

Research Paper

Factors Shaping Aggressive Behaviour among Key Stage 1 Students and Management Strategies

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Abstract: Young children learn all sorts of behaviour from their environment and are likely to imitate them. As such, parents, teachers and caretakers need to keep a vigilant eye on the behaviour of these students, especially when they display aggressive behaviour. In this study, factors that shape the aggressive behaviour of students in Key Stage 1 of a Maldivian school and strategies that can be used to manage them were examined using a qualitative approach. The study identified seven factors contributing to aggressive behaviour, including exposure to media violence, past victimisation, frustration, aversive events, parent and prenatal health, and developmental disorders. Additionally, four themes emerged regarding strategies to manage aggression, such as educating parents on parenting skills, interventions with behaviour observation, implementing classroom rules, and addressing children's needs. These findings will be beneficial for policy makers and educators in formulating strategies with regard to student behaviour.

Keywords: Social learning theory, frustration aggression hypothesis, education psychology, developmental psychology, Key Stage 1 students

Suggested citation: Hassan, K. A., Rasheed, F., & Letchamanan, H. (2024). Factors shaping aggressive behaviour among Key Stage 1 students and management strategies. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Futures in Education and Society*, 3(3), 87–106. <https://doi.org/10.58946/apjfes-3.3.P5>

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Introduction

Background of Study

Aggressive behaviours in children, though common during developmental stages, warrant attention when they lead to social disruption. Definitions of aggression encompass a wide range of behaviours, including those intended to cause harm, necessitating careful consideration of underlying intentions (Baron & Richardson, 2013). Aggressive behaviours are often categorised as impulsive or instrumental, with impulsive acts driven by emotional upheaval and instrumental acts involving premeditated intentions to achieve specific goals (Stangor et al., 2011; Del Vecchio, 2011). In educational settings, managing diverse student behaviours poses challenges, exacerbated by global influences and technological advancements exposing children to various materials, including violent content (Perišin & Opić, 2013).

Studying aggressive behaviours in Key Stage 1 is vital for early intervention, understanding unique developmental considerations, and mitigating potential long-term educational and social consequences. This early period presents a critical opportunity for intervention, establishing foundational behaviours for healthy socio-emotional development. Given the rapid cognitive and social growth during this stage, identifying factors contributing to aggression is essential for tailored interventions (Zarra et al., 2023). Addressing aggression in Key Stage 1 is imperative to promote positive academic outcomes, prevent peer rejection, and foster a supportive school environment. By targeting aggressive behaviours early, a culture of respect and cooperation can be encapsulated, benefiting not only individual students but also the broader school community.

The prevalence of aggressive behaviours among schoolchildren, ranging from verbal aggression to extreme violence, underscores the urgency of addressing this issue. Studies report varying prevalence rates, with percentages ranging from 17.7% to 55.8%, highlighting the need for targeted interventions (Kumar et al., 2016). Most importantly, reports of severe aggression, including sexual assault and rape in schools, underscore the gravity of the problem (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Whipp, 2021).

This study explored the prevalence and management of aggressive behaviour among schoolchildren of Key Stage 1 in the Maldives. In the context of the target school under study, Key Stage 1 encompasses students in grades 1, 2, and 3. These early years of formal education mark a critical period in children's development, characterised by significant cognitive, social, and emotional growth. During Key Stage 1, students typically range in age from approximately 5 to 8 years old, representing a crucial stage of transition from early childhood to primary education.

Problem Statement

The prevalence of aggressive behaviour in Maldivian schools remains inadequately documented, with limited research addressing broader studies on aggression (Engelhardt & Jayasuriya, 2009; Shifa, 2009). Records from the target school reveal frequent aggressive behaviours among Key Stage 1 children, some exhibiting symptoms of behavioural disorders like attention-deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Aiminath Eamu Ahmed, personal communication, February 2, 2022; Soodha Ahmed, personal communication, February 2, 2022). These behaviours, ranging from tantrums to verbal aggression and bullying, present challenges for teachers in classroom management.

