is harder to do so when they are older). Which illustrates the malleability of young behaviours. Where this happens,

teachers are encouraged to adopt systematic pedagogical interventions to curb these tendencies early in childhood (Waller et al., 2017).

Botswana, located in Southern Africa, is characterised by a rich cultural heritage, economic growth, and social challenges. The country is divided into 10 administrative districts, two cities (Gaborone and Francistown), five towns, and eleven sub-districts, which contribute to a diverse cultural and socio-economic landscape. South East District, using Ramotswa village, is an enthralling case for examining teachers' views, experiences, and strategies for addressing aggression among preschool children in Botswana. This district is strategically chosen due to its diverse socio-economic landscapes, family dynamics, and exposure to both traditional and modern influences on parenting because of its proximity to the capital city, Gaborone. Labour migration, economic pressures, and lifestyle changes have contributed to shifts in family dynamics, leading to increased stress and potential disconnections among family members. Consequently, this rise in tension may result in greater parental conflict, impacting children's perceptions of relationships and aggression (Xuan et al., 2018). This makes it imperative to focus on Ramotswa.

Aggression among preschool children poses significant challenges for teachers, not only disrupting classroom harmony but also affecting children's emotional and social development (Falla et al., 2023). According to the Gender Based Violence Indicators Study, in Botswana (Machaisa & Dorp, 2012), there is a trend of conflict between women and men who are more or less likely to be parents in those instances. In addition, according to the report by the Sustainable Development Goals Botswana Domesticated Indicator Framework report of 2022 (Statistics Botswana, 2022). Botswana has young children enrolled in pre-primary education who come from conflict-affected families. Despite recognition of the issue, there remains a scarcity of literature on teachers' proactive strategies for addressing aggression in the unique cultural and educational landscapes of Botswana. Additionally, existing research indicates that aggressive tendencies—whether justified or not—can hinder a child's psycho-social well-being (Dimitrova, 2023; Schick & Cierpka, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative to examine how teachers perceive aggressive behaviours and the measures they implement, particularly in contexts where corporal punishment is regulated. This study investigates teachers' perceptions of aggressive behaviours among preschool children and the proactive strategies they employ to address these tendencies. The study delves into the lived experiences of preschool teachers, examining how cultural, social, and educational contexts influence their approaches to managing aggression in the classroom. By understanding these perspectives, the research highlights effective intervention methods tailored for the unique challenges faced in Botswana's preschool settings.

### *1.1 The Conceptual Framework*

This study used Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modelling of behaviours within social contexts (Bandura, 1973). This theoretical framework is particularly relevant in understanding how preschool children acquire social skills and aggressive behaviours through their interactions with teachers and peers. The theory provides insight into the reciprocal relationships among individual

behaviours, environmental influences, and the resultant social dynamics, thus forming the basis upon which teachers can develop effective intervention strategies tailored to the unique needs of young children (Blewitt et al., 2021). Furthermore, the study used Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasises the complex interplay between a child's individual characteristics and the broader environmental context, including family, peers, and educational systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). By utilising these theoretical frameworks, the study aims to illuminate the nuanced factors influencing aggressive behaviours in preschool settings and the proactive strategies that teachers can adopt to foster a nurturing learning environment.

### *1.2 Key Highlights*

- *Understanding of Social Skill Development:* The article emphasises the critical role of preschool settings in fostering social skills among young children, asserting that social interactions are pivotal for emotional regulation and overall development. Falla, Duenas-Casado, and Ortega-Ruiz (2023) provide a comprehensive overview of how preschools serve as unique environments where children learn to navigate social situations, thus contributing to the broader literature on early childhood education and social development.

- *Framework for Aggression Typology:* By analyzing various theoretical perspectives on aggression, the study delineates several subtypes of aggression—reactive, proactive, relational, and slow dissipation. This taxonomic approach aligns with scholars like Waschbusch et al. (2024), enriching the academic discussion on the nature and types of aggressive behaviours in early childhood and their long-term implications.

- *Culturally Contextualized Insights:* The research makes a case for contextual factors influencing aggressive tendencies, particularly within the Botswana cultural framework. By citing the proverb 'lore lo ojwa lo sale metsi,' the article underscores the importance of early intervention in shaping children's behaviours, contributing to the discourse on culturally aware pedagogical strategies.

