

CONSTRUCTING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CHILDHOOD
AGGRESSION THEORY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH SITUATIONAL
ANALYSIS IN TURKISH CONTEXT: A GROUNDED THEORY

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THEORY**

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ABSTRACT

CONSTRUCTING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CHILDHOOD AGGRESSION THEORY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS IN TURKISH CONTEXT: A GROUNDED THEORY

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Aggression is a persistent behavioral problem with long-term negative consequences and strong resistance to change. Culture plays a significant role in shaping aggressive behavior, and although prior research has offered general insights into childhood aggression across cultures, much of the literature originates from Western contexts, particularly the United States and Europe. Given Türkiye's distinct cultural structure, there is a pressing need to develop culturally grounded theories that reflect local perspectives. This study aims to construct a comprehensive and culturally appropriate theory of childhood aggression through a grounded theory design. The research was conducted in two phases. Study 1 focused on defining aggression and identifying its key characteristics to inform the sampling and design of the main study. In this phase, data were collected from 18 experts, including psychologists, psychiatrists, child development specialists, early childhood educators, and guidance counselors. Study 2 explored childhood aggression from the perspectives of parents, teachers, and through observation of children in Ankara. Theoretical sampling was

employed, and participants included 12 fathers, 12 mothers, 17 preschool teachers, and five children aged 60 to 72 months. Data collection tools included semi-structured interview, observation forms, and field notes. To ensure trustworthiness, strategies such as audit trails, thick description, reflective journals, memo writing, triangulation, peer review, and member checking were employed. As a result, the study developed a culturally appropriate theory of childhood aggression consisting of nine themes: behavioral antecedents, aggressive behaviors, behavioral consequences, intervention strategies, functions of aggression, patterns and manifestations, influencing factors, background determinants, and behavioral challenges and outcomes.

Keywords: Aggression, childhood aggression, culture, grounded theory

ÖZ

ERKEN ÇOCUKLUKTA KÜLTÜRE UYGUN ÇOCUKLUK ÇAĞI SALDIRGANLIĞI TEORİSİNİN TÜRKİYE BAĞLAMINDA DURUMSAL ANALİZ YOLUYLA OLUŞTURULMASI: GÖMÜLÜ TEORİ YAKLAŞIMI

ERYİĞİT, SÜMEYRA

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Saldırganlık, değişime dirençli, uzun vadeli olumsuz sonuçlar doğuran kalıcı bir problem davranıştır. Kültür, saldırganlığın şekillenmesinde önemli bir rol oynar. Mevcut literatürde erken çocukluk dönemindeki saldırganlığa dair genel bir bakış sunulsa da, bu çalışmaların büyük kısmı Amerika ve Avrupa merkezlidir. Oysa Türkiye, Batılı ülkelerden farklı bir kültürel yapıya sahiptir ve bu durum, yerel bağlamda kuramsal geliştirmelere duyulan ihtiyacı ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, erken çocukluk dönemine özgü saldırganlık davranışına kültürel açıdan duyarlı ve bütüncül bir kuram geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, grounded theory (gömülü teori) deseniyle yürütülmüş ve iki aşamadan oluşmuştur. Birinci çalışmada, saldırganlığın tanımlanması ve özelliklerinin belirlenmesi yoluyla ana çalışmanın örneklem süreci şekillendirilmiştir. Bu aşamada psikolog, psikiyatrist, çocuk gelişimi uzmanı, okul öncesi öğretmeni ve PDR uzmanı olmak üzere 18 uzmandan veri toplanmıştır. İkinci çalışmada, Ankara'daki 60–72 aylık öğretmenleri ve ebeveynleriyle görüşmeler yapılmıştır ve çocuk gözlemi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Teorik örnekleme ile ulaşılan katılımcılar; 12 baba, 12 anne, 17 öğretmen ve 5 çocuktan

oluřmuřtur. Veri toplamada yarı yapılandırılmış görüřmeler, gözlem formları ve alan notları kullanılmıştır. Güvenirlięi sağlamak amacıyla denetim izi, kalın betimleme, yansıtıcı günlük, not alma, veri çeřitilmesi, akran incelemesi ve katılımcı kontrolü gibi yöntemlere başvurulmuřtur. Çalışma sonucunda saldırganlıęa ilişkin dokuz temadan oluřan kültürel bağlamlı bir kuram geliştirilmiřtir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Saldırganlık, çocukluk çağı saldırganlıęı, kültür, gömülü teori



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EC	Early Childhood
GTM	Grounded Theory Method
SIP	Social Information Processing Model
VOC	Value of Child
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practices
ICPS	I Can Problem Solve Program
FSS	First step to Success
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Peer relations shape an individuals' development throughout their life (Rubin et al., 2006). Developmental psychology and psychopathology literature emphasize peer relations in early childhood, which has long-term implications in later stages of life (Sroufe et al., 1999). Peer relationships is a complex and broad concept and current research highlights aggression as the most common issue associated with it (Boivin et al., 2005). Aggression is a developmental behavior that starts from early childhood and is usually associated with psychiatric disorders (Ostrov & Houston, 2008). Furthermore, various longitudinal studies have associated aggression with academic failure, peer rejection, deviant sexual behaviors, depression, and delinquency (Bierman, 2004; Coie & Dodge, 1998; Dodge et al., 2006). Aggression has long-lasting, negative implications and is usually resistant to treatment interventions (Keltikangas-Jarvinen & Pakaslahti, 1999; Huesmann et al., 1984). Shaw and colleagues (2000) defined it as, "an act directed toward a specific other person or object with intent to hurt or frighten, for which there is a consensus about the aggressive intent of the act" (p. 398). Braine (1994) provided a four-point guideline to define and distinguish observed behaviors as aggression: has the potential to harm, is intentional, associated with arousal, and repellent to the victim. Carpenter (2002) revised Braine's guidelines and highlighted that aggression in early childhood has intent the potential to harm others. He further stipulated that arousal in early childhood is hard to detect, and the origin of the behavior might not be arousal. However, socialization during early years is different; young children initially consider aggression as a way of communication and are aversive to aggression to get their way. During preschool years, children are just starting to learn that aggression is not an acceptable form of behavior and communication. Therefore, young children might tolerate higher levels of aggression than older children. Furthermore, if

aggression is aimed towards inanimate objects, the aversion of the victim is hard to detect (Carpenter 2002). Childhood aggression from cultural context is defined as harmful acts that are socially learned behavior and shaped by social norms, expectations and child's cultural environment (Huesmann, 2018; Reebye, 2005). Ambiguous and overlapping definitions have led to overlapping characterizations of aggression (Casper & Card, 2017; Coie & Dodge, 1998; Underwood et al., 2001).

Aggression has been characterized differently throughout different periods of mankind's development (Dodge et al., 2006). These categorizations focus on the different perspectives of aggressive behaviors. Some of these categories can be listed as: proactive-reactive (Dodge, 1991), relational, verbal, and physical aggression (Coie & Dodge, 1998; Crick et al., 1997; Vissing et al., 1991), direct and indirect aggression (Feshbach, 1969; Olweus, 1994), and overt and covert aggression (Beale, 2001; Bernardini, 2005).

Aggressive behaviors usually begin during childhood and progress throughout life (Shaw et al., 1996). Children exhibit physical aggression at infancy, and start to display verbal and relational aggression after language acquisition (Cairns, 1979; Dodge et al., 2006; Girard et al., 2019). Besides age, aggression is also differentially influenced by gender (Ostrov & Keating, 2004). Initial studies investigating the influence of gender reported that boys exhibit more aggression (Parke & Slaby, 1983). Studies on Greek children also confirmed that boys exhibit more aggression than girls (Mouratidou et al., 2020). However, Crick and Grotpeter (1995) introduced relational aggression, and revealed contrasting findings. In this regard, Reebye (2005) also highlighted that aggression displays gender-based differences; females tend to display relational aggression while males tend to show physically aggressive behaviors. Other studies have reported birth order and existence of siblings as significant determinants of aggression (Lamb, 1978a; Stauffacher & DeHart, 2006). Older children are more likely to display aggression, as compared to younger children (Lamb, 1978a; 1978b). The presence of siblings is another source where children learn aggression (Stauffacher & DeHart, 2006). Research studies asserted that children with multiple siblings display more aggression (Tucker et al., 2024).

Various other socialization contexts are also crucial for behavioral development as siblings are the immediate social surroundings of a child (Körük, 2021).

Parents are another crucial element of socialization within the family (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). First of all, children who are placed in government facilities are more likely to display aggression than their peers (Şimsek et al., 2008; Vorria et al., 1998). Even if children live with their parents, marital harmony is also critical for preventing behavioral problems (Erath et al., 2006; Özbey, 2012). Children of divorced parents display aggressive behaviors more than their counterparts (Amato, 2001; Andreas, & Watson, 2009). As marital harmony is closely related to parenting styles (Chang et al., 2004; Erel & Burman, 1995), these have been extensively researched in association with aggression (Arnold et al., 1993). Children who have harsh, negligent, permissive, overprotective, oppressive, and inconsistent parenting tend to display more behavioral problems (Bandura & Walters, 1959; Yavuzer, 1999). Disagreement regarding child-rearing practices, also leads to marital disharmony and behavior problems such as aggression (Chen & Johnston, 2012; Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2009). Besides parental existence and dynamics within the family, aggression can be related to characteristics of the parent's age, education, and socioeconomic status (Conaty, 2006; Kadan, 2010; Karakuş, 2008; Tremblay et al., 2004). Children with younger mothers tend to display relational or reactive aggression more than children with older mothers (Conaty, 2006; Karaca et al., 2011). Furthermore, more aggression is observed in the children of women who become mothers at a young age (Tremblay et al., 2004). Findings are conflicting regarding educational background and socioeconomic status. Children of parents who graduated from university or possess higher degrees display more relational aggression, while low education level of mothers was closely related to high levels of aggression among boys (Karaca et al., 2011; Nagin & Tremblay, 2001). Despite the conflicting nuances, educational attainment of parents can be regarded as one of the determinants of aggression (Cabello et al., 2017). In terms of the socio-economic background of parents, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds display aggression more than children from middle and higher socio-economic backgrounds (Connor, 2002; Karakuş, 2008). Parents' socioeconomic status is closely associated

to the choice of school and peer group, which in turn is associated with aggression (Abduh et al., 2023; Sirin, 2005; Suna et al., 2020).

Teachers, school and peers are other significant elements of socialization outside the family (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Teachers are an integral part of the school and play an important role in a child's educational journey (Hattie, 2008). Turiel (2012) argued that children develop and construct realities by experiencing, reflecting on experiences and making sense of social interactions with parents, peers, and other adults such as teachers. High-quality teacher-child relationship plays a regulatory role for children's socioemotional development (Pianta, 1999). Children who have negative relationships with their teachers display higher levels of behavioral problems (Pianta et al., 1995). Furthermore, children with negative relationships tend to have higher absences and display higher rates of aggression (Kadan, 2010; Ladd & Burgess, 2001). Conversely, aggressive behaviors also lead to negative child-teacher relationships (Stipek & Miles, 2008). Classroom management is another implication of aggression (Rose & Gallup, 2005). To deal with aggressive children, teachers allocate more time to these children, have difficulty controlling these behaviors and continue with the educational process (Oliver et al., 2011). This leads to stress, burnout, negative educational atmosphere, and negative educational outcomes for the whole class (Oliver et al., 2011; Smith & Smith, 2006). Hence, prevention of problematic behaviors is key to effective classroom management and environment (Oliver et al., 2011). Understanding aggression is paramount to address the problem and teachers have been reported to face difficulty distinguishing relational aggression (Alvarez, 2007; Ersan, 2020).

Additionally, children with a higher absence from their preschool are more likely to display aggression than children who regularly attend (Kadan, 2010). Another study found a correlation between attendance in preschool and aggression for children with high-risk families (Borge et al., 2004). Children who attend preschool for over one year display less aggressive behavior (Loeb et al., 2007; Olcay, 2008; Yoshikawa, 1995). Vice versa, children who display aggression tend to be excluded and not accepted by their peer groups (Snyder et al., 2010). In turn, peer exclusion has detrimental implications for child development (Lynn Mulvey et al., 2017).

Childhood aggression poses a problem because it predicts aggressive behaviors in the future (Reebye, 2005). A study conducted by Robins (1966) revealed that children who were clinically diagnosed with problem behaviors tend to become adults who create problems in society. Aggression is also associated with various negative outcomes such as poor peer relationships, prosocial behavior, maladjustment in adulthood, antisocial behavior, difficulty in collaboration, sharing, following social rules, communicating, social interaction, self-motivation, and academic success (Coyne et al., 2011; Leff et al., 2001; Sprague, & Perkins, 2009; Sumi et al., 2012). These outcomes can be further aggravated by second-hand learning, such as media and technology.

Exposure to violence on television is one of the significant cultural influences on aggression (Dodge et al., 2006). One meta-analysis revealed that exposure to violence on television corresponded to 10% of childhood aggression (Wood et al., 1991). Bandura and his colleagues' (1963) "Bobo doll" experiment also supported these findings that, once children are exposed to violence, they start to themselves display violence without outside incentive. Violent video games have yielded an increase in rates of aggression is to play (Dodge et al., 2006). Long hours spent playing violent video games are indicators of aggressive behaviors in the long term (Anderson, 2004). Besides obvious violence, viewing indirect aggression, such as spreading rumors, manipulating people, and destroying relationships in television programs, also affects aggression (Coyne et al., 2004). Since exposing oneself and others to aggression has significant implications, extensive research and theories on television-based violence are not surprising.

Starting from the late 1800s, researchers and theoreticians provided biological and psychological explanations by highlighting focal points such as cognition, cognitive processes, instinct, emotions, emotional processes, biology, behavior, personal factors, situational factors, ecology, and environment (Krahe, 2001). Aggression-related theories are listed as biological theory, sociobiological theory, ethological theory, social information processing model (SIP), cognitive schema theory, the cognitive-neoassociation theory of aggression, social cognitive theory, psychoanalytic theory, frustration-aggression theory, excitation transfer theory,

theory of behaviorism, bioecological systems theory, and general aggression model (Allen et al., 2018; Bandura, 1973; Beck, 1976; Berkowitz, 1993b; Bronfenbrenner, 1977b; 1979; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Darwin, 1859; Dollard et al., 1939; Freud, 1922; 1933; Huesman, 1988; Krahe, 2001; Lorenz, 1966; Skinner, 1974; Zillmann, 1971).

Besides theories, culture is an integral element of aggression, and previous studies from different cultures established a general perspective of aggression in early childhood (Ostrov & Keating, 2004; Dearing et al., 2015). To comprehend the association between aggression and culture, it is essential to define culture and what culture entails. The term culture was first defined by Tylor (1871) as a complex notion consisting of knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, traditions, habits, and skills that individuals have as community members. Linton (1936) also defined culture as “the sum total of human social inheritance” (p. 17). In 1945, Murdock provided a list of 79 universal cultural items, which was later refined by Barry (1980). This list of cultural elements is divided into eight main and 79 subcategories. Aspects of culture are divided into general characteristics: food and clothing, housing and technology, economy and transportation, individual and family activities, community and government, welfare, religion, and science, and sex and the life cycle. Living standards and routines, rest, fine arts, entertainment, social stratification, interpersonal relationships, marriage, family, and kinship are listed as cultural practices under the main category of individual-family activities (Barry, 1980). The current study focuses on the individual and family activities and the sub-items of this main culture heading in Murdock's (1945) list as culture. Therefore, for the current study, culture can be defined as “the sum total of human social inheritance” (Linton, 1936, p. 17) within individual and family contexts. To comprehend individual and family contexts within culture for the current study, it is essential to understand family, mother, father, child, child-rearing practices, and family relations of Turkish culture.

In Türkiye, 93.4% and 6.6% of the population lives in cities and rural areas, respectively (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2023a). However, although the percentage of families residing in urban areas is high, families still embrace some of the rural practices and traditional values (Kağıtçıbaşı & Sunar, 1992; Sunar, 2002). Turkish

families are categorized as functionally extended because of close relationships and strong social support (Ataca et. al., 2005; Gökhan, 2008; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982). Emphasis on close relations and kinship indicates the importance and position of family over an individual in Türkiye (Sunar, 2002). Various studies verified that children of both genders establish closer relationships, emotional connections, and healthy communication with their mothers (Fingerman et al., 2020; Hortacsu, 1989; Hortacsu et al., 1995; Sunar, 2002; Zimmermann et al., 2022). Hence, the position of women in regards to inter-family relations is significant for family dynamics (Ataca, 2006). Apart from mothers, fathers and fatherhood are crucial factors in child care and development (Bozok, 2018; Ünlü-Çetin & Olgan, 2016; 2019). In the Turkish culture, manhood and fatherhood are shaped by dominant masculinity such as patriarchal and sexist beliefs (Boratav et al., 2014; Bozok, 2013). The goal of manhood is perceived as being married and having a child while fatherhood is perceived as an end goal both financially and in continuity of lineage (Bozok, 2018). The child is of significant value of the child in Turkish family dynamics and it represents the entity of the family (Ataca, 2006; Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2015; Erdem et al, 2022; T.C. General Directorate of Family and Social Researches, 2010). One of the most notable studies called Value of Child (VOC), investigated the value of the child in Türkiye and several countries (Fawcett, 1983; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982; Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005). This study refers to psychological VOC as love, joy, and positive emotions a child gives to parents, whereas economic/utilitarian VOC refers to the monetary benefit of a child and returning the favor to parents during their older years (Fawcett, 1983). With time, the psychological VOC increases and economic/utilitarian decreases (Aycicegi-Dinn & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982). This means that parents do have less monetary expectations and are rather satisfied by receiving love from their children (Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007). However, parents still have expectations regarding their children (Şanlı & Öztürk, 2015). Children are expected to uphold the parents' traditional and modern values, such as respect for elders, being confident, fulfilling responsibilities, defending one's rights, graduating university, being generous, being financially stable in the future, thinking independently and making decisions (T.C. General Directorate of Family and Social Researches, 2010). However, there is a distinctive difference when it comes to the term "independent" in the Turkish context

(Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). Parents refer to being independent as having economic independence and having a profession rather than building a life apart from parents and putting a distance from them (Sümer et al., 2021; T.C. General Directorate of Family and Social Researches, 2010). This shows that cultural context is crucial while interpreting the value of a child, thus highlighting the importance of understanding the cultural context of child rearing and upbringing practices in the Turkish context.

Child rearing and upbringing practices in Türkiye can be summarized as restrictive in discipline, with higher levels of control but warm in emotional atmosphere (Çorapçı et al., 2108; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1970; 2013; Yaman et al., 2010). Sunar (2002) also stated that although Turkish parents have a tendency to supervise their children strictly, they do not impose strict rules. Gender is another aspect of child-rearing practices, which plays an essential role in the Turkish context (Yılmaz, 2023). For instance, boys are encouraged to be more independent and aggressive, while girls are expected to be more dependent and obedient (Ataca, 2006). During the teenage years, girls are more under scrutiny and supervised compared to boys (Ataca, 1992; Ataca et al., 2005). Although child-rearing is stricter, corporal punishment in education is frowned upon (T.C. General Directorate of Family and Social Researches, 2010). Compared to physical punishment and other authoritative techniques, middle-class Turkish parents prefer to use reward, reasoning, and guilt-tripping as a way to deal with negative behaviors (Kircaali-Iftar, 2005; Omac Sönmez et al., 2020; Sunar, 2002). This preference for non-punitive disciplinary methods, such as reward and reasoning, may contribute to the cultural differences observed in children's expressions of aggression and their attitudes toward it.

The Turkish context of aggression may show variation depending upon parenting styles and cultural influences. Aggression and attitudes towards aggression may differ depending on culture, for instance, children from Western countries are more encouraged to express themselves than those from Asian countries (Knyazev et al., 2008). Therefore, Bergeron and Schneider (2005) deduced that children from Asian countries display less aggression than their peers in the Western countries. One study conducted with 24 countries, including Türkiye, revealed that Denmark, Iceland, and

Spain display less problem behaviors than other countries. Chile's frequency was the highest, followed by Iran, Türkiye, Taiwan, and Lithuania (Rescorla et al., 2011). Another study conducted in Belize, Kenya, Nepal, and American Samoa also revealed that the patrilineal countries (Kenya and Nepal), display less aggression (Munroe et al., 2000). In addition to frequency, attitudes regarding aggression may differ in different cultures. For instance, in Italy, aggression is also associated with social competence and assertion, whereas in China, aggression is associated with psychological problems (Schneider & Fonzi, 1996; Chen et al., 1995). One comparative study conducted in Greece and America revealed that American teachers consider aggression less serious than Greek teachers (Kalykaki, 2001). In addition, east Asian parents, such as Chinese and Thai, believe that aggression is a temporary behavior and existence is dependent on the context (Cheah & Rubin, 2004). When it comes to Türkiye, contrary to the findings of Bergeron and Schneider (2005), Metin Aslan (2020) found that Turkish children display and are exposed to aggression more than their American peers. Some researchers found that girls display relational aggression more than boys, which is parallel to existing literature (Gülay, 2009; İkiz, 2015; Metin Aslan, 2013). However, some studies conducted with Turkish children did not reveal similar patterns (Metin Aslan, 2020; Ummanel, 2007). During the preschool period, aggression can be regarded by Turkish parents as normal behavior and as a result of adaptation to a new social environment and socialization (Yıldızbaş, 2019). Similar to the study of Cheah and Rubin (2004), Turkish mothers perceive aggression as a temporary stage and a result of contextual factors. Furthermore, mothers feel disappointment and anxiety when their children display aggressive behaviors (Bayram Özdemir & Cheah, 2013). Although in different cultures, it is established that mothers, teachers, and children consider relational aggression more acceptable than physical aggression, it is not clear what is considered aggressive or which behaviors are within an acceptable range in the Turkish context (Doescher Hurd & Gettinger, 2011; Goldstein et al., 2002; Swit et al., 2016; Werner et al., 2006). Related studies, conducted with teachers, did not provide any information regarding acceptable aggression (Ersan, 2020; Dereli, 2020). They revealed that physical and verbal aggression can be easily recognized relational aggression is difficult to distinguish (Ersan, 2020). Hence, they tend to intervene more in instances of physical aggression than relational aggression (Dereli,

2020). Since aggression is a construct of human development that is closely influenced by culture, theories that investigate aggression might show variation in different cultures (Kağıtçıbaşı & Poortinga, 2000). This study aims to develop a childhood aggression theory in the Turkish culture, through the grounded theory method using situational analysis.

1.1. Significance of the study

This study builds on various significance and implications regarding early childhood. Initially, this study provides definition of aggression, and classifications of aggression in the Turkish context, apart from Braine's (1994) and Carpenter's (2002) conceptualizations. Hence, this study provides an operational and theoretical structure for future aggression studies in the Turkish context. Furthermore, since culture is influential in shaping any behavior (Ostrov & Keating, 2004), this study provides a list of behaviors that experts consider aggressive in Turkish schools, clinics, and any professional context.

Second, this study investigates aggression from a hawk-eye perspective. Various previous studies investigated aggression about specific variables (Bowlby, 1958; 1982; Chow et al., 2011; Karaca, et al., 2011). However, the current study tries to provide insight into aggression from a comprehensive point of view. Hence, this study asks questions about demographical variables, cultural aspects, parenting styles, relationships within the family, characteristics and frequency of aggressive behaviors, triggering factors, consequences of the behaviors, the environment in which aggression takes place, attitudes of people in the situation, reasons, learning methods, long or short-term outcomes, intervention methods, and challenges of aggression.

Thirdly, another significance of this study is to investigate aggression from Turkish mothers, fathers, children, and teachers' points of view to provide cultural context. Pioneer psychologists such as Piaget and Vygotsky emphasized the importance of culture and the child as an active role player in society by taking into account the fact that a child develops through social interaction (Fung, 2011). Furthermore, according

to Turiel's (2012) moral development theory, behaviors such as aggression and moral reasoning of that behaviors is shaped by cultural context, practices, social structure, and inequalities. Turiel (2002) stated that although certain moral principles are universal, nuances of those principles are molded by cultural norms and practices. Smetana (2006) also claimed that these shaped principles and moral reasoning have an impact on moral judgment which in turn influence behaviors such as aggression. Moreover, Arsenio and Lemerise (2004) created a new model that integrated social information processing model (Crick & Dodge, 1994) and Turiel's (1983) moral domain models. It was claimed that moral judgment, emotions play a role in understanding social cues and processing information. Since culture and social norms are embedded in social information processing model, elements of moral domain models and culture interact and play a role in forming aggression (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Crick & Dodge, 1994).

Fung (2011) states that cultural psychologists are aware of static forms of culture therefore, some issues might be culture-specific, which in turn provides different pathways for development. Existing literature has also proven differences in aggression depending on cultural context, as can be seen above. Despite this, it is striking that most of the psychological issues covered in related literature originated from America and Europe (Arnett, 2008). Furthermore, Miller (2005) highlighted the fact that participants involved in those studies were generally from the middle class. In addition to socioeconomic status, nationality is another issue regarding the representation of people in research. Regarding nationality, Arnett (2008) stated that although the American population represents 5% of the whole world, 70% of participants in psychological studies were American, and 80% of those Americans were from originally Europe. Even if we ignore the nationality aspect, individual and family contexts of the culture, such as family, mother, father, child, child-rearing practices, and family relations, show differences in different cultural contexts (Murdock, 1945).

One of the significances of the current study is that it includes cultural context into theories and create a culturally appropriate aggression theory. There are several dominant aggression theories, which are psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1920a),

frustration-aggression theory (Dollard et al., 1939), social information processing model (Crick & Dodge, 1994), social learning theory Bandura (1973), and many other theories above-mentioned. Among these theories, bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977b; 1979), the general aggression model (Allen et al., 2018), and social cognitive theory (1973) acknowledge environmental factors' relation to aggression. Hence, these theories indicated that social context as environmental factors might influence children but provide limited information regarding culture. Bandura (2002), in his writings, acknowledges the cultural perspective of social cognitive theory. However, in his article, he refers to culture as a nationality, and he only explains cultural differences in terms of a child's self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura 2002). He does not specify how family and individual context of culture might influence aggression. Therefore, it can be said that these theories do not provide any information regarding how aggression emerges in the Turkish context. Furthermore, all of these mentioned theories originated in Western countries for instance, Freud was from Europe (Jones, 1953). Furthermore, the need for creating theories in the Turkish context stems from the fact that Türkiye demonstrates consists of a different cultural structure than Western countries. Hofstede (1984) clarified various dimensions of culture, and one of them is individualism versus collectivism. According to Hofstede's algorithm, Türkiye is a collectivist culture with a score of 37, which is interestingly similar to Greece, with a score of 35. At the same time, the United States is an individual society with a score of 91, Germany with a score of 67, and France with 71. In collectivism, unity and belonging in a community are more important than individual and own needs (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Schwartz, 1990). Oyserman and colleagues (2002) supported the need for cultural context and stated that psychological theories originated from American and Western cultures consider individualism and ignore collectivism therefore, there is a need to include collectivist societies to comprehend human nature. Kağıtçıbaşı (1995) also emphasized that to conduct successful applied research, each researcher needs a theory, and that theory should be applicable to a specific culture. It is stated that for theories to be suitable in a specific culture, there is a need to develop theories rather than transfer original theories.

As the fifth significance, one of the significances of the current is to provide comprehensive theory in contrast to the limited coverage of previous theories. Some

of the theories focus on how aggression occurs (Allen et al., 2018; Beck, 1976; Berkowitz, 1993b; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Huesmann, 1998) and how these behaviors are learned (Bandura, 1973; Skinner, 1974). Some of them investigate triggering factors (Berkowitz, 1989; Dollard et al., 1939; Zilmann, 1971), some focus on genetic or inborn factors (Darwin, 1859; Freud, 1920a; Lorenz, 1966; Krahe, 2001), and some focus on influencing elements (Allen et al., 2018; Bronfenbrenner, 1977b; 1979). However, the current study investigates how aggression occurs, how these behaviors are learned, its triggering factors, the genetic or inborn factors, influencing elements and interventions, attitudes of parents-teachers-peers-siblings, challenges, background factors, and cultural aspects.

As the sixth significance, the current study has implications for early childhood education practices and practitioners. This study creates a culturally appropriate theory, and provides guidelines for teachers and other early childhood education practitioners. As described above, teachers are an integral part of children's lives and play a key role in intervening in problem behaviors (Hattie, 2008). Hence, this will deepen the understanding of aggression, making predictions regarding its origins, reasons, and sources of the behaviors, knowing probabilities regarding outcomes, and the intervention process are going to be easier. The outcomes of the current study enable teachers and researchers to comprehend what makes a child who they are. In turn, considering a child's needs and difficulties regarding classroom management and problem behavior will be easier by creating a positive classroom atmosphere.

The last significance of the current study is the need and gap within both international and national literature. In the existing international literature, two existing studies investigated aggression in young children (Ermann, 2019; Lazar, 1995). The grounded study of Lazar (1995) focused on media, while Ermann (2019) focused on mother experiences regarding aggression. Apart from these two studies, another grounded study investigated verbal aggression among adults by focusing on their childhood parent-child verbal aggression experiences (DeBlaere, 2009). Still, Doğan (2020) stated that there is a lack of theory that comprehends aggression as a whole by investigating from multiple dimensions. There are some studies investigating aggression from different perspectives in the Turkish context, such as

influencing factors, prevention, and revealing relations with other psychological concepts (Kadan, 2010; Diken et al., 2010). However, none of them establish a disparity of theories in the Turkish context; there is no grounded theory study or any other theory-developing study related to aggression or childhood aggression. Since various aspects of culture demonstrate differences, culturally appropriate theory in the Turkish context is needed.

Consequently, Hardin and colleagues (2014) also supported the abovementioned insight by specifying the gap regarding the cultural validity of theories developed in psychology and social sciences. To fulfill the gap, there is a need for understanding the aggression in the specific culture and, in turn, a need to develop a culturally appropriate theory of aggression. Based on the significance abovementioned and the gap specified in the related literature, the purpose of the current study is to develop a theory of childhood aggression as a whole, investigating from different dimensions to provide a culturally sensitive and appropriate theory. To achieve this goal, two consecutive studies, Study 1 and Study 2, were planned to investigate childhood aggression and construct a childhood aggression theory. To reach for answers, the following research questions were proposed for Study 1 and Study 2.

Research questions for Study 1:

1. What is the definition of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?
 - 1.1. What are the characteristics of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?
 - 1.2. What are the categories of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?
 - 1.2.1. What are the characteristics of each category of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?

Research questions for Study2:

1. How does childhood aggression occur?
 - 1.1. What are the dimensions and characteristics of childhood aggression?
 - 1.2. How does childhood aggression emerge depending on specified dimensions?
2. How does culture interact with childhood aggression?

2.1. How do individual and family contexts of culture interact with childhood aggression in the Turkish context?

1.2. Definition of Important Terms

Aggression: Aggression is “behavior that is aimed at harming or injuring another person or persons” (Parke & Slaby, 1983, p. 50). Anderson and Bushman (2002) also defined aggression similarly but included hurting self or others who do not wish to avoid any harm.

Childhood Aggression: Childhood aggression is defined as acts that have the potential to harm, hurt or damage (Braine, 1994; Carpenter, 2002). Childhood aggression is a part of the developmental process linked with limited developmental capabilities such as cognition, emotional regulation, and verbal skill and so on (Ferris & Grisso, 1996; Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Gredanus et al., 1992).

Culture: Culture is the accumulation of values, beliefs, and identity that is passed down from generation to generation (Tudge, 2008). Culture for this study can be defined as “the sum total of human social inheritance” (Linton, 1936 p. 17) within individual and family contexts.

Individual and family context of culture: Individual and family context of culture refers to universal cultural values specified by Murdock (1945). It refers to the individual and family activities. Each social and human construct related to the individual and family is the main focus such as family, marriage, kinship, and interpersonal relationships (Berry et. al, 2021).

Culturally appropriate: In the literature, many other terms are used for the term “culturally appropriate. Some of these terms are culturally sensitive, culturally responsive, culturally respective, culturally rooted, culturally congruent, and culturally relevant (Gay, 2010; Singh, 2011; Yamauchi, 2005). Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) emphasize the child’s development, child, cultural and social context (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Charlesworth, 1998). Bredekamp and

Copple (1997) state that the social and cultural context of children are key elements to enhance learning experiences. Culturally appropriate means taking specific culture and social context into account to achieve DAP (Charlesworth, 1998).



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a detailed examination of the theoretical background of aggression, with a specific focus on childhood aggression. The explanation is organized into nine main sections: definition, categorization, key theories, contributing factors, development, cognitive-behavioral aspects, cultural influences, intervention strategies, and a review of previous research.

2.1. Defining aggression

Bandura (1983) defined aggression as “complex events that include not only injurious behavior but judgmental factors that lead people to attach aggression labels to some forms of harmful conduct but not to others” (p. 2). Given its complexity, Coie and Dodge (1998) proposed four criteria for defining aggression: aggressive behaviors are intentional, have the potential to cause harm, occur during a heightened physical state, and are perceived as unpleasant by the victim.

Kazdin (1995) categorized various problem behaviors, such as fighting, bullying, and verbal abuse, as examples of aggressive behavior. Although aggression is often linked to physical harm, it also includes psychological harm, such as excluding a peer or humiliating a bullied child (Abell et al., 2001). However, perceptions of aggression vary based on factors such as age, socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, physical appearance, and social standing (Bandura, 1983). In this regard, the severity of aggression as a problem differs across age groups, is influenced by different mechanisms, and manifests in various forms (Barnes et al., 2014).