Preventing the escalation of aggressive behaviour is crucial to mitigate potential long-term consequences such as vengeful tendencies or involvement in gang violence (Maldives Institute for Psychological Services, Training and Research, 2012). However, existing teacher training programs often lack effective strategies for managing such behaviours. This research aims to address this gap by identifying causes and developing intervention measures for aggressive behaviour among Key Stage 1 students in Maldivian schools.

Utilising antecedent-behaviour-consequence (ABC) charts at the target school, this study sought to understand the root causes of aggressive behaviour among Key Stage 1 students and develop tailored management strategies based on teachers' experiences and observations. By addressing these causes and implementing targeted interventions, educators can foster safer and more conducive learning environments for children. In particular, two research questions were addressed: Research Question 1: What are the causes of aggressive behaviours in Key Stage 1 students according to teachers at the target school? Research Question 2: What strategies are currently used by teachers to manage aggressive behaviour?

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The literature on human aggression reveals it as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon of significant interest in the psychosocial sciences. Defining aggression remains challenging, leading to inconsistencies across studies and impeding comparative analysis (Warburton & Anderson, 2015). It is generally understood as behaviour aimed at harming an unwilling recipient (Baron & Richardson, 2013), distinct from negative emotions like anger (Baron & Richardson, 1994).

Several theories attempt to elucidate the dimensions of aggression. The frustration-aggression hypothesis (Huesmann, 1994) links aggression with the learning theory, suggesting that frustration from blocked goals leads to aggression

(Huesmann, 1994). Berkowitz (1969) expanded this with the cognitive neo-association theory, incorporating a broader range of aggression triggers beyond frustration (Berkowitz, 1962).

Bandura's social learning theory (1971) emphasises observational learning and reinforcement in acquiring aggressive behaviours, highlighting the role of modelling, reinforcement, and punishment (Bandura, 1978). This theory integrates cognitive processes into understanding aggression.

In contrast, instinct theories by Freud and Lorenz suggest aggression is innate and biologically determined (Giacolini & Sabatello, 2019; Ogretir Ozcelik, 2017). Lorenz viewed aggression as internal excitation discharged under specific conditions, with social factors playing a secondary role (Ogretir Ozcelik, 2017). These perspectives offer insights into aggression's multifaceted nature, enabling a comprehensive examination of the underlying factors. One significant factor is the role of parental figures in shaping children's behaviour, as harsh parenting styles and strained relationships correlate with higher aggression levels in children and adolescents, especially in violent contexts (Lakhdir et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2022).

Factors Contributing to Aggressive Behaviours

Exposure to media violence is a significant risk factor for childhood aggression (Jia et al., 2016; Majali & Alsheran, 2019). Consistent findings indicate that media violence, through online games, movies, and television, increases aggression in children, supporting the social learning theory (Daly & Perez, 2009). Another crucial risk factor highlighted in the literature is childhood experiences of aggression, such as bullying or trauma, which increase the likelihood of developing aggressive behaviour. Victims may become aggressors themselves, perpetuating a cycle of violence (Lansford et al., 2007). Longitudinal studies support this, showing that children subjected to physical abuse are more prone to delinquency, while prolonged exposure to bullying negatively affects adolescents' well-being, leading to diminished self-esteem and increased social anxiety (Lansford et al., 2007; Pabian et al., 2021).

Children with neurobiological disorders such as ASD and ADHD often exhibit verbal aggression (Hill et al., 2014). Individuals with ADHD also face social difficulties closely associated with aggression and negative outcomes (Saylor & Amann, 2016). These observations underscore the complex interplay between neurobiological and social factors influencing aggression in children with special needs. Recent research highlights that children with ASD frequently exhibit higher rates of emotional and behavioural problems compared to UK norms, as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Hastings et al., 2022).