- *Teacher Perceptions and Experiences:* The qualitative findings reveal teachers' acute awareness of aggressive behaviours in preschool settings, providing rich, firsthand insights into their experiences and perceptions (Ombori et al., 2016). Such findings highlight the challenges teachers face daily and underscore the necessity of tailored intervention strategies for aggression management in social settings.

- *Root Causes of Aggression:* The study identifies multiple origins of aggressive behaviours, including parental modeling and the impact of home environments on children's social interactions. It expands on Bandura's social learning theory to articulate how children replicate observed behaviours, thereby linking theoretical perspectives with practical classroom experiences (Bungental et al., 2012; Malete, 2007).

- *Importance of Prevention Strategies:* The article discusses various intervention strategies, emphasizing that addressing aggressive tendencies requires stakeholder engagement—teachers, parents, and the community (Garegae, 2020). This collaborative

approach not only fosters a consistent response to children's behaviour but also legitimizes interventions, grounding them in the cultural context of the learner.

- *Shift in Teacher Response Modes*: Following the prohibition of corporal punishment, teachers evolve from punitive measures to educative methods that encourage positive behavioural change. The findings reflect a significant paradigm shift in classroom management strategies, suggesting that educational interventions are vital for emotional and intellectual growth in children (Wilkins, Verlenden, Szucs, & Michelle, 2024).

- *Policy Implications for Teacher Education*: The research calls for integrating training on aggression management and classroom discipline in teacher development programs, advocating for an evidence-based approach to literacy in teacher preparation (Emmett, 2023). This highlights a need for systemic changes in educational frameworks to better equip teachers with the skills necessary for dealing with aggression.

- *Recommendations for Future Research*: The study encourages further exploration into the nuances of aggression in early childhood, particularly considering varying contexts and environments. It suggests that future researchers examine longitudinal effects of early interventions on children's behaviours as they progress through educational stages.

By synthesizing existing literature, drawing on teacher experiences, and proposing actionable strategies, this research article makes a valuable contribution to the fields of early childhood education, child psychology, and social behaviour studies, particularly in the context of Botswana.

## 2. Methodology

The study was both descriptive and exploratory, asked the 'what' and the 'how' questions respectively to determine the types of aggressive behaviours exhibited by young preschool children and the approaches and practices used by teachers to combat and prevent these aggressive tendencies (Payne & Grey, 2014). A qualitative cross-sectional case study design was employed, with a interest in three private preschools in Ramotswa village, in the South East District of Botswana. The study involved qualified preschool teachers in a cross-sectional case study design convenient sampling involving 6 teachers while providing in-depth details about the cases and a true picture of the phenomenon being studied (Bell & Waters, 2018; Creswell & Clark Plano, 2017; Yin, 2011). Following the guidance of Taherdoost (2016), this group was purposeful and deliberate in our selection of participants by identifying highly reputable preschools in the Ramotswa village. Our working assumption at this stage was that, given their reputation, the preschool teachers were more likely to have anti-social behaviour intervention approaches making the information-rich and more relevant participants to elucidate the research problem (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Based on this assumption, this is where six teachers were purposefully from those three private preschools in the village. All participants were female, held qualifications in early childhood, were within the age range of 27 and 50 years old, and had between 3 to 10 years of teaching experience.

Table 1. Participants profile and background information

Research participants	Age (years)	Gender	Highest level of education							Teaching experience		
			Primary	Junior certificate	Secondary	Certificate	Diploma	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	PhD	1-5 years	6-10 years
Teacher	18-24	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	25-34	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Female	0	0	0	1		1	0	0	2	0
	35-44	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Female	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
	45-50	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Female	0	0	0	0	0	1	1		0	2
	≥ 51	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