Aggression is a prevalent social misconduct in early childhood. According to the American Psychiatric Association (1994), 2% to 16% of children are diagnosed with

psychological disorders in which aggression is a symptom. Early signs of aggression may lead to negative developmental outcomes (Abell et al., 2001). Furthermore, the American Psychiatric Association (1994) stated that early aggression often persists into adolescence and adulthood.

Aggression is also a key symptom in various conditions, including conduct disorder, externalizing and disruptive behavior problems, and antisocial behaviors (Hendriks et al., 2018). Therefore, childhood aggression is not merely a behavioral issue but a significant concern with financial and social consequences that impact children, parents, relatives, schools, peers, and the broader community (Dretzke et al., 2005). Due to its association with multiple conditions and its long-term negative implications, early intervention is crucial for healthy development (Johnson et al., 2014). Without appropriate intervention, children who display aggression are at risk of negative outcomes, including peer rejection, poor academic performance, substance abuse, teenage parenthood, criminal behavior, and delinquency (Kazdin, 1995).

2.2. Categorization of aggression

Aggression is a multifaceted concept, and various researchers have classified its types from different perspectives (Underwood et al., 2001). Some examples of these classifications include direct vs. indirect aggression (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Buss, 1961), physical, verbal, and relational aggression (Buss, 1961; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), reactive vs. proactive aggression (Dodge & Coie, 1987), overt vs. covert aggression (Crick, 1996; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), expressive aggression (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), physical vs. social aggression (Galen & Underwood, 1997; Paquette & Underwood, 1999), and instrumental vs. hostile aggression (Feshbach, 1964), among others. Additionally, some of these categories overlap, adding to the complexity of the concept (Björkqvist, 2001). In this section, four different categorizations of aggression are examined in detail.

2.2.1. Direct and indirect aggression

Feshbach (1969) was the first to use the term ‘indirect aggression’, which is defined as behavioral acts aimed at harming others but delivered covertly and indirectly,

making the aggressors and their behaviors difficult to identify (Björkqvist et al., 1992; Lagerspetz et al., 1988; Warren et al., 2011). Examples of indirect aggression include gossiping, spreading rumors, socially excluding others from friend groups, using negative nonverbal expressions, and revealing secrets (Coyne et al., 2006; Galen & Underwood, 1997; Lagerspetz et al., 1988). In contrast, 'indirect aggression' involves open, face-to-face negative acts intended to attack the victim (Olweus, 1994). Bodily and verbal threats, as well as physical harm, are considered forms of direct aggression (Olweus, 1996).

2.2.2. Reactive and proactive aggression

Raine and colleagues (2006) stated that the key difference between reactive and proactive aggression lies in intrinsic motivation. This means that the reasoning and motivation behind aggression are clear to the individual displaying the aggression but not to outsiders. Reactive aggression occurs as an impulse reaction to a threat, provocation, frustration, defense or any negative emotions (Vitaro & Brendgen, 2005). In contrast, proactive aggression is linked to the social learning model of aggression, where children learn to behave aggressively through reinforcement and reward (Bandura, 1983; Vitaro & Brendgen, 2005). For instance, fighting over authority is considered proactive aggression, while damaging toys due to anger is seen as reactive aggression (Raine et al., 2006). Proactive aggression is associated with poor peer relations (Brown et al., 1996), while reactive aggression is linked to poor information processing skills (Crick & Dodge, 1996).

2.2.3. Overt and covert aggression

Overt and covert aggression are distinguished based on how behavior is expressed, specifically whether it is observable or not (Underwood et al., 2001). Overt aggression consists of observable and confrontational behaviors, while covert aggression involves more subtle behaviors that are difficult to detect (Beale, 2001; Bernardini, 2005). Hitting and biting are examples of overt aggression, whereas nonverbally excluding peers from play is an example of covert aggression (Crick et al., 1999; Underwood et al., 2001).

2.2.4. Physical, verbal, and relational aggression

Ostrov and Crick (2007) identified different forms of physical and relational aggression. Buss (1961) also categorized aggression as physical and verbal. Verbal aggression refers to communication intended to harm or hurt another person (Vissing et al., 1991). Physical aggression, on the other hand, is defined as “the intent to hurt another individual using physical force or the threat of physical harm” (Ostrov et al., 2008, p. 664).

Crick first introduced the concept of relational aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), using the term to describe overt or covert behaviors intended to harm others by damaging or threatening to damage relationships (Crick et al., 1999). Crick and colleagues (2007) identified the key distinguishing element of relational aggression as the focus on relationships. While relational aggression may include verbal threats, these threats must specifically target relationships to be classified as such. In contrast, verbal aggression does not include verbal threats aimed at relationships (Crick et al., 2007).

Another issue is that relational aggression can be both proactive and reactive (Crick et al., 1999). An example of proactive relational aggression is when a child says, “If you do not give me a teddy bear, you cannot be my friend.” In contrast, reactive relational aggression might occur when a child says, “You are not invited to my party” in response to being excluded from a playgroup or bullied (Ostrov & Crick, 2007).

As evident from the previous statements, physical aggression provides concrete evidence of aggression, such as hitting, beating up, and pushing. In contrast, relational aggression harms social relationships by excluding individuals from a group, spreading rumors, or gossiping about them (Crick et al., 1997).

2.3. Development of aggression

Ostrov and colleagues (2008) stated that aggressive behaviors are most prevalent among children aged 2 to 5 who display signs of typical development rather than

among other age groups. Aggression, as a notable characteristic of early childhood, continues through middle childhood and adolescence, although its form varies across age groups (Ostrov et al., 2008).

Tremblay and his colleagues (2004) argued that aggression is an inborn trait because, from birth, babies display signs of aggression, such as biting and kicking. This suggests that aggression begins at birth, peaks between the ages of 2 and 3, and starts to decline around age 4 (Alink et al., 2006). As children mature, their cognitive processing skills improve, and they learn to manage their anger more effectively (Murray-Close & Ostrov, 2009).

Aggression is a product of affective processes with a stressor origin, cognitive processing, aggression potential, individual-related factors, and social learning, as illustrated in Figure 2.1 (Geen, 1998, p. 3). Therefore, developmental factors related to aggression may vary depending on the individual.

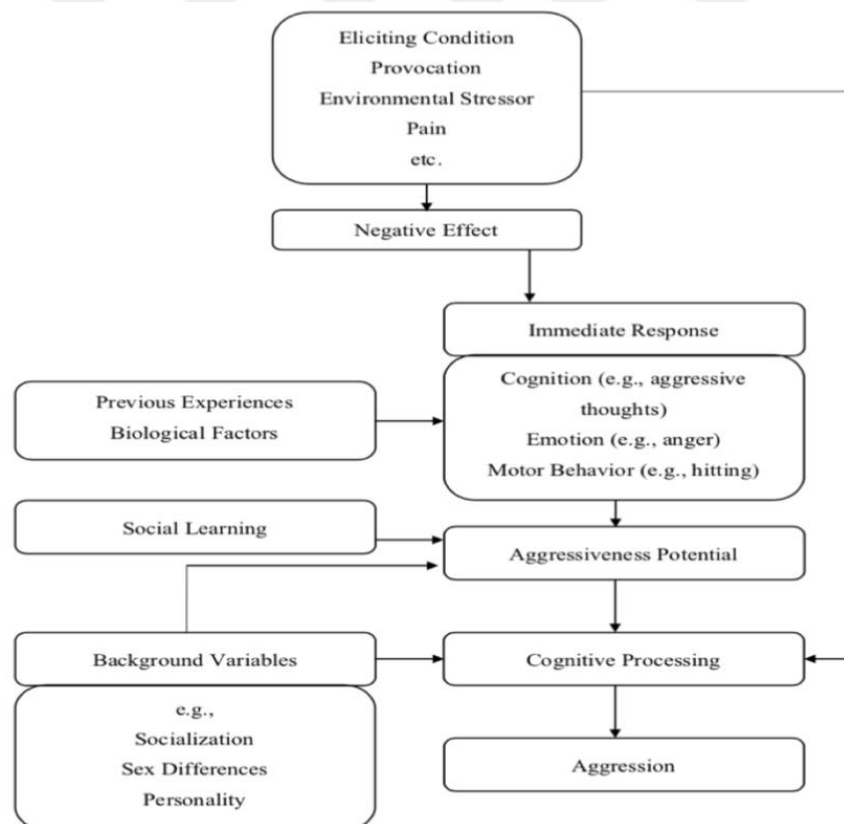


Figure 2.1. Processes of affective aggression

2.4. Determinant of aggression

2.4.1. Sex and age

Aggression is a phenomenon that varies between sexes, with males being given more freedom in regards to aggression. Therefore, males tend to display more physical and verbal aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). However, some studies suggest that females display more aggressive behaviors, but males tend to have more behavior problems (Kargı & Erkan, 2004; Mavi Dervişoğlu, 2007). Ostrov and Keating (2004) found that males tend to display physical aggression, while females tend to display relational aggression. Additionally, it has been found that 80% of children begin to display physical aggression at 17 months of age (Tremblay et al., 1999). Studies have shown that the types of aggression children display differ across age groups. In line with these findings, Karakuş (2008) found that four- to five-year-olds display more relational aggression than five- to six-year-olds, while Kadan (2010) found that six-year-olds display more physical aggression than younger children. Despite these findings, some studies fail to demonstrate the impact of age on aggression (Alisinanoğlu & Kesicioğlu, 2010; Çorapçı et al., 2010).

2.4.2. Mother and Father

Having or not having a mother and father is associated with behavior problems. In this regard, it is reported that children who live in child protection and social security agencies demonstrate more behavior problems than children who have both a mother and father (Şimşek et al., 2008). Furthermore, teachers also believe that aggressive behaviors start prior to formal education and originate from home (Kök et al., 2008). In addition to having or not having a mother and father, having marital disharmony in a family is also associated with behavior problems (Özbey, 2012). Regarding family, family structures have an impact on aggression; for example, children with divorced parents tend to express aggression more than children who have both mothers and fathers (Türkaskan, 2007). In the same way, parenting styles are also influential in socialization and the development of aggression (Arnold et al., 1993). Yavuzer (1999) stated that overprotective, negligent, oppressive, overly intrusive

attitudes of parents can lead children to behave aggressively. Furthermore, Bandura and Walters (1959) claimed that aggression is closely related to inconsistent, harsh, and permissive parenting. Moreover, parents might adopt different parenting styles, leading to interparental conflict, which in turn is associated with aggression (O'Leary & Vidair, 2005). Previous studies found that agreement on parenting styles and parents' supporting each other's parenting styles lead to marital harmony and better child outcomes (Meteyer & Perry-Jenkins, 2009; Martin et al., 2007). Complementary to this, Chen and Johnston (2012) claimed that conflict regarding child-rearing practices induces problem behaviors such as aggression. One of the factors that is related to aggression is the age of parents. Children who have mothers between the ages of 31 and 35 display more relational aggression than children whose mother is younger (Karaca et al., 2011). Furthermore, mothers of children who show aggressive behaviors tend to become mothers at a young age (Tremblay et al., 2004). One last influential element is the educational and economic status. Children whose mothers and fathers graduated from university or higher education tend to display more relational aggression than children whose mothers and fathers graduated from primary school (Karaca et al., 2011). Moreover, children from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to display relational aggression more than children from middle and high socioeconomic backgrounds (Karakuş, 2008).

2.4.3. Siblings

Siblings are an essential part of children's life, and it is claimed that children tend to learn aggression from their siblings rather than their peers (Stauffacher & DeHart, 2006). Furthermore, it is also found that the number of siblings is also influential in terms of aggression. For instance, children who have two siblings display more problem behavior than children with a single sibling (Şehirli, 2007). However, research regarding the number of siblings reveals conflicting findings. For example, Alisinanoğlu and Kesicioğlu (2010) emphasized that there is no association between problem behavior and the number of siblings. When it comes to birth order, older children are likely to behave aggressively towards younger siblings, while younger children tend to model their older siblings and submit to older children (Lamb, 1978a; 1978b).

2.4.4. School and peers

Aggression has an effect on children's school environment because it has been found that peer acceptance of aggressive children is lower than that of children who do not display aggressive behaviors (Snyder et al., 2010). School attendance also has an impact on aggression; for instance, children with low attendance in preschool tend to display more aggressive behaviors than children who attend regularly (Kadan, 2010). Regarding the duration of preschool education, some studies have found that children who attend preschool for more than one year tend to display less problem behavior (Olçay, 2008), while some studies have found the opposite claim (Özbey & Alisinanoğlu, 2009). One study revealed that children who attend public school tend to have more aggressive behavior than children who attend private school (Mavi Dervişoğlu, 2007).

2.4.5. Media

One of the cultural influences on children is media (Dodge et al., 2006). One of the most significant examples of this influence in history is the Bobo doll experiment conducted by Bandura and his colleagues (1963). This experiment demonstrated a strong connection between watching television and increased aggression. Moreover, media also portray gender-specific issues, influencing children to adopt gender-specific forms of aggression (Bowie, 2007). Additionally, studies have shown that exposure to violence in media during childhood is a predictor of violent behavior in adolescence and adulthood (Ybarra, 2022).

2.5 Cognitive-behavioral constructs and aggression

Emotion regulation is a sophisticated construct with various different aspects, involving emotion awareness, recognizing and understanding emotions, acknowledging one's and others' emotions, developing coping mechanisms when feeling negative emotions, and the ability to amend strategies in order to control emotions depending on circumstances (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). The implications of emotion regulation are closely associated with outcomes of child development, both

from positive and negative perspectives. For example, a child who has poor impulse control develops poor peer relations, and the child's social development may be inhibited (Sroufe, 1997). An association between aggression and emotion regulation has been established (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1999). Children with high levels of emotion regulation tend to have the ability to perceive social cues, solve problems, provide solutions, display fewer problem behaviors, and engage in less aggressive behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2001). Moreover, children with low emotion regulation tend to have strong positive and negative perspectives toward life, which is likely to cause lower peer acceptance, higher peer rejection, and more adjustment problems (Hubbard, 2001; Schwartz et al., 1999; Lengua, 2003). In addition to emotion regulation, social problem-solving skills are related to the development of aggression, problem behaviors, and prosocial behaviors (Dodge et al., 2003). Aggressive children have difficulty providing socially accepted problem-solving strategies; therefore, they tend to display aggression rather than compromise and reach an agreement in a friendly way (Lochman & Dodge, 1994). However, social problem-solving is not an ability that all children who do not display aggression necessarily possess (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

2.6. Intervention

When it comes to intervening in aggression, various studies have investigated the effect of intervention programs on aggression. Throughout the years, several researchers have created intervention programs to deal with aggression and its adverse effects, such as the *I Can Problem Solve* program (ICPS) (Richardson, 2009), the *Incredible Years Dinosaur Social, Emotional, and Problem-Solving Child Training Program* (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003), *First Step to Success* (FSS) (Sumi et al., 2012), and the *Second Step Program* (Jack, 2009). Regarding parents, parents are generally reluctant to seek help and open up about the problem (Eckstein, 2004; Edenborough et al., 2011). Some parents might be open to exploring professional help options but lack the knowledge to find appropriate professionals (Jackson, 2003). Furthermore, it is documented that parents consider aggressive behaviors between siblings as developmentally appropriate and normal behavior (Skinner & Kowalski, 2013). In addition, parents might feel shame

and failure, and in turn, cope with the situation by minimizing and rejecting the aggression (Eckstein, 2004; Holt & Retford, 2013). Desir and Karatekin (2018) stated that parents generally feel anger, sadness, guilt, forgiveness, and failure in response to aggression. The researchers stated that forgiveness refers to minimizing the problem, and parents tend to ignore the situation.

2.7. Theories of aggression

2.7.1. Social information processing model (SIP)

Social information processing is a model first proposed by Huesmann (1988) and reformulated by Crick and Dodge (1994), which provides a cognitive process to explain social environments and behavioral exchanges in certain circumstances. As shown in Figure 2.2, the cognitive process consists of six stages: encoding cues, interpreting cues, clarifying goals, response construction, choosing a response, and enacting behavior (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

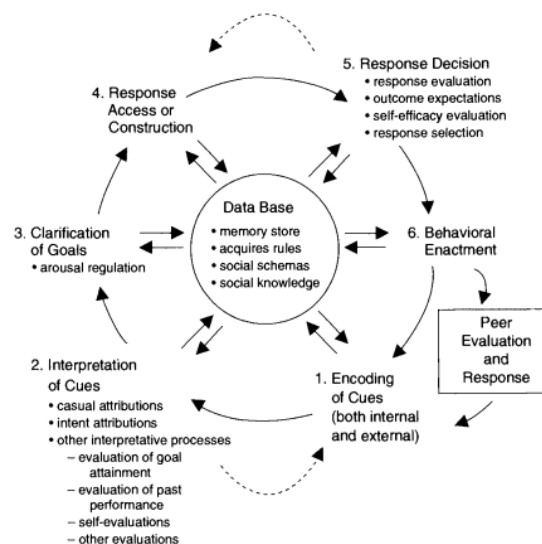


Figure 2.2. Reformulated social information processing model (Huesmann, 1998)

These stages highlight that the ability to encode and interpret social cues is essential for children to respond appropriately (Wike, 2011). The reformulated model suggests that social behaviors are guided by schemas and mental frameworks that children

develop in their early years (Crick & Dodge, 1994). As children encounter and observe different life experiences, these schemas are reinforced (Krahe, 2001). Children process information and cues based on their mental representations of past experiences, and this mental processing influences their behaviors (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Dodge's reformulated model emphasizes the role of peer responses and evaluations (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Therefore, in addition to schemas and scenarios, children interpret their peers' reactions and update their schemas, which in turn shapes future behaviors (Huesmann, 1998). Crick and Dodge (1996) argued that children who exhibit aggressive behaviors struggle with encoding and interpreting cues accurately, which leads them to respond with aggression in pursuit of specific goals.

2.7.2. Social cognitive theory

Bandura (1973) grounded social cognitive theory on the principle that human beings are not born with aggression but instead acquire these negative behaviors through learning. In 1986, Bandura further developed the theory, arguing that human behavior results from the interaction of cognitive, environmental, and behavioral factors. According to social cognitive theory, human behavior is influenced by observations, which provide opportunities to learn, as well as by past experiences. Cognitive processes enable children to encode observed behaviors and human interactions, which are then stored in memory and may be imitated in the future (Bandura, 1986). The theory emphasizes the role of two key factors in learning aggressive behavior: modeling and reinforcement (Bandura & Kupers, 1964).

In 1961, Bandura and his colleagues conducted the famous "Bobo Doll" experiment, in which children watched a cartoon featuring an adult who shouted at and kicked a "Bobo Doll." Afterward, the children were placed in a room full of toys, and during the play session, an attendant informed them that their playtime was over and another child would play with the toys. The children were then placed in another room containing a "Bobo Doll." As a result of their disappointment, it was observed that the children who had watched the cartoon exhibited more aggressive behaviors (Bandura et al., 1961).

As social cognitive theory suggests, although aggression may have a biological foundation, life experiences play an important role in the development of aggression (Bandura, 1973). Furthermore, research has shown that both direct and indirect exposure to aggression contribute to the development of aggressive behavior (Bandura, 1973; 1977). This indicates that even in the absence of direct exposure to aggression, children can learn to behave aggressively by observing aggression being reinforced (Berkowitz, 1990).

2.7.3. Frustration-aggression theory

Frustration-aggression theory was first proposed by Dollard and colleagues (1939), who suggested that aggression always results from frustration, and that the existence of frustration implies the existence of aggression. In this definition, frustration does not refer to emotions but is understood as “an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response” (Dollard et al., 1939, p. 7). This means that frustration refers to an event resulting from the removal of reinforcements rather than an emotion (Breuer & Elson, 2017). Amsel (1962; 1992) further explained that, in addition to removal, delaying or reducing a reward also leads to frustration, which in turn leads to aggression. Lazarus (1991) stated that achieving a goal has to be meaningful for the individual, and events that prevent the attainment of the goal arouse negative feelings.

Regarding intensity, Dill and Anderson (1995) also stated that aggression tends to be more hostile when frustration is perceived as more unjustified. Moreover, Kregarman and Worchel (1961) expressed that if frustration is foreseen, aggression tends to be less intense. Regarding the intensity of aggression, it is specified that while sources of frustration tend to provoke the most intense and strongest aggression as retaliation, aggression can also be directed at other sources that are not responsible for the frustration (Dollard et al., 1939; Geen, 1968; Zillmann & Cantor, 1976).

Frustration-aggression theory also implies that gender is a significant factor concerning aggression (Breuer & Elson, 2017). It has been found that males display aggression more than females, while individuals tend to display aggression more toward same-sex opponents (Buss, 1963; Harris, 1974).

Delving deeper into the issue, Berkowitz (1989) reformulated the frustration-aggression theory originally proposed by Dollard and his colleagues (1939). As shown in Figure 2.3, Berkowitz (1989) claimed that aggressive inclinations occur as a result of negative emotions triggered by frustration.

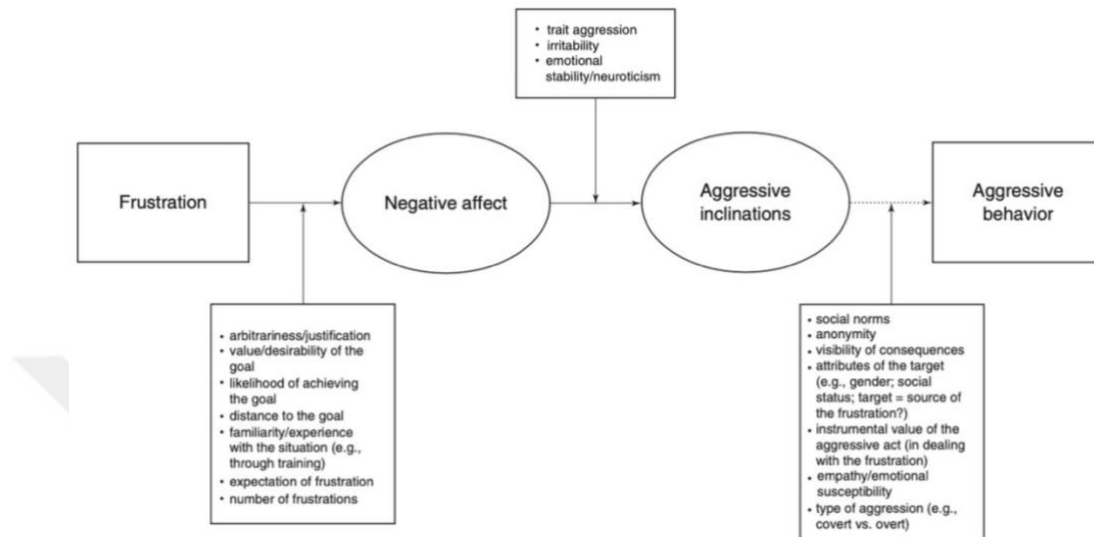


Figure 2.3. Berkowitz's (1989) reformulated Frustration-aggression theory (Breuer & Elson, 2017)

This reformulated theory indicates that frustration does not directly lead to aggressive inclinations. Rather, negative emotions resulting from frustration lead to aggressive inclinations (Berkowitz, 1988). However, Berkowitz pointed out that not only frustration, but also insults, anxiety, negative emotional conditions, and any negative events can lead to negative emotions (Hokanson, 1961; Breuer & Elson, 2017). Berkowitz (1989) also used the term “aggressive inclinations” to describe aggression or aggressive behavior. This new term implies that aggressive inclinations do not have to be observable behaviors but also include affective and cognitive factors (Breuer & Elson, 2017). For example, potential events and negative emotions might lead to aggression; however, different factors might prevent an individual from behaving aggressively.

2.7.4. Biological theory

From a biological perspective, the central nervous system, neurotransmitters, endocrine system, hormones, genetic material, brain structure, and bodily functions

are all associated with aggression (Brannan, 2008; Krahe, 2001). Regarding the brain and its structure, the amygdala and hypothalamus are two regions known to regulate and influence aggression (Brannan, 2008). Electrical stimulation in these regions leads to an escalation of aggressive behaviors (Bernhardt, 1997). The hypothalamus's role is to detect aggression levels with the help of neurotransmitters such as serotonin (Bernhardt, 1997). This means that people with low serotonin levels have difficulty regulating aggression (Coccaro, 1989).

Another hormone associated with aggression is testosterone (Brannan, 2008). Studies have shown that higher levels of testosterone are associated with higher levels of aggression (Bernhardt, 1997). This means that males tend to display aggression more than females due to their higher testosterone levels (Algur, 2019).

Another biological factor influencing aggression is genetic material (Brannan, 2008). Researchers have found that an extra Y chromosome is linked to increased aggression (Lissey et al., 1973). Likewise, an extra X chromosome is also linked to decreased aggression (Josephson & Colwill, 1978).

Miles and Carey (1997) investigated the nature-versus-nurture debate and conducted twin and adoption studies. Their findings suggest that genetic predisposition is more strongly associated with aggression in adults, whereas environmental factors play a greater role in aggression among children and adolescents. DiLalla and Gottesman (1991) conducted a study with adoptees to explore aggression. They found that individuals with both criminal biological and adoptive parents had the highest tendency toward criminality, followed by those with only criminal biological parents, and lastly, those with only criminal adoptive parents.

2.7.5. Psychoanalytic theory

Aggression was originally defined by Freud (1920b) as a primary response driven by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Later in his career, Freud revised this theory (Bandura, 1973). Freud (1922; 1933) claimed that human behavior is derived from an instinctual system of motivation, consisting of Eros and Thanatos.

Eros represents life instincts that sustain survival, including reproduction and behaviors aimed at avoiding pain, hunger, and thirst (Freud, 1920a; Petersen & Davies, 1997). Thanatos, on the other hand, represents the death instinct, and Freud argued that all human beings harbor an unconscious desire to die (Freud, 1920b).

Humans strive to balance these two instincts, and when conflicts arise, they result in aggression (Krahe, 2001). This means that aggression is an innate instinct (Bandura, 1973). Freud (1950) also argued that since aggression is instinctual, attempts to eliminate it are futile. He claimed that aggression is inevitable, but its expression can be modified.

2.7.6. Ethological theory

The ethological theory of aggression was proposed by Lorenz (1966), who defined aggression as an inborn survival mechanism in both humans and animals. Lorenz (1974) hypothesized that aggression is a form of energy that consistently accumulates within an individual. This accumulated energy manifests as aggression due to two factors: the amount of accumulated energy and the strength of the triggering stimulus. If the accumulated energy level is low, a strong stimulus is required to provoke aggressive behaviors, and vice versa. If energy accumulates to high levels without an outlet, spontaneous aggression will emerge (Lorenz, 1974).

This theory derives from the concept of natural selection and implies that living beings fight and display aggression over food, territory, and other survival-related resources (Lorenz, 1966). Lorenz also indicated that while humans have the capability to kill, they also possess the capacity to control their aggression through socially acceptable outlets, such as sports competitions (Lorenz, 1966; 1974).

2.7.7. The bioecological systems theory

The bioecological systems theory was proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1977b; 1979), who emphasized the role of interrelated, nested ecological levels in human development. Bronfenbrenner identified five nested ecological levels: the

microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

The microsystem refers to the immediate environment in which a child interacts, such as the childcare setting, home, and peer group (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; 1979). Children exposed to aggressive behaviors within their microsystem, whether from parents, siblings, grandparents, or peers, are more likely to engage in substance abuse, join gangs, display aggressive behaviors, and use slang expressions in adulthood (Körük, 2021).

The mesosystem represents the interactions between two or more microsystems that influence the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977b). For example, a child's parents and teacher may communicate regarding the child's academic, physical, behavioral, and emotional needs (Thomas, 2005). According to Doğan (2010), weak communication between parents and teachers may result in behavioral problems, such as aggression, being overlooked and not addressed early on.

The exosystem, as the third ecological level, consists of environments that the child does not directly participate in but that still influence them indirectly (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, the presence of psychological counseling services in schools and the school's approach to aggression can indirectly impact a child's behavior (Doğan, 2010).

The macrosystem is the outermost level, shaping interactions within all other levels of the bioecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1977a). Cultural elements, including economic, legal, educational, social, and political systems, are examples of macrosystem influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1978). In relation to aggression, children living in violent neighborhoods are more likely to develop aggressive behaviors (Schneiders et al., 2003). Bronfenbrenner (1989) later introduced the chronosystem, defining it as changes over time resulting from life experiences. Examples include the birth of a sibling, starting preschool, puberty, and illness (Bronfenbrenner, 1988; 1989). For instance, children who experience financial crises or war are more likely to develop aggressive tendencies (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

2.7.8. The sociobiological theory

The sociobiological theory, rooted in Darwin's (1859) theory of evolution, suggests that survival depends on behavioral adaptation. In this framework, aggression is viewed as an adaptive trait that enhances an individual's chances of survival and reproduction (Krahe, 2001). More aggressive individuals are theorized to have a competitive advantage over their less aggressive counterparts. In contemporary research, this theory is particularly associated with sexual aggression, as it is often examined in the context of reproductive strategies and evolutionary pressures (Thornhill & Thornhill, 1991).

2.7.9. The Cognitive-Neoassociation Theory of Aggression

The cognitive neoassociation theory highlights the interplay between cognition, emotion, and external stimuli as the foundation of aggression (Berkowitz, 1993b). According to this theory, cognitive processes can interpret an event as unpleasant, assigning aggressive meaning to a particular situation (Berkowitz, 2012a). Following an unpleasant experience, an individual may exhibit one of two possible reactions, as illustrated in Figure 2.4: either avoiding the stimulus or responding with aggression (Berkowitz, 1993b).

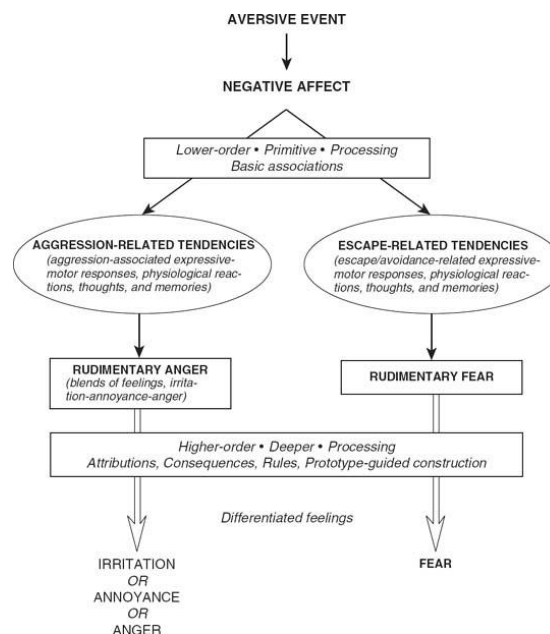


Figure 2.4. The Cognitive-Neoassociation Theory of Aggression (Berkowitz, 2012a)

According to Berkowitz (2012a), as illustrated in Figure 2.4, escape-related tendencies manifest as fear, while aggression-related tendencies arise as irritation, annoyance, or anger. Various unpleasant conditions are believed to contribute to aggression, including physical pain, atmospheric factors, and social stress (Berkowitz, 2012a). For instance, bad odors, high temperatures, noise, crowded environments, and social pressure can provoke aggressive behavior (Berkowitz, 2012a; Berkowitz et al., 1981; MacDonald & Leary, 2005).

Furthermore, certain conditions may intensify aggression (Berkowitz, 2012a). As depicted in Figure 2.5, Berkowitz (1984) suggests that past aggressive experiences, exposure to violent crimes, violent media content, or any stimuli associated with aggression can heighten aggressive tendencies.

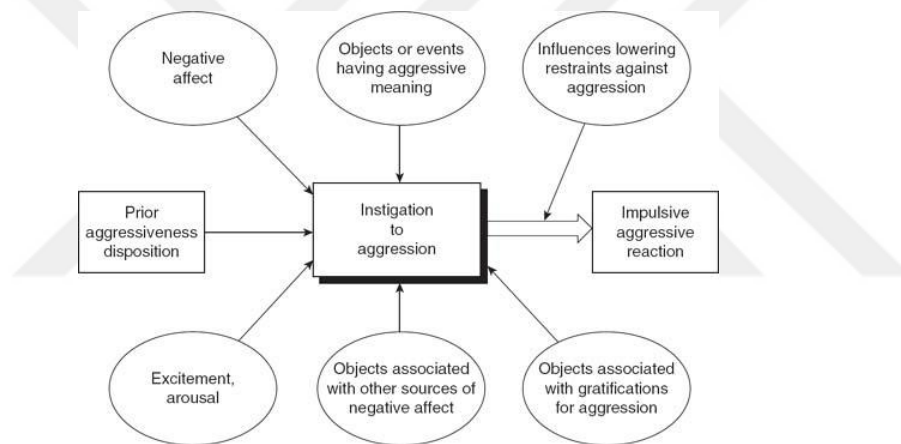


Figure 2.5. Influences affecting the magnitude of an impulsive aggressive reaction (Berkowitz, 2012a)

It is claimed that the mere sight of a weapon can trigger aggression (Berkowitz & LePage, 1967). Finally, Berkowitz (2012b) also argues that cognition can be self-regulated to mitigate and control aggression.

2.7.10. Theory of behaviorism

John B. Watson adopted the theory of behaviorism, which emphasizes observable behaviors and excludes emotions and thoughts regarding learning (Cüceloğlu, 2018). This theory focuses on the relationship between stimulus and behavior (Baum, 2005).