Similarly, a study on children with ADHD revealed significant findings regarding emotional dysregulation and behavioural challenges. The study noted a higher prevalence of emotional lability, tearfulness, and irritability, especially

among those with the combined form of ADHD. Specifically, emotional lability, tearfulness, and irritability were reported in 61.6% of children with ADHD, with the combined presentation subgroup showing a higher incidence (72.2%) compared to the predominantly inattentive subgroup (43.8%) (Chutko et al., 2022).

Challenges of Children's Aggressive Behaviours and Coping Strategies

Children with behavioural issues can disrupt the classroom environment through outbursts, defiance, or non-compliance, impacting the learning experience of other students and creating tension (Ogundele, 2018). Teachers face challenges in addressing academic performance alongside behavioural issues, documented extensively in educational research (Murugi et al., 2018). Put simply, educators often feel pressure to improve academic outcomes while managing disruptive behaviours, leading to the allocation of valuable teaching time away from instructional activities (Murugi et al., 2018). Thus, addressing aggression and promoting positive classroom conduct is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment and enhancing academic achievement (Murugi et al., 2018).

The literature presents various intervention strategies for managing aggressive behaviour, tailored to address specific causes. Counselling interventions and aggression management programs have shown effectiveness, particularly for children exposed to violence at home (Peralta & Dominguez, 2022; Tawfik et al., 2019). For instance, Parent Management Training (PMT) equips parents with behavioural skills to modify behaviour and improve parent-child communication (Sukhodolsky et al., 2016; Staddon & Cerutti, 2003). Alternative approaches include careful observations to identify triggers and contexts, understanding underlying causes, and involving key individuals in interventions (Tremblay et al., 2008). Further, proactive strategies for children with neurodevelopmental disorders emphasise structured classroom environments and tailored instructional methods (Braden, 2022). Lastly, addressing prenatal risk factors is crucial for reducing aggression risk (Tremblay et al., 2008; Liu, 2011).

However, aggressive behaviours in the Maldivian context lack comprehensive research and nationally adopted educational strategies (Braden, 2022). Thus, future research should prioritise understanding childhood aggression's implications for crime prevention and develop tailored intervention strategies for classroom settings (Braden, 2022).

While existing literature offers valuable insights into the factors influencing aggressive behaviour in young children and effective intervention strategies, there remains a need for context-specific research that addresses the unique challenges faced by Key Stage 1 students in Maldivian school settings. By conducting a case study in a targeted school environment, this research seeks to bridge this gap by providing nuanced insights into the factors contributing to aggression and identifying tailored

strategies for managing such behaviour. Furthermore, the case study approach allows for a deeper understanding of the contextual factors influencing aggressive behaviour and the effectiveness of interventions, thereby informing evidence-based practices for educators and stakeholders.

Methodology

Research Design

This research adopted a qualitative case study methodology to delve into the origins of aggressive behaviour and educators’ methodologies (Rashid et al., 2019). Through this approach, teachers’ experiences and documentary evidence of behavioural incidents within educational settings were scrutinised. The qualitative framework facilitates the exploration and evaluation of antecedents and subsequent occurrences surrounding aggression, uncovering underlying factors contributing to such behaviour (Starman, 2013). Case studies, valued for their ability to examine specific situations and causal mechanisms within institutional contexts, are particularly suitable for this qualitative inquiry aiming to elucidate the underlying causes of aggression.

Having worked in the field of education for several years, the researchers bring prior experiences and perspectives that may shape the understanding of aggressive behaviour and its management. Additionally, the researchers’ background in inclusive education informs the approach to studying behaviour and implementing interventions. While these experiences and perspectives may offer valuable insights, they also necessitate reflexivity and critical self-awareness to mitigate the impact of potential biases on the research process and findings. By transparently acknowledging the researchers’ positionality, it is aimed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of this study’s findings and interpretations.