It is important to protect research integrity and participant rights and it was crucial to clearly explain the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, and participants' rights. An informed consent form was filled out, ensuring participants understand the study is voluntary and free to withdraw at any point. Confidentiality of responses is essential, and support systems were in place for those experiencing stress or emotional discomfort. Consent for the study was obtained from Ministry of Education and skills development (Botswana), ensuring research involving human subjects is conducted ethically and respects participants' rights. Two data collection techniques were triangulated. First, preschool teachers were asked to keep a journal in which they recorded incidents of what they perceived as aggressive behaviour for four (4) weeks. This was a deliberate move intended to direct teachers' attention to episodes of aggressive tendencies in their classrooms and to allow teachers to recollect their thoughts or perceptions on aggression. Secondly, two (2) weeks after submitting their journals, the research team convened at a place of the participants' choosing for a focus group interview. A focus group interview is considered an important strategy for collecting insightful and rich data from participants because the researchers were able to hear different perspectives of preschool teachers on aggression during their 'debate' (Creswell, 2012). Most importantly, the interview was more of a conversation among colleagues rather than an interrogation, so that participants were relaxed and open about their opinions about and how they combated aggressive behaviour in their classrooms. The proceedings were audio-recorded for later assimilation. To begin, the audio recordings of the focus group interviews were transcribed into text, allowing for a written record of the discussions (J. W. Creswell & D. J. Creswell, 2022). This step was crucial in ensuring that the data could be accurately analyse and coded.

Next, the transcribed data and records of teachers' journals were read, edited, and anonymised to protect the confidentiality of participants and ensure that the data was not identifiable (J. W. Creswell & D. J. Creswell, 2022). This step was essential in maintaining the integrity of the data and preventing potential biases. Using a deductive approach, the team analysed the data to identify emerging patterns and differences, and then connected categories to reveal underlying themes and relationships (J. W. Creswell & D. J. Creswell, 2022). This

approach allowed us to systematically analyse the data and identify key findings.

To improve the credibility of the findings and mitigate any biases, data was analysed individually, compared, discussed, and consolidated differences to achieve a consensus (J. W. Creswell & D. J. Creswell, 2022). This step ensured that multiple perspectives were considered and that any potential biases were identified and addressed.

In addition, the research team conducted member checks by sharing the findings with participants and seeking their feedback to ensure that the results accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives (J. W. Creswell & D. J. Creswell, 2018). This step further enhanced the credibility of the findings by providing an opportunity for participants to validate or challenge the results.

To further strengthen the findings, the authors of this work triangulated journal data with focus group interview data, which allowed us to verify the accuracy of the results by comparing different sources of data (J. W. Creswell & D. J. Creswell, 2022). This step added rigor and trustworthiness to the findings, ensuring that they were reliable and generalisable.

### **3. Findings**

The presentation and discussion of findings will be reported under the following themes; perceptions of aggression, perceived causes of aggression, and intervention strategies against aggression.

#### *3.1 Preschool Teachers' Perception of Aggression*

Data collected from journal entries and focus group interviews reveal that preschool teachers are acutely aware of aggressive tendencies among young children in their classrooms. Many teachers expressed concern over the alarming prevalence of such behaviour, describing it as both unexpected and troubling. For instance, one teacher noted, “We have kids fighting in class, throwing tables or chairs, going under the chairs, or just beating others with fists in class,” while another added, “They push, pinch, and even strangle each other” (Participant 1, personal communication, 2023). These observations underline the significant challenges teachers face in managing aggression in preschool settings.

Teachers reported that no day passes without incidents of aggression, and they conveyed concern about the substantial time spent managing these cases. They noted observable differences in aggressive behaviours based on gender, with one teacher asserting, “Boys tend to be more physical, while girls often resort to shouting and using vulgar language” (Participant 2, personal communication, 2023). This observation aligns with the notion of gender stereotyping in aggression put forth by Santos et al. (2022), who emphasises how societal expectations shape children’s behaviours.

Furthermore, the dynamics of aggression among preschoolers are complex; the distinction between aggressor and victim can be ambiguous. As Olivier et al. (2021) suggest, this makes the power relations involved in aggressive incidents difficult to delineate.

### 3.2 Perceived Origins of Aggressive Tendencies

Through focus group discussions and a review of teachers' journals, several perceived origins of aggression among young children were identified. Teachers noted that aggression often appeared to be instinctual rather than learned, with some speculating that aggressive responses may be modeled through family interactions. As Bandura (1973) posited, parents can unintentionally serve as role models for aggressive behaviour, particularly during conflicts at home. This notion was echoed when one teacher reflected, "Sometimes it feels like these children have already 'learned' aggressive responses from what they see at home" (Participant 3, personal communication, 2023).