Skinner (1974) also emphasized the importance of reinforcement and reward to learn behaviors. Simply put, this theory highlights the importance of environmental stimuli rather than cognitive and biological processes as key factors for learning (Cüceloğlu, 2018). In relation to aggression, if a child is reinforced after displaying aggressive behaviors, as per the stimulus-behavior principle, the likelihood of exhibiting aggressive behavior will be higher (Atkinson et al., 2019).

2.7.11. Excitation Transfer Theory

The arousal transfer theory, proposed by Zillmann (1971), suggests that emotional responses are linked to prior arousal. According to this theory, if the source of arousal is unclear, residual arousal can influence subsequent reactions without conscious intent (Bunce et al., 1993). It is argued that residual arousal from experiences such as sexual stimulation or physical exertion can increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior (Zillmann & Bryant, 1974; Zillmann et al., 1972; Zillmann et al., 1981). Zillmann (2008) illustrated this theory with a case: If a woman believes she has stepped on a snake, she will experience fear, causing a spike in adrenaline levels. However, once she realizes it's actually her son's snake-like toy, she may feel anger towards him. Initially, her heightened arousal might cause her to direct this anger at her son, resulting in aggression. Over time, as her arousal decreases, she may reflect on the situation and find it amusing. In this way, the intense arousal from fear becomes misattributed to her son, leading to aggression.

2.7.12. Cognitive schema theory

Cognitive schema theory was initially proposed by Beck (1976) in relation to depression and personality disorders, providing the foundation for cognitive schema therapy. Cognitive schema theory argues that early maladaptive schemas are beliefs that affect one's understanding (Dunne et al., 2017). These beliefs are constructed as a result of lifelong negative experiences, especially during childhood (Beck, 1976). These beliefs lead to the creation of early maladaptive schemas, which in turn alter cognitive information processing and lead to problematic behaviors (Young et al., 2003).

2.7.13. General aggression model

The general aggression model is a framework that integrates several of the previously mentioned theories, such as cognitive neoassociation theory and excitation transfer theory (Bushman & Anderson, 2020). This model explains aggression through developmental, biological, social, and cognitive determinants (Allen et al., 2018). It consists of two main factors, namely distal and proximate causes and processes, as shown in Figure 2.6 (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

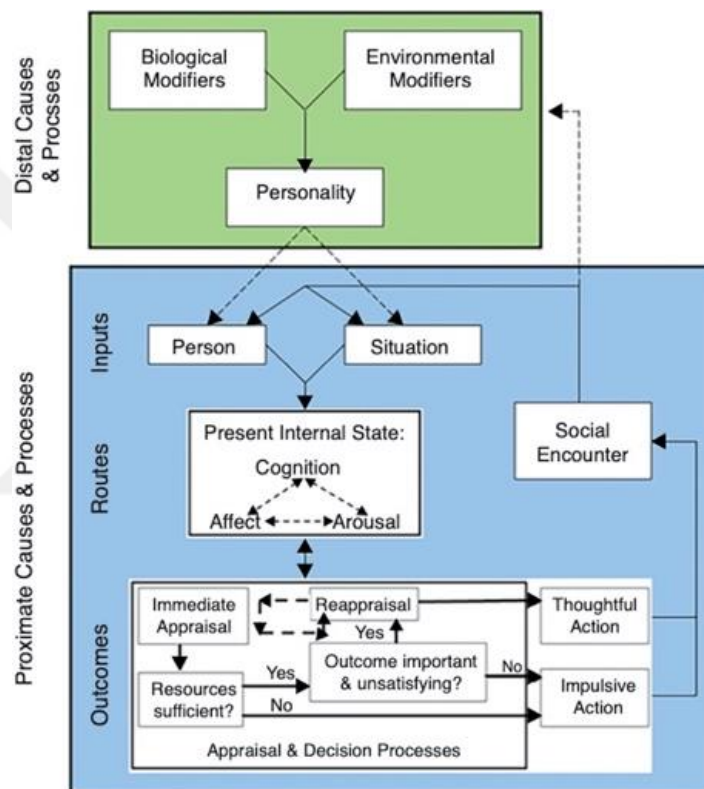


Figure 2.6. The General Aggression Model (GAM) (Allen & Anderson, 2017)

Proximate causes and processes consist of three stages: inputs, routes, and outcomes (Allen et al., 2018). The first stage, inputs, refers to personal and situational factors that influence aggression (Bushman & Anderson, 2020). Personal factors include hostile biases, cultural stereotypes, beliefs, attitudes, narcissism, and poor impulse control (Anderson & Bushman, 2018). Situational factors include mood, frustration, alcohol intake, social stress, exposure to violence, weather, and fear-related stimuli (Anderson & Bushman, 2018).

In the second stage, inputs influence three elements: affect, cognition, and arousal (DeWall et al., 2011). Affect refers to mood and emotions, cognition encompasses thoughts, scripts, attitudes, and biases, while arousal involves both physiological and psychological responses, such as stress or anxiety (Allen et al., 2018).

In the third stage, individuals make decisions and evaluate their responses (Bushman & Anderson, 2020). As illustrated in Figure 2.6, immediate appraisal occurs unconsciously (Anderson & Bushman, 2018). However, according to Allen and his colleagues (2018), once the reappraisal process begins, individuals engage in more deliberate and thoughtful actions. This means that they may initially have automatic, unconscious reactions and act on impulse. However, with cognitive processing and reflection, they may exhibit fewer impulsive responses, such as aggression, and instead adopt more controlled and deliberate behaviors (Allen et al., 2018).

However, after reappraisal, if individuals perceive the situation or the given inputs as hostile or aggressive, they may still choose to behave aggressively (Anderson & Bushman, 2018). Once behaviors are carried out, these actions shape social interactions, and if the outcome is unfavorable, the proximate process may restart (Allen et al., 2018).

Another key component of the general aggression model is distal processes, as shown in Figure 2.6 (Allen & Anderson, 2017). Distal processes refer to biological and environmental factors that shape personality and influence the proximate process (Anderson & Carnagey, 2004). Anderson and Bushman (2018) identified cultural norms, life conditions, exposure to violence, and maladaptive parenting as examples of environmental modifiers, while biological modifiers include hormones, ADHD, or genetic predispositions.

2.8. Culture

Culture is a complex and comprehensive concept. As a result, it has been defined in various ways. One of the most common definitions is Kluckhohn's (1951) view that culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired and

transmitted mainly through symbols, which constitute the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. Another widely accepted definition describes culture as “the sum total of human social inheritance” (Linton, 1936, p. 17). In 1945, Murdock analyzed social structures and identified 79 universal cultural elements as fundamental components of culture. Later, Barry (1980) refined and categorized these elements into eight main and 79 subcategories, which include food and clothing; housing and technology; economy and transportation; individual and family activities; community and government; welfare; religion and science; and sex and the life cycle. The category related to children and family falls under individual and family activities, which Barry (1980) further classified into living standards and routines, rest, fine arts, entertainment, social stratification, interpersonal relationships, marriage, family, and kinship.

As Barry (1980) highlighted, family plays a central role in culture, and children are the focal point of family structures (Bozok, 2018). Regarding the position and value of children in the Turkish context, the Value of Child (VOC) research study was first conducted in 1970 under the leadership of Fawcett, including Türkiye among various other countries (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982). This study examined the economic and psychological values that parents attributed to their children. Economic value refers to children’s monetary contributions, such as working or caring for elderly parents, while psychological value relates to children as a source of happiness, joy, and pride (Fawcett, 1970). The VOC study was repeated in Türkiye 30 years later (Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005), revealing an increase in the psychological value of children, while their economic value declined (Ataca et al., 2005). This shift indicates that parents increasingly have children for emotional fulfillment rather than economic support or labor contributions (Georgas et al., 2006).

Building on the findings of the VOC study, Kağıtçıbaşı (1990) developed the Model of Family Change to describe family structure in Türkiye, categorizing it into three distinct family patterns: the family model of total interdependence, the family model of independence, and the family model of emotional/psychological interdependence. The family model of total interdependence, common in rural areas, is characterized by high interdependence and low child autonomy (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1990). In contrast, the

family model of independence, typically found in Western societies, features low interdependence and high autonomy (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). The family model of emotional/psychological interdependence, however, reflects both high interdependence and high autonomy (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2002). As Turkish society modernizes, Kağıtçıbaşı (2010) argues that family structures shift from the family model of total interdependence toward the family model of independence. However, Türkiye incorporates a cultural blend of Western and Asian influences (Dündar, 2019), leading Kağıtçıbaşı (2002) to describe the Turkish family as a hybrid model, referred to as the family model of emotional/psychological interdependence. This suggests that while modernization has led to a greater emphasis on children's autonomy, emotional bonds between parents and children remain strong, distinguishing Turkish family structures from those in Western cultures (Aycicegi-Dinn & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010).

Given that levels of autonomy and interdependence in Türkiye differ from those in other cultures, child-rearing practices also reflect these distinctions. Traditionally, fathers have represented authority figures, while mothers have assumed the role of caretakers (Kara & Çetinkaya, 2019). Research indicates that corporal punishment and its societal acceptance have declined in recent years (T.C. General Directorate of Family and Social Researches, 2010); however, some studies suggest that mothers continue to employ physical and psychological disciplinary methods (Sönmez et al., 2017).

2.9 Previous studies

2.9.1. Previous international Studies

Since aggression is a broad and multifaceted issue, various studies have investigated childhood aggression from different perspectives. For instance, Crick and her colleagues (2006) conducted a study to understand the development of relational aggression in early childhood. The study included 91 preschool children and their teachers. Based on observations and interviews, it was found that girls tend to display relational aggression, while boys exhibit physical aggression more frequently than

girls. Furthermore, children tend to show aggression toward their same-sex peers. These findings were also supported by another study conducted by Ostrov and Crick (2007). Their research examined the form (relational and physical) and function (proactive and reactive) of aggression through a short-term longitudinal study. With 132 early childhood participants, the study found that aggression has implications that may affect educational life, such as peer rejection and student-teacher relationships.

Evans and colleagues (2018) also investigated the forms and functions of aggression with 133 preschool children. Their findings revealed that all types of aggression are associated with peer rejection. However, they found no significant relationship between aggression and academic success or depression. Similarly, Murray-Close and Ostrov (2009) conducted a study with 101 preschool children and discovered that while the forms of aggression (relational and physical) remain more stable over time, the functions of aggression (reactive and proactive) are less consistent. In addition to the female gender, they found that older children and socially dominant children are more likely to engage in relational aggression. Consistent with previous findings, their study also confirmed the association between peer rejection and relational aggression.

McEvoy and colleagues (2003) also examined relational and physical aggression with 59 preschool children. To assess differences, they utilized three methods: teacher rating scales, direct observation, and peer sociometry. The study found results similar to previous research; however, it was noted that the three methods showed greater agreement on physical aggression than on relational aggression. Moreover, peer and teacher reports aligned more closely on the occurrence of both relational and physical aggression than observer measures. This study emphasized the importance of validity when researching aggression.

Beyond these aspects, the role of media in aggression has also been explored. Ostrov and his colleagues (2013) conducted a short-term longitudinal study with preschool children to investigate the impact of media on children's social development, including prosocial behavior and aggression. Their findings indicated that media

exposure is a strong predictor of relational aggression in children, with effects lasting for more than two years. However, no significant relationship was found between media exposure and physical aggression. Another perspective was provided by Ostrov (2005), who examined the link between aggression and deception in a study of 64 preschool children. The results showed that both relational and physical aggression were associated with deception. However, among male children, physical aggression was the strongest predictor of deception, while relational aggression also showed a connection.

Regarding intervention strategies for aggression and its implications, various studies have examined the effectiveness of intervention programs. Since multiple intervention programs exist, different studies have assessed their impact on aggression. For instance, the “I Can Problem Solve” (ICPS) program was investigated by Richardson (2009) using a convenience sampling and quasi-experimental control group design with 368 children and 34 teachers. The ICPS program was found to enhance social problem-solving skills and overall competence. Furthermore, Richardson (2009) provided evidence that ICPS also influences aggression, emotion regulation, prosocial behavior, and academic skills. Shure and Spivack (1982) investigated the ICPS program’s effects on 350 nursery and kindergarten children over two years. They argued that the program was linked to improved behavior and a reduction in high-risk behaviors, a finding later confirmed by Shure’s (1993) five-year longitudinal study.

Several studies have examined another intervention program, “The Incredible Years Dinosaur Social, Emotional, and Problem-Solving Child Training Program” (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003). Webster-Stratton and Hammond (1997) conducted a study with 97 children aged 4 to 8 years old and their families. Children exhibiting conduct problems were assigned to one of four groups: parent training, child training, a combination of both treatments, and a control group. Findings revealed that all treatment groups, except for the control group, demonstrated improvements in problem-solving skills, conflict management, and social interactions. Furthermore, a one-year follow-up study showed lasting

effects of the treatments, with the combined child and parent training proving to be the most effective approach.

Another intervention program, “First Step to Success” (FSS), was investigated by Sumi and colleagues (2012) using a pretest-posttest control group experimental design with 280 first, second, and third graders, along with their teachers and parents. Findings indicated that children in the experimental groups exhibited fewer behavioral problems and greater academic improvement than those in the control group. Additionally, Golly and colleagues (2000) conducted a study with five-year-old identical twins to explore the effects of the FSS on problem behavior and participation in academic activities. Their findings supported previous research, demonstrating that the FSS effectively reduced problem behavior and increased academic engagement. Furthermore, Golly and colleagues (1998) examined the FSS with 22 preschool children and their teachers, finding that the program helped reduce externalizing behaviors and improve peer relationships. Teachers also reported that the intervention was effective in teaching desired behaviors. However, no significant impact was found on internalizing behaviors.

Regarding the effectiveness of the Second Step program, Jack (2009) conducted a study to evaluate its impact on aggressive behaviors in kindergarten children. This quasi-experimental pretest-posttest nonequivalent control group design study included 102 kindergarten children and revealed a decrease in aggressive behaviors lasting up to four months. Similarly, Jakob (2005) implemented a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design with 56 kindergarten children. Findings emphasized the importance of the Second Step program in enhancing prosocial behavior scores and reducing aggressive behaviors. Wojtalewicz (2004) also implemented the program to assess the social competence and cognition of 64 Head Start preschoolers. Results indicated that pretest social competence, overall development, and teacher characteristics were significant predictors of posttest social competence following the Second Step intervention.

In contrast to previous studies on the Second Step program, Stephenson (2009) applied the intervention to 41 preschool children aged 3 to 5 years in a three-month-

long randomized pretest-posttest control group study to investigate its impact on aggression and prosocial behaviors. This study found no significant effect on aggression scores for either gender. McCabe (1999) also conducted an intervention study using a pretest-posttest control group design with 96 preschool children. Findings revealed that while the Second Step intervention had no impact on antisocial behaviors, children with aggressive tendencies exhibited fewer negative behaviors.

2.9.2. Previous national studies

Studies on childhood aggression in the Turkish context have been investigated. Karadeniz Akdoğan (2017) conducted a mixed-method study examining the problem behaviors of preschool children in the school context, with 510 children. The study revealed that aggression scores for male children were significantly higher than for female children. It was also noteworthy that children who attended preschool for more than one year showed less aggression. In the qualitative part of the study, it was found that children tended to display aggression during free time, transition, activity time, and meal time, in that order. A similar study was conducted by Amca and Kıvanç Öztuğ (2016). This study investigated preschool children's behavior from the perspective of teachers. In the study, 691 four-year-old children were observed by 52 preschool teachers for eight weeks. It was found that children from divorced families exhibited higher rates of physical and relational aggression, as well as depressive emotions, compared to children from married families. Another study investigating social behaviors of preschool children was conducted by Karaca and colleagues (2011). Data gathered from 299 children revealed that the child's gender, the educational level of the parents, and the parents' age led to significant differences in aggression. Specifically, there was a relationship between the education level of parents, the age of the mother, and relational aggression. On the other hand, the father's age did not show a significant difference in relation to either relational or physical aggression. In addition to these studies, Özdemir (2014) conducted a study with preschool children to examine aggressive behavior. Observation of 20 preschool children revealed that aggression occurred in order to obtain an object, gain attention, or avoid something. Moreover, teachers preferred verbal warnings, Type II

punishment, ignoring the child, providing solutions, cognitive persuasion, providing breaks, Type I punishment, offering guidance, seeking help, and showing empathy to deal with aggression. Supporting previous findings, a study conducted with 1,159 preschool children by Şen (2009) found that preschool children who attended full-time daycare exhibited more relational aggression than children who attended part-time daycare. Furthermore, children with working mothers exhibited more relational aggression than those with housewife mothers. Another study conducted by İkiz (2015) examined aggression in relation to parents' attitudes with the participation of 300 preschool children, 300 mothers, and 300 fathers. Findings revealed that authoritarian parenting was positively correlated with both physical and relational aggression. Furthermore, permissive parenting was negatively associated with physical aggression.

When it comes to the relationship between aggression and other psychological constructs, Ersan (2017) examined aggression in relation to the expression and regulation of emotions. From a sample of 863 preschool children, the findings revealed that physical aggression differed significantly based on gender, while both physical and relational aggression displayed variance based on age. Furthermore, anger, sadness, and fear, which are subcategories of emotional expression skills, were significant predictors of physical aggression. Additionally, changeability/negativeness, which is a subcategory of emotion regulation, was also a predictor of physical aggression. Overall, emotion regulation skill scores were significantly associated with physical aggression. For relational aggression, significant predictors included anger and sadness, which are subcategories of emotional expression skills, and changeability/negativeness, which is a subcategory of emotion regulation.

Since aggression is associated with various difficulties, several studies have investigated interventions for aggression. Eriçi and Topcu (2018) conducted a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest study with 32 second- and third-grade students. Researchers implemented the "I Can Problem Solve (ICPS)" program and found a significant difference between post-test and pre-test scores of social problem-solving skills and behaviors. Aras and Aslan (2018) also investigated the impact of the ICPS

program on 51 preschool children's perspective-taking skills with a pretest-posttest retention-test control group design. Findings indicated significant improvement in perspective-taking skills as a result of the ICPS intervention program, and retention scores also confirmed the lasting effect of the program.

In addition to the ICPS intervention program, Uysal Bayrak and Akman (2018) investigated "The Incredible Years Dinosaur Social, Emotional, and Problem-Solving Child Training Program" in relation to problem behaviors, social competence, and problem-solving skills. To investigate the effectiveness of this program, a pretest-posttest experimental design with a control group was utilized with 32 children aged 48–66 months. It was revealed that "The Incredible Years Dinosaur Social, Emotional, and Problem-Solving Child Training Program" was effective in relation to problem behaviors and social problem-solving skills. Furthermore, it was also found that the effects of the program on social problem-solving skills were prolonged in the permanence phase. In addition, Kayılı (2015) investigated "The Incredible Years Dinosaur Social, Emotional, and Problem-Solving Child Training Program" in order to assess children's ability to understand feelings and social problem-solving skills, in addition to the effect of the Montessori method. 53 preschool children participated in the study, and it was revealed that Montessori education, when supported by "The Incredible Years Dinosaur Social, Emotional, and Problem-Solving Child Training Program," was more effective in improving social problem-solving and the ability to understand feelings than either Montessori education alone or the Ministry of Education early childhood curriculum.

The FSS has also been investigated in the Turkish context (Diken et al., 2011; Diken et al., 2010; Karaoğlu, 2011). Diken and his colleagues (2010) investigated the impact of the FSS on social skills, problem behaviors, and academic aptitude in 24 preschool-aged children, first- and second-grade children, their parents, and teachers. The pretest-posttest control group experimental study demonstrated a decrease in problem behaviors and an increase in social skills and academic skills. Another study by the same researchers (Diken et al., 2011) included 102 children in a pretest-posttest control group experimental design and revealed the same findings as the previous study, which emphasizes the effect of the FSS. Karaoğlu (2011) conducted

the same study with 24 kindergarten children. However, different modules, such as the home and class modules of the FSS, were applied in this study, in contrast to previous studies. The researcher found that, in the home and class module, children's problem behaviors decreased while social skills increased. In the class module, while externalizing problem behavior and social skills showed significant differences, there was no difference regarding internalizing problem behaviors.



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, a comprehensive overview of the methodology employed in the study is provided. The chapter is divided into two parts, both of which describes the research methods utilized in Study 1 (Preliminary Study) and Study 2 (Main Study). In the preliminary study, the definition of aggression, its classification, and a list of aggressive behaviors were examined from the perspectives of experts. Under the heading of Study 1 (Preliminary Study), methodological aspects of this phenomenological study are presented. In the main study, the findings from Study 1 regarding the definition of aggression and aggressive behaviors as events were expanded upon. A grounded theory study was conducted to investigate childhood aggression through the perspectives of mothers, fathers, and teachers, as well as in-class observations. Methodological details related to the grounded theory study, as the main study, are presented under the heading of Study 2 (Main Study). This chapter also outlines the study's purpose, research questions, research design, rationale for the chosen methodology, sample selection, data collection tools, data collection procedures, data analysis process, and measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the results.

3.1. Study 1 – Preliminary Study

3.1.1. Purpose of Study 1

A preliminary study was conducted to explore the meaning of aggression, specifically childhood aggression, from various expert perspectives, including psychological guidance counselors, child development specialists, clinical psychologists, child psychiatrists, early childhood educators, and psychologists.

Additionally, this study examined the different types of childhood aggression, their characteristics, and their categorization.

The findings of this research provided valuable insights into childhood aggression, including its definition, various types, and a comprehensive list of aggressive behaviors. These results also contributed to Study 2 by informing the selection of participants. To achieve these objectives, the following research questions were proposed:

1. How is aggression defined in the Turkish context?

1.1 What are the characteristics of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?

1.2. How is childhood aggression categorized in the Turkish context?

1.2.1. What are the characteristics of each category of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?

3.1.2. Research Design of Study 1

The research design of Study 1 is grounded in the principles of the qualitative paradigm and research methods. Qualitative research is utilized to provide comprehensive and intricate insights while exploring concepts that are difficult to quantify (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, descriptive phenomenological research methods are utilized as a qualitative approach to inquiry. Phenomenological research seeks to investigate the meaning of a specific issue or topic through individuals' lived experiences (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that phenomenology involves not only defining a concept but also interpreting participants' lived experiences. These definitions align with the purpose and research questions of the study.

To clarify these research questions, Figure 3.1 presents a more detailed depiction of the research design of Study 1. This phenomenological study consists of five phases: the theoretical phase, planning phase, pilot study, data collection phase, and data analysis and preparation phase. In the theoretical phase, a review of the literature was conducted, the significance of the study was defined, the research purpose was specified, and research questions were formulated.

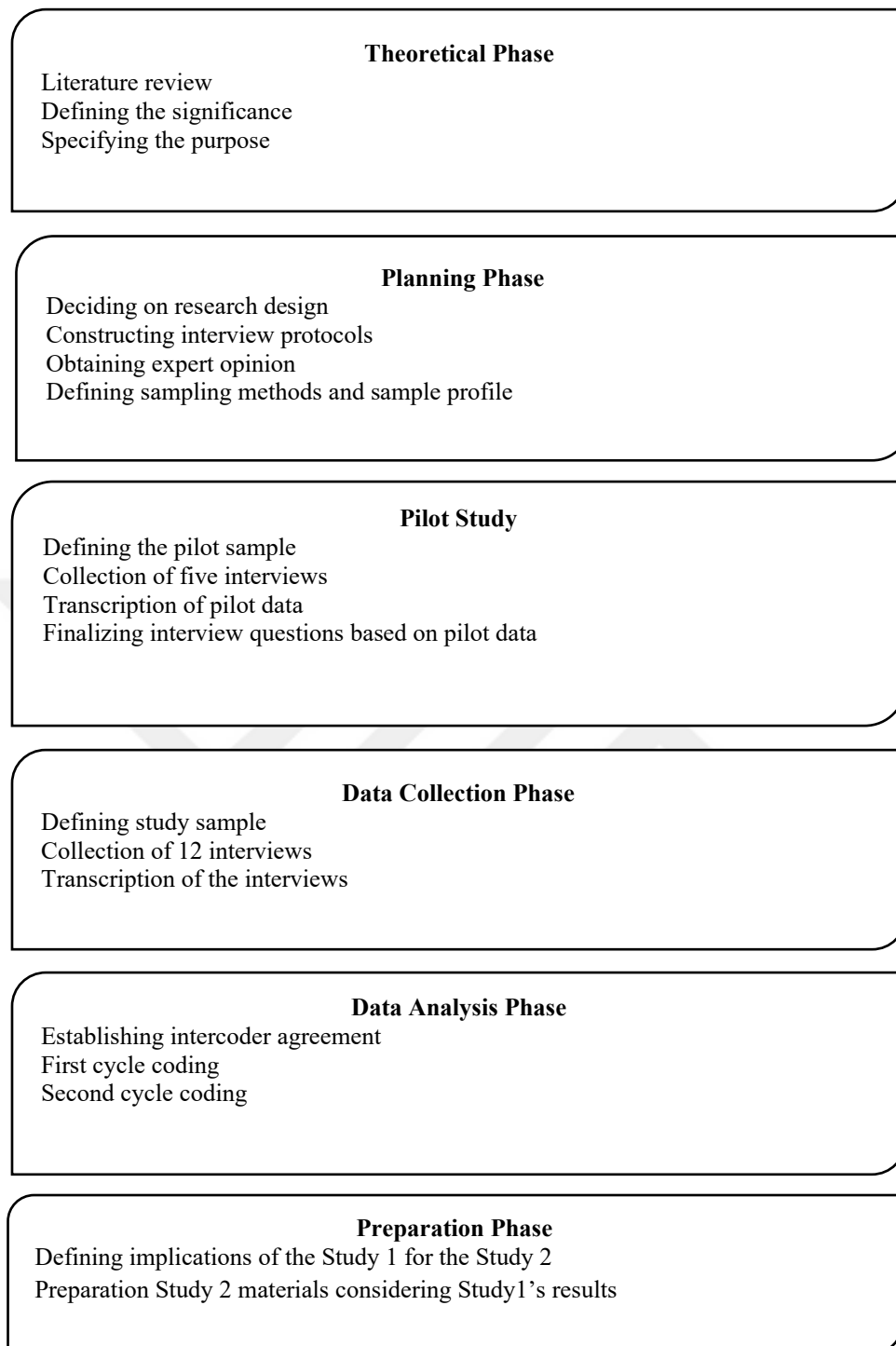


Figure 3.1. Outline of the research design (Study 1)

During the planning phase, decisions regarding the research design were made, an interview protocol was developed, opinions from experts in the field of early childhood education and child development were obtained, and sampling methods and sample profiles were determined. In the pilot study phase, the pilot study sample

was selected. Five interviews were conducted and transcribed, leading to the refinement of the interview questions. In the data collection phase, the study samples were identified, 13 interviews were conducted and transcribed. In the data analysis phase, the intercoder agreement was first established, followed by first-cycle and second-cycle coding. The final phase, the preparation stage, encompassed all preparatory work for Study 2. During this phase, the implications of Study 1 were examined, and relevant considerations for Study 2 were identified. As a concluding step, based on the results of Study 1, the necessary materials were prepared for Study 2. Figure 3.1, along with the sections below, provides a more detailed and comprehensive explanation of these phases.

3.1.3. Rationale for the Phenomenological Study

Edmund H. Phenomenological inquiry was first proposed and utilized by Husserl in 1913 to examine individuals' interpretations of objects and lived experiences from their own perspectives (Patton, 2015). According to Patton (2015), Husserl asserted that individuals experience the world through their senses, and through these senses, interpretations and inferences are made. Therefore, an experience cannot be explored without considering individuals' interpretations of their lived experiences. Consequently, reality is subjective and varies depending on individual perspectives (Patton, 2015).

The concept of subjective reality has also been supported by various researchers, who have emphasized the significance of subjective lived experiences in phenomenological research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Mertens, 2010). Mertens (2010) further highlighted that subjective lived experiences are one of the key factors distinguishing phenomenology from other qualitative research methods.

An essential question that arises is what topics are suitable for phenomenological inquiry. Van Manen (2014) clarified that anything perceived by human consciousness can be a subject of phenomenological research. According to Van Manen (1990), the crucial aspect is that the phenomenon must be related to past experiences rather than current ones, indicating that phenomenology is a

retrospective and recollective method. Furthermore, Patton (2002) emphasized that second-hand experiences are not investigated in phenomenology. Patton (2015) also provided examples of potential phenomena, including emotions such as joy, anger, and happiness; experiences such as engaging in outdoor activities or overcoming cancer; relationship issues such as divorce or marriage; job-related issues such as unemployment; and various social and cultural activities.

In the present study, descriptive phenomenology has been applied. Descriptive phenomenology is characterized by the narration of lived experiences without additional inferences or interpretations (Van Manen, 2014). This approach distinguishes itself from other forms of phenomenology, such as interpretative phenomenology, by focusing solely on the description of lived experiences while refraining from researchers' interpretations (Langdrige, 2007).

Husserl emphasized the necessity for researchers to adopt a neutral approach toward any object, experience, or thought (Van Manen, 2014). He identified epoche or bracketing as a prerequisite for phenomenological inquiry (Tassone, 2017). Bracketing, or epoche, has been described as the process of refraining from presumptions and striving to comprehend phenomena as they are (Langdrige, 2007). Additionally, Husserl strongly recommended that researchers adopt the position of transcendental reduction, enabling the study of a topic without biases that might influence participants' depiction of a phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). Giorgi (2009) later developed a descriptive phenomenological psychological method to provide a structured approach for conducting scientific research. According to this method, in order to obtain scientific data on a specific phenomenon, participants must be empowered to describe their lived experiences, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs regarding the subject under investigation (Giorgi, 2010). To facilitate this, interviews with open-ended questions can be utilized to obtain rich descriptions of the phenomenon (Giorgi et al., 2017).

In light of these characteristics of phenomenology, particularly the descriptive phenomenological method, it is evident that the study's purpose, research questions, and instrumentation tools are appropriate. Furthermore, childhood aggression, the

phenomenon of interest in this study, aligns well with phenomenology, as indicated by Patton (2015). By adhering to the principles of descriptive phenomenology and avoiding interference from the researcher's biases, prior beliefs, and interpretations, this study seeks to define childhood aggression, explore its various types, and characterize its features based on participants' lived experiences.

3.1.4. Research Sample of Study 1

In qualitative research, in-depth data must be obtained, and research questions must be addressed by purposefully selecting participants (Creswell, 2014). Purposeful sampling is defined as the selection of participants based on research questions and problems (Bryman, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the current study, snowball sampling was adopted. Snowball sampling, a type of sequential and emergence-driven sampling strategy, falls under the umbrella of purposive sampling (Patton, 2015). This technique involves initial participants referring the researcher to additional participants who possess relevant knowledge regarding the research question, allowing the sample size to expand progressively, similar to a snowball effect (Bryman, 2012). Patton (2015) also suggested that the snowball sampling technique is well-suited for utilizing social media and the internet.

At the initial stage of the study, internet websites listing psychologists, psychiatrists, and child development specialists were explored, and consultations with field experts were conducted. After obtaining an initial set of names, emails were sent to prospective participants. Once participants agreed to participate in the interviews, they were asked at the end of each session to suggest other potential experts who could be contacted. Subsequently, emails were sent to these newly identified individuals. If the suggested participants declined to participate, the process was restarted by identifying new names through internet searches and expert consultations. The selection of these professional groups was based on their direct engagement with children and their expertise in addressing behavioral issues, including aggression.

Hence, several criteria were established for selecting participants to serve the purpose of the study.

- 1) Participants were required to have an educational background related to one of the following occupations: psychological guidance counselor, child development specialist, clinical psychologist, child psychiatrist, early childhood educator, or psychologist.
- 2) Participants were required to have case experience with preschool-aged children who exhibit aggressive behavior and have normal developmental patterns.

Another important consideration in sampling was determining an appropriate sample size for qualitative inquiry (Bryman, 2012). Morse (2000) indicated that sample size varies depending on participants, data quality, and the type of research methods employed. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that for phenomenological research, the sample size may range from 3–15 participants. Various researchers have proposed different sample sizes for phenomenological studies, such as one participant (Padilla, 2003), 325 participants (Polkinghorne, 1989), 33 participants (Edwards, 2006), and 3–10 participants (Dukes, 1984). Hennink and her colleagues (2017) suggested that code saturation is typically reached after nine interviews, whereas meaning saturation is achieved between 16 and 24 interviews. In another study investigating sample size for saturation, it was found that for interviews, a sample size between nine and 17 participants is required (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). In the current study, five participants were initially selected for the pilot study, and 13 participants were interviewed for the main part of Study 1. However, after collecting pilot data, it was determined that the information obtained was both rich and valuable, and no significant modifications to the study were necessary. Consequently, the pilot study participants were included in the main study. Arthur and Nazroo (2003) stated that if no substantial revisions to pilot instruments are required, incorporating pilot data can enhance the significance of the research. In conclusion, a total of 18 participants' data were included in the analysis for Study 1.