Table 1. Research alignment matrix

Research Questions	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Technique
RQ1. What are the causes of aggressive behaviours in Key Stage 1 students according to the teachers of the target school?	Interviews, Document analysis	Thematic analysis
RQ2. What strategies are currently used by teachers to manage aggressive behaviour?	Interviews, Document analysis	Thematic analysis

Participants

As of January 2024, Key Stage 1 of the target school comprised 595 students spanning grades 1 through 3, with instruction delivered by a total of 33 teachers across seven classes. Notably, within this Key Stage 1 population, there were 33 students receiving

specialised educational services (Nazim Abdulla, personal communication, May 17, 2022).

The purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants according to predefined criteria tailored to the objectives of the study. This methodology facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon and has been demonstrated to offer advantages in qualitative research (Etikan et al., 2015). The participants’ professional experience spanned from 5 to 15 years, selected based on their status as the most seasoned educators among those currently teaching Grades 1 to 3 at the target school.

In this study, data saturation was achieved upon the inclusion of 12 participants. Five of the selected participants were educators specialising in the provision of special education for children with special needs in designated Special Educational Needs (SEN) classrooms. The remaining seven participants were teachers in mainstream classrooms catering to a diverse range of students with varying educational needs, employing differentiated instructional methods and techniques.

Table 3 presents the profiles of the participants. To uphold privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used in place of the participants’ names. These pseudonyms will be utilised to refer to the participants hereafter.

Table 2. Demographic profile of participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Educational Qualification	Teaching Experience
Neesha	Female	Bachelor of Teaching	5+ years
Mary	Female	Bachelor of Psychology	4 years
Areesha	Female	Bachelor of Teaching	15 years
Shahana	Female	Bachelor of Psychology	10 years
Reena	Female	Bachelors in primary education	5 years
Sarah	Female	Bachelor of Teaching	8 years
Emily	Female	Bachelor of Teaching	11 years
David	Male	Bachelor of Psychology	7 years
Machael	Male	Bachelors in primary education	12 years
Edward	Male	Bachelor of Teaching	11 years
Rose	Female	Master of Inclusive Education	5 years
Jade	Male	Bachelors in primary education	10 years

Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews, selected for their flexibility in exploring teachers’ experiences with managing aggressive behaviours among children, allowed for comprehensive insights into contextual factors contributing to such behaviours

(Adams, 2015). Document analysis of antecedent-behaviour-consequence (ABC) charts at the target school supplemented these insights, providing anecdotal records of incidents and facilitating discussions with participants during interviews.

After obtaining consent from participants via signed consent forms, individual interviews were conducted in person at locations chosen by the participants, to ensure uninterrupted recording and open discussion (Adams, 2015). English was the chosen language of communication to facilitate clarity and eliminate the need for translation during transcription, thereby preserving the conversational style and facilitating the use of full verbatim or naturalised transcription techniques.

Transcribed interviews were meticulously reviewed against original recordings to ensure accuracy, while access to ABC charts further enriched data analysis by corroborating and verifying incidents described during the interviews (Bowen, 2009). The integration of chart contents with interview transcripts during thematic analysis provided a nuanced understanding of documented behaviours, contributing to the research's credibility and reliability. Themes emerging from textual data review were recorded, coded, and repeatedly reviewed to grasp relationships between themes and events, ensuring in-depth understanding.

Findings

Through a comprehensive examination of interview transcripts and an analysis of the ABC charts, this study discerned 10 major themes pertinent to the research objective. Of these, six themes elucidate the causes of aggressive behaviour in children, while the remaining themes offer valuable perspectives on strategies for mitigating such behaviour.

Causes of Aggressive Behaviour

Poor Parenting Style and Parenting Bonds

The participants associated aggressive behaviour in students with the quality of parent-child bonding and parenting styles. According to them, tensions within the home environment can contribute to aggressive behaviours in children. David stated:

I think there are several reasons that can cause this. For example, some things that had happened at their home.