Additionally, teachers pointed out that the nature of parent-child relationships is intricately connected to the emergence of aggressive tendencies (Mensah & Kuranchie, 2013). Maleté (2007) supports this idea by indicating that parenting styles significantly influence children's behaviour. One teacher recounted an incident, saying, "We were playing a game when Leadile pushed Odirile away just to take his place next to Nkosi," highlighting a common situation where jealousy and competition fuel aggressive behaviour observed in preschool settings.

In this study, seven categories of collated data from teachers' journals and focus group discussions identifying specific instances denoting causes of aggression emerged and these are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 2. Emerging causes of aggressive tendencies from data

Categories	Selected examples
<b>Role models</b>	<i>Parents are natural role models for aggression.</i>
	<i>If I ignore aggressive behaviour, other kids will copy what others are doing.</i>
<b>Reinforcement</b>	<i>I punish my students to decrease bad behaviour.</i>
	<i>Other kids laughed when Adoh pulled Tracy's hair and ran away.</i>
	<i>If I ignore aggressive behaviour, other kids will copy what others are doing.</i>
<b>Temperament</b>	<i>Some students have a bad temper.</i>
	<i>It is like they have anger issues, (laughs) they keep anger bottled up waiting to vent</i>
<b>Provocation</b>	<i>Sometimes fights start because they steal each other's food.</i>
<b>Unprovoked</b>	<i>A boy kicks a sleeping girl to wake her.</i>
<b>Jealousy</b>	<i>We were playing a game called xxx when Leadile pushed Odirile away, just so he can take Odirile's place next to Nkosi.</i>
<b>Frustration</b>	<i>Aphi was trying to tie her shoelace, after several unsuccessful attempts, she threw the shoe at the blackboard. Luckily, no one was harmed.</i>



From the findings of the study, it was established that frustration also plays a pivotal role in triggering aggression. For example, one reported incident involved a child named Aphi who, after struggling with her shoelaces, threw her shoe at the blackboard (luckily no was harmed) out of frustration, illustrating how young children may express their emotions physically when overwhelmed (Participant 4, personal communication, 2023). As Yuliyanto and Astuti (2023) noted, aggressive responses can often emerge from situations involving jealousy, frustration, and provocation. Interestingly, teachers also recognised cases of apparent unprovoked aggression, noting that “sometimes children seem to initiate aggressive behaviours when they are simply bored or playing” (Participant 5, personal communication, 2023). This perspective aligns with Falla et al.’s (2023) assertion that unintentional aggression can still lead to serious consequences if not addressed promptly.

Teachers recognised that not addressing aggressive behaviour promptly could inadvertently reinforce these actions. One teacher expressed concern, stating, “It seems like if we don’t handle aggression immediately, it appears to the children that we’re rewarding and accepting this behaviour” (Participant 6, personal communication, 2023). Such observations emphasize the need for early intervention to prevent the normalization of aggression in the classroom, as noted by Sukhodolsky et al. (2016).

The following revised narrative incorporates participants’ quotes and appropriate references, illuminating preschool teachers’ perceptions of aggression and their approach to managing it. It systematically addresses perceptions, origins, and interventions while connecting to supporting literature.

### *3.3 Participants’ Intervention Strategies*

Teachers outlined several proactive strategies they employ for de-escalating aggression in their classrooms, highlighting three key points from the focus group interviews. First, teachers emphasised the importance of stakeholder involvement in devising and implementing effective interventions. This aligns with Walumoli’s (2016) concept of a tripartite holistic strategy, which advocates for collaboration among parents, community members, and teachers (see Figure 2 below). Teachers were adamant that the community, parents, and teachers’ synergic efforts can effectively shape a child’s social skills and competencies according to the values and traditions rooted in the society’s culture.