Table 3.1. Demographic characteristics of participants

	Frequency (<i>f</i>)
Gender	
Female	17
Male	1

Table 3.1. (continued)

Bachelor's Degree	
Child Development	3
Early Childhood Education	6
Psychological Counselling and Guidance	3
Psychology	3
Master's Degree	
Career Counselling	1
Clinical Psychology	2
Child Development	1
Developmental Focused Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology	2
Early Childhood Education	5
Education of Mentally Handicapped	1
Family Counselling and Psychology	2
Psychological Counselling and Guidance	2
Medicine	3
Doctorate Degree	
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	3
Child Development	1
Early Childhood Education	5
Psychological Counselling and Guidance	1
Years of Experience	
0–5 years	1
6–10 years	8
11–15 years	4
16–20 years	2
21–25 years	1
26 or more	2
Occupation	
Academician	2
Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist	3
Child Development Specialist	2
Clinical Psychologist	4
Kindergarten Principal	1
Preschool Teacher	1
Psychological Counselor	1
Research Assistant	3
School Psychologist	1
Past Job Experiences	
Administrative Staff	1
Family Counsellor	1
Guidance Counsellor	3
Kindergarten Principal	1
Medical Resident	3
NGO worker	1
Part Time University Instructor	2
Preschool Teacher	6
Primary School Teacher	1
Psychologist in Hospital and Special Education Center	1
Research Assistant	2
School Psychologist	1
Special Education Teacher	1
Age	
26–30	3
31–35	6
36–40	5
41–45	2
46–50	2

Table 3.1. (continued)

Field of Expertise	
Abnormal Psychology and Attitude Problems	1
Aggression	1
Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder	1
Child Psychiatry	3
Child Psychology	1
Child, Adolescent, and Adult Therapy	1
Emotional and Behavioral Problems	1
Emotional Integration Therapy	1
Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy	1
Peer and Sibling Relationship/Bullying	2
Play Therapy	2
Prosocial Behaviors	2
Psychodrama	1
Psychological Resilience	1
Child Sociology	1
Child Rights	1

When the demographic information of the participants in Study 1 was examined, as shown in Table 3.1, it was found that among the 18 participants, 17 were female, and only one was male. Regarding their areas of specialization, most participants had graduated from early childhood education (n=6), psychological counseling and guidance (n=3), and psychology (n=3), respectively. Furthermore, one participant had a degree in child development, another in child development and education, and one had a dual degree in child development and education and classroom teaching. However, it is important to note that child development and child development and education bachelor's degrees are essentially the same, with the difference in naming attributed to policies of the Council of Higher Education, as department names have changed over the years. Consequently, as indicated in Table 3.1, three participants were graduates of the child development department. In addition to holding a bachelor's degree, as presented in Table 3.1, 17 participants had obtained a master's degree. Specifically, four participants had a master's in early childhood education, three in medicine, and two in developmental-focused clinical child and adolescent psychology. In contrast, as shown in Table 3.1, only 10 participants had earned a doctorate, specializing in areas such as early childhood education (n=5), child development and education (n=1), child and adolescent psychiatry (n=3), and psychological counseling and guidance (n=1).

Beyond their educational background, participants had professional experience ranging from four to 27 years, as illustrated in Table 3.1. One of the variables

investigated was the participants' occupations. As shown in Table 3.1, participants had diverse professional backgrounds, including academician (n=2), child development specialist (n=2), kindergarten principal (n=1), clinical psychologist (n=4), psychological counselor (n=1), research assistant (n=3), school psychologist (n=1), teacher (n=1), and child and adolescent psychiatrist (n=3). Only one participant stated that she was currently unemployed, staying at home, and taking care of her daughter. The past job experiences of the research participants were also investigated. As shown in Table 3.1, participants reported having worked as guidance counselors (n=3), research assistants (n=2), medical residents (n=3), preschool teachers (n=6), administrative staff (n=1), family counselors (n=1), primary school teachers (n=1), kindergarten principals (n=1), psychologists in hospitals and special education centers (n=1), school psychologists (n=1), part-time university instructors (n=2), special education teachers (n=1), and NGO workers (n=1). Another distinguishing variable examined was the age distribution of the participants. As indicated in Table 3.1, participants' ages ranged from 26 to 50. One final aspect related to the qualifications of the participants was their field of expertise. As shown in Table 3.1, six participants did not specify any particular field. The remaining participants identified their expertise in various areas, including abnormal psychology (n=1), attitude problems (n=1), child psychiatry (n=3), ADHD (n=1), psychodrama (n=1), child, adolescent, and adult therapy (n=1), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy (n=1), peer and sibling bullying (n=1), play therapy (n=3), child psychology (n=1), emotional integration therapy (n=1), prosocial behaviors (n=1), emotional and behavioral problems (n=1), peer relations (n=1), social skills (n=1), aggression (n=1), psychological resilience (n=1), child sociology (n=1), and child rights (n=1).

3.1.5. Data Collection Tools of Study 1

3.1.5.1 Semi-Structured Interview

Qualitative research explores phenomena, lived experiences, cases, or cultures by collecting data through interviews, observations, focus group discussions, documents, texts, or social media analysis (Mertens, 2010; Patton, 2015). In Study 1

(Preliminary Study), semi-structured interviews were employed to investigate the operational definition of childhood aggression, its categorization, and its characteristics. Patton (2015) stated that interviews serve as a valuable method for collecting meaningful data on feelings, beliefs, thoughts, and other unobservable aspects. Additionally, interviews provide useful information regarding behaviors that may occur in the absence of a researcher. Furthermore, they offer insights into participants' perspectives and the meanings they assign to specific matters (Patton, 2015). In the present study, the research aimed to uncover operational definitions, explore lived experiences that occurred without the researcher's presence, and gather information based on participants' professional experiences. Therefore, interviews were deemed an appropriate data collection tool.

During the initial stage of the study, a thorough review of the relevant literature was conducted using resources such as the Middle East Technical University library, the Council of Higher Education Thesis Center, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and databases provided by the university library, including Web of Science and Scopus. The process of constructing the interview protocol began with an extensive literature review, which informed the creation of an initial question pool. The questions were then developed based on this question pool, insights from the literature, the researcher's own inquiries, and the study's research questions. To ensure clarity and appropriateness, an expert opinion form was created, and the interview questions were sent to four experts in early childhood education. These experts provided feedback, particularly emphasizing that the questions appeared bookish and mechanical. The process of expert review and revision was repeated multiple times. Based on the feedback received, necessary revisions were made to enhance the wording and clarity of the questions.

Table 3.2. Semi-structured interview questions for participants of Study 1

Dimensions of Inquiry	Interview Questions
Background information	Could you please share a few things about yourself?
Definition of aggression	Based on your professional experience, what comes to mind when you think of "aggression"?
Characteristics of aggression	Have you encountered aggression in children aged 60 to 72 months?
	Could you describe your experiences?
	What distinguishing characteristics define the aggressive behaviors you mentioned?

Table 3.2. (continued)

Aggressive behaviors	What types of aggressive behaviors have you observed in children of this age group?
Classification of aggression	You have identified certain aggressive behaviors observed in children aged 60 to 72 months. How would you classify these behaviors?
Characteristics of each classification	How would you define the classifications you mentioned?

The semi-structured interviews included four main questions, two of which consisted of eight sub-questions. Consequently, the interview comprised a total of 20 questions. As presented in Table 3.2, the questions were designed to gather information regarding demographic details, work experience, professional development, the operational definition of aggression, the operational definition of childhood aggression, experiences with aggression, observed aggressive behaviors, and the categorization of aggression. Additionally, supplementary notes were included in the interview protocol to enhance question clarity and assist the researcher in effectively utilizing the protocol.

3.1.6. Pilot Study of Study 1

The purpose of the pilot study was to assess the clarity and relevance of the interview questions. To conduct this study, ethical approval was first obtained. Following this, the research sample was selected using the snowball sampling method. Once potential participants were identified, email invitations were sent. Upon receiving their responses, participants were provided with an informed consent form along with a link for online video communication.

Ultimately, all participants expressed a preference for conducting the interviews online. Among these participants, three resided outside Ankara. Of these three, two were employed and indicated that an online format was more suitable for their work schedules. Consequently, the pilot study was conducted through an online video communication platform with five participants. The duration of the interviews varied, ranging from 25 to 56 minutes. Participants were informed about the recording process and the importance of confidentiality. Permission was obtained from each participant before recording the sessions. Prior to initiating voice recordings, the necessary approvals and signatures for voluntary participation were collected.

Finally, five pilot data sets were gathered. After data collection, a decision was made to include the pilot data in the main study due to its richness and relevance (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003). Since the pilot data were incorporated into the main findings, participants' demographic information is also presented under the research sample section. As a result of the pilot study, no modifications to the interview questions were deemed necessary, as additional notes provided sufficient clarification when needed.

3.1.7. Data Collection Procedure of Study 1

As part of the data collection procedure for Study 1, ethical approval was obtained from the Middle East Technical University Human Subjects Review Board after finalizing the semi-structured interview protocols. Following this approval, websites that list professionals such as doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, psychological counselors, and child development specialists—including doctorsitesi.com and dokortakvimi.com—were searched. Additionally, field experts were contacted to obtain referrals for potential candidates. Through this process, participants were recruited using snowball sampling.

After the sampling process, five participants were selected and took part in the pilot study of Study 1. Following the pilot study, interviews were conducted with 13 additional participants as part of the main phase of Study 1. Each participant was interviewed once. While most participants joined the study via video conference, four participants from the main study preferred face-to-face interviews. These in-person interviews were conducted at their workplaces, as participants cited work schedules or personal comfort as reasons for their choice of interview format. Upon completing data collection, a decision was made to include pilot study data in the main study to retain information-rich data (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003).

Before data analysis, an additional research assistant specializing in early childhood education contributed to the study by assisting in the establishment of intercoder agreement. Details regarding this process are provided in the following section on data analysis for Study 1. After reliability was ensured through intercoder agreement, the data analysis process was initiated.

3.1.8. Data Analysis of Study 1

3.1.8.1. Intercoder Agreement

Reliability is a crucial concern in both qualitative and quantitative research (Silverman, 2013). Intercoder agreement is one of the methods used to establish reliability in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). O'Connor and Joffe (2020) define intercoder agreement as “a numerical measure of the agreement between different coders regarding how the same data should be coded” (p. 2). This agreement is achieved by ensuring that the same data is coded multiple times by multiple coders to check for reliability (Campbell et al., 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kuckartz, 2014).

Several guidelines for achieving intercoder reliability have been highlighted by researchers (Cofie et al., 2022; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020), including the following:

- i) At least two researchers must be involved in the coding process
- ii) To prevent bias, one of the researchers must be blind to the data collection procedure and not part of the research team
- iii) At least one researcher must have prior coding experience
- iv) Researchers should discuss codes and reach an agreement
- v) Once an agreement on the codes is reached, a codebook should be created, and the remaining data must be coded based on the codebook. New codes may be added as necessary (p. 75)

Following these guidelines, various individuals were contacted and informed about the study. Ultimately, a research assistant from the Department of Early Childhood Education volunteered to serve as a second coder. This coder is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in early childhood education and had previously employed a phenomenological qualitative research method for their master's thesis. Additionally, the second coder possesses relevant methodological expertise, having completed coursework in qualitative research methods, mixed-method research, and MAXQDA software.

Initially, the second coder was provided with essential information regarding the research questions and coding process. As the next step, two transcripts were randomly selected for coding. The selection of two transcripts was based on the argument that 10%–25% of the data is typically required for this process (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). In summary, two interview transcripts were coded by both the primary researcher and the voluntary coder, ensuring an appropriate intercoder agreement procedure for this study.

One of the selected interview transcripts was initially coded collaboratively as a trial run. This trial run was conducted to establish a common understanding of coding strategies. However, simultaneous collaborative coding was discontinued due to the risk of influencing other researchers and imposing dominant ideas (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019). Instead, simultaneous independent coding was employed. This approach involved both coders coding the transcripts at the same time but separately. Each coder worked independently on their own computer using their respective MAXQDA programs. Following the first round of interview coding, the codes assigned by the researchers were compared, revealing almost no similarity. After extensive discussions, an effort was made to reach an agreement, leading to the development of a comprehensive codebook. Once common ground was established, the second interview was coded again, simultaneously but independently. During this second round of coding, the codebook was utilized, and new codes were added as necessary. After coding the second interview, discussions between the coders lasted six hours. Throughout this process, the guidelines outlined earlier were closely followed to ensure reliability (Cofie et al., 2022; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Despite adherence to these guidelines, some challenges were encountered. One major issue was the disagreement on whether to use lumper coding or splitter coding. Lumper coding involves assigning a single code to a large segment of text, whereas splitter coding entails breaking down larger segments into smaller units for more detailed coding (Saldana, 2016). Campbell and his colleagues (2013) identified this issue as part of the process of defining and unitizing transcript text. This discrepancy posed a challenge because Krippendorff (1995; 2004) emphasized that intercoder agreement requires coders to identify the same block of text and apply the same code.

Table 3.3. Coders' agreement and disagreement

		Coder 1		
Coder 2		1	0	
	1	a=334	b=1	335
	0	c=9	0	9
		343	1	344

To address this issue, Krippendorff (1995) provided a solution for recognizing meaningful blocks of text. In the present study, meaningful blocks of text were coded accordingly. Depending on the research question, a single code was assigned to a word, a sentence, or even three sentences. If discrepancies arose in defining a block of text, discussions were held, and efforts were made to reach a consensus.

$$\begin{aligned} P(\text{observed}) &= P_o = a / (a + b + c) = 0.97 \\ P(\text{chance}) &= P_c = 1 / \text{Number of codes} = 1 / 65 = 0.02 \\ \text{Kappa} &= (P_o - P_c) / (1 - P_c) = 0.97 \end{aligned}$$

Figure 3.2. Coefficient Kappa formulation

Eventually, after a series of agreements and disagreements, intercoder agreement analysis was conducted using MAXQDA. The MAXQDA program calculated the intercoder coefficient Kappa (Brennan & Prediger, 1981) based on the formula presented in Figure 3.2 and generated Table 3.3. As a result, the intercoder agreement was determined to be 0.97. To interpret the Kappa value, Neuendorf (2002) suggested that an intercoder reliability value greater than 0.9 is highly acceptable. Therefore, the intercoder reliability of the present study can be considered a perfect agreement.

3.1.8.2. Coding the Interviews

In the current study, the foundational principles of thematic analysis were adopted. Thematic analysis is a key method of analysis associated with qualitative inquiry (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Various researchers have provided guidelines for conducting thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kuckartz, 2014). This study

followed the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006 2022), which include: (i) familiarizing oneself with the dataset, (ii) coding, (iii) generating initial themes, (iv) developing and reviewing themes, (v) refining, defining, and naming themes, and (vi) writing up (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2022). Throughout these phases, an inductive approach was employed, meaning that codes and themes emerged directly from the data, independent of the researchers' prior knowledge, theoretical background, or any pre-existing coding framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 1990).

Phase i. Familiarizing oneself with the dataset

During this phase, researchers must engage with the data by reading, taking notes, and developing an overall understanding of the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In the present study, the interviews were conducted by the researcher herself, allowing for the familiarization process to begin during data collection. Although the qualitative data analysis program used in the study allowed for coding directly from audio data, a transcription program was utilized to convert audio recordings into text. Text data was preferred over audio data, as it enabled easier navigation and facilitated the identification of small details within the dataset. It also helped the researcher become familiar with the data.

As the first step, the transcription program was used to generate text-based transcripts. The transcripts were then reviewed for confidentiality, and any identifying information was removed. Next, an individual with a bachelor's degree in Psychological Counseling and Guidance examined the initial transcripts and corrected any inconsistencies. As a final step, the researcher listened to the original audio files while reviewing the transcripts once more to ensure accuracy. During these processes, brief notes and memos were recorded.

Phase ii. Coding

In the second phase, initial codes were developed by segmenting and summarizing the entire text into meaningful units (Braun & Clarke, 2022). A code is defined as a meaningful label that captures the essence of the raw text and provides insight into the research questions (Boyatzis, 1998). At this stage, first-cycle coding was initiated. The eclectic coding method was selected for this process, and MAXQDA, a

qualitative data analysis software, was used. Eclectic coding is a coding approach that integrates multiple coding methods, among the 26 types identified by Saldana (2016). In this study, eclectic coding consisted of simultaneous coding, descriptive coding, in-vivo coding, and process coding. According to Saldana (2016), simultaneous coding involves assigning multiple codes to the same passage, descriptive coding entails summarizing data with a single word or noun, in-vivo coding uses exact phrases from participants, and process coding involves coding with -ing words.

Phase iii. Generating initial themes

In the third phase, initial themes emerged as codes were grouped based on their commonalities and relationships (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, some initial themes developed directly from memos taken during the coding process. Additionally, phases two and three occurred simultaneously in an iterative manner. Saldana (2016) emphasized that coding and categorizing codes can take place concurrently, as this approach prevents researchers from becoming overwhelmed by an extensive volume of codes and facilitates the development of a more organized and manageable codebook. As initial codes were created and analytic memos were taken, related codes began to emerge over time. To enhance organization and streamline the process, themes were progressively developed as coding continued. It is important to note that these themes and the codes within them remained subject to modification, requiring the researcher to continuously move between codes and themes. Throughout this process, visual tools provided by MAXQDA were utilized to gain an overview of the entire codebook.

Phase iv. Developing and reviewing themes

During this phase, second-cycle coding was conducted using axial coding as the primary method. Axial coding is defined as a process for reorganizing codes, categories, and themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It also facilitates the identification of prominent themes while eliminating weak or redundant codes and categories (Boeije, 2010). At this stage, data were continuously compared to determine whether the identified themes aligned with the coded segments or whether new themes needed to be developed. Additionally, the dataset was reviewed to identify any

missing segments requiring coding. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized the importance of creating thematic maps during this phase.

Phase v. Refining, defining, and naming themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2022), the names of themes should accurately reflect the data and the corresponding coded segments. In this phase, all theme names were reviewed, and modifications were made where necessary. Additionally, themes were defined, and their scope was specified based on participants' statements.

Phase vi. Writing up

The final phase involved the creation of data products. This dissertation reflects this phase by presenting the methodology and results. The findings of the study are conveyed through participants' data extracts, along with the display of codes, themes, and meaningful coded segments. Furthermore, visual maps, word clouds, code clouds, summary tables, and various functions provided by MAXQDA were utilized to offer a comprehensive overview.

3.2. Study 2 – Main Study

3.2.1. Purpose of Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 is to investigate childhood aggression, its dimensions, characteristics, and interaction with culture. Furthermore, this study aims to develop a culturally appropriate theory of childhood aggression. The findings are expected to provide a theoretical foundation and cultural perspective on childhood aggression. Charmaz (2006) stated that, given the nature of grounded theory, it is not advisable to formulate research questions at the outset, as they emerge during the study. However, Agee (2008) argued that initial research questions are necessary to establish a foundation for the research. Consequently, tentative research questions were proposed to guide the research process. The initial research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How does childhood aggression occur in the Turkish context?
 - 1.1. Which dimensions emerge from the Turkish context?

- 1.2. What are the characteristics of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?
- 1.3. How does childhood aggression emerge based on the identified dimensions in the Turkish context?
2. How does culture interact with childhood aggression in the Turkish context?
 - 2.1. How do individual and family cultural contexts interact with childhood aggression in the Turkish context?

3.2.2. Research Design

A qualitative research paradigm is employed in this study. Morse (1991) emphasized that the qualitative paradigm focuses on answering “how” rather than on the final product. Furthermore, he stated that the use of a qualitative paradigm is essential for generating new theories.

To address the specified research questions and fulfill the study’s purpose, a situational analysis grounded theory approach was adopted. Grounded theory methods are inductive and iterative, involving both data collection and analysis to develop theories grounded in participants’ statements (Charmaz, 2014). Clarke and Friese (2007) stated that situational analysis grounded theory assumes that theory creation occurs within a dynamic context, where all elements of a situation can interact and influence one another. This perspective suggests that macrosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem elements surrounding the participants or the research issue have the potential to become integral parts of the emerging theory, with distinctions between these systems becoming less apparent (Clarke & Friese, 2007). Since the aim of this study is to explain childhood aggression within the Turkish context, including its associated dimensions and cultural interactions, it is essential to consider social-ecological factors. Situational analysis grounded theory methods serve this purpose effectively within the context of the current study.

Aligned with the study’s objectives, the research design for Study 2 consists of six phases, which are presented in detail in Figure 3.3. This grounded theory study is structured around the following six phases: theoretical phase, planning phase, pilot study, data collection, data analysis, and theory construction phase.

In the theoretical phase, a literature review was conducted, the significance of the study was defined, and its purpose was specified. In the second phase, Study 1 (described in Section 3.1) was conducted, and its implications were determined. Additionally, materials required for Study 2 were developed based on the findings of Study 1.

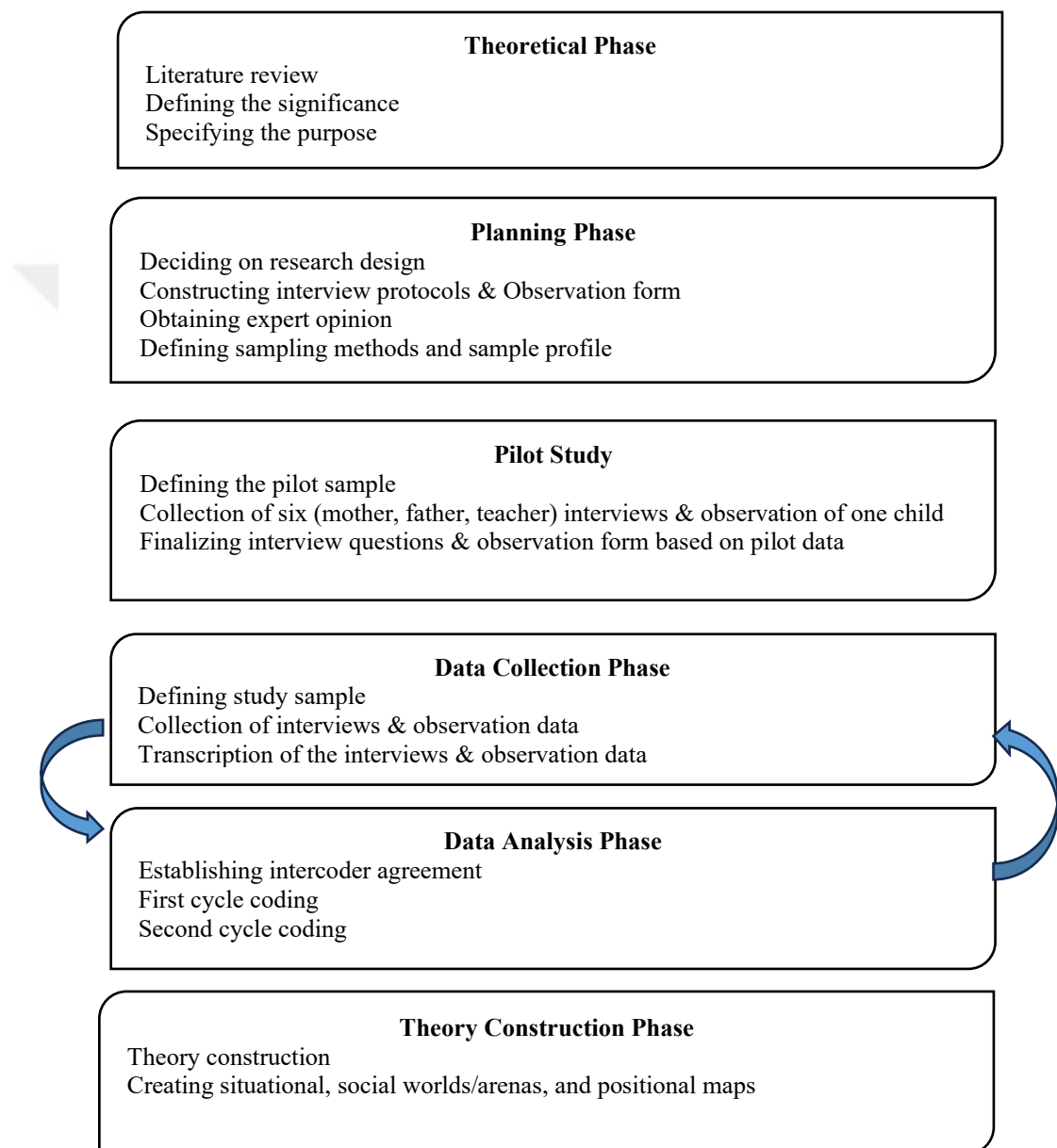


Figure 3.3. Outline of the research design (Study 2)

During the planning phase, methodological considerations were addressed. The research design, sampling methods, and sample profile were determined based on the

study's objectives. Interview protocols and observation forms were developed, and expert opinions were sought for validation.

In the pilot study phase of Study 2, a pilot sample was identified. Interview data were collected from two mothers, two fathers, and two teachers, while one child was observed to validate the observation form. Based on the pilot study findings, the interview questions and observation form were finalized.

In the data collection phase, the study sample was defined, and interview and observation data were gathered. The collected audio recordings of interviews and observation notes were transcribed into textual data.

During the data analysis phase, the intercoder agreement was established. Following this, first- and second-cycle coding was conducted. As illustrated in Figure 3.3, the data collection and data analysis phases were iterative, meaning that data saturation achieved during first-cycle coding influenced subsequent data collection procedures.

In the final phase, the theory construction phase, a theory grounded in participants' statements was developed. This phase is crucial, as theory construction distinguishes grounded theory methodology from other qualitative approaches and is regarded as the core of grounded theory research (Bryant, 2017). In this phase, situational, social worlds/arenas, and positional maps were created.

3.2.3. Rationale for the Grounded Theory

The grounded theory method (GTM) is defined as:

“Grounded theory involves taking comparisons from the data and reaching up to construct abstractions and then down to tie these abstractions to data. It means learning about the specific and the general—and seeing what is new in them—then exploring their links to larger issues or creating larger unrecognized issues in entirety. An imaginative interpretation sparks new views and leads other scholars to new vistas. Grounded theory methods can provide a route to see beyond the obvious and a path to reach imaginative interpretations” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 181).

Some components of the grounded theory method were outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as follows:

1. The simultaneous process of data collection and data analysis
2. An emphasis on codes and categories rather than hypotheses
3. The constant comparative method during data analysis
4. The use of memo writing at each stage of the study
5. Usage of memo writing during each step of the study
6. Sampling aimed at developing theory rather than representing a population

Since its initial introduction by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the grounded theory method has been further developed by researchers from positivist, constructionist, and interpretivist perspectives. The distinctions among these approaches arise from differing philosophical understandings of knowledge (Sebastian, 2019). Positivist grounded theory assumes that prior knowledge may introduce bias; therefore, theory is constructed solely from emerging data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In contrast, interpretivist grounded theory acknowledges the role of prior knowledge, emphasizing that researchers should recognize its influence on their work (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Constructivist grounded theory takes a balanced approach, allowing prior knowledge to contribute to the research while maintaining necessary controls (Charmaz, 2014).

In recent years, “situational analysis” has emerged as a new form of grounded theory, introduced by Clarke (2003, 2005). According to Clarke and her colleagues (2015), situational analysis expands upon constructivist grounded theory by incorporating non-human elements and their connections to the research context, thus offering an ecological perspective. This includes buildings, environmental features, technology, and any other non-human elements relevant to the topic under investigation. In addition to the principles of constructivist grounded theory, situational analysis introduces three types of maps: situational maps, social worlds/arenas maps, and positional maps. Situational maps reveal the key elements involved in the research inquiry and their interrelationships. Social worlds/arenas maps identify the actors within the issue, facilitating a meso-level understanding of the inquiry. Positional maps illustrate the different positions that emerge from the data. These mapping

techniques provide diverse perspectives for analyzing newly developed theories by incorporating both human and non-human elements (Clarke et al., 2015). Further details regarding these maps are provided below.

In this research, the situational analysis grounded theory method is employed. The rationale for choosing this approach is based on two key considerations. First, Bandura (1986) argued that human behavior results from the interaction of cognitive, environmental, and behavioral factors, highlighting the importance of considering environmental influences. Second, Bandura (1983) characterized aggression as a complex phenomenon involving both behaviors and multiple contributing factors. Given that non-human elements are integral to the study of aggression, their inclusion in the investigation is essential.

3.2.4. Research Sample

Morse and Clark (2019) stated that sampling, as one of the most crucial aspects of the grounded theory method (GTM), must remain flexible and continue throughout data analysis. In accordance with these characteristics, GTM recommends the use of theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 2006; Morse, 2007; Morse & Clark, 2019). In the present grounded theory study, theoretical sampling was employed. Theoretical sampling, which is associated with the grounded theory method, requires the selection of participants until data saturation is reached and the nature of the data is fully understood (Clarke et al., 2015). Charmaz (2014) outlined several characteristics of theoretical sampling:

- i) Prior understanding of sampling must be abandoned
- ii) Initial sampling should be adopted as a starting point
- iii) Representation and generalizability are not primary concerns
- iv) Sampling is used for conceptual and theoretical development
- v) It is linked to theoretical saturation

Following the principles of theoretical sampling and Charmaz's (2014) guidelines, the current study was conducted with children aged 60 to 72 months, their parents, and their classroom teachers. One important consideration in grounded theory

research is sample size. Creswell (2013) suggested conducting 50–60 interviews with 20–30 participants, while Charmaz (2008) argued that sample size should be determined based on the emergence of new categories, with data collection continuing until no new themes arise.

In this study, the sample size was determined based on theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation, meaning data collection continued until saturation was achieved. The procedure for data saturation is further explained in the data analysis section. In total, six participants (two teachers, two mothers, and two fathers) were selected for the pilot study of the interviews, and 35 participants were interviewed for the main study. For the observation component, one child was selected for the pilot study, and four children were observed in the main study.

Following the collection of pilot study data, it was determined that the participants from the pilot phase would be included in the main study. This decision was made due to the richness and value of the information gathered, which contributed to data saturation, as well as the absence of any required modifications to the data collection tools.

Table 3.4. Sample of Study 2

		Pilot	Main	Total
Interview	Preschool Teachers	2	15	17
	Fathers	2	10	12
	Mothers	2	10	12
Observation	Children	1	4	5
Total	-	7	39	46

Arthur and Nazroo (2003) suggested that pilot study data may be included in the main study if no revisions to data collection instruments are necessary. Accordingly, in Study 2, data from a total of 41 adults and five children were included in the analysis. As shown in Table 3.4, a total of 46 individuals participated in Study 2.

Initially, participants for the interviews were selected, with 12 preschool teachers, 12 mothers, and 12 fathers being contacted by the researcher. The teachers were first provided with an information form detailing the criteria for selecting children,

offering insights into childhood aggression, explaining its categorization, and outlining various aggressive behaviors. Regarding the selection of fathers and mothers, criteria for eligible children were provided by the researcher. These informational packets were distributed to both teachers and parents. If a child met the specified criteria, an interview was conducted. During the parent interviews, parents' statements were compared against the definitions and characteristics of aggression derived from the findings of Study 1 to determine whether the child's characteristics met the established criteria. Furthermore, if parents were hesitant to discuss aggression and aggressive behaviors, appropriate definitions were provided by the researcher to encourage them to elaborate. These materials were prepared as part of Study 1, as illustrated in Figure 3.12.

For the observation sample, a form outlining the criteria for assessing children was distributed by the researcher. This form included details on childhood aggression and classifications of aggressive behaviors and was designed for use by preschool teachers and principals. Following face-to-face communication, teachers were asked to select two children from their classrooms who met the criteria. The decision to select two children per classroom was made to account for the possibility of not obtaining parental consent and to increase the likelihood of securing a sufficient sample. Ultimately, five children were selected for observation. As the observations were conducted, interviews with these children's teachers were also carried out. Consequently, five additional preschool teachers were included in the interviews to ensure the collection of comprehensive data and to validate the observations through data triangulation.

As stated, Study 2 employed theoretical sampling. In accordance with the characteristics of theoretical sampling outlined above, initial sampling was used as a starting point, with participants selected based on specified criteria. Following the initial sampling, the collected data were analyzed, and initial codes and categories were identified. Based on these initial categories, theoretical sampling was then utilized to select additional participants until theoretical saturation was reached.

For initial sampling, several criteria were established for the children:

- i) Show normal development

- ii) Do not require special education
- iii) Do not receive psychological support
- iv) Have no clinical diagnosis regarding aggression
- v) Have Turkish as their native language
- vi) Be between 60 and 72 months of age
- vii) Reside in Ankara

As stated, initial sampling was used to recruit participants. Once the initial criteria were determined, data collection commenced. During this process, in line with the characteristics of theoretical sampling mentioned above, modifications to the criteria were made.

Firstly, in one interview question, participants were asked to describe themselves and their classroom. One teacher (T3, 27) in Study 2 provided information regarding the classroom setting, reporting that although the classroom was a preschool classroom, its organization resembled that of a primary school. For instance, the chair-table arrangement was similar to that of a primary school. The participant highlighted challenges associated with this layout and its implications for managing aggression. This raised the question of how classroom layout influences aggression.

To explore this further, a teacher with a double major in early childhood education and primary school teaching (T9, 30) was contacted for Study 2. This teacher, currently working as a primary school teacher, had students between the ages of 60 and 72 months who displayed aggressive behaviors and met the established criteria. Consequently, this teacher was included in the sample.

Additionally, one of the initial selection criteria—namely, “not receiving psychological support”—was excluded. The researchers’ personal experiences revealed that children, particularly those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, often seek professional help such as play therapy, regardless of whether it is directly related to aggression. Therefore, the third criterion was disregarded. However, the fourth criterion, “having no clinical diagnosis related to aggression,” was still maintained as a requirement.

Another criterion established for the children was being between the ages of 60 and 72 months. The rationale for selecting children within this age range was based on research indicating that children older than 60 months develop more advanced expressive language skills compared to their younger peers (Karmiloff-Smith, 1986). Since aggression is closely linked to the ability to express oneself (Estrem, 2005), it was necessary to ensure that childhood aggression observed in this study was not attributed to a lack of language skills.