Rose highlighted:

Because at home with their parents they have the chance to communicate, solve the problem and learn how to behave with other people. That is their first learning environment, so if they do not have a good relationship with their parents, I think the aggressive behaviour may be seen.

Regarding parenting styles, the participants emphasised the negative effects of harsh discipline and aggression from parents. Sarah mentioned:

Dealing anger with anger is one of the common practices that parents use and that is not very effective.

Reena expressed her concern, stating:

Many of the parents who raise their voice, and are aggressive towards the children and verbally, physically abuse the children, may be, those parenting methods might harm the child and cause their aggressive behaviour.

Overall, the participants highlighted the importance of positive parent-child relationships and effective parenting strategies in mitigating aggressive behaviour in students.

Role of Media

The participants emphasised the significant role of media violence in shaping children's behaviour. Neesha highlighted:

Children learn by experiencing things, seeing other people, media plays an important role, if they see violent behaviour and if they hear those kinds of things, they will learn from those from media and they might replicate those, they might learn the words, behaviour and they might show it later.

Reena stated:

Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, and I think children may be more fearful of the world around them.

Shahana also echoed the same sentiment, saying,

Media creates a fearful world around them. And children can become less sensitive to the pain of parent suffering or others.

The findings from the ABC charts collected at the target school provide concrete evidence of media-induced aggressive behaviour among students. One chart described a student yelling, shouting, and displaying obscene gestures, behaviours likely learned from television and political unrest witnessed by the child.

The exposure of children, particularly those in Key Stage 1, to media content and video games is strongly associated with aggressive behaviour. Teachers' accounts and observations from the ABC charts reveal instances where children attempt to replicate behaviours observed in movies or games.

Past Experience as Victims of Aggression

The participants emphasised the significant impact of traumatic past experiences, such as abuse, on children's aggressive behaviour. Neesha highlighted how past abuse or exposure to violence can lead to aggression, suggesting that children may replicate such behaviours, while Shahana noted that students who have experienced trauma may struggle to express their feelings, potentially resulting in aggression. Reena underscored the link between past abuse and aggressive behaviour, highlighting its adverse effects on children's self-confidence and academic performance, and Areesha acknowledged that traumatic experiences can lead to mood swings and aggression in children. Furthermore, Shahana emphasised the direct connection between a student's aggressive behaviour and their past abusive environment, illustrating the profound impact of previous trauma on children's behaviour and emotional well-being.

Frustration and Aversive Events

The participants emphasised that certain aversive events and frustrations can lead children to behave aggressively. Neesha defined aggressive behaviour as occurring when children become upset or frustrated, particularly when they are unable to obtain something they desire. She highlighted:

Aggressive behaviour is the behaviour that is seen in children when they get upset, when they do not get something, they really want. The frustration that they show to us. It is known as the aggressive behaviour.

Mary explained:

Most of the times students clash when they get frustrated. The work handed out for them might be too big. So, they might not be able to communicate that. So, it usually comes out as temper tantrum or some other forms of aggressive behaviour.

Reena also associated student frustration with the prevention of goals, suggesting that students may become easily frustrated when asked to do certain tasks. She mentioned: *"Some will get frustrated very easily, sometimes when we asked to do somethings most of the time."*

Areesha remarked:

Students sometime dislike things said to them which make them frustrated. Such frustrations appear to be more in children having special educational needs as they are challenged by everyday aspects of life.

Difficulty in Controlling Emotions, Sensory and Neurological Issues

When discussing the differences in aggressive behaviours observed in students with special education needs such as ADHD and autism, the participants emphasised their difficulty in controlling emotions and communicating verbally. Neesha highlighted these challenges, stating:

Children with ADHD or autism tend to have difficulty recognising their emotions, controlling their behaviour, and dealing with social situations.

She further explained that these students often struggle to calm down and may remain emotionally overwhelmed for extended periods, even over minor issues. Mary echoed this sentiment, noting that aggressive behaviours in students with special needs is exacerbated by their reluctance to accept guidance from teachers or listen to advice. These insights underscore the unique challenges faced by students with special education needs in managing their emotions and behaviour.