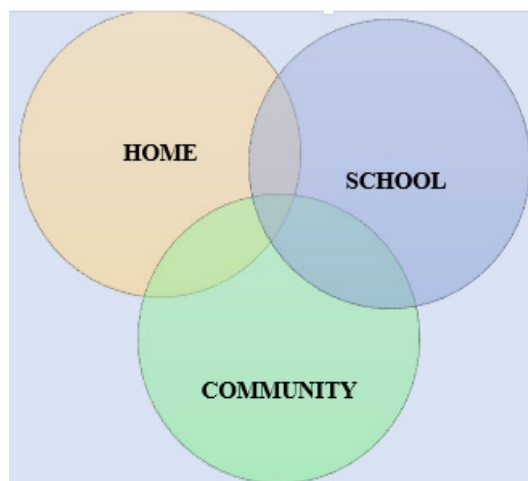


Figure 1. Tripartite stakeholders involved in a holistic intervention strategy

As one teacher stated, “The community, parents, and us teachers need to work together to shape our children’s social skills and norms rooted in our culture” (Participant 7, personal communication, 2023). Garegae (2020) further emphasises the significance of culturally informed disciplinary strategies, suggesting they are more likely to be effective.

On a practical note, one teacher remarked, “Sometimes involving parents helps protect us from litigation. *Akere batsadi ba re isa ko court* (because parents take us to court)” (Participant 8, personal communication, 2023). This highlights the dual function of engaging parents—both to legitimize intervention strategies and to create a protective framework for teachers.

Secondly, the data indicated that although interventions are sometimes too general, teachers engage in a systematic process to identify the root causes of aggression for tailored responses. As one teacher noted, “I don’t beat my students anymore. I try to teach them better behaviours and encourage care for one another” (Participant 9, personal communication, 2023). This shift aligns with (Sajid & Mehta, 2023) perspective that such educative interventions provide supportive measures crucial for children’s emotional and cognitive development.

Lastly, teachers expressed their surprise at the frequency of aggressive incidents, which reflects a misconception about children’s behavioural maturity. One teacher articulated, “We often assume kids know how to behave, but aggression is not just willful misbehaviour” (Participant 10, personal communication, 2023). This understanding correlates with (Sajid & Mehta, 2023) findings, suggesting that these beliefs may hinder teachers’ capacity to intervene effectively.

#### 4. Discussion

Below is a discussion of the findings/results of the study, organised according to the three specified research questions.

#### *4.1 Preschool Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences Related to Aggressive Behaviours*

The findings reveal that preschool teachers have a pronounced awareness of aggressive behaviours among children in their classrooms. The teachers expressed alarm over the prevalence and unexpected nature of these behaviours, which they described as common occurrences; incidents like fighting, pushing, and physical altercations were frequently mentioned. Many teachers observed that boys tend to display more physical aggression while girls may resort to verbal aggression, aligning with gender stereotyping observed in societal contexts. These behaviours may lead to other physical and emotional health outcomes such as academic failure, substance abuse (Matingwina, 2018), peer victimisation (Harold, Elam, Lewis, Rice, & Thapar, 2012), depressive (Natsuki et al., 2014) and sleep problems (Gregory & Sadeh, 2016).

The study further highlights that preschool teachers perceive aggression as complex, noting that the distinction between aggressor and victim can often be unclear as children may develop maladaptive social information processing Ogundele (2002). Teachers also acknowledged the cultural influences that may shape these behaviours in Botswana, referencing the proverb “*lore lo ojwa lo sale metsi*”, which emphasises the importance of early intervention. Teachers felt that the cultural context impacts how aggression is perceived and managed, suggesting a need for culturally informed approaches to address these behaviours. Notably Evans et al. (2019) also believe that both acculturation and cultural, social codes may determine the extent of exposure to aggressive events and the levels of expressed aggression among young children.

#### *4.2 Common Causes and Triggers of Aggressive Behaviours*

Teachers identified multiple origins of aggressive behaviours among children, indicating that such tendencies can arise from instinctual responses rather than learned behaviour alone. Factors such as family dynamics and parental modeling were viewed as significant contributors; and accordingly provides children with a direct explanation for adopting similar behaviours in their interpersonal relations with their peers and siblings (Milojevich, Quas, & Adams, 2021). Teachers expressed concerns that children often replicate aggressive behaviours they observe in their home environments. For example, a teacher noted that children’s aggressive responses might stem from observed conflicts at home.