Mothers and fathers were also included in the research sample. The inclusion of mothers was based on the fact that young children spend a significant amount of time with their mothers in daily life, making it more likely for their behaviors to be observed by them (Fomby & Musick, 2018). Additionally, fathers were included due to existing literature highlighting the influence of fathers on the development of aggression in children (Whal & Metzner, 2012). Hudziak and his colleagues (2003) emphasized that experiences related to aggression may differ between fathers and mothers; therefore, to develop a more comprehensive theory, fathers were also included in the sample. Efforts were made to reach both the mother and father of each child. However, if one parent chose not to participate, interviews were conducted only with the parent who volunteered. As a result, either both parents, only the father, or only the mother of a child could participate in the study. In some cases, fathers were reluctant to participate individually but agreed to do so alongside their spouse. Consequently, dyadic interviews were also conducted. Dyadic interviews involve two participants who share an existing relationship or a common ground (Kvalsvik & Ogaard, 2021). The process of reaching parents and teachers was also guided by theoretical sampling. No specific criteria were established for adult participants in the study. However, demographic information relevant to aggression, such as gender and age, was collected to obtain more detailed insights into the participants.

Regarding cultural background, since aggression is influenced by cultural factors (Ostrov & Keating, 2004), participants were selected from diverse backgrounds. This selection allowed for the development of a more culturally appropriate and comprehensive theory of aggression. In line with this objective, data were collected

from Ankara. The decision to select Ankara as the data collection site was based on internal migration patterns. Since its establishment as the capital of Türkiye, Ankara has attracted migration due to employment opportunities (Bostan, 2017). According to one of the recent reports of Turkish Statistical Institute (2023b), Ankara was the second most common destination for internal migrants in Türkiye. Therefore, Ankara is considered to have cultural diversity.

Table 3.5. Variables associated with the child

	Frequency (<i>f</i>)
Gender of the child	
Girl	20
Boy	21
Birth order of the child	
Only child	15
Youngest child	11
Middle child	1
Oldest child	14
Household composition	
3 people	12
4 people	24
5 people	5
Number of siblings	
0	15
1	24
2	2
Parents' marital status	
Married	38
Divorced	3

The demographic distribution of the 46 research participants is presented in more detail below. In the current study, 20 participants identified their child as a girl, while 21 identified their child as a boy. Most of these children were either the oldest child or the only child in their family (Table 3.5). A total of 24 children had only one sibling, while only two children had two siblings. All of the children had no more than two siblings. Another variable examined was household composition, which referred to individuals living with the child and first-degree relatives. This included cases where grandparents lived with the child, a mother's boyfriend resided with the child, or divorced parents lived separately from the child. Household composition generally consisted of three to five people. Although 46 participants took part in the study, it is important to note that the total frequency of child-related variables was recorded as 41. This discrepancy arose because information regarding child-related

variables was obtained from interviews with 41 adult participants. Among the 46 participants, five were children who were observed rather than interviewed. Therefore, data related to 41 children were analyzed in total.

Regarding the variables associated with parents and preschool teachers, most participants were between the ages of 31 and 40, as shown in Table 3.6. Among these participants, 25 held a bachelor's degree, while five had completed only primary, secondary, or high school education. Only one participant possessed a doctoral degree. In the interviews concerning children, only their parents or teachers were interviewed; both did not participate in the study simultaneously. As a result, information on the monthly household income of children whose teachers were the sole interviewees was obtained second-hand. Consequently, since teachers had only indirect knowledge of parents' earnings, reliable responses regarding household income were not received from them. Therefore, 15 preschool teachers did not specify parents' monthly income.

Table 3.6. Variables associated with mother, fathers, and preschool teachers

	Frequency (<i>f</i>)
Age of the participants (parents & teachers)	
21–30	7
31–40	27
41–50	6
51 or more	1
Level of education (parents & teachers)	
Primary school	1
Secondary school	1
High school	3
Associate degree	3
Bachelor degree	25
Master degree	7
Doctoral degree	1
Monthly average income (of family)	
Not specified	15
21–40K	7
41–60K	6
61–80K	6
81–100K	7
Place of residency (of child)	
Çankaya	7
Yenimahalle	5
Keçiören	5
Etimesgut	1
Polatlı	1
Gölbaşı	1

Table 3.6. (continued)

Akyurt	1
Sincan	4
Mamak	6
Altındağ	7
Missing	3
Occupation (parents & teachers)	
Teacher and Engineer (Language, Geography, Preschool, Primary; Mechanical, Electrical and electronic)	22
Technical manager	1
Sales assistant	2
Housewife	6
Government employee (office based)	4
Blue collar worker (laborer, baker, janitor)	5
Academician	1

In the present study, the children who were observed and interviewed resided in 10 different districts of Ankara, the capital city of Türkiye. Among the 41 children from various districts, seven resided in Çankaya, seven in Altındağ, six in Mamak, and five in Yenimahalle. Three teachers could not identify the place of residency of specific children. Another variable examined was the occupations of the participants. Since this study included preschool teachers, 17 of the teacher participants were preschool teachers. Additionally, two parents reported their occupation as teachers, bringing the total number of teachers to 19. The second most common occupation was housewife, reported by six participants. However, as shown in Table 3.6, the occupations of the participants were diverse.

3.2.4.1. Observation Sample Profile

3.2.4.1.1. Profile of Child 1 (C1)

School 1 is situated in Çankaya, the largest district of Ankara. The school is centrally located within Çankaya and is surrounded by high-level government and military buildings. As a result, nearly all students have at least one parent, if not both, employed in these prominent government positions. Additionally, this early childhood institution operates under the jurisdiction of a specific government agency.

Regarding the school's features, it consists of four classrooms, five teachers, and 71 children. Only one class is designated for children aged 60 to 72 months. Official

school hours begin at 08:00 and continue until 13:00 for the morning session, while the afternoon session runs from 13:00 to 18:00. Observations were conducted during the morning hours, as the afternoons are dedicated to club activities, including English, robotic coding, traditional children's games, drama, intelligence games, piano, and Orff education.

A single classroom was allocated for children aged 60 to 72 months, accommodating 22 students, one of whom has special educational needs. The classroom dimensions measure 7.63 m X 4.84 m, with a ceiling height of 2.25 m, resulting in a total area of 36.93 m². The classroom is decorated in vibrant colors and features a carpet; however, only three small cushions are available. One of the most striking features upon entering the classroom is a column positioned directly in front of the door, as illustrated in Figure 3.4.



Figure 3.4. Pictures of classroom 1

Regarding the classroom atmosphere, the teacher reported that this group of children had attended preschool together since the age of three, resulting in strong familiarity among them. However, their current teacher began instructing the group only this

year. The first three weeks of the school year were particularly challenging for the teacher in terms of establishing routines, enforcing rules, and managing problematic behaviors. In fact, she stated that, in her 15 years of experience, this was the first time she had faced such difficulties. Additionally, throughout the observation period, the class was noticeably noisier compared to other observed classrooms. To address these challenges, the teacher adopted an authoritative approach and maintained strict discipline. When children approached the researcher with questions, the teacher reprimanded them in a serious and stern tone, stating, "I am your teacher; ask me." Such instances occurred multiple times. In addition to behavioral challenges, the class exhibited poor hygiene and weak fine motor skills, despite none of the children having developmental disorders. Consequently, the teacher frequently conducted literacy activities, such as cutting and painting, to enhance school readiness. Several students in the class were considered potential candidates for the study. However, the teacher selected a girl (C1) who demonstrated relational aggression, particularly covert relational aggression. This specific form of aggression was cited as a key reason for her selection. The teacher's observations were based on personal experience, classroom interactions, past problem situations, and conflicts among parents arising from these behaviors. The preschool teacher described C1 as dominant and possessing leadership qualities. Within group dynamics, C1 strives for popularity and seeks praise, preferring the company of friends over solitude. In terms of developmental concerns, the teacher repeatedly emphasized that C1's fine motor skills were underdeveloped compared to age norms. Regarding her family background, both of C1's parents hold high-ranking positions in government agencies. She is the younger of two siblings and has an older sister.

3.2.4.1.2. Profile of Child 2 (C2)

School 2 is located in Altındağ, one of the districts of Ankara. It is situated at the junction of Altındağ, Mamak, and Çankaya, three distinct districts of the city. This early childhood institution operates under the premises of a training and research hospital. Although the school is not in a prime location, its association with the hospital results in a relatively high educational background for some parents. For instance, some children's parents are employed at the research hospital, while others

work in nearby pharmacies. However, a portion of the students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, with some receiving state assistance.

This school consists of three classrooms, five teachers, and 53 children. Only one class is designated for children aged 60 to 72 months. The official school hours run from 08:00 to 13:00 for the morning session and from 13:00 to 18:00 for the afternoon session. The researcher was present during the morning hours. In the afternoons, club activities such as intelligence games and chess take place.



Figure 3.5. Pictures of classroom 2

A single classroom was allocated for children aged 60 to 72 months, accommodating 14 students, two of whom have special educational needs. The classroom dimensions measure 9.13 m X 3.89 m, with a ceiling height of 2.34 m, resulting in a total area of 35.52 m². The classroom is decorated in vibrant colors and has a carpet. One of the most notable features upon entering the classroom is the presence of various colorful cushions, as shown in Figure 3.5. These cushions can be unfolded into beds. However, according to the teacher, the classroom has an insufficient number of toys and games.

Regarding the classroom atmosphere, the teacher reported that they had begun teaching this group only in the current academic year. A male child, C2, was identified by the teacher as displaying verbal aggression, such as using hurtful language and swearing. The teacher also noted that C2 struggles with authority figures, often pretending not to hear instructions and appearing detached from reality. Despite this, C2 is described as emotional and enjoys playing with male peers. In terms of family background, C2's parents are divorced. He lives with his mother and his mother's boyfriend, who is involved in his life and occasionally picks him up from school. However, according to the teacher, C2 has conflicts with his mother's boyfriend and dislikes being picked up by him. The teacher also reported that C2 has no contact with his father and never mentions him. Financially, C2 is supported solely by his mother, who works as an administrative staff member.

3.2.4.1.3. Profile of Child 3 (C3)

School 3 is located in Yenimahalle, one of the largest districts in Ankara. The school is situated in the center of Yenimahalle and is surrounded by official government buildings and residential areas. Additionally, this early childhood institution operates under the premises of a specific government agency. As a result, nearly all children have at least one parent, or both, employed in government positions. This school was newly established, and the current academic year marks the first time children are enrolled. Consequently, all materials are new; however, the quantity of materials, toys, and games is insufficient.

The school consists of five classrooms, seven teachers, and 47 children. Official morning school hours run from 08:30 to 13:30, while afternoon hours extend from 13:30 to 18:00. The researcher was present during the morning hours. Afternoon sessions consist of club activities, including chess.

At this school, two classrooms accommodate children aged 60 to 72 months. In the specific classroom under observation, six children are enrolled, with the number of girls exceeding the number of boys. Regarding the physical characteristics of the classroom, its dimensions measure 7.94 m X 5.10 m, with a height of 2.76 m, resulting in a total area of 40.5 m². The classroom features two full-length windows on opposite sides. However, minimal color is present in the room.



Figure 3.6. Pictures of classroom 3

A carpet is available, but no cushions are provided. On a positive note, floor heating is installed, making it comfortable to sit on the floor. One of the most striking

observations upon entering the classroom for the first time is the absence of color, toys, and games, as depicted in Figure 3.6. The classroom contains only basic necessities, and according to the teacher's report, the existing toys were donated by parents.

Regarding the classroom atmosphere, the teacher reported that, since the school is new, both the teacher and the children met for the first time in this academic year. In contrast to the previously observed classrooms, only one male child in this classroom met the criteria for participation in the study. This child (C3) was reported to exhibit relational aggression, specifically by withdrawing from social interaction and ignoring others.

C3 is described as active and friendly. He has an older brother. His parents are divorced, and he lives with his father, who provides for him financially. According to the teacher, his parents maintain an amicable relationship, both are actively involved in his life, and on some days, he spends the night at his mother's home. The teacher also reported that, due to living with his father, C3 has underdeveloped hygiene and eating etiquette skills.

3.2.4.1.4. Profile of Child 4 (C4)

The school attended by the fourth child (C4) is located in Yenimahalle, one of the largest districts in Ankara. C4 is enrolled in the same school as C3; therefore, the school details remain the same as those provided under Section 3.2.4.1.3. At this school, two classrooms accommodate children aged 60 to 72 months.

C4's classroom is adjacent to C3's, and both children are schoolmates. Additionally, during afternoon club hours, both classrooms are merged due to the limited number of students. However, the researcher's observations were conducted during the morning hours, until 13:30. During this period, seven children were present in the classroom, one of whom had special education needs. The number of girls exceeded the number of boys, with only one boy in the classroom.



Figure 3.7. Pictures of classroom 4

Regarding the physical characteristics of this classroom, its dimensions measure 7.94 m X 4.47 m, with a ceiling height of 2.76 m, resulting in a total area of 35.5 m². Similar to the previous classroom, this space lacks vibrant colors and evokes a cold, office-like atmosphere. The primary difference between this classroom and C3's is that only one side of this classroom features a full-length window. A carpet is present, but no cushions are available. However, floor heating allows the children to sit comfortably on the floor. As in C3's classroom, no colorful decorations, toys, or games are present, as illustrated in Figure 3.7. The classroom contains only basic necessities, and according to the teacher's report, the existing toys were donated by parents.

For the purposes of the current study, two potential candidates were identified in this classroom. However, only C4's parents consented to their child's participation. The teacher selected a female child (C4) who exhibited relational aggression, particularly overt relational aggression.

C4 is described as a clever and well-adjusted child. As an only child, C4 receives considerable attention from her parents, who both have strong educational backgrounds and hold prestigious positions. Due to this, her parents are highly attentive and open to communication regarding any concerns.

3.2.4.1.5. Profile of Child 5 (C5)

School 5 is located in Keçiören, a district of Ankara. It is situated in the middle of a residential area. Unlike the previously mentioned schools, this school has parents from diverse occupational and educational backgrounds. However, it is noteworthy that a higher proportion of mothers in this school are not employed. In alignment with this parent profile, the school follows a double-shift system. Morning classes begin at 07:45 and conclude at 13:00, while afternoon classes run from 13:15 to 18:00. Additionally, for working parents, a full-day classroom is available, operating from the morning until 18:00.

The school comprises six classrooms, 14 teachers, and 257 children. Multiple classes are available for children aged 60 to 72 months. The researcher was present during the afternoon hours, as a parent from the afternoon class granted permission for their child to participate in the study. In the full-day class, club activities such as robotic coding, drama, and gymnastics are offered.

In C5's classroom, there are 16 children. Regarding the physical characteristics of the classroom, its dimensions are 5.96 m X 5.5 m, with a ceiling height of 2.63 m, resulting in a total area of 32.8 m². The classroom is colorful and contains several cushions. As shown in Figure 3.8, no carpet is present; however, according to the teacher, the previous carpets were old, and new ones were expected to arrive soon. One of the most striking aspects upon entering the classroom for the first time is the combination of clashing colors, the worn-out condition of the room, and the dirty walls.

Regarding the classroom atmosphere, the teacher perceives herself as maternal yet not overly permissive. She enjoys discussing classroom rules and routines with the

children. Furthermore, according to her statement, she actively engages with the children and communicates with them regularly. In the previous academic year, she worked at the same school but in a different classroom. Therefore, this is her first time working with this specific group of children. However, she mentioned being familiar with the class, as she is friends with the previous teacher and has observed certain situations in the school's common areas. For the purposes of the current study, only one candidate was identified in this classroom. The teacher selected a male child (C5) who has exhibited physical aggression.



Figure 3.8. Pictures of classroom 5

Regarding family background, only C5's father is employed, while his mother is a housewife. His mother is a foreigner from a Turkic country. Although she speaks Turkish, communication with the family typically occurs through his father. It is important to note that C5 was born and raised in Türkiye, and his mother tongue is Turkish.

C5 is described as extremely active. According to the teacher's report, his problem behaviors were less pronounced last year. He exhibits an indifferent demeanor and does not respond to stimuli unless he chooses to. His behavioral issues have been recognized by his parents, and a meeting was held with the teacher, psychologist, vice principal, and principal to discuss these concerns. At times, C5 appears detached from reality. Initially, the school psychologist diagnosed him with a mental deficiency. However, this diagnosis was contested by the school psychologist, his previous teacher, and his current teacher. As a result, a reevaluation was conducted, and it was determined that he had been misdiagnosed. Both the psychologist and the teacher described C5 as intelligent, with no developmental delays. They suggested that the misdiagnosis may have been due to his tendency to ignore stimuli and his refusal to follow instructions.

One of the reported concerns about C5 is that, on rare occasions when he becomes extremely excited, he may stutter. However, he receives speech therapy for this issue. During the entire observation period, the researcher did not witness any instances of stammering. Additionally, the teacher believes that the possibility of ADHD should be explored. However, according to the teacher, the parents refuse to use any prescribed medication; therefore, no official diagnosis has been made.

3.2.5. Data Collection Tools

3.2.5.1. Semi-Structured Interviews of Parents and Teachers

Charmaz (2014) indicated that interviewing is well-suited for the grounded theory method (GTM), as it allows researchers to obtain substantial data through open-ended and in-depth questions. Following the determination of the initial research questions, a comprehensive literature review was conducted. Based on this review, an initial pool of interview questions was developed. These questions were then revised with consideration of the research questions and objectives, and additional questions were incorporated as needed. Two distinct interview protocols—one for parents and one for teachers—were constructed.

After the development of the semi-structured interview protocols, experts were consulted for their opinions. The primary criterion for expert selection was prior research experience in aggression and problem behaviors during early childhood. Consequently, feedback on the interview questions was obtained from six early childhood education specialists and one child development expert. Several suggestions were made regarding ambiguous or judgmental wording, and recommendations were provided for improving the clarity of the questions. Some experts suggested merging or splitting certain questions. Following revisions based on expert feedback, the interview protocols for both parents and teachers were finalized. Thus, in the present study, semi-structured interview protocols were employed to collect in-depth data from parents and teachers.

During this preparatory stage, the coding process of Study 1 was ongoing. The findings from this coding process were also considered significant in shaping the interview protocols. One key implication was the necessity of avoiding the term “aggression.” A participant from Study 1 stated, “The word aggression is very disturbing” (P9, Psychiatry). Another participant similarly noted, “At the point where we say aggressive behavior, it can sound really, you know, very repulsive” (P4, Psychology). Additionally, one participant frequently expressed concerns about the term and provided an alternative phrase used in her professional practice, as illustrated below.

“Now, since we are talking about a 5-year-old child here, this child actually does not know what aggression is, and maybe he ended up in that situation just because he did not know what to do. Therefore, instead of calling him an aggressor, I always warn parents about this issue. They come for an examination and say, ‘Our child has a tendency toward violence.’ You would think that such a child would become a serial killer. That’s why I believe that we should talk about it without labeling the child. For example, what can happen instead? Our child exhibits behaviors that are harmful to the environment from time to time. He physically harms others, or there are verbally hurtful behaviors. I think the language should be corrected a little more, because aggression is something that evokes a lot of guilt.” (P9, Psychiatry)

Based on the findings of Study 1 and expert opinions, the term “behaviors that are physically, verbally, or relationally damaging and hurtful to the environment and

others”—as suggested by P9 (Psychiatry)—was adopted in place of “aggressive behaviors.” The words “damaging” and “hurtful” are commonly used to define aggression, and P9’s definition aligns with previous literature (Card et al., 2008; Crick, 1996; Ostrov et al., 2006).

However, a preliminary trial was conducted in which potential participants were approached using this definition. While teachers responded neutrally, parents strongly rejected any suggestion of aggressive behavior in their children. As a result, the researcher adjusted the approach and instead used the term “negative behaviors” when reaching out to parents. During the interviews, the word “aggression” was deliberately avoided, and parents were encouraged to discuss related behaviors. Definitions and a list of behaviors were provided when necessary.

Consequently, the parent interview protocol was structured into two sections: parent and child. In the parent section, information regarding family dynamics, relationships among family members, and child-rearing attitudes was examined, as shown in Table 3.7. In the child section, topics explored included aggressive behaviors exhibited by the child, variables influencing these behaviors, potential causes, ways these behaviors are acquired, their consequences, parental reactions, intervention strategies, and challenges experienced. The parent interview protocol consists of 13 semi-structured questions, four of which include a total of 17 sub-questions. Additionally, alternative questions were incorporated as notes for the researcher to enhance clarity.

Table 3.7. Semi-structured interview questions for parents in Study 2

Focus of the Questions	Interview Questions
Background	Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your family. Please tell me a little bit about your child.
Characteristic of aggression	You mentioned that your child exhibits some negative behaviors. Could you elaborate on the specific behaviors you have observed? Can you describe the events leading up to these negative behaviors? What do you think might have triggered your child to act this way?
Reasons and context	In your opinion, what factors contribute to your child’s negative behaviors toward their environment and others? In what situations do these behaviors typically occur?
Outcome of aggression	What are the positive or negative consequences of your child’s negative behaviors?
Intervention	What strategies do you use to prevent or reduce these behaviors? Can you describe this process?

Furthermore, similar to the parent interview protocol, the teacher interview protocol also consists of two parts: the teacher and the child. In the teacher section, information regarding the teacher and the classroom, relationships within the classroom, and classroom management techniques was examined, as shown in Table 3.8. The questions in the child section were largely similar to those in the parent interview, with minor differences. In the child section, the aggressive behaviors displayed by the child, various factors related to these behaviors, their causes, the ways in which these behaviors are acquired, their outcomes, parental responses to aggression, intervention methods, and experienced difficulties were explored. The teacher interview protocol comprises 12 semi-structured questions, three of which include a total of 15 sub-questions. Similar to the parent protocol, alternative questions are included as additional notes for the researcher to ensure clarity.

Table 3.8. Semi-structured interview questions for preschool teachers in Study 2

Focus of the Questions	Interview Questions
Background	Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your classroom. Could you please tell me a little bit about the child you selected for this study?
Characteristic of aggression	You mentioned that this child exhibits behaviors that are physically, verbally, or relationally harmful to others and the environment. Could you describe these behaviors in detail? Could you tell me a little bit about the process just before the behaviors occur? In your opinion, what might have triggered the child to exhibit these behaviors?
Reasons and context	What do you think are the reasons behind the child exhibiting such behaviors? What/what situations do you associate these behaviors with?
Outcome of aggression	What are the positive or negative consequences of these behaviors?
Intervention	What strategies do you use to prevent or reduce these behaviors? Could you describe this process?

3.2.5.2. Observation Form

Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicated that, to acquire reliable data and investigate phenomena from various sources, the use of both interviews and observations is essential. Therefore, observation methods were employed in this study to observe children in the classroom. Wortham (2014) stated that event sampling is used to identify the cause-and-effect relationship of problem behaviors. To further understand problem behaviors, Bell and Low (1977) proposed the ABC analysis. Consequently, an ABC analysis observation form was developed. The abbreviation

“A” represents the antecedent event, “B” denotes the behavior, and “C” signifies the cause (Wortham, 2014). This form includes headings for information regarding the child, classroom details, behavior lists for event sampling, antecedent events, behaviors, causes, possible functions, and reflective field notes. After the observation form was finalized, expert opinions were obtained from one child development specialist and six early childhood education experts. One of the most significant recommendations was the inclusion of a heading titled “possible function” in the observation form. “Possible function” refers to the purpose the behavior serves and the potential reasons for its occurrence. Following revisions based on expert feedback, the observation form was finalized.

Name: Darrell		Teacher:	Date:
Age: 4		Domain of Dev:	Time:
Setting:			
Situation:			
Behavior: Darrell cries multiple times a day.			
Time	Antecedent Event	Behavior	Consequent Event
8:35	Darrell’s dad drops him off in the classroom. Darrell is holding on tight to dad’s leg.	Darrell begins to cry as dad hug him and says good bye.	As the teacher comforts Darrell by squatting down next to him, Darrell stops crying five seconds after dad left and walks to the Lego area.
9:01	Teacher announces it is breakfast time.	Darrell is not picking up the Legos. When he is asked to save his work on a shelf and pick up the rest of the Legos, he sits down with his arms crossed and lower lip protrudes and begins to cry loudly.	The teacher walks to the Lego area and sits next to Darrell. The teacher puts their arm around him. He cries louder for 3 minutes before she gets him to stand up and walk to wash his hand for breakfast.

Figure 3.9. Example of ABC analysis (Peterson & Elam, 2020)

3.2.5.3. Reflective Field Notes

Qualitative research is inherently reflective in nature (Creswell, 2014). For instance, Saldana (2016) emphasizes the importance of taking reflective notes during solo coding, considering it essential for researchers. Similarly, Glaser and Strauss (1967) underscored the significance of writing memos and notes at each stage of grounded theory development. In the present study, reflective field notes were taken

throughout both the data collection and data analysis processes. As mentioned earlier, a section was included in the observation form for the researcher to document reflective notes. These notes captured specific behaviors and situations observed during data collection. In addition to the reflective notes recorded in the observation form, further reflections were documented throughout the entire observation period. Moreover, after each day of observation or interview, the researcher transcribed or voice-recorded their reflections and impressions. These notes included insights into notable issues, information about children or teachers, and observations that could provide further understanding of behaviors.

When possible, the researcher validated these reflections by asking additional questions to teachers. This validation process was undertaken to minimize subjectivity and enhance the dependability of the research findings. Although these notes were not coded, they were utilized to establish contextual understanding, as recommended by Creswell (2014). Their primary function was to deepen the comprehension of children's experiences and circumstances. As a result, in alignment with Saldana's (2016) recommendation, these reflections guided the researcher during the coding process. Furthermore, they contributed to providing contextual understanding and clarifying codes in the results section.

3.2.6. Pilot Study for Study 2

The pilot study for Study 2 was conducted to assess the clarity and relevance of the semi-structured interview questions and the observation form. Following the acquisition of ethical approval, a research sample was selected through purposeful sampling based on the criteria outlined in the sample section of Study 2. Informed consent forms and information sheets for teachers and parents were provided to the selected participants.

As part of the pilot study, interviews were conducted with three teachers, two mothers, and two fathers. The duration of the interviews ranged from approximately 50 to 68 minutes. Each interview was voice-recorded. To pilot the observation form, a child was observed by the researcher for one week. Participants were informed

about the recording process and confidentiality measures. Since the pilot data were included in the main findings, participants' demographic information is presented under the research sample section. As a result of the pilot study, no modifications to the interview questions were necessary, as the additional notes prepared for the researcher ensured clarity when needed.

3.2.7. Data Collection Procedure

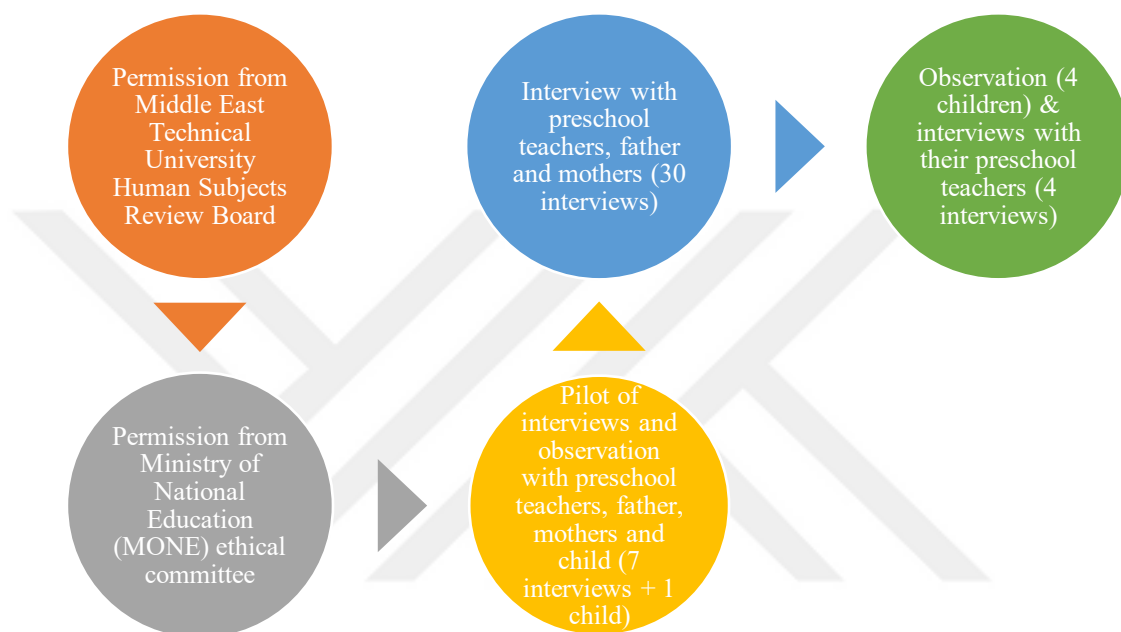


Figure 3.10. Data collection process of Study 2

As a first step, the research problem and research questions were formulated. After determining the initial research questions, data collection instruments were developed, and expert opinions were obtained from seven specialists. Following the revisions made based on expert feedback, the participation consent form, parent permission form, parent information form, teacher information form, parent interview protocol, teacher interview protocol, and observation form were finalized.

Before initiating data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Middle East Technical University Human Subjects Review Board. Additionally, approval was secured from the Ministry of National Education (MONE) ethical committee. Once the necessary permissions were acquired, the data collection process was initiated, as illustrated in Figure 3.10.

Initially, a pilot study was conducted, during which the preliminary interview form was administered to three teachers, two mothers, and two fathers. Additionally, the initial observation form was tested with one child over a one-week period. Following the pilot study, the semi-structured interview forms and observation form were finalized, as no further revisions or additional questions were deemed necessary. Once the interview protocols were prepared, preschool teachers, as well as the mothers and fathers of children aged 60 to 72 months, were contacted by the researcher based on the initial sampling criteria. Information forms containing definitions, characterizations, a list of aggressive behaviors, and a set of criteria were provided to the teachers. For parents, information forms were distributed that included a list of criteria but excluded definitions and examples of aggressive behaviors to prevent potential parental sensitivity.

After obtaining consent forms, interviews with parents and teachers were conducted. It is important to note that, since participants were not recruited through preschool institutions, data regarding a child were not collected from both teachers and parents simultaneously. Instead, participation was limited to either the mother, the father, or the teacher. In rare cases, both the mother and father of a child agreed to participate in the study. One challenge encountered during data collection was the reluctance of fathers to participate. Some fathers volunteered under the condition that interviews be conducted alongside their spouses. According to the literature, dyadic interviews are considered appropriate for individuals who share an existing relationship or a common ground (Kvalsvik & Ogaard, 2021). Consequently, four father-mother dyads participated in dyadic interviews.

Additionally, participants determined the location of the interviews. As a result, online interviews were conducted upon request or when scheduling conflicts arose during working hours. Once logistical arrangements were finalized, the interviews were carried out. At the beginning of each interview, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study. Furthermore, information regarding confidentiality and anonymity was provided by the researcher. With participants' consent, interviews were audio recorded. The duration of the interviews ranged from 22 to 78 minutes. As a result of this interview phase, information regarding children

was gathered from 12 preschool teachers, 12 fathers, and 12 mothers, leading to a total of 36 interviews.

After the interviews were conducted, observations of children in a classroom setting took place, as illustrated in Figure 3.9. To meet the observation sample criteria defined in the sampling section of Study 2, these criteria were used as an initial basis for selecting participants.

For the study, early childhood teachers and principals were contacted by the researcher. Teachers were provided with guidelines for selecting children, which included definitions, characterizations, a list of aggressive behaviors, and selection criteria. These guidelines were developed based on the findings of Study 1. If more than one child met the criteria, teachers were asked to select two children. This approach was taken to ensure that, in case parents declined participation, alternative participants would be available. If only one child in a classroom met the criteria, the teacher was included in the study.

After identifying potential child participants, the researcher provided information forms to the teachers to be distributed to parents to obtain their consent. These forms included a list of criteria but omitted definitions and specific behaviors to minimize potential parental concerns. Additionally, parents were asked whether they were willing to participate in the study. During this process, many parents declined participation, refusing to allow their children to be observed. As a result, only four children in the main study and one child in the pilot study were included in the observation. None of the parents of these children consented to participate or provide additional data. Consequently, information regarding these five observed participants was obtained exclusively through interviews with their preschool teachers.

Delving deeper into the details of observation, one child in each classroom was observed. For this purpose, an observation form was utilized, and event sampling was employed. An aggressive behavior list, constructed in Study 1, served as the criterion for event sampling.

Initially, the researcher intended to observe the most frequently mentioned behaviors among those identified in Study 1. However, the thesis monitoring committee advised first conducting a pilot study that included all identified behaviors as events before determining which behaviors to observe. During the pilot study, it was realized that selecting only certain behaviors was not feasible. This was due to the fact that each child exhibited a different variety of behaviors. Restricting observations to specific behaviors could have minimized the participant pool and prevented the researcher from reaching the maximum number of participants. A concern was raised that an extensive list of behaviors might complicate the researcher's role and result in some behaviors being overlooked. However, findings from the pilot study indicated that each child did not display all the behaviors; rather, they generally followed a pattern and exhibited a similar range of behaviors. Consequently, all aggressive behaviors identified in Study 1 were included as events for sampling. A list of these behaviors, along with their descriptions, can be found in the results section.