According to the participants, sensory and neurological issues contribute to the aggressive behaviour observed in students with special education needs, setting them apart from neurotypical students. Teachers emphasised that these students often exhibit underreactions or overreactions to sensory stimuli, such as sounds, smells, or touch.

Shahana highlighted this point, stating:

Kids with autism or ADHD... have so many sensory issues which make them behave differently.

She expressed concern that these sensory challenges frequently trigger aggressive behaviour in these students.

Mary provided an example of such behaviour recorded in an ABC form, attributing it to sensory issues. The form described a student's behaviour characterised by pulling other students' hair and biting them during times when the student was less engaged in the classroom. These findings underscore the impact of sensory challenges on the aggressive behaviour exhibited by students with special needs.

Parent and Prenatal Health

Parental and prenatal health were mentioned by some, though not all, of the participants as potential contributors to aggressive behaviour. However, the teachers seemed hesitant to delve into this aspect extensively due to their lack of expertise in health-related matters. When asked about this, many participants paused before responding, indicating their discomfort with the topic.

Nevertheless, the participants acknowledged the genetic and neurobiological factors underlying aggressive behaviour. Mary highlighted the importance of

maternal health during pregnancy in shaping the child's predisposition to aggression. She pointed out the role of genetics in predisposing individuals to certain traits, including aggression, but also emphasised the importance of nurturing in mitigating these predispositions.

Strategies Currently used to Manage Aggression

Providing Parent Training Programme

All participants emphasised the importance of parent training programme as an effective strategy for reducing aggressive behaviours in students. They viewed parent training as a means to establish a common approach between educators and parents, facilitating consistency in managing behaviour both at home and at school. Neesha highlighted the benefits of parent training, stating:

In my view, counseling can help and parent training to manage children's behaviour is also going to be helpful... There can be a common strategy teachers and therapists can use which will make things easier to routine the children.

Similarly, Areesha underscored the following:

It would be a great help for the parents so that they can apply them in their home environment as well... So that the student will experience home environment and school environment as equal.

Mary emphasised:

When parents are given proper guidance on how to deal with children with aggressive outbursts, it helps to improve the behaviour and change the trajectory of these children.

Shahana stressed the role of parents in teaching children healthy coping mechanisms for managing anger and stress, stating:

Parents should teach kids healthy ways of controlling anger, how to deal with frustration or traumatic experiences... They should also teach coping mechanisms to deal with stress or aggressive behaviour.

Conducting Close Observation

The participants emphasised the importance of observation in identifying the root causes of aggressive behaviour and documenting instances in ABC charts. Mary highlighted the need to understand triggers before addressing behaviour:

The key is to observe the behaviour and find out the trigger point, so we can determine the appropriate response.

Areasha described her observation methods, including listing and taking anecdotal notes. Shahana focused on observing body language to pinpoint sensory issues contributing to aggression:

I observe body language to identify sensory issues. For example, if a child covers their ears, it may indicate sensitivity to sound.

Once the root cause is identified, participants outlined their strategies. For example, Mary suggested using short, calming phrases during outbursts to reduce stress. Areasha emphasised facilitating conflict resolution among students by providing guidance and solutions.

Setting Classroom Rules and Regulation

The participants highlighted the effectiveness of implementing strict routines and clear rules in managing student behaviour, including aggression. Neesha emphasised:

I remind students of classroom rules and use schedules to guide activities. This helps minimize disruptive behaviour as students know what to expect.

Similarly, Reena explained:

Setting clear rules and expectations for behaviour is key. Students know what is expected of them and what behaviours are unacceptable.

Shahana echoed a similar sentiment:

I display and enforce classroom rules consistently, reminding students verbally and non-verbally. Supervising adherence to rules is crucial.