The findings also pointed to other common causes of aggression, including jealousy, frustration, and social provocation. Teachers reported instances of aggression triggered during competitive games or due to frustrations when children encounter failure (like difficulty tying shoes). This by Grych and Fincham (1990); Monk, Ogolsky, and Rice (2021) regard it as an appropriate; method of conflict management and develop poor problem solving capacity and destructive conflict resolution skills. Furthermore, unprovoked aggression was noted, where children acted aggressively out of boredom. These results underline the intricate interplay between children’s emotional states and their social interactions.

#### *4.3 Proactive Strategies and Interventions Implemented by Preschool Teachers*

The data revealed that preschool teachers are employing a range of proactive strategies to

manage and reduce aggressive behaviours in their classrooms. Notably, there is a strong emphasis on involving parents and the community in these intervention efforts. The teachers advocated for a collaborative approach, suggesting that engaging parents and stakeholders helps create a supportive environment for children that reinforces positive behaviours. This is further acknowledged by Walumoli (2016), stating that a young child who lives under frustration within the family environment, tend to model aggressive behaviour.

Teachers reported shifting from punitive measures to more supportive, educative methods following a ban on corporal punishment. They emphasised the importance of teaching children better ways to express their emotions and interact socially, asserting that teaching social-emotional skills is vital in curbing aggression (Walumoli, 2016). Professional development training was also deemed critical, as it equips teachers with knowledge about child development and behavioural management.

Further, teachers highlighted the need for targeted interventions, such as functional behavioural assessments to understand underlying triggers of aggression better. Workshops focusing on social-emotional learning (SEL) were suggested, providing children with tools to manage feelings and cope with social challenges effectively.

Overall, the findings reflect a comprehensive understanding among teachers of the importance of collaborative and educative strategies in addressing aggression, ultimately aiming to foster a nurturing environment that contributes positively to children's emotional and social development. The integration of culturally informed practices is also emphasized as essential for successful intervention outcomes.

In the following section, based on the teachers' responses and the reviewed literature, we present recommendation to address the preschool children's aggressive tendencies.

## **5. Recommendations**

Focus group interviews with teachers revealed various intervention strategies for de-escalating aggression in their classrooms, highlighting three key insights grounded in both theoretical frameworks and cultural contexts. Below are the intervention strategies, incorporating Bandura's theory, relevant psychological theories, and cultural aspects to provide a comprehensive approach to addressing aggressive tendencies in preschool classrooms.

### *5.1 The Role of Stakeholders*

Teachers underscored the critical importance of stakeholder involvement in developing and implementing interventions to address aggressive behaviours in classrooms. This aligns with Walumoli's (2016) concept of a tripartite holistic strategy that emphasises collaboration among parents, community members, and teachers. The collective engagement of these stakeholders not only fosters a supportive environment but resonates with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that behaviours are learned through observation and interaction within a social context.

### 5.2 Culturally Responsive Approaches

- *Community-Based Workshops*: Organize workshops that involve parents and community leaders to discuss child behaviour within the cultural context. Highlighting positive behaviour models derived from local traditions can enhance understanding and cooperation in managing children's aggression.
- *Culturally-Rooted Communication*: Encourage transparent communication with parents to ensure they understand classroom strategies, helping to harmonize home and school disciplinary techniques that reflect local cultural values.

Moreover, Garegae (2020) emphasises that culturally informed disciplinary strategies are more likely to be perceived as appropriate and effective. Teachers expressed that establishing a partnership with stakeholders not only democratizes intervention processes but can also safeguard them against potential litigation issues, reinforcing the need for legitimate and culturally relevant strategies.

### 5.3 Target-Specific and Systematic Interventions

The data illuminated the necessity for interventions to be both specific and systematic, allowing teachers to accurately identify the root causes of aggression and tailor appropriate responses. This perspective aligns with constructs from cognitive-behavioural theories that advocate for understanding the underlying thoughts and motivations behind aggressive behaviour before implementing any strategies (Avika & Khanam, 2023; Falla et al., 2023).

### 5.4 Customized Intervention Strategies

- *Functional behavioural Assessments (FBAs)*: Conduct assessments to understand the triggers and motivations behind children's aggressive behaviours. This systematic approach can help discern whether aggression stems from frustration, jealousy, or environmental factors, enabling teachers to design targeted interventions.
- *Skill-Building Workshops*: Implement workshops focusing on social-emotional learning (SEL). Teachers can equip students with skills to recognise and manage their emotions effectively. For example, through role-playing games, children can practice alternative strategies to express frustration socially.