In the original plan, the observation sessions were intended to be video recorded. However, the pilot study revealed that videotaping was impractical, as the children were constantly moving and aggressive behaviors often emerged spontaneously. As a result, the researcher opted to use an observation form and take notes by hand during the sessions. Non-participant, direct observations were conducted, with the researcher positioning herself in a corner of the classroom.

One challenge encountered was the loud noise in the classroom, which made it difficult to hear certain conversations. During these noisy moments, efforts were made by the researcher to find new positions near the child to enhance her ability to listen. On one occasion, intervention became necessary during an observation. On that particular day, a school-wide performance was held, involving all the children, which made it difficult for teachers and interns to supervise everyone effectively. When the behavior of the observed child began to seriously harm a peer, intervention was required. Aside from this situation, interactions with the children were avoided during observations.

In this phase of the study, the initial plan involved conducting observations throughout the entire school day. However, permission to remain in the classroom while club teachers were present was not granted by the principals. In the Turkish educational system, some preschools operate on a half-day schedule, while others function for a full day. However, in full-day preschools, preschool teachers work only half the day, and club teachers take over after lunch hours (Ministry of National Education Directorate General for Basic Education, n.d.). Consequently, each child was observed for half a day during the hours in which preschool teachers were present. During each non-participatory observation, various periods were observed, including arrival at school, free play, breakfast, activity time, and other elements of the daily routine. Each time specified behaviors occurred, notes were taken by the researcher on the observation form. During the observations, noteworthy incidents that occurred and could provide insights into the child's characteristics and the classroom atmosphere were documented. Additionally, during class hours, some teachers voluntarily shared insights without any request from the researchers, offering potentially valuable information. Furthermore, during each observation, the researcher recorded personal reflections to ensure more accurate field notes and prevent data loss.

Data collection continued until sufficiently rich data were obtained and data saturation was reached. Although participants were initially selected based on specific criteria, theoretical sampling was later employed to refine participant selection. In other words, the selection procedure was adjusted as the data analysis process progressed due to the nature of theoretical sampling. Detailed information regarding theoretical sampling decisions is provided under the section on the research sample of Study 2—theoretical sampling, along with findings and participants' input, led the researcher to revise the initial selection criteria. Further details on theoretical sampling can be found under section 3.2.4.

The sample size and selection process were closely related to data saturation. Observations for each child continued until no new data emerged. As long as a child provided new codes and data, the observation was prolonged. This meant that once a child was observed, if no new or previously unseen data were generated, the

observation was immediately terminated. The researcher then proceeded to observe the next child. Observations and interviews were concluded when no additional data were obtained in successive sessions. Accordingly, C1 was observed from 08:15 to 13:00 over a span of seven days, C2 from 08:15 to 13:00 for six days, C3 from 09:00 to 13:30 for four days, C4 from 09:00 to 13:30 for four days, and C5 from 12:30 to 17:00 for three days.

In this study, saturation was not determined based on individual children but by examining the overall dataset. Likewise, saturation was not assessed on an interview- or observation-specific basis but rather by considering the entire data set. During data collection, recorded interviews and observations were transcribed into written form. Each interview and observation was labeled with an alias to ensure confidentiality. These aliases are described in detail in the results section. In the initial stage, intercoder reliability was assessed to enhance trustworthiness. Codes emerged through line-by-line coding, followed by the identification of relationships among them. This process ensured the credibility and consistency of the codes. Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection and played a crucial role in determining the sample size. Throughout both data collection and analysis, reflective field notes were maintained by the researcher for future reference. Additionally, thick descriptions and an audit trail were provided to ensure rigor and transparency in the research process.

3.2.8. Data Analysis

3.2.8.1. Intercoder Agreement

Similar to the intercoder agreement process in Study 1, intercoder agreement was used to establish reliability in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As stated in the intercoder agreement section of Study 1, intercoder agreement is achieved through multiple coders coding the data multiple times (Kuckartz, 2014). Following the guidelines provided by Cofie et al. (2022) and O'Connor and Joffe (2020), coding was conducted by two researchers, one of whom was blind to the data collection process but possessed prior qualitative coding experience. Based on these

guidelines, both researchers discussed the codes and reached an agreement. Additionally, an initial codebook was developed as a result of these discussions and was subsequently used to facilitate the coding process.

A voluntary research assistant from the Department of Early Childhood Education was recruited by the primary researcher. The second researcher had prior experience with qualitative research methods and was proficient in using MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software. Since the second coder was unfamiliar with the research topic and data collection process, a brief information session was conducted to provide an overview of the research topic and questions. Following the recommendations of O'Connor and Joffe (2020), which suggest that 10%–25% of the data is needed for the intercoder agreement process, two out of six pilot interview transcripts were randomly selected. In summary, two interview transcripts were coded by both researchers, adhering to the guidelines deemed appropriate for the intercoder agreement procedure in this study.

First, one of the selected interview transcripts was coded using simultaneous collaborative coding. This method allows two researchers to code data collaboratively in real time while discussing the assigned codes (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019). This approach was chosen because, unlike Study 1, the data in this study is more extensive, and line-by-line coding is required. As a result, the agreement process becomes more complex and demanding. During the coding process, if both researchers agreed on a common code, that code was used. However, if a disagreement arose and one researcher did not concur with the other's reasoning, each researcher applied their own codes.

Upon completing the coding of the first interview transcript, a codebook was developed. The same process was then applied to the second interview transcript using the codebook as a reference. Following the coding of the second interview, all codes in the codebook were reviewed by the primary researcher and discussed with the second coder. Throughout the intercoder agreement procedure, previously recommended guidelines were followed to ensure reliability (Cofie et al., 2022; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Table 3.9. Coders' agreement and disagreement

		Coder 1		
		1	0	
Coder 2	1	a=816	b=14	830
	0	c=31	0	31
		847	14	861

Although these guidelines were followed, one difficulty was encountered. Although both researchers coded the same text block with the same code, MAXQDA's sensitivity to upper- and lowercase distinctions caused the software to register these differences as disagreements. Consequently, the initial agreement scores were relatively low, with a Kappa value of 0.22. After resolving inconsistencies in uppercase and lowercase usage and reaching agreement on certain codes, MAXQDA recalculated the intercoder coefficient Kappa value using the formula presented in Figure 3.11 and Table 3.9, following the approach of Brennan and Prediger (1981).

P(observed)	=	Po	=	a	/	(a	+	b	+	c)	=	0.95		
P(chance)	=	Pc	=	1	/	Number	of	codes	=	1	/	241	=	0.00
Kappa	=	(Po	-	Pc)	/	(1	-	Pc)	=	0.95				

Figure 3.11. Coefficient Kappa formulation

As a result, the intercoder agreement was calculated as 0.95. According to Neuendorf (2002), a Kappa value exceeding 0.9 is considered highly acceptable. Therefore, it can be concluded that the intercoder reliability of the current study reflects a perfect agreement.

3.2.8.2. Coding the Observations and Interviews

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with the data collection process, as the sample size remained tentative based on ongoing findings. During both data collection and analysis, reflective field notes were taken for future reference. In this study, dyadic interviews were conducted in addition to solo interviews, and their

instance, in the messy situational map, non-human elements such as curriculum and housing issues were depicted to provide additional context.



Figure 3.13. Messy situational map

Note. Adapted from Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn by A. E. Clarke, 2005, p. 221

Clarke and her colleagues (2015) clarified that the first two types of maps—situational maps and social worlds/arenas maps—are created in the early stages of research. As data analysis progresses, elements within these maps may be adjusted to guide further data collection.



Figure 3.14. Ordered situational map

Note. Adapted from Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn by A. E. Clarke, 2005, 222

As illustrated in Figures 3.13 and 3.14, situational maps may take either a messy or an ordered form (Clarke, 2005). Additionally, a third type of map, the relational

analysis map, provides insights into the relationships among human and non-human elements within the study.

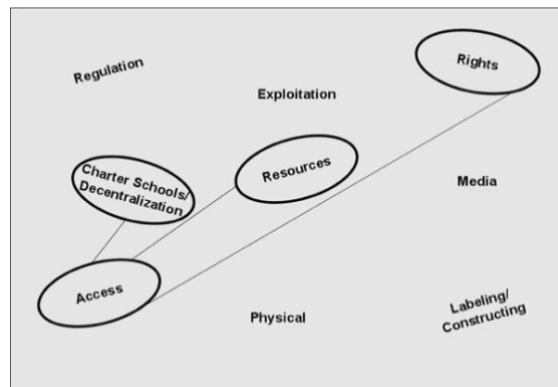


Figure 3.15. Relational analysis map

Note. Adapted from Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn by A. E. Clarke, 2005, p. 227

Although situational maps are utilized by researchers, social worlds/arenas maps are typically included in written reports or theses. These maps reveal the meso-level organization of the investigated issue. Figure 3.16 illustrates a social spheres and power arenas map.

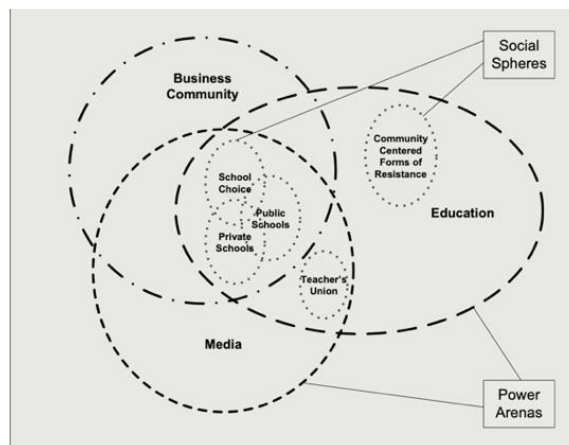


Figure 3.16. Social spheres/power arenas map

Note. Adapted from Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn by A. E. Clarke, 2005, p. 229

Positional maps, on the other hand, emerge following data analysis and provide information about the evolving positions related to the research topic. As shown in

Figure 3.17, positional maps enable the exploration of various stances on the issue and facilitate the formulation of inferences (Clarke, 2005).

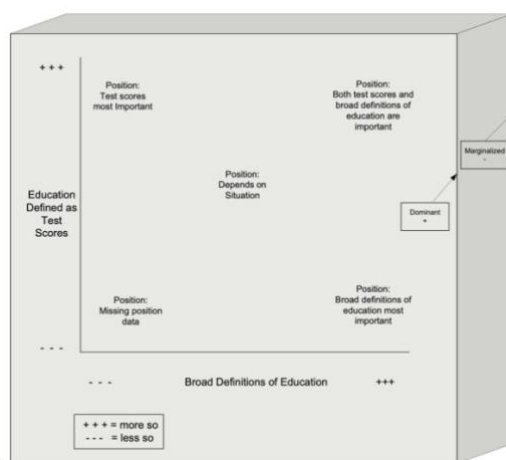


Figure 3.17. Positional map

Note. Adapted from Situational analyses: Grounded theory mapping after the postmodern turn by A. E. Clarke, 2005, p. 231

Regarding data analysis within traditional grounded theory methods, coding consists of three steps: open coding and axial coding, which align with the principles of both grounded theory and situational analysis (Clarke et al., 2015). In open coding, a line-by-line analysis is conducted, while in axial coding, relationships between emerging codes are established (Kelle, 2007). In the current study, open coding was performed as the first cycle, employing a line-by-line approach. Axial coding was then conducted as the second cycle. In the final stage, theory construction was completed, followed by the development of situational maps, social spheres/power arenas maps, and positional maps.

3.3. Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness, which is associated with validity and reliability in the qualitative paradigm, consists of confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability (Miles et al, 2014).

First, confirmability, which is related to objectivity, was emphasized, as stated by Miles and his colleagues (2014). To ensure confirmability, an audit trail was

maintained throughout the study. Detailed explanations regarding the rationale behind each decision were documented in audit trails across the entire research process.

Second, dependability, which refers to the consistency of the study process (Miles et al., 2014), was ensured through various strategies. Providing a thick description was one such strategy. Additionally, the use of reflective field notes, memo writing, interview recordings, and observations contributed to ensuring dependability in this study.

Third, to establish credibility, thick descriptions, as suggested by Geertz (1973), were provided. Interviews regarding a specific child's aggressive behaviors were conducted with multiple data sources, including teachers, fathers, and/or mothers. These findings were validated through data triangulation, which ensured credibility of the study (Miles et al, 2014). Data triangulation was achieved by utilizing multiple sources of information, as recommended by Patton (1999). To gather diverse perspectives, semi-structured parent-teacher interviews and child observations were conducted. Furthermore, intercoder reliability was applied to ensure the credibility of the generated codes. Several interview and observation transcripts were selected, coded by two independent coders, and subsequently compared and discussed to achieve consistency among reviewers.

Finally, transferability, which pertains to external validity and the generalizability of findings to other settings (Miles et al., 2014), was addressed. To enhance transferability, thick descriptions were provided.

3.4. Delimitations and Limitations

Regarding delimitations, insight was provided by the study's participants about children who are developing normally, do not require special education, have no clinical diagnosis, and whose mother tongue is Turkish. Consequently, the findings obtained do not apply to children with special education needs, children with clinical diagnoses related to aggression, or children whose mother tongue is not Turkish.

As for limitations, since a qualitative research methodology was employed in the study, the results cannot be generalized across Türkiye (Creswell, 2014). Another limitation arises from the sensitive nature of aggression as the focus of the study. As a result, participants may have been reluctant to present a negative portrayal of their children.



CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The current chapter is divided into two sections: Study 1 and Study 2. The first section introduces the research questions and sample information briefly, providing the necessary context for understanding the findings and quotations. In the subsequent section, under heading 4.1, the findings exploring the definition, characteristics, and categories of aggression are discussed. The analysis of the interviews led to the emergence of themes, sub-themes, categories, and codes, which are thoroughly examined in relation to the research questions.

The second section, under the heading 4.2, presents findings related to childhood aggression, its characteristics and dimensions, and its interaction with culture. The discussion of themes, sub-themes, categories, and codes is more detailed in this section. In addition to these, a culturally appropriate theory of childhood aggression is developed. Furthermore, situational analysis maps are used to provide detailed insights into this theory.

4.1. Study 1

4.1.1. Remembering the purpose and research questions of Study 1

Study 1 explored childhood aggression from the perspectives of psychological guidance counselors, child development specialists, clinical psychologists, child psychiatrists, early childhood educators, and psychologists. The research questions were designed to investigate the definition of aggression, the classification of childhood aggression, and the characteristics of each classification. To achieve these objectives, the following research questions were proposed:

1. What is the definition of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?
 - 1.1 What are the characteristics of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?
 - 1.2. What are the categories of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?
2. What are the characteristics of each category of childhood aggression in the Turkish context?

4.1.2. Recollection of study participants

Under this heading, participant profiles are provided to offer context for the themes, sub-themes, codes, and quotations, as presented in Table 4.1. As shown in Table 4.1, each participant is assigned the letter “P” followed by an abbreviation corresponding to their field of expertise. For ethical reasons, participants are referred to anonymously.

The letter “P” represents “participant,” and their respective fields are indicated as follows: “ECE” for early childhood education, “Counseling” for psychological counseling and guidance, “Psychology” for psychology and clinical psychology, “Psychiatry” for child and adolescent psychiatry, and “C. Development” for child development. For example, the first participant is labeled as P1, ECE, indicating their specialization in early childhood education. Another participant is labeled as P13, Psychology which indicated that this participant is specialized in psychology for their bachelor education.

Relevant background information, including degrees (bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate), years of experience, age, field of expertise, current occupation, and past job experience, is provided to give a comprehensive overview of each participant’s qualifications. Furthermore, participants’ age and gender information were taken to fully comprehend and understand participant profile. By gathering these information, it is aimed to provide better understanding which help interpreting the result in a more meaning the result in a more meaningful way. In the findings section, the symbol “*f*” is used to indicate the frequency of coded segments in both the tables and the text. The symbol “*n*” represents the number of participants who mentioned specific codes.

Table 4.1. Participants' profile of the Study 1

Document name	Gender	Bachelor degree	Master degree	Doctorate degree	Years of experience	Occupation	Past job experiences	Age	Fields of expertise
P1, ECE	Female	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	20	Academician	Preschool Teacher	42	Peer Relations, Social Skills, Aggression, Psychological Resilience
P2, C. Development	Female	Child Development	Education of Mentally Handicapped	Child Development and Education	26	Academician	Preschool Teacher, Family Counsellor	47	Prosocial behaviors, Emotional and Behavioral Problems
P3, Psychology	Female	Psychology	Developmental Focused Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology	-	7	Clinical Psychologist	School Psychologist	29	Not specified
P4, Psychology	Male	Psychology	Developmental Focused Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology	-	4	Clinical Psychologist	Part Time University Instructor, NGO Worker	30	Abnormal Psychology and Attitude Problems
P5, Psychiatry	Female	Medicine	-	Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	6	Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist	Medical Resident	34	Child Psychiatry, ADHD and Psychodrama
P6, Psychology	Female	Psychology	Family Psychology	-	10	School Psychologist	Psychologist in Hospital and Special Edu Center, Kindergarten Principal	34	Play Therapy
P7, ECE	Female	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	6	Research Assistant	Preschool Teacher	26	Not specified
P8, ECE-Counselling	Female	Early Childhood Education	Psychological Counselling and Guidance	Psychological Counselling and Guidance	15	Teacher	Part Time University Instructor, Special Education Teacher	38	Peer and Sibling Bullying
P9, Psychiatry	Female	Medicine	-	Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	13	Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist	Medical Resident	36	Child Psychiatry
P10, ECE	Female	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	11	Research Assistant	Preschool Teacher, Administrative Staff	35	Not specified

Table 4.1 (continued)

Document name	Gender	Bachelor degree	Master degree	Doctorate degree	Years of experience	Occupation	Past job experiences	Age	Fields of expertise
P11, C. Development	Female	Child Development	Child Development	-	14	Child Development Specialist	Not specified	38	Not specified
P12, Psychology	Female	Psychological Counselling and Guidance	Career Counselling, Clinical Psychology	-	23	Clinical Psychologist	Guidance Counsellor, Research Assistant	45	Child, Adolescent and Adult Therapy, EMDR Therapy
P13, Psychology	Female	Psychological Counselling and Guidance	Clinical Psychology	-	16	Clinical Psychologist	Guidance Counsellor	36	Play Therapy
P14, Psychiatry	Female	Medicine	-	Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	9	Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist	Medical Resident	34	Child Psychiatry
P15, Counselling	Female	Psychological Counselling and Guidance	Family Counselling, Psychological Counselling and Guidance	-	9	Psychological Counsellor	Guidance Counsellor	32	Play Therapy, Child Psychology, Emotional Integration Therapy
P16, C. Development	Female	Child Development, Primary School Teaching	-	-	27	Child Development Specialist, Kindergarten Principal	Primary School Teacher	50	Not specified
P17, ECE	Female	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	10	Housewife (currently at maternity leave)	Preschool Teacher, Research Assistant	37	Not specified
P18, ECE	Female	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	9	Research Assistant	Preschool Teacher	32	Child Sociology, Child Rights

4.1.3. Aggression in early childhood (EC)

The current study examines aggression in early childhood from the perspectives of experts. In this study, 18 interviews identified one main theme, two sub-themes, 11 categories, eight sub-categories, and 62 codes. This section focuses on the theme and sub-themes in detail. Further information regarding categories, sub-categories, and codes is provided under the relevant headings in the following sections. The findings of the current study are categorized under the theme of aggression in early childhood, as illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

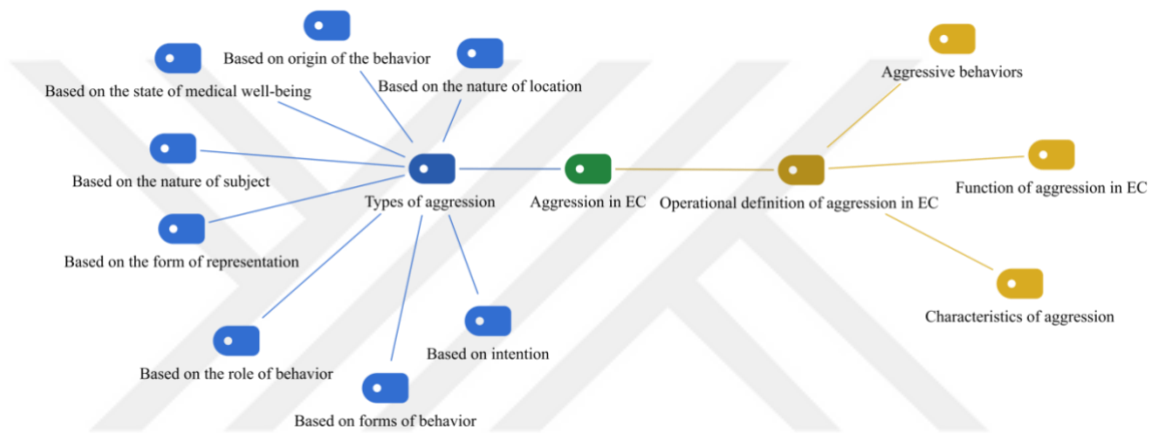


Figure 4.1. Theme and sub-themes

The theme “Aggression in Early Childhood” ($f=1058$) refers to any issue linked to aggression during the early childhood period. This theme encompasses Study 1 as a whole. Under this theme, participants mainly discussed two sub-themes: the operational definition of aggression in early childhood ($f = 659$) and types of aggression ($f = 401$). The sub-theme of the operational definition of aggression in early childhood includes three categories: characteristics of aggression ($f = 127$), the function of aggression in early childhood ($f = 40$), and aggressive behaviors ($f = 445$). The second sub-theme, types of aggression, consists of eight categories: based on location ($f = 10$), based on the origin of the behavior ($f = 11$), based on medical well-being ($f = 23$), based on the nature of the subject ($f = 10$), based on the form of representation ($f = 8$), based on the role of behavior ($f = 17$), based on the form of behavior ($f = 284$), and based on intention ($f = 34$).

You can think of it as a negative situation where children in the egocentric period reflect their emotions and thoughts, as they are unable to reason properly due to the underdevelopment of the frontal lobe and the ongoing development of the limbic system (P12, Psychology)

Similar to P12, another expert defined aggression from a sociological perspective, emphasizing child rights and social dynamics. P18 described aggression as a process-driven outcome and stressed the significance of sociological components with the following statement:

From a more sociological point of view, ...aggression mostly occurs in situations where the person feels misunderstood, or when caregivers, those who support them, fail to guide them positively. If negative emotions are not explained or addressed in a supportive way, they can be expressed as aggression. Aggression is a result; there is a process that leads to it. Although it is not always possible to change the causes and factors in this process, managing it is not only about the person who engages in aggressive behavior. It also involves the kind of support, or lack thereof, provided by the people around them. (P18, ECE)

(Note: The ellipses used in this thesis represent extended pauses, repetition, or incomplete thoughts in the speaker's speech. Further usage of ellipses in direct quotes follows this convention.)

Furthermore, P5's statement also highlighted that aggression must be recurring to be considered as such. The same participant emphasized that aggression exists on a spectrum, explaining:

Of course, when defining aggression, I would say there is a difference between simply throwing a toy on the ground and smashing it to pieces. Aggression exists on a spectrum, ranging from mild irritability to more intense forms of aggressive behavior. (P5, Psychiatry)

Another expert, on the other hand, defined aggression as: *"The alienation of an individual from themselves or their environment during the process of growth and development."* (P15, Counselling) P15 further clarified that alienation occurs: *"When you stop acknowledging yourself and begin suppressing your feelings, thoughts, or behaviors, the sudden reactions that emerge from this sense of alienation are considered aggression."* Similarly, another psychologist highlighted the role of self-expression in aggression:

When discussing childhood aggression, the first thing that comes to mind from my perspective is the child's needs. In other words, aggression can be seen as certain inappropriate behavioral or verbal actions that arise when a child struggles to express their needs or uses aggression as a means of communication. (P3, Psychology)

P3 also defined aggression as: *“When I think of aggression, I associate it with a child harming themselves, their environment, or their surroundings.”* (P3, Psychology) P4 supported this argument but emphasized the importance of intent in defining aggression:

We define aggression as any behavior pattern that causes physical and emotional harm or behaviors against an object, such as damaging, destroying, or eliminating it. However, I would like to add that the intention behind aggression in this age group may not always be as negative as we perceive it from an adult perspective. (P4, Psychology)

Similarly, another expert (P2, Child Development) highlighted both age and developmental aspects when defining aggression:

Childhood aggression may differ somewhat from that of older age groups. How does it differ? Since young children are still developing language and self-expression skills, their aggression is often driven by frustration and difficulty regulating their emotions. In other words, rather than a deliberate intent to harm, their aggression stems from an inability to manage their emotions. As children grow, aggression may take on a more intentional form, but in early childhood, it primarily arises from struggles with emotional regulation and limited ability to express thoughts and feelings effectively. (P2, C. Development)

Another expert (P11, Child Development) argued that aggression is not limited to observable behaviors but extends to tone of voice, facial expressions, and attitudes. They introduced the concept of *“above-the-line reactions”* to describe these less overt but equally significant manifestations of aggression: *“Aggression is not only expressed through behavior. Sometimes, we can observe it in a child’s tone of voice, attitude, and facial expressions.”* (P11, C. Development) As the quotations above illustrate, each expert emphasized different aspects of aggression. Rather than offering a single, fixed definition, participants described aggression from multiple dimensions. Key aspects they highlighted include emotions, provocation,

impulsivity, attention-seeking, language use, physical contact, frustration, goal attainment, problem-solving, body awareness, conflicts between parental expectations and the child's behavior, gender, peer relationships, and aggressive actions such as biting and hitting. This suggests that participants aimed to provide an operational definition rather than a rigid, one-size-fits-all explanation. Accordingly, the sub-theme of the operational definition of aggression in early childhood is organized into three categories, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Sub-theme₁ and its categories

Sub-theme/ Category	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (<i>n</i> /18)	Empirical indicators
Operational definition of aggression in EC	Defining aggression and describing what does aggression mean.	659	18	When I think of aggression, the first thing that comes to my mind is when a person engages in harmful behavior in a way that violates the rights of another person, in the most basic and simple sense (P1, ECE)
Characteristics of aggression	Features of aggression and aggressive behaviors	127	18	In this respect, we also evaluate, for example, in which context did it happen? I mean, what distinguishes them from each other? What kind of environment was in it, was there anything that happened before the child did this behavior? Was there any behavior against him/her or did the child suddenly do it on his/her own? In other words, the time and place of the incident, what happened before and after the intervention and the frequency and severity of this aggressive behavior. All of these will actually make the difference between each other. (P3, Psychology)
Function aggression in EC	What purpose does aggression serve? What are the functions of these behaviors?	40	13	At this age, children can generally use aggression as a form of expression. (P4, Psychology)
Aggressive behaviors	Behaviors that are considered aggressive	445	18	So aggressive behaviors are very diverse. I mean, they can trip each other, they can push their friends, we have seen people pinch each other, etc. (P1, ECE)

4.1.3.1.1. Category₁: Characteristics of childhood aggression

This category emerged from research question 1.1 of Study 1, which investigates the characteristics of aggression. The reason this category is included within the scope of Sub-theme 1 is that, as shown under the heading above, participants defined aggression by emphasizing its characteristics. The characteristics of aggression consist of four sub-categories, as illustrated in Figure 4.3.

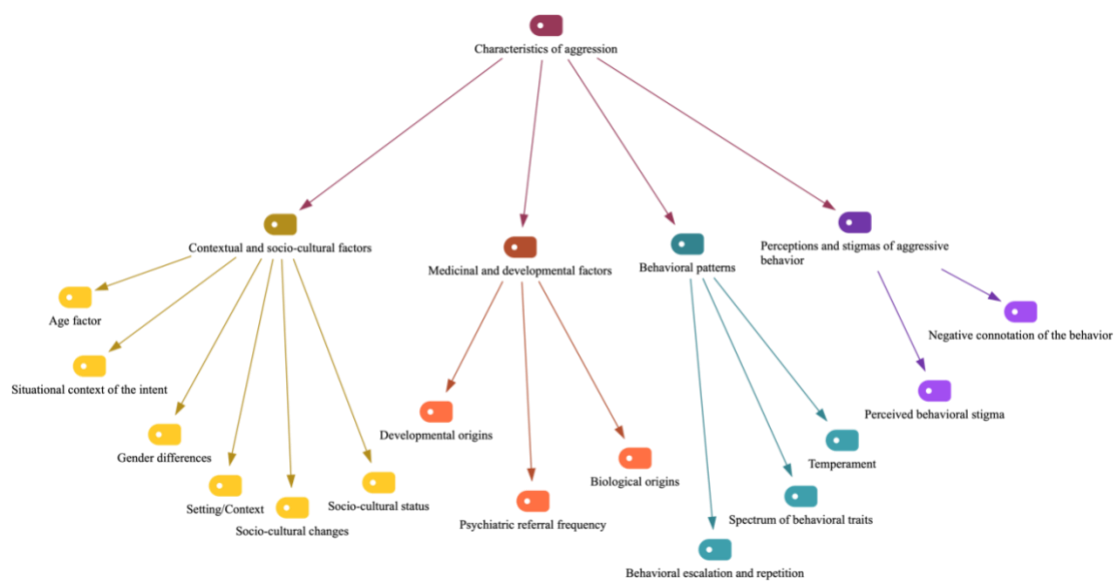


Figure 4.3. Characteristics of aggression and its sub-categories and codes

The sub-categories include contextual and socio-cultural factors ($f = 75$), medical and developmental factors ($f = 21$), behavioral patterns ($f = 19$), and perceptions and stigmas associated with aggressive behavior ($f = 12$).

Sub-category₁: Contextual and socio-cultural factors: Contextual and socio-cultural factors significantly shape the expression and prevalence of aggressive behaviors across different age groups. These factors provide valuable insights into the characteristics of aggression. This sub-category refers to any contextual, social, and cultural elements that inform the operational definition of aggression. Key contextual and socio-cultural factors include age, the situational context of intent, gender differences, setting, socio-cultural changes, and socio-economic status, as outlined in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Sub-category 1 and its codes

Sub-category/ Codes	Description	f	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Contextual and socio-cultural factors	Any contextual, social and cultural factors that define characteristics of aggression	75	16	I mean, I think we need to look at this from a sociological point of view. For example, behavior differs according to society. (P6, Psychology)

Table 4.3. (continued)

Age factor	Differences in aggression depending on age group	2	14	6	At a young age, there is more physical aggression. Even younger, before 60-72 months, there is biting, hitting, pushing. In 60-72 months, children tend to display aggressive behaviors such as exclusion, belittling, saying bad words. (P6, Psychology)
Situational context of the intent	The existence or absence and the context of the intent behind behavior.	1	9	9	When I think of aggression, I can define it as the tendency to intentionally harm a person, any behavior aimed at causing harm. (P8, ECE-Counselling).
Gender differences	Differences in aggression depending on gender of child	1	5	1	When we think of aggression in young children, one of the first things that comes to mind is gender differences. For example, I can think of different types of aggression according to gender. (P1, ECE).
Setting/Context	When and where aggression occurs?	7	4	4	In this respect, we also evaluate, for example, in which context did it happen? I mean, what distinguishes them from each other, in which context did it happen? What kind of environment was it, was there anything that happened before the child did this behavior? Was there any behavior against him/her or did the child suddenly do it on his/her own? (P3, Psychology)
Socio-cultural changes	Sudden changes in the socio-cultural context	6	4	4	We look for a challenging event in the child's life, a periodically challenging transition. Here, we always look at the following, for example, is there any loss? Is there an accident? Is there the birth of a sibling? Is there a separation of parents? Or more global challenges, the pandemic was one of them. (P3, Psychology)
Socio-cultural status	Differences in social and cultural levels in a society and its relation to aggression	6	4	4	For example, I work in a rural area, we can call it a village. I honestly think that there is a difference between the aggression of a child in a village and the aggression of a child raised at a high socio-cultural level in a big city. I can say this in terms of consciousness and tendency to harm (P8, ECE-Counselling).

One of the key contextual and socio-cultural factors highlighted is age. It has been noted that aggression varies depending on age. As one participant mentioned in the quote below, as a child grows, the types of aggressive behaviors they exhibit also change.