Using Reinforcements

Emily implemented a star chart system as a rewarding strategy to reinforce desired behaviour, documenting it in the consequence column of the antecedent behaviour consequence charts. She explained:

We used a star chart to encourage compliance. Students earn rewards by following instructions, and in return, they receive gifts of their choice. This motivates students to refrain from undesirable behaviour for several days.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the causes of aggressive behaviours among Key Stage 1 students and strategies used to manage these behaviours. One of the themes identified in the thematic analysis as contributing to aggressive behaviour in children is a deficient parental bond. This observation aligns with Bandura's social learning theory (1971), emphasising the significant role of the home environment in shaping

children's behaviour. Liu et al. (2022) supported this idea, suggesting that children may adopt higher normative beliefs regarding aggression by observing their parents' aggressive behaviour and harsh parenting styles. Furthermore, Lakhdar et al. (2020) indicated that weakened parent-child bonds may lead children to seek external influences, potentially resulting in the adoption of aggressive behaviour. Similarly, Jia et al. (2016) found that children exposed to hostile family environments are more prone to exhibiting aggression.

The second theme is the role of media in influencing aggressive behaviour in children. The exposure of children, particularly younger children, to media content and video games is strongly associated with aggressive behaviour. Teachers' accounts and observations from ABC charts reveal instances where children attempt to replicate behaviours observed in movies or games. These findings align with Bandura's social learning theory (1971), which posits that children learn through observation and repeated exposure to certain content can lead to behaviour retention and replication. Bandura emphasises the role of media in shaping behaviour, suggesting that exposure to aggressive content can desensitise individuals to violence and influence their conduct. This supports the notion expressed by the participants that media exposure can make children "less sensitive to suffering."

The analysis also revealed a crucial theme indicating that prior victimisation experiences contribute to the development of aggressive behaviour. The participants' responses align with the identification of traumatic experiences, bullying, and past memories as risk factors associated with the development of violent tendencies and antisocial issues in children. They noted that children may learn and attempt to replicate these behaviours, a phenomenon supported by Bandura (1971). These findings are consistent with the results of a longitudinal study by Lansford et al. (2007), which established a significant correlation between early childhood exposure to physical abuse and subsequent aggressive behaviour manifestations.

Moreover, instances of aggressive behaviour triggered by frustration and aversive events were documented in ABC charts by special education teachers at the target school. One incident described a student's sudden outburst of anger and destructive behaviour after being prevented from going outside to play, while another occurred when a student refused to complete work from a textbook, leading to aggression when the teacher intervened. These examples highlight aversive events as triggers for student aggression, aligning with the frustration-aggression hypothesis (Huesmann, 1994), which posits frustration as a key contributor to aggressive behaviour. Teachers noted instances where students became notably angry and frustrated when their goals were obstructed, consistent with Huesmann's (1994) conceptualisation of frustration. Additionally, the research supports Berkowitz's (1962) notion that aversive events increase the likelihood of frustration and subsequent aggression, offering substantial backing for the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

The research findings also suggest that aggressive behaviour in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and other special needs is predominantly influenced by neurobiological factors, rather than environmental learning. These children exhibit distinct characteristics, including difficulties in emotion regulation and heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli, which contribute to their propensity for experiencing aversive events. Moreover, their challenges in verbal expression hinder their ability to communicate emotions effectively, leading to aggressive behaviour as an alternative means of expression. These findings are consistent with previous research, such as that conducted by Hill et al. (2014), which highlighted the prevalence of comorbid issues among children with ASD, including sleep problems, cognitive deficits, and attention difficulties, all of which contribute to increased instances of challenging and aggressive behaviour. The authors noted that, relative to the myriad challenges faced by these children, their aggressive behaviour may be perceived as less concerning to parents.

Previous studies, such as Adrichem et al. (2019), have demonstrated an association between prenatal risk factors—such as substance use during pregnancy, financial difficulties, and psychiatric disorders—and the development of foetal brain structure and function. These findings underscore the importance of providing expectant mothers with a supportive prenatal environment to promote healthy foetal development and maternal well-being.