Teachers noted a significant shift in their approach since the prohibition of corporal punishment, transitioning toward educational methods that promote constructive behaviour. As one teacher articulated, "I don't beat my students anymore. Instead, I try to teach them better ways to behave in class and to care for each other". This transformation aligns with (Sajid & Mehta, 2023) assertion that supportive structures foster cognitive and emotional development, enabling children to make informed decisions during challenging social interactions.

### 5.5 Re-evaluating Perceptions of Aggression

Teachers expressed surprise at the frequency of aggressive behaviours among preschoolers, revealing a common misconception that young children inherently understand acceptable

behaviour. This belief can undermine teachers' capabilities to intervene effectively, as they may perceive aggression as a willful attempt to disrupt authority (Sajid & Mehta, 2023).

### *5.6 Strategies for Perception Shift*

- *Professional Development Training*: Organize regular training sessions that equip teachers with knowledge about child development, emphasizing that aggression is often a developing behaviour rather than a conscious choice to misbehave. Understanding typical developmental milestones can foster empathy and patience among teachers.

- *Fostering an Empathetic Classroom Environment*: Encourage consistency in applying positive behaviour interventions and guidance to create an empathetic classroom culture. When teachers model understanding and compassion, it sets a precedent for children to emulate these traits, reinforcing Bandura's concept of observational learning.

Additionally, insights from (Visser, Claudia, & Mark, 2022) combined with Gershoff, Sattler, and Holden's (2019) findings highlight the disconnect between corporal punishment and effective learning outcomes, further supporting the premise that aggression should not be addressed with aggression.

Presentation of a comprehensive and culturally relevant approach to intervention strategies while grounding them in established theories. It emphasises the importance of community, collaboration, and understanding child development to effectively address aggression among preschoolers.

By applying Bandura's Social Learning Theory in preschool settings, teachers can guide children toward healthier behavioural choices through observation, reinforcement, and positive role modeling. When interventions incorporate cultural nuances and responsiveness to children's emotional needs, they can effectively address and reduce aggressive behaviours in young children.

## **6. Conclusion**

By integrating Bandura's Social Learning Theory alongside culturally informed interventions, teachers can create a holistic approach to managing aggressive tendencies among preschoolers. These strategies not only emphasize stakeholder engagement and targeted interventions but also encourage a re-evaluation of current beliefs surrounding child behaviour. Cultivating an understanding and collaborative atmosphere among teachers, parents, and the wider community is essential to foster positive behavioural change rooted in the cultural context of Botswana's society.

It is crucial to note that aggressive tendencies are rife in preschools and they take various forms with varying degrees of violence. To thwart episodes of students' aggressiveness and promote an environment conducive to learning, teachers' classroom management practices must make students understand boundaries and identify with the norms for harmonious interactions. Combating aggressive tendencies in young children involves multifaceted practices and the creation of conditions that are conducive to effectively promoting classroom discipline and self-regulation. Adopting an individualistic and educative approach may help

to target the causes of aggressive tendencies and eliminate aggressiveness. This has implications in the application and relevance of social learning theory in response strategies against aggressive tendencies and disruptive behaviour. Collective input of parents, teachers, and relevant stakeholders is critical in preventing the emergence of and combating aggressive tendencies.

Evidently, young children's emotional well-being is overlooked, and according to (Emmett, 2023), young children need to be sat down and listened to. In one word this could be achieved through establishing a school guidance and counseling program. Counseling could offer an effective means of remedying aggressive behaviours among young children as long as both parents and schools appreciate the children's psychological and emotional needs of young children. Schools should utilize research findings to inform the conception and implementation of interventions against aggression. Teacher teachers should also integrate issues of dealing with classroom discipline and aggression in teacher development programs.

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Dr. Debrah Mogotsi and Mr. Kago C. Patrick were responsible for study design and revising. Mr. Kago C. Patrick was responsible for data collection. Dr. Debrah Mogotsi drafted the manuscript and revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. In this paragraph, also explain any special agreements concerning authorship, such as if authors contributed equally to the study.

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