At a young age, physical aggression is more common. Even earlier, before 60-72 months, children may engage in biting, hitting, and pushing. Between 60-72 months, however, children tend to display more verbal forms of aggression, such as exclusion, belittling, and using bad language. What I observe in children within this age range are behaviors like excluding others, swearing, and expressions such as “Don't come near us,” “You're not a good child,” or “No one will love you.” (P6, Psychology)

Furthermore, it is also emphasized that aggression emerges in children arises from various emotions, which differ from those in adults. One participant (P9) supported this argument as follows:

At an older age, especially in adults, aggression is primarily caused by anger, although the reasons behind the anger can vary. In children, however, emotions such as anxiety, worry, sadness, disappointment, and even physical pain can lead to aggressive behavior. I think this is one of the key differences. Additionally, children at this age are not as adept at using verbal language as adults, as they have not yet developed abstract expressions. Because they struggle to express their emotions effectively, their aggression may stem from this inability. These, I believe, are the main factors that differentiate children from adults. (P9, Psychiatry)

The developmental process also plays a crucial role in how aggression is categorized, particularly when comparing children with adults. P14 (Psychiatry) noted that *“while adults are more prone to verbal aggression, children, in general, are more likely to display physical aggression, such as hitting and pushing.”* Another key point raised was that children between the ages of 60 to 72 months are frequently referred to psychiatric clinics for aggression-related concerns. A significant number of outpatient clinic visits are linked to aggression, particularly in this age group. P14 (Psychiatry) explained:

During this developmental stage, even families of children with typical development frequently observe aggressive behaviors and seek professional help. Additionally, since aggression is often an early symptom of conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder, clinic visits tend to be quite frequent at this age. (P14, Psychiatry)

Alongside age, gender is another demographic factor closely associated with aggression. Statements from multiple participants highlighted differences in aggression based on gender. P1 (ECE) pointed out: *“When we think of aggression in young children, one of the first aspects that comes to mind is gender differences. For instance, different types of aggression tend to emerge depending on gender”* (P1, ECE)

P14 (Psychiatry) observed that *“while boys tend to display more physical aggression, girls are more likely to express aggression verbally through yelling and crying.”*

Similarly, P11 (C. Development), who works in a public hospital's psychiatry clinic, confirmed that physical aggression is more commonly observed in boys: *"I've frequently seen this among boys. Some even engage in self-harming behaviors, such as pinching their own skin or pulling their hair, out of rage. Interestingly, I have never encountered a girl exhibiting such behaviors in a psychiatric clinic."* (P11, C. Development)

Regarding relational aggression, which involves harming others through social exclusion, gossip, or manipulation, P1 (ECE) noted: *"We have observed more relational aggression in girls, whereas boys exhibit more physical aggression."* (P1, ECE) Although P14 (Psychiatry) acknowledged that girls often engage in verbal aggression, another participant linked swearing specifically to male children. P2 (C. Development) explained:

Young children often mimic the swearing they hear at home. Since verbal aggression develops through modeling, we see behaviors such as swearing, belittling friends, and making fun of physical characteristics, especially among boys. For instance, they may call someone 'fat,' mock their glasses, or ridicule their speech patterns. (P2, Child Development)

Another key aspect in defining aggression is intent. The situational context of a child's intent influences how aggression is interpreted. Several participants (P4, Psychology; P15, Counseling; P2, C. Development; P16, C. Development; P8, ECE-Counseling; P10, ECE) emphasized that aggression varies depending on the underlying intent. P8 (ECE-Counseling) defined aggression as follows: *"When I think of aggression, I define it as the tendency to intentionally harm a person or engage in any behavior aimed at causing harm."* (P8, ECE-Counseling) P4 (Psychology) further clarified the concept of intent: *"When distinguishing aggression, the key factor we examine is intent. More precisely, we ask: what is the child trying to achieve?"* (P4, Psychology)

Some participants acknowledged that while aggressive behavior often serves a purpose, there are cases where it occurs spontaneously, without specific intent. P15 (Counseling) noted: *"For some children, aggressive behavior is sudden and*

unprovoked. However, for others, it may stem from a desire to be noticed, 'see me, hear me, I am here,' or from an intent to harm.” (P15, Counseling)

Participants also discussed how the concept of intent differs between children and adults. P16 (C. Development) described intent in early childhood as *“less calculated, more spontaneous, and impulsive.”* P2 (C. Development) reinforced this view: *“In young children, intent is not very deliberate. Their behaviors are often momentary, arising from an inability to regulate emotions, a strong desire to possess everything for themselves, or difficulty in sharing.”* (P2, C. Development)

Similarly, P4 (Psychology) pointed out that adults may misinterpret children's intentions: *“The intention behind aggression in this age group may not always be as negative as we assume from an adult perspective.”* (P14, Psychology) Some participants suggested that aggression in young children often arises from frustration rather than a desire to cause harm. P2 (C. Development) explained:

In later years, aggression may become more intentional, used deliberately to harm others. However, in young children, aggression often results from difficulties in self-regulation. It stems from an inability to manage anger and express emotions effectively. (P2, C. Development)

Family practices and cultural factors also shape children's understanding of aggression. P16 (C. Development) highlighted how cultural norms influence intent, citing the example of physical affection in families:

In our culture, love and physical aggression can sometimes be intertwined. For example, hitting the buttocks is one of the things I am most sensitive to, and I work with parents a lot on this. What happens is that when the child comes here, they hit the buttocks of their teacher or friend... They do this as a sign of love because, until that day, their grandmother, grandfather, and mother showed affection by hitting their buttocks. (P16, C. Development)

This observation emphasizes the importance of considering context when interpreting aggressive behaviors in children. Another notable point is that words or actions that seem harmless from an adult perspective may carry different meanings for children. P10 (ECE) illustrated this with an example:

If a child cannot tie their shoes, for example, another child might call them a 'baby doll' and laugh at them, which could upset the child. Actually, being called a baby is not a bad thing, but in that age group, it's something that is often made fun of. ...You need to see and understand the world of young children a little better. As I said, 'baby' is not a swear word or slang, but when you go down to the child's level and look at it, yes, it is actually something that is made fun of. It's like saying, "You can't do anything, you are incompetent." (P10, ECE)

In the excerpt above, a child mocks their peer by calling them a baby with the intention of making fun. However, P10 also emphasizes that sometimes children use offensive words without the intent to harm, simply to state an obvious reality. This suggests that in some cases, even if children do not intend to cause harm, perceptions of the behavior's harmful nature will vary depending on the child's experience. This situation is described as follows:

I had a female student who was overweight. There was also a male student with her, who was very active. ...One day, while coloring during free playtime, my overweight student dropped her eraser or pencil on the floor, and when she bent down to pick it up, she couldn't bend down much because of her belly. The male student picked it up, gave it to her, and said, "You can't pick it up because you are too fat; I helped you." As a teacher, if you haven't observed this event firsthand, you need to look at the intentions of both students. Maybe in the male student's home, they always use the word "fat," and perhaps they don't see it as slang. The child may not view it as slang; in fact, his intentions were completely good. However, the other child cried because he called her fat. That's why I think the situation is a bit different in preschool. It's something the teacher should get involved in, evaluate, and look at very seriously. (P10, ECE)

All in all, the situational context of intent is complex, and in early childhood, it is an issue that requires understanding from multiple perspectives.

Another factor that provides insight and helps professionals interpret aggression is the setting and context. This refers to when and where the aggression occurs. The reasoning behind this is illustrated in the following excerpt:

In this respect, we also evaluate, for example, in which context the behavior occurred. I mean, what distinguishes them from each other? What kind of environment was it? Was there anything that happened before the child exhibited this behavior? Was there any behavior directed at him/her, or did

the child suddenly act on their own? In other words, the time and place of the incident, what happened before and after the intervention, as well as the frequency and intensity of this aggressive behavior. All of these factors will actually make a difference between them. (P3, Psychology)

The same participant (P3, Psychology) also stated that one criterion for considering behavior pathological is whether it occurs in more than one place. This argument is clarified as follows, *“If it happens only at home, not at school or in other environments... at this point, we say that it is not pathological, but more related to attitudes toward boundaries.”*

In early childhood settings, children are more likely to display aggressive behavior during free play time, as highlighted by the following excerpt:

Especially during those free playtime periods, when we left them more non-intrusive, there were behaviors such as pushing their friends, hitting them, putting them on the ground, climbing on top of them, especially physically harming them. ...Aggression also occurs in cases related to the sharing of toys, etc. (P2, C. Development).

One issue that has emerged, related to contextual and socio-cultural factors, is socio-cultural changes. This refers to sudden shifts in the socio-cultural context that negatively influence children, leading them to display aggression. A participant linked the pandemic period to aggression as follows:

In the last two years, we have seen children who, when they are unable to create a safe space for themselves, resort to aggressive behavior as a means of communication. In other words, these children engage in aggressive behaviors instead of using communication to express themselves. I want to emphasize the last two years, because even among children of parents with communication breakdowns, we didn't observe many children using aggression to communicate. Previously, if a child was exposed to aggression, they would communicate through aggression as well. However, in the past two years, especially in the period after the pandemic, we have noticed that children are increasingly using aggression as a form of communication. (P15, Counselling).

The link between aggression and the pandemic is also framed in terms of socialization and communication issues. Another participant connected the pandemic

to aggression from the perspective of screen exposure by stating “*High screen exposure has been shown to increase aggression in children, and unfortunately, during the pandemic period, with the increase in children's screen exposure and the decrease in social skills, symptoms of aggression have increased.*” (P14, Psychiatry).

P15 (Counselling) provided a different perspective, linking the pandemic to aggression by discussing the rise in night terrors, stating: “*Before the pandemic, we rarely saw this kind of situation. We didn't know much about it, but recently, we've been observing something similar to night terrors.*” They added that, as a result of fear and anxiety, children often cry and exhibit aggressive behavior, either towards themselves or others, while crying. However, the specific reasoning behind the link between the pandemic and night terrors was not further explored.

Another socio-cultural change discussed was the impact of traumatic events and challenging transition periods. One participant explained this as follows:

We look for a challenging event in the child's life, a periodically challenging transition. We always consider factors like: has there been a loss? An accident? The birth of a sibling? The separation of parents? Or more global challenges, such as the pandemic? If there is a stress factor in the child's life, it can act as a trigger, and we also consider the attitudes within the environment as other potential triggers. (P3, Psychology)

In brief, sudden changes at the global, micro, meso, or macro levels that directly or indirectly influence children are linked with aggression, as supported by the quotations above.

Another ecological factor associated with aggression is socio-cultural status. Participants highlighted a link between aggression and socio-cultural status, with one participant (P9, Psychiatry) suggesting that a low socio-cultural level within the family poses a significant risk for aggression. P8 also discussed the possible relationship between aggression and socio-cultural status, noting that:

In childhood aggression, there is a tendency to harm, but this may not always be conscious. By 60-72 months, children are less self-centered, showing more

empathy and being more aware of their rights. However, depending on the event and the child's developmental level, their behavior can vary. For example, I work in a rural area, a village, and I honestly think there is a difference between the aggression of a child in a village and the aggression of a child raised in a high socio-cultural environment in a large city. I can say this in terms of awareness and the tendency to harm. (P8, ECE-Counselling)

Another participant (P6, Psychology) compared the impact of socio-cultural status within a metropolitan city:

If you work at a school in Beytepe (a district in the capital city of Turkey), you face different challenges and family structures compared to working in Sincan (another district in the capital city). I believe the socio-economic status of families affects children's aggression... Families with higher socio-economic status often struggle to spend enough time with their children because they work more. As a result, these children may exhibit physical aggression more suddenly. They may need help regulating during play. When I worked in a special education center, there was a lot of biting and hitting. It is also more difficult to guide families in these cases. Aggression seems harder to address with children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. With children from higher socio-economic backgrounds, emotional aggression is more prevalent. For example, "Don't come to our group; your mother won't buy this for you; I have this, and you don't, etc." (P6, Psychology)

The two quotes above discuss the differences in socio-cultural status between villages and cities, while P4 addressed the issue by comparing Turkish families living in Turkey versus abroad:

In other words, if I have Turkish clients raising their children abroad and integrating well with the local culture, they exhibit a different pattern than those living in Turkey, especially those in lower socio-economic levels. This could be attributed to cultural differences at this point. (P4, Psychology)

Sub-category2: Medicinal and developmental factor: Medicinal and developmental factors refer to biological and developmental issues that provide explanations for aggression. As shown in Table 4.4, developmental origins, psychiatric referral frequency, and biological origins of aggression are considered medicinal and developmental factors that provide clues regarding the characteristics of aggression.

Table 4.4. Sub-category 2 and its codes

Sub-category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Medicinal and developmental factor	Biological and developmental issues influencing aggression	21	12	When I think of childhood aggression, what I understand is that at a young age, for various reasons, both because the brain development is not yet complete, and because the environmental boundaries are sometimes not sufficient, and for biological reasons, children cannot cope with their emotions, not only anger, but also other emotions, and cannot express them correctly, and transmit them to the other party in a physical way. (P9, Psychiatry)
Developmental origins	Impact of developmental stages on aggression	10	9	For example, when we look at the developmental periods of preschool children, social concepts are not fully established, so they cannot fully understand and comprehend the consequences of aggressive behaviors or what they make the other person feel. (P4, Psychology)
Psychiatric referral frequency	aggression is a common symptom of psychiatric disorders	8	5	A high number of outpatient clinic visits are related to aggression. It is also high especially in this age period. When we look at the characteristics of that age period, families of children with normal development see this behavior often and bring them in. Furthermore, since it is seen as the initial symptoms of disorders such as attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder, behavioral disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, the application is actually quite frequent at this age. (P14, Psychiatry)
Biological origins	Medical issues or brain development and its' link with aggression	3	3	You can think of it as a negative situation in which children in the egocentric period reflect their emotions and thoughts because they cannot reason correctly due to the underdevelopment of the frontal lobe and due to the development of that limbic system. (P12, Psychology)

The first medicinal and developmental factor is the developmental origins of aggression. Developmental origins refer to any developmental issues and the impact of the developmental process on children, particularly in relation to the emergence of aggression. To clarify this definition, one participant highlighted the role of cognitive development in young children. P5 stated that the developmental origins of childhood aggression differentiate it from aggression in adults, as shown in the following excerpt:

The cognitive development of children between 60-72 months may cause difficulties in evaluating the potential consequences of aggression. Because

they are in the concrete operations stage, our expectations for managing aggression in these children should not be as high as those for adolescents, older children, or adults. In older children, adolescents, and adults, the cognitive component is more advanced, enabling them to manage their thoughts and emotions more effectively. (P5, Psychiatry)

Another psychologist (P4) also emphasized that aggression is part of normal development, stating, *“Aggression is part of development, but it’s not a concern unless it increases in frequency.”* According to P4, aggression becomes a focal point *“when the frequency increases and it becomes harder to manage.”* This suggests that participants agree that aggression is a natural part of development, as long as it remains within an expected range of frequency and intensity.

However, when aggression falls outside of this expected range, another medicinal and developmental factor must be addressed. In this context, the frequency of psychiatric referrals was discussed by the participants. Psychiatric referral frequency refers to the idea that aggression is often an early indicator of psychological issues and one of the most common reasons for parents to consult a psychiatrist. P5 (Psychiatry) noted, *“Families may initially ignore it, but eventually, it becomes something that causes them to feel desperate, prompting them to quickly seek our help.”* P9 (Psychiatry) supported this statement, saying, *“It is a prevalent reason for admission. However, by the time aggression manifests, many other issues have likely occurred, and what we identify as aggression is usually the result of those earlier issues.”* This implies that families often turn to psychiatrists as a last resort, even though various symptoms may have preceded the aggressive behavior. P14 (Psychiatry) further stated that aggression is a symptom and indicator of *“attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, behavior disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder.”* Thus, aggression is a common issue that psychiatrists address in their practice.

In addition to the previously mentioned factors, biological origins also play a role in aggression. Biological origins refer to the impact of biology and biological factors on aggression. In this study, participants connected biological origins to brain development. P12 made the link between aggression and biology by emphasizing the frontal lobe and limbic system, stating, *“Children in the egocentric period often*

struggle to process their feelings and thoughts correctly due to the underdevelopment of the frontal lobe and the ongoing development of the limbic system.” (P12, Psychology)

Sub-category3: Behavioral patterns: Behavioral patterns refer to any behavioral components associated with the characteristics of aggression. They also highlight how aggressive behavior can vary depending on different factors. These patterns include behavioral escalation and repetition, the spectrum of behavioral traits, and temperament, as shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Sub-category 3 and codes of Sub-category 3

Sub-category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Behavioral patterns	Behavioral elements characteristics to aggression	19	10	The most common thing we give to families is the operational definition of this behavior, and then to find out how often and on which days the behavior of that child occurs. (P3, Psychology)
Behavioral escalation and repetition	intensity, frequency, interval, pattern of behavior that increases over time	12	7	For it to be pathological, for example, we look at the fact that it has been in more than one environment, going on for more than 6 months and that almost every day that frequency, that behavior can be seen. But if it happens only at home, not at school or in other environments, or if it happens not every day but every once in a while, at this point we say that it is not pathological but more related to attitudes. (P3, Psychology)
Spectrum of behavioral traits	Existence of range of behaviors that are considered characteristics of aggression	4	4	Of course, when defining aggression, I can say that there is a difference between throwing a toy on the ground and smashing it to smithereens, so I can say that this is a spectrum and that there can be various dimensions of aggression, from irritability to aggression. (P5, Psychiatry)
Temperament	Differences depending on temperament	3	2	It depends on the situation of the child. Some children are more verbally aggressive, while others are temperamentally inclined to hit (P14, Psychiatry)

One of the primary concerns regarding the display of aggressive behaviors is the escalation and repetition of the behavior, which makes it more alarming. Behavioral escalation and repetition refer to the characteristics of aggression in terms of its intensity, frequency, intervals, and patterns that increase over time. While the developmental origins code previously emphasized that aggression is a part of

development, one of the key factors that make aggression pathological or problematic is its escalation and repetition. As one psychologist pointed out, the criteria that make aggression concerning are as follows:

For it to be pathological, for example, we look at whether it occurs in more than one environment, has been ongoing for more than six months, and can be seen almost every day. However, if it only happens at home, not at school or in other environments, or occurs sporadically rather than daily, we would say it is not pathological but more related to attitudes. (P3, Psychology)

Another key concern and characteristic of aggression is its escalation. P1 (ECE) explained this as follows: *“The first thing that comes to my mind is that aggression has become a behavior pattern that has been increasing more and more among children, especially in the last five years.”* It is important to note that these five years correspond to the COVID-19 pandemic period, which may have influenced these trends.

The criteria mentioned above highlight what makes aggression concerning. However, it was also revealed that not all aggressive behaviors carry the same implications. One such characteristic is that aggression exists on a spectrum. This means aggression encompasses a range of behaviors, and not every act of aggression holds the same weight. P5 emphasized the spectrum of behavioral traits when defining aggression as follows:

When defining aggression, I can also say that there is a difference between throwing a toy on the ground and smashing it to smithereens. I can say that this is a spectrum and that there can be various dimensions of aggression, from irritability to aggression. (P5, Psychiatry)

P2 (C. Development) also supported this viewpoint by cautioning against “generalizations” and stressing the “complex structure” of aggression, noting that *“each situation is unique.”* These perspectives highlight the importance of understanding aggression on a spectrum and considering its context before making broad judgments.

Along with the varying levels of aggression seen on the spectrum, a key factor influencing these behaviors is the child’s temperament. Temperament refers to the

inherent traits that influence how a child responds to specific situations, providing insights into their behavioral patterns. P11 (C. Development) argued that when a child displays aggression, it reflects “*an attitude that suits his own temperament.*” P14 (Psychiatry) further supported this by stating, “*It depends on the situation of the child. Some children are more verbally aggressive, while others are temperamentally inclined to hit.*” Based on these observations, it can be concluded that while children may exhibit aggressive behaviors, the form of aggression is often influenced by their temperament.

Sub-category4: Perceptions and stigmas of aggressive behavior: One of the characteristics of aggression is the perception and stigma associated with aggressive behavior. These refer to society’s views and understanding of aggression, as well as the stigmas and negative associations attached to it. This sub-category includes perceived behavioral stigma and the negative connotations of the behavior, as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Sub-category 4 and its codes

Sub-category/ Codes	Description	f	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Perceptions and stigmas of aggressive behavior	Societies view of behavior and its impact on child	12	9	Unpleasant situations (P7, ECE); “Teacher, can we save this?” And for a six-year-old child, if his mother uses the phrase “will we be able to save him”, what can this child do if he doesn't show aggressive behavior, right? (P17, ECE)
Perceived behavioral stigma	Societal perceptions and labels on a child's identity	3	2	For example, one of my twin students, a boy, showed much more aggressive behavior than a girl. The male child was physically larger, taller. There was very little tolerance for him from the family or the people around him. That's why something girl did didn't bother people, whereas his did. When he was overreacted to, he reacted even more. (P17, ECE)
Negative connotations of the behavior	Aggression evokes negative or hostile associations	9	7	Aggression is the hostile actions and behaviors that an individual performs physically, psychologically or verbally by harboring anger and hostility towards the other person. (P14, Psychiatry)

One of the first things that come to mind when aggression is mentioned is the stigma associated with it. Perceived behavioral stigma refers to society’s expectations for a

child to behave in a certain way, which leads to judgments about the child. Therefore, this concept also relates to labeling children as aggressive and the stigma and impact this label has on them. P17 linked this behavioral stigma and the labeling of children as aggressive to the child's physical characteristics. P17 also provided the following example, discussing twin children from the same family: it is interesting how, within the same family structure, one child may be labeled as aggressive while the other is not.

Physically, the girl was a very cute, very sweet child, while the boy was physically larger and taller. The family or the people around him had very little tolerance for him. That's why people didn't react to something the girl did, while they reacted too much to the boy... I mean, imagine that there is a difference of 7-8 centimeters between him and his sister. Imagine a difference of two kilos in weight. When I look at it, the child was more aggressive because of the reactions he received from the outside, because he was not allowed to express himself. Maybe it was because he was tired of being constantly blamed... When he first came to school, his mother said: 'Teacher, will we be able to save him?' And for a 6-year-old child, if his mother uses the phrase 'will we be able to save him,' what can this child do if he doesn't show aggressive behaviors anyway, right? (P17, ECE)

After the stigma of labeling, as P18 (ECE) claimed, teachers “*do not want to invest too much in that child*”, and children who display aggression are “*ignored*” in educational settings. Furthermore, the stigma attached to these children creates challenges in “*family-school cooperation.*”

In addition to stigma and labeling, it is essential to note that these stigmas and labels carry negative connotations. The negative connotation of behavior suggests an association between the term negative and aggression. For the current study, various experts used the term ‘negative’ while defining aggression. P1 (ECE) described the negative characteristics of aggression as “*we perceive childhood aggression as examples of negative behaviors that children direct towards each other, especially in peer relationships.*” In this definition, P1 highlights the negative nature of aggressive behaviors. On the other hand, P2 (C. Development) emphasized the negative aspects concerning outcomes, stating that “*these can be physical, relational, or verbal aggression, which negatively affect relationships and impact a person's learning.*” In addition to the term negative, P3 (Psychology) used the term “*inappropriate*” when

describing aggressive behaviors. P7 (ECE) similarly used the term “*unpleasant*” to describe aggressive behaviors. To summarize, aggressive behaviors are characterized by words that carry negative connotations.

4.1.3.1.2. Category₂: Function of aggression in EC

The function of aggression in early childhood refers to the purpose of aggression and the roles aggressive behaviors serve. This category is part of the broader theme of defining aggression in early childhood, as several participants linked aggression to its purpose and the functions it serves. In this study, the function of aggression in early childhood is categorized into three key areas: emotional and frustration expression ($f=24$), means to end ($f=13$), and methods of exploration ($f=3$), as outlined in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Category 2 and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (<i>n</i> /18)	Empirical indicators
Function of aggression in EC	What purpose does aggression serve? What are the functions of these behaviors?	40	13	At this age, children can generally use aggression as a form of expression. (P4, Psychology)
Modes of emotional and frustration expression	Using as a way of expressing emotions and reaction to boundaries	24	12	When we think of childhood aggression, we think of low tolerance for frustration, expressing emotions that they cannot express verbally in inappropriate ways. (P14, Psychiatry)
Means to an end	To obtain desired wishes and goals	13	8	So basically, it's a pattern of behavior that child uses to get something he/she wants. (P4, Psychology)
Methods of exploration	Using aggression to explore and set new behavior pattern	3	2	The child discovers. There is exploration in play and in life. By playing, he learns everything. Therefore, when he experiences something, he continues to do it if it gives him pleasure. So he hit, he got what he wanted. He hit, he didn't get what he wanted, he starts hitting more. (P15, Counselling)

Aggression in EC is often mistaken for anger, but it is a distinct behavior that stems from various emotional states, including frustration, anxiety, and disappointment, rather than solely from anger. The ‘modes of emotional and frustration expression’ code suggests that aggression in EC often serves as a means of communicating emotions and frustration. Unlike in adulthood, where aggression may be expressed differently, childhood aggression is characterized by distinct ways of expressing emotions and frustrations. This distinction is explained as follows:

As people get older, especially in adulthood, aggression is primarily triggered by anger, though the causes of anger can be debated. In children, however, aggressive behavior can arise from a range of emotions such as anxiety, worry, sadness, disappointment, and even physical pain. I think this is one key distinction. The difference is that young children aren’t as skilled at using verbal language as adults. They haven’t developed abstract expressions yet, so they struggle to express themselves and their emotions clearly. (P9, Psychiatry)

The connection between aggression and emotional or frustration expression was commonly attributed to language development deficiencies in young children by several participants. One of these participants, P17 (ECE), supported this view by stating, *“they don’t have enough words for their thoughts.”*

Another term frequently mentioned by psychologists and psychiatrists was frustration. Frustration is understood to occur when children face boundaries, setbacks, or obstacles that prevent them from achieving their desired goals. P12 (Psychology) explained the relationship between frustration and aggression, saying, *“One of the most important behaviors that a child cannot tolerate, and one of the main reasons they express aggression, is frustration. When a child is stopped and cannot reach what they want, they project aggression.”* Therefore, the expression of emotions and frustration is considered one of the main functions of aggression in early childhood.

As noted earlier, frustration resulting from unfulfilled desires often manifests as aggression. Aggression in EC is frequently a means to an end, with children using aggressive behaviors to obtain desired objects or goals. The ‘means to an end’ code

refers to using aggression as a tool to achieve these goals. P4 (Psychology) described this code as *“a pattern of behavior the child uses to get something he wants.”* In the context of early childhood, desired objects or goals may include *“a friend doing what they want”* (P14, Psychiatry), *“controlling the family,” “having their way”* (P11, C. Development), *“wanting to take a toy from a friend,”* or *“defending oneself”* (P2, C. Development).

In addition to expressing emotions and obtaining objects, another function of aggression in early childhood is exploration. This code refers to using aggression as a way to explore and establish new behavior patterns. During early childhood, children learn through exploration, and aggression in this stage is described by P4 (Psychology) as *“an act they did during the discovery phase.”* P4 argued that using aggression as a tool *“in the process of discovery rather than self-expression is one of the distinguishing characteristics of childhood aggression.”* P15 (Counseling) further explained this process of discovery and exploration, stating:

There is discovery in play and in life, and a child learns everything by playing. Therefore, when a child experiences something, they continue to do it if it gives them pleasure. I mean, if hitting behavior results in getting what they want, they’ll keep doing it. (P15, Counseling)

4.1.3.1.3. Category₃: Aggressive behaviors

In the current study, field experts define childhood aggression by emphasizing behaviors that are considered aggressive. This category includes all the behaviors that are specifically specified as aggressive by the experts. A list of these aggressive behaviors, along with their descriptions and empirical indicators, is provided in Table 4.8

In Study 1, a total of 23 behaviors were classified as aggressive. By a large margin, participants identified hitting ($f=80$) as an aggressive behavior. Other behaviors listed as aggressive included pushing ($f=44$), causing harm ($f=38$), using offensive language ($f=37$), biting ($f=31$), vocal outbursts ($f=29$), excluding ($f=26$), pulling ($f=22$), and various other behaviors, as shown in Figure 4.4.

Table 4.8. Category 3 and its codes

Aggressive behaviors	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Biting	Using teeth in a forceful manner	31	9	Biting, in other words, is a contact that leaves a mark or pain on the other person's body. (P6, Psychology)
Causing harm	Destroying stuff or behaving in a destructive manner	38	15	Behaviors such as taking their belongings, stealing their belongings, or tearing a friend's paper (P3, Psychology)
Choking	Strangling to throat and preventing taking breath	2	1	various unauthorized harmful interventions on the other party's body, such as choking (P2, C. Development)
Crying/wailing	Crying loudly as if in a fit of rage or temper tantrum	10	5	Screaming at parents or crying on the floor when they don't get their way. (P14, Psychiatry)
Excluding	Exclusion from the group	26	8	It's relational, you know, not letting your friend into the group. He didn't give me his toy. That's why I'm not going to let him in. (P2, C. Development)
Getting on top of somebody	Forcing someone to ground	2	1	During free play time, there were some behaviors such as pushing his friends, hitting them, forcing them on the ground, climbing on top of them, especially physically harming them. (P2, C. Development)
Hitting	By using hand hitting, knocking slamming, punching someone, oneself or any object	80	16	Hitting, punching, that is, making a fist with this hand and hitting the other party, (P2, C. Development)
Ignoring	Intentionally withdrawing any social interaction such as sulking to protest, refusing to cooperating and talking	12	6	For example, refusing to talk, turning away, not sitting at the table. (P11, C. Development)
Interrupting play or ongoing educational activities	Disrupting activity, play	8	3	Displaying aggressive behavior or disrupting other friends' play when they don't get their way (P10, ECE)
Kicking	Striking with the foot	9	6	I often see children kicking their parents too. (P13, Psychology)
Pinching	Squeezing or compressing between the finger and thumb	6	5	Sometimes children may hit themselves, hit their heads against the wall, hit the floor, scratch themselves, scratch their arms and legs, pinch themselves. (P5, Psychiatry)
Pulling	Tugging on hair, person, toy or object and trying to take object without permission	22	10	For example, let's say it happens like this, he wants to take the toy from his friend. His friend doesn't give it to him, he pulls and pulls. (P2, C. Development)

Table 4.8. (continued)

Pushing	Moving someone in a forceful manner	44	14	When they try to get involved in his play, pushing with direct physical intervention (P7, ECE)
Scratching	Marking the surface of by rubbing, scraping, or tearing with something sharp or rough	4	4	Sometimes children may hit themselves, hit their heads against the wall, hit the floor, scratch themselves, scratch their arms and legs, pinch themselves. (P5, Psychiatry)
Slapping	Sharp blow or smack, especially with the open hand	6	3	Slapping your friend so hard that you leave 5 fingerprints (P2, C. Development)
Spitting	Ejecting saliva from the mouth	18	8	Spitting behavior is generally more common in passive-aggressive children, that is, in children who are more withdrawn but who cannot react when they do not get their way. (P15, Counselling)
Spreading rumors	Turning other against someone, damaging a person's reputation	9	4	Badmouthing, gossiping against each other. (P1, ECE)
Throwing something or oneself	Tossing oneself to ground or propelling object through the air	18	9	When he was told it was nine o'clock and we were going to bed, he took the toy and threw it at his father's head. (P4, Psychology)
Tripping	Catching of a person's foot so as to throw the person down	7	3	But what shifts it to the hostile side is the frequency of that kicking or tripping behavior. (P4, Psychology)
Undermining others	Use of expressions to mock, belittle, humiliate, or flaunting	22	9	Making fun of them if they wear glasses, for example, or if they have braces, or if they are slightly overweight (P1, ECE)
Using offensive language	Using emotionally hurtful phrases, swear, slang words, labelling, name-calling and insulting by using names	37	16	Verbal aggression can also include expressions such as stupid, retarded. There may also be some words that hurt your friend. (P2, C. Development)
Vocal outbursts	Screaming, shouting, yelling	29	11	Apart from that, there are tantrums, yelling and screaming at home. (P13, Psychology)
Wetting yourself	Deliberate bedwetting, urination	4	2	Even bedwetting is actually an emotional aggression. So if the child does it on purpose. (P4, Psychology)
TOTAL		44	18	
		5		

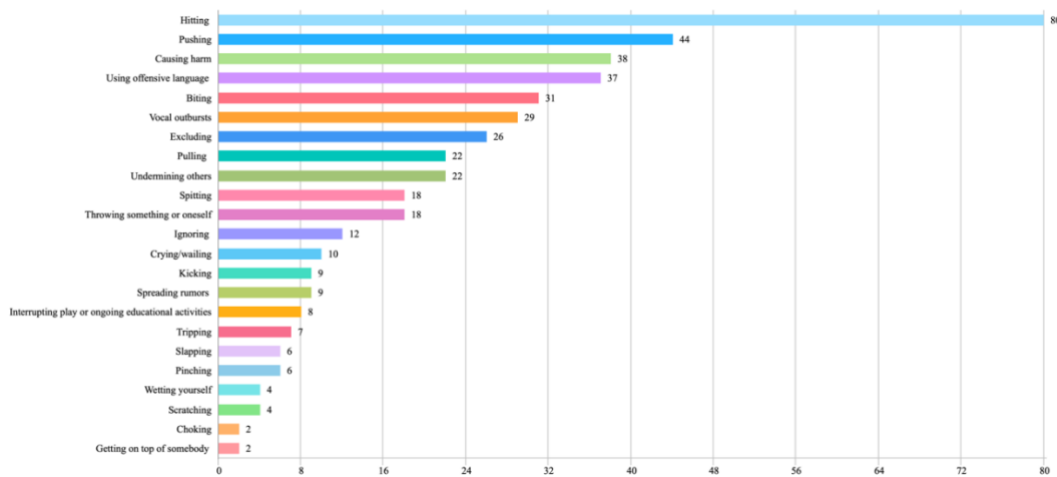


Figure 4.4. Frequency of aggressive behaviors

Participants generally listed aggressive behaviors without providing specific definitions for them. While listing aggressive behaviors, P6 stated that although various behaviors can be observed in the classroom, biting is the most problematic and difficult to intervene with. The reasoning behind the problematic nature of biting was explained as follows: *“The bite is very severe. It leaves a mark on the body and is really traumatic for the child who was bitten. The pain lingers for a long time, and the child constantly sees and remembers the bite marks.”* (P6, Psychology) One participant highlighted behaviors that professionals may overlook or ignore. P18 (ECE) pointed out that *“aggressive behaviors that violate one’s sense of belonging and being loved, such as excluding and name-calling, are generally the most underestimated.”* Another interesting behavior mentioned was bedwetting. P4 (Psychology) stated, *“Even bedwetting is aggression if the child does it on purpose.”* The key point here is the intention. Therefore, it is important to note that not every instance of bedwetting is considered aggressive behavior. P15 also mentioned a situation involving a 61-month-old child, describing it as follows: *“The child never communicated when they needed to go to the toilet... Instead, they would go to the back or hidden corners and relieve themselves there.”*

4.1.3.2. Subtheme2: Types of childhood aggression

The second theme, titled “Types of Aggression,” emerged in response to research questions 1.2 and 1.2.1 from Study 1. This sub-theme refers to classification

aggression and the characteristics of each classification. As shown in Figure 4.5, aggression is classified into eight different types based on the following criteria: nature of location ($f=10$), origin of the behavior ($f=11$), the state of medical well-being ($f=23$), nature of the subject ($f=10$), form of representation ($f=8$), role of behavior ($f=17$), forms of behavior ($f=284$), intention ($f=34$).