Moreover, conditions like autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which directly influence children's behaviour, have been linked to genetic factors (Chaste & Leboyer, 2012). Therefore, it is imperative to prioritise prenatal care and implement precautionary measures to support optimal foetal development and maternal health during pregnancy.

Different strategies were adopted by the teachers to manage children's aggressive behaviours. Parenting training is a promising strategy for mitigating children's aggressive behaviour, supported by early research (Sukhodolsky et al., 2016). Such programs empower parents to regulate children's emotional arousal and teach appropriate social responses, aligning with B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning principles (Staddon & Cerutti, 2003). Through these techniques, parents can reinforce desirable behaviours, fostering socially acceptable conduct in their children (Staddon & Cerutti, 2003).

Intervention by observation is closely aligned with Tremblay et al.'s (2008) approach, emphasising the significance of initially observing aggressive behaviour to comprehensively understand its underlying causes before implementing management strategies. The authors stressed the importance of identifying factors within the family, classroom environment, or parental issues as root causes of aggression. Therefore, gaining insight into these causes is crucial for applying relevant and effective strategies (Tremblay et al., 2008).

The strategy of regulating behaviour through consequences, as observed by the participants, aligns with Bandura's (1971) social learning theory. Bandura (1971) suggested that actions can be effectively regulated by anticipated consequences, emphasising the importance of setting rules and regulations. This approach enables children to understand that specific actions lead to predictable outcomes. Bandura contended that children's actions are reinforced by these consequences, providing implicit guidance on actions yielding positive outcomes (Bandura, 1971).

The findings demonstrating the effectiveness of providing rewards for desirable actions and modelling behaviour through reinforcement resonate with Bandura's (1978) social learning theory. This theory suggests that behaviour change, including in children, can be facilitated through external reinforcement mechanisms. Tangible rewards, identified by Bandura as elements of positive reinforcement, play a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing desired behaviours. This alignment underscores the significance of utilising reinforcement strategies in educational settings to effectively manage aggressive behaviour among children. By implementing reward systems for positive behaviours, educators not only incentivise appropriate conduct but also provide tangible demonstrations of associated consequences. This experiential learning process, rooted in social learning theory, allows children to observe and internalise the link between actions and outcomes, fostering the development of self-regulation and adaptive behaviour.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Study

The study provides detailed insights into the various factors influencing aggressive behaviour among Key Stage 1 students. This information can help educators understand the underlying causes and implement effective strategies to manage and reduce such behaviour. By applying this knowledge, educators can tailor intervention measures to create supportive and nurturing learning environments that promote positive social and emotional development.

The theoretical implications of this study highlight the intricate interplay of factors influencing aggressive behaviour among Key Stage 1 students. By establishing a multifactorial framework that includes individual temperament, family dynamics, peer interactions, and media exposure, the research enriches existing theoretical models. It underscores the significance of developmental perspectives, shedding light on how early experiences shape aggressive behaviour over time. In terms of the practical implications, this research provides actionable strategies for educators, parents, and policymakers to effectively manage and mitigate aggressive behaviour in young students. Educators can adopt positive classroom management techniques to create supportive learning environments. Parental workshops can educate on effective communication and discipline strategies, while media literacy initiatives can guide parents and children in managing media exposure. Moreover, the study

advocates for policies that support mental health resources in schools and encourages collaborative efforts among educators, parents, and policymakers to foster a holistic support system for children's well-being.

The study faces limitations due to a small sample size, making generalisation challenging. Inconsistent use of anecdotal records by educators, further limits comprehensiveness, while the lack of prior research in the Maldives hampers contextualisation and triangulation of findings. Caution is warranted when interpreting the results due to these constraints. Future research should consider a comprehensive research approach incorporating diverse environmental contexts, including the home environment, which would provide a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between environmental factors and aggressive behaviour, facilitating the development of targeted interventions tailored to different contexts.

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