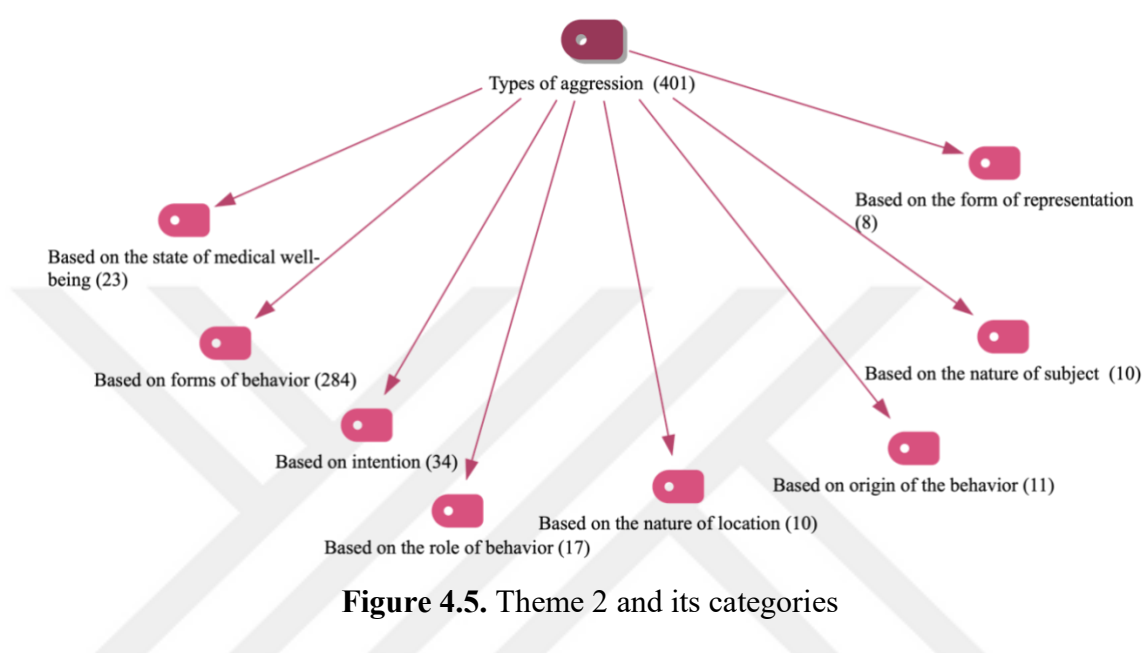


Figure 4.5. Theme 2 and its categories

4.1.3.2.1. Category₁: Based on the nature of location

One of the initial classifications of aggression is based on the location where the aggressive behavior occurs. As shown in Table 4.9, the locations in this context are specified as home, street, and school.

Table 4.9. Category 1 and its codes

Category/Codes	Description	f	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Based on the nature of location	Based on where aggression take place	10	1	
At home	Family setting child live in	3	1	At home, they may react more by shouting or throwing tantrums, but at school they may differ and exhibit physical behaviors such as breaking things. (P13, Psychology)

Table 4.9. (continued)

At street	Outdoor place	1	1	We can divide it into aggressive behaviors shown at school, aggressive behaviors shown at home, or perhaps aggressive behaviors shown on a street. (P13, Psychology)
At school	Institution child attends to	3	1	Sometimes aggressive behaviors can also be seen at school due to teacher-related reasons. Or, if the teacher cannot manage a conflict there, and the child has started preschool education for the first time, then he/she cannot make sense of it and may react in such a way as a defense mechanism, perhaps trying to defend himself/herself (P13, Psychology)

The reason behind this classification was given by P13 (Psychology). It is stated that aggression in different locations differs due to “*the difference between the attitude of parents and the attitude of teachers at school.*” Firstly, aggression at home refers to aggression that took place at home. P13 (Psychology) stated that children might display different aggressive behaviors at home due to attitudes of adults in the location. P13 gave the following as an example of this situation: “*The family may not allow hitting, but at school, the child may hit their friends. At home, the child may react more by shouting or having tantrums, but at school, the child may display more physical aggression.*” As it is P13 stated, aggression might take place at school. Aggression at school refers to the type of aggression that occurs at school. The difference and origins of aggression occurring at school are related to teachers and classroom management problems, as P13 stated below:

Sometimes, families say they don’t have any issues at home, but teachers often report problems... Aggressive behaviors at school can sometimes stem from factors related to the teacher. If the teacher struggles to manage a conflict, and especially if the child is starting preschool for the first time, the child may not understand the situation and may react defensively, possibly as a way of protecting themselves. (P13, Psychology)

The last location mentioned in the study is the street. The ‘street’ code refers to aggressive behavior that occurs in public spaces. P13 (Psychology) distinguishes between aggression that happens at school and at home, saying, “*We can divide it into aggressive behaviors shown at school, aggressive behaviors shown at home.*”

However, P13 did not provide further details on this classification, so the information remains limited.

4.1.3.2.2. Category₂: Based on origin of the behavior

Another way aggression was classified is by its origin, meaning it can be categorized based on the underlying causes and sources of the behavior. As shown in Table 4.10, three categories emerged: modeled behavior, frustration, and parent attitude and attachment.

Table 4.10. Category 2 and its codes

Category/Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Based on origin of the behavior	Based on reasons and sources of the behavior	11	2	When a child shows aggression, there are things we look at. We try to look at the causes of the aggression and what the problem is in the first place. (P12, Psychology)
Modelled	Aggressive behaviors that are learned through modelling	3	1	The father is such an angry man that he uses both psychological and physical violence against his environment, against his child. Or a child who has been bullied severely at another school, becomes a bully himself when he changes schools because he has learned bullying, he has taken it as a model. (P12, Psychology)
Frustration	Aggressive behaviors that emerged due to boundaries and frustration	2	1	Reactions to being frustrated, stopped or not getting what they want by their friends during their experiences (P12, Psychology)
Parent attitude & attachment	Parents' attitudes towards children's needs and their expectations	3	2	When their basic needs are not met, they act aggressively; when they do not receive love and attention, they act aggressively. (P15, Counselling)

The first category that emerged is 'modelled aggression', which emphasizes the cycle of victimization. P12 (Psychology) explains this process with the example: *"The father is so angry that he resorts to both psychological and physical violence against those around him, including his child. Similarly, a child who has been*

severely bullied at school may eventually become a bully themselves.” This demonstrates that children learn by modeling the behavior around them and begin to display aggression themselves.

In addition to modelling, ‘frustration’ also triggers aggression in children, especially when they encounter boundaries. P12 described this as “*reactions to being frustrated, stopped, or not getting what they want from their friends during their experiences.*”

The final classification is labeled ‘parent attitude & attachment’. This refers to parents’ approach to meeting their children’s needs and their expectations. P15 (Counseling) identified these expectations as “*love and attention.*” It is suggested that parents’ failure to meet these needs is closely linked to “*parental attitudes and attachment, as the child has difficulty managing and expressing their emotions when these needs are not met.*”

4.1.3.2.3. Category3: Based on the state of medical well-being

Another way aggression is categorized is based on the individual’s medical well-being. Aggression is primarily divided into two categories: pathological and non-pathological, as shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11. Category 3 and its codes

Category/Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Based on the state of medical well-being		23	4	
Pathological	Aggressive behaviors that are indicators of medical issues	11	4	In order for the aggressive behavior to be pathological, we look at the fact that it has been found in more than one environment, that it has been going on for more than six months, and that the behavior can be seen almost every day at that frequency. (P3, Psychology)
Due to psychological conditions	Aggressive behaviors that are indicators of psychological problems	3	2	We can see aggression as a symptom in many psychiatric disorders. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, mental disorders such as mental retardation, or autism. (P14, Psychiatry)

Table 4.11. (continued)

	Due to physical conditions	Aggressive behaviors that are indicators of physical health symptoms	2	2	Deficiencies in certain vitamins, minerals or changes in thyroid hormones, hyperthyroidism can cause aggression in children. (P5, Psychiatry)
Non-pathological		Aggressive behaviors without any indicators of any medical issues	5	3	If it happens only at home, not at school or in other environments, or if it happens not every day but every once in a while, at this point we say that it is not pathological, but more related to attitudes of boundaries. (P3, Psychology)

This categorization was primarily discussed by psychiatrists and psychologists, as they are typically involved with more pathological cases in clinical settings.

To classify aggression as pathological, P3 (Psychology) defined it as behavior that occurs *“in more than one environment, persists for about six months, and happens almost daily.”* Additionally, P5 (Psychiatry) further divided pathological aggression into two categories: *“aggressions caused by physical medical conditions”* and *“aggressions caused by psychological factors,”* which are referred to as ‘due to psychological conditions’ and ‘due to physical conditions.’

Regarding psychological conditions, P14 (Psychiatry) emphasized that *“aggression can be a symptom of various psychiatric disorders, including ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, intellectual disabilities, delayed expressive language, and autism.”* This suggests that some aggression in children is linked to psychological issues.

Furthermore, some participants pointed out that aggression may also result from physical conditions. P5 (Psychiatry) mentioned that *“aggression can be caused by deficiencies in vitamins and minerals or changes in thyroid hormones, such as hyperthyroidism.”*

In comparison to pathological aggression, non-pathological aggression can also be observed in young children. P3 (Psychology) explained that *“if aggression is limited to certain environments, such as home, and occurs only occasionally rather than daily, it is considered non-pathological and more related to boundary-setting*

attitudes.” P14 (Psychiatry) also connected this type of aggression to “environmental factors, child-rearing practices, parental attitudes, parents' psychopathology, temperament, and marital harmony.”

4.1.3.2.4. Category4: Based on the nature of the subject

The nature of the subject is another key factor in categorizing aggression. This means that aggression can be classified based on who is positioned as the victim. In this category, aggression is divided into three types: aggression towards others, aggression towards oneself, and aggression towards the environment, as shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12. Category 4 and its codes

Category/Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Based on the nature of the subject	Depending on who is exposed to the behavior	10	4	
Towards other people	People in social circle	3	3	Aggression can be directed towards a living being: a friend, a teacher, a parent, a sibling. (P1, ECE)
Towards oneself	The individual himself	3	2	If there is no other person to harm, children in this age group can easily turn their aggression back on themselves. (P5, Psychiatry)
Towards environment	Environment and non-living beings	2	2	The child may exhibit aggression towards an object or inanimate being. (P1, ECE)

P1 (ECE) stated that children “*exhibit aggression towards living beings, such as friends, teachers, parents, and siblings, as well as towards objects or inanimate things.*” Similarly, P5 (Psychiatry) noted that “*when there is no one else around to target, children in this age group may easily redirect their aggression towards themselves.*”

4.1.3.2.5. Category5: Based on the form of representation

Aggression is also categorized based on the form of representation. This refers to the way aggression is displayed, either overtly or covertly. As shown in Table 4.13, these categories of aggression include indirect and direct forms.

Table 4.13. Category 5 and its codes

Category/Codes	Description	f	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Based on the form of representation	Based on the way it is displayed whether it is targeted or covert	8	1	
Indirect	Implicit or covert aggressive behaviors	3	1	The perpetrator of indirect aggression does not always come out or does not come out in a short period of time as in direct aggression. In other words, who started the rumor, who didn't play who, who made fun of who first, who said what to whom may remain more ambiguous, or sometimes that perpetrator may never really emerge. (P1, ECE)
Direct	Overt targeted aggressive behaviors	3	1	You can observe direct behavior immediately. It's immediately obvious or it's obvious by whom. So the person who hits is obvious. (P1, ECE)

P1 clarified difference between indirect and direct aggression as follows:

Direct aggression is immediately observable. It is clear who is responsible. For example, if someone hits another person, the perpetrator is obvious. However, indirect aggression is not always immediately apparent, nor is the perpetrator always identifiable. It may take time to uncover who started a rumor, who excluded someone, or who mocked whom first. In some cases, the perpetrator may remain entirely unknown. (P1, ECE)

4.1.3.2.6. Category₆: Based on the role of behavior

Aggression can also be categorized based on the role of behavior. This classification considers questions such as: Who initiated the aggression? What is the child's role in the interaction? Is the child actively provoking the situation, or are they responding to a prior interaction or defending themselves? By addressing these questions, aggression is divided into two types: reactive and proactive, as shown in Table 4.14.

Sometimes, a child displays aggression in a deliberate yet reactive manner. For example, if another child hits him, he may respond aggressively both to defend himself and out of anger. Alternatively, he may exhibit aggressive behavior intentionally and with deliberate intent. (P1, ECE)

Table 4.14. Category 6 and its codes

Category/Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Based on the role of behavior	What is the role of child or behavior? Is he/she initiator and defending own or is he/she aggravating the situation?	17	3	
Proactive	Provoking, imitative aggressive behavior	5	3	There can be provocateurs, you know, children who just want to create disturbances. (P2, C. Development)
Reactive	Defensive aggressive behavior	5	3	Lets imagine, there is a child, mostly participative, cheerful, as accommodating as possible. He really wants a toy in the garden, he waits for his turn, but it never comes to him. Just when it's his turn, another child comes and takes it, and he gets angry and smacks the child or pulls the toy out of his hand very harshly. (P16, C. Development)

As P1 described, children who exhibit reactive aggression do so in response to prior stimuli or conflict. However, proactive aggression is driven by intentional provocation. P2 (C. Development) referred to children who engage in proactive aggression as “*provocateurs*.”

4.1.3.2.7. Category7: Based on forms of behavior

One of most common categorizations of aggression is based on forms of behavior. As shown in Table 4.15, 284 coded segments fall under this category.

Table 4.15. Category 7 and its codes

Category/Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Based on forms of behavior	Type of behavior as a form of demonstration	284	16	
Verbal	Aggressive behavior by using words	68	12	Verbal aggression can also include expressions such as stupid, retarded. There may also be some words that hurt your friend. (P2, C. Development)

Table 4.15. (continued)

Relational	Aggressive behaviors by targeting social relations	61	10	Behaviors such as spreading gossip about the person that cause the person to be excluded and rejected from the group, ignoring him/her, not letting him/her into the play as relational aggression. (P2, C. Development)
Physical	Aggressive behaviors by using physical contact	132	16	Actions that cause or intend to cause physical damage can be considered as physical aggression. (P10, ECE)

The categorization of aggression based on forms of behavior was frequently highlighted by early childhood experts. According to this classification, aggression is divided into three categories: physical, verbal, and relational. Physical aggression, as defined by P18 (ECE), involves “*hitting another person or object with the hand, foot, body, or any object in a negative manner, or using excessive force to harm someone.*” Verbal aggression, on the other hand, is described by P14 (Psychiatry) as “*shouting or using offensive language in a disturbing manner without any physical contact.*” Meanwhile, relational aggression is characterized by P18 (ECE) as “*damaging another person's position in social relations.*” P18 further clarified that even if a child is not explicitly excluded from a group, they may still be considered “*the weakest link, the weakest person in the group, or the one who bears the group's burden.*”

Some psychologists and psychiatrists viewed verbal and relational aggression as overlapping concepts and did not differentiate between them, while others made a clear distinction. P18 (ECE) explained that although relational aggression can include verbal expressions, the key difference lies in the target of the aggression. If the verbal expression is aimed directly at a person's identity, self-worth, or social relationships, it is considered relational aggression. However, if it does not specifically attack a person's social standing or personal identity but instead involves offensive language or disruptive speech, it falls under verbal aggression. Additionally, experts pointed out that certain behaviors, such as ‘undermining others,’ can be categorized as either verbal or relational aggression depending on the context in which they occur. Another key observation concerned age differences in aggression. P6 (Psychology) noted that “*at a young age, there is more physical*

contact,” indicating that younger children are more likely to engage in physical aggression. P9 (Psychiatry) supported this by stating that verbal aggression is less common among younger children due to their limited vocabulary, explaining that *“their vocabulary is not very developed.”*

Gender differences in aggression were also a point of discussion. P2 (C. Development) suggested that verbal aggression, including swearing, belittling peers, and making fun of physical characteristics, was more commonly observed in boys. However, this view was challenged by P14 (Psychiatry), who argued that *“girls display verbal aggression more frequently, such as shouting and crying.”* These differing perspectives suggest that while both boys and girls exhibit verbal aggression, the forms and expressions of such behaviors may vary based on gender. In this study, vocal outbursts, crying/wailing, using offensive language, and undermining others were identified as verbal aggression, whereas spreading rumors, undermining others, ignoring, and excluding were classified as relational aggression. Physical aggression included behaviors such as biting, causing harm, choking, climbing on top of someone, hitting, kicking, pinching, pulling, and scratching. Overall, these findings indicate that while aggression manifests in different forms, its expression is influenced by factors such as age, gender, and the social environment.

4.1.3.2.8. Categorys: Based on intention

Last but not least, aggression can also be categorized based on intention. In this context, intention refers to the question, *“What is the child using aggression for?”*, as clarified by P4 (Psychology). P10 (ECE) provided the following example to illustrate the role of intention:

“...One day, while coloring during free playtime, my overweight student dropped her eraser or pencil on the floor, and when she bent down to pick it up, she couldn’t bend down much because of her belly. The male student picked it up, gave it to her, and said, “You can’t pick it up because you are too fat; I helped you.” As a teacher, if you haven’t observed this event firsthand, you need to look at the intentions of both students. Maybe in the male student’s home, they always use the word “fat,” and perhaps they don’t see it as slang. The child may not view it as slang; in fact, his intentions were

completely good. However, the other child cried because he called her fat. That's why I think the situation is a bit different in preschool. It's something the teacher should get involved in, evaluate, and look at very seriously." (P10, ECE)

As shown in Table 4.16, aggression is categorized into two types: with intention and without intention.

Table 4.16. Category 8 and its codes

Category/Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/18)	Empirical indicators
Based on intention	Categorization based on intention or existence of intention	34	2	What we look at when differentiating behavior is the intention. To put it more clearly, what is the child using it for? It may differ according to this. (P4, Psychology)
Without intention	Absence of intention	11	1	
Accidental	Unintentional aggressive behaviors	9	1	It is an accidental, exploratory behavior of the child. (P4, Psychology)
With the intention	Existence of intention	18	1	
Expressive	Intentional acts to express emotions, thoughts	2	1	Let's imagine 2 children playing on the beach. They made a sand castle, one of them hit the other one's sand castle and he really had fun and enjoyed it. The child destroyed this sand castle not with the intention of hurting, not with the intention of making other child feel bad, but rather, how can we say it? He did it and had fun. (P4, Psychology)
Hostile	Behaviors that purposeful intention to harm	7	1	If you take pleasure in the suffering of the other person, or if you are intentionally harming an animal or a living creature, this can be a bit different. (P4, Psychology)
Instrumental	Acts carried out to reach a goal or used as a tool	7	1	When he is just starting to socialize with friends, he wants to get a toy. His goal is actually to get the toy. For this purpose, he bites it and gets it. (P4, Psychology)

Accidental aggression falls under the category of aggression without intention, whereas expressive, hostile, and instrumental aggression are classified as aggression with intention. As described by P4 (Psychology), it refers to behaviors that occur *"without harmful intent and often stem from developmental processes related to exploration and discovery."* One key factor contributing to accidental aggression is a *"lack of eye-hand coordination"*, which can lead to unintentional harm.

P4 also provided an example of expressive aggression, emphasizing that it often serves as a way for children to express emotions such as excitement or fun:

For example, imagine two five-year-old children playing on the beach. They build a sandcastle together, and one of them suddenly knocks it down. Rather than trying to upset or harm his friend, the child does it purely for fun, enjoying the moment without any malicious intent. His actions are not meant to hurt or make his friend feel bad, but simply stem from his own sense of playfulness and excitement. (P4, Psychology)

Another type of aggression is instrumental aggression, which, as the name suggests, involves using aggressive behavior as a means to an end. P4 explains that

When young children are just beginning to socialize, they may try to take a toy from a friend. Their goal is simply to get the toy, but they don't yet understand how to achieve it appropriately, so they might resort to biting or grabbing. (P4, Psychology)

Based on P4's explanation, it is likely that if a child successfully attains their goal through such behavior, they may continue using aggression as a strategy.

The final type of aggression discussed is hostile aggression. This form of aggression is driven by the intent to cause harm, often with the mindset of "*taking pleasure in another person's suffering or intentionally harming an animal or another living being.*" However, P4 (Psychology) clarified that in cases of hostile aggression, there is a possibility of underlying pathology, which psychologists take into consideration. This suggests that children with typical development and no psychological diagnosis are not expected to exhibit hostile aggression.

In brief, categorizing aggression based on intention helps clarify the underlying motivations behind children's behavior. Accidental aggression, driven by developmental factors like coordination, differs from intentional aggression, which includes expressive, instrumental, and hostile types. Understanding these distinctions allows for more appropriate interventions, especially in preschool settings where socialization and development play key roles in shaping behavior.

4.1.3.3. Key findings

- Aggression in early childhood as a theme includes operational definition of aggression in EC and types of aggression.
- The operational definition can be constructed by identifying the characteristics of aggression, function of aggression in EC and aggressive behaviors.
- Aggression can be classified based on the nature of location, the origin of the behavior, the state of medical well-being, the nature of the subject, the form of representation, the role of behavior, the form of behavior and intention.
- While defining aggression in early childhood, the focal point of the definition varies based on the expert's field. Therefore, experts from different disciplines use different key terms.
- Childhood aggression is defined as physical and emotional harm directed at oneself, others, the environment, surroundings, or objects.
- Aggression is not an isolated incident; it is a recurring pattern of behavior.
- Psychiatrists and psychologists emphasize the biological and medical aspects of aggression while defining childhood aggression.
- Childhood aggression is often attributed to a lack of understanding and support for the child. Therefore, it should be viewed not only from the child's perspective but also from that of their surroundings.
- Childhood aggression differs from adult aggression due to developmental factors such as a limited ability to express and regulate emotions; thus, rather than being driven by harmful intent, aggression in childhood serves a functional purpose.
- Intention is one of the key aspects highlighted when defining childhood aggression. However, intention in childhood differs from that in adulthood.
- Participants defined aggression by emphasizing keywords such as emotions, provocation, impulsivity, attention-seeking, language, physical contact, frustration, goal attainment, problem-solving, body awareness, parent-child relationships, gender, peer relations, and aggressive behaviors.

- Children exhibit different types of aggression depending on their age. Young children tend to display physical aggression, whereas children between 60–72 months primarily engage in relational and verbal aggression.
- The emotions that lead to aggression also vary by age. For younger children, feelings of anxiety, worry, sadness, disappointment, and frustration rather than just anger often contribute to aggressive behavior.
- In early childhood, aggression can be a symptom of a psychological disorder. Consequently, a significant number of children are referred to professionals due to aggression as a symptom.
- Aggressive behavior also differs based on gender. It is commonly claimed that boys exhibit more physical aggression, while girls are more prone to verbal and relational aggression. However, one participant suggested that boys display more verbal aggression than girls.
- The intent behind a child's aggression is crucial for understanding and interpreting their behavior. In early childhood, aggression may not always be intended to cause harm; there can be other underlying motivations.
- Cultural family practices also shape perceptions of intent. Some families express affection through physical actions that might be interpreted as aggressive.
- To fully understand aggressive behavior, it is essential to consider not only the child's intent but also the perspectives of those who experience the behavior. Perceptions of harm can vary among children exposed to aggression.
- For aggression to be considered pathological, it must occur in multiple settings, increase in frequency, and persist for more than six months.
- Children are more likely to display aggression during free play.
- Sudden socio-cultural changes can influence children and contribute to aggression. Events such as a pandemic, the birth of a sibling, parental separation, accidents, or other stress factors may trigger aggressive behavior.
- Rural and socio-cultural backgrounds are also associated with aggression. Some argue that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are at a

higher risk of aggression, while others suggest that children from higher socio-economic backgrounds may also exhibit aggression due to factors like long parental working hours.

- Developmental factors, especially cognitive development, play a critical role in emotional regulation and aggression control.
- Additionally, aggression is linked to brain development.
- Aggressive behaviors exist on a spectrum, and not all forms of aggression have the same implications.
- Temperament plays a significant role in aggression. Children with different temperaments may exhibit varying types of aggressive behaviors.
- Aggression carries negative connotations and is often associated with stigma and labeling.
- Aggression can serve as a means of expressing frustration and emotions, functioning as a form of communication.
- Childhood aggression differs from adult aggression in that children often use it to express emotions such as worry, sadness, physical pain, disappointment, anxiety, and frustration. In contrast, adult aggression is primarily driven by anger.
- The use of aggression as a communication tool is closely linked to language development.
- Aggression may also be used to obtain desired objects or goals, as well as during the exploratory phase of development.
- In the Turkish context, experts have identified 23 different types of aggressive behaviors.
- The most frequently mentioned aggressive behaviors include hitting, pushing, causing harm, using offensive language, biting, vocal outbursts, excluding, pulling, and undermining others.
- The least frequently mentioned behaviors include getting on top of someone, choking, scratching, wetting oneself, pinching, and slapping.
- Among these, biting is reported as the most problematic behavior due to its severity and the prolonged pain it causes.

- Exclusion and offensive language, such as name-calling, are considered the most underestimated forms of aggression.
- Aggression is categorized based on various factors, including the nature of the location (at home, on the street, at school), the origin of the behavior (modeled, frustration, parental attitude and attachment), medical well-being (pathological, non-pathological), the nature of subject (toward others, oneself, or the environment), the form of representation (indirect, direct), the role of the behavior (proactive, reactive), the forms of behavior (verbal, relational, physical), and the presence of intent (accidental or intentional, including expressive, hostile, and instrumental aggression).
- Verbal aggression includes vocal outbursts, crying or wailing, using offensive language, and undermining others.
- Spreading rumors, undermining others, ignoring, and excluding are forms of relational aggression.
- Physical aggression includes behaviors such as biting, causing harm, choking, getting on top of somebody, hitting, kicking, pinching, pulling, and scratching.
- Experts recognize ‘undermining others’ as both verbal and relational aggression.
- Aggression is also classified based on intent. Accidental aggression, which occurs unintentionally, is often associated with poor hand-eye coordination and developmental challenges. In contrast, hostile aggression is deliberate and linked to psychological pathology.

4.2. Study 2

4.2.1. Remembering the purpose and research questions of Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 is to develop a culturally appropriate framework for understanding childhood aggression, exploring its dimensions, characteristics, and its interaction with culture. The research questions for this study are as follows:

3. 1. How does childhood aggression occur?

- 3.1.What are the dimensions and characteristics of childhood aggression?
- 3.2.How does childhood aggression emerge across different dimensions?
- 4. How does culture influence childhood aggression?
 - 4.1.How do individual and family contexts of culture interact with childhood aggression in the Turkish context?

4.2.2. Recollection of study participants

This section provides profiles of each participant, offering context for the themes, sub-themes, codes, and quotations. These profiles can be found in Tables 4.17, 4.18, and 4.19.

As outlined in Tables 4.17, 4.18, and 4.19, participants in the study are assigned anonymous identifiers for ethical reasons. Each father is labeled with the letter ‘F’ followed by their age (e.g., F1, 38), each mother with ‘M’ and their age (e.g., M2, 35), and each preschool teacher with ‘T’ and their age (e.g., T13, 37). Preschool teachers who participated in the observation part of Study 2 are labeled with ‘T,’ followed by the corresponding observed child’s identifier (e.g., T13-C1, 37), where ‘C1,’ ‘C2,’ etc., indicate the observed children. For example, ‘T13-C1, 37’ refers to the teacher for the first observed child, with the teacher’s age included. Observed children are labeled with ‘C,’ followed by their gender. Each quotation labeled with, for instance, ‘C1, Female’ corresponds to observation recordings of the observed child.

To further describe the participants, additional background information such as household composition, parental status, occupation, residency, education level, average monthly income, number of siblings, gender, and birth order of the child is provided. This ensures a comprehensive profile for each participant.

In the findings section, the symbol ‘*f*’ indicates the frequency of coded segments, while ‘*n*’ represents the number of participants who mentioned specific codes. This system helps to clearly display and analyze the data collected.

Table 4.17. Fathers' profile of the Study 2

Document name	Household composition	Parental status	Occupation	Age of the participants	Place of residency	Level of education	average monthly income (k)	number of sibling	gender of the child	birth order of the child
Document Group: Fathers										
F1, 38	4	Married	Baker	38	Altındağ	Bachelor degree	60	1	female	younger child
F2, 34	4	Married	Blue collar worker (laborer)	34	Sincan	High school	26	1	female	older child
F3, 33	4	Married	Government employee	33	Yenimahalle	Master degree	65	1	female	older child
F4, 34	3	Married	Engineer (Electrical and electronic)	34	Çankaya	Bachelor degree	100	0	female	only child
F5, 33	4	Married	Engineer (Mechanical)	33	Mamak	Bachelor degree	100	1	male	older child
F6, 51	4	Married	Blue collar worker (labourer)	51	Mamak	Primary school	40	1	male	younger child
F7, 41	4	Married	Janitor	41	Çankaya	Bachelor degree	35	1	female	younger child
F8, 39	5	Married	Blue collar worker (labourer)	39	Keçiören	High school	40	1	male	middle child
F9, 33	5	Married	Technical manager	33	Keçiören	Secondary school	50	0	female	only child
F10, 44	3	Married	Academician	44	Çankaya	Doctoral degree	100	0	female	only child
F11, 32	4	Married	Sales assistant	32	Keçiören	Associate degree	60	1	female	older child
F12, 39	4	Married	Teacher (Geography)	39	Keçiören	Bachelor degree	30	1	male	younger child

Table 4.18. Mothers' profile of the Study 2

Document name	Household composition	Parental status	Occupation	Age of the participants	Place of residency	Level of education	average monthly income (k)	number of sibling	gender of the child	birth order of the child
Document Group: Mothers										
M1, 38	4	Married	Sales assistant	38	Altındağ	high school	60	1	female	younger child
M2, 26	4	Married	Housewife	26	Sincan	Bachelor degree	26	1	female	older child
M3, 35	4	Married	Corporate personel	35	Yenimahalle	Bachelor degree	65	1	female	older child
M4, 34	3	Married	Engineer (Mechanical)	34	Çankaya	Bachelor degree	100	0	female	only child
M5, 32	4	Married	Housewife	32	Mamak	Bachelor degree	100	1	male	older child
M6, 31	3	Married	Government employee	31	Mamak	Bachelor degree	70	0	female	only child
M7, 36	4	Married	Housewife	36	Altındağ	Bachelor degree	50	1	female	older child
M8, 31	4	Married	Housewife	31	Altındağ	Associate degree	80	1	male	older child
M9, 39	4	Married	Housewife	39	Etimesgut	Bachelor degree	80	1	male	younger child
M10, 35	4	Married	Government employee	35	Altındağ	Bachelor degree	90	1	female	older child
M11, 26	4	Married	Housewife	26	Akyurt	Associate degree	60	1	female	older child
M12, 39	3	Married	Teacher (Turkish)	39	Polatlı	Bachelor degree	80	0	female	only child

Table 4.19. Preschool teachers' profile of the Study 2

Document name	Age of the teachers	Level of education of teachers	Household composition	Parental status	Place of residency of selected child	average income of selected child(k)	number of sibling	gender of the selected child	birth order of the selected child
Document Group: Preschool teachers									
T1, 35	35	Master degree	3	Married	Not specified	Not specified	0	male	only child
T2, 36	36	Bachelor degree	4	Divorced	Altındağ	Not specified	1	male	older child
T3, 27	27	Bachelor degree	4	Married	Çankaya	100	1	male	older child
T4, 39	39	Bachelor degree	4	Married	Sincan	Not specified	1	male	older child
T5, 24	24	Bachelor degree	3	Married	Yenimahalle	Not specified	0	female	only child
T6, 25	25	Bachelor degree	3	Married	Yenimahalle	Not specified	0	male	only child
T7, 50	50	Master degree	4	Married	Gölbaşı	Not specified	1	male	younger child
T8, 37	37	Master degree	4	Married	Sincan	Not specified	2	male	younger child
T9, 30	30	Bachelor degree	3	Married	Çankaya	Not specified	0	male	only child
T10, 26	26	Bachelor degree	3	Married	Yenimahalle	Not specified	0	male	only child
T11, 37	37	Bachelor degree	4	Married	Mamak	Not specified	1	male	younger child
T12, 31	31	Master degree	3	Married	Çankaya	Not specified	0	male	only child
T13-C1, 37	37	Master degree	4	Married	Mamak	Not specified	1	Female	Younger child
T14-C2, 44	44	Bachelor degree	4	Divorced	Altındağ	30	0	Male	Only child
T15-C3, 42	42	Master degree	4	Divorced	Not specified	Not specified	1	Male	Younger child
T16-C4, 49	49	Bachelor degree	2	Married	Not specified	Not specified	0	Female	Only child
T17-C5, 40	40	Bachelor degree	5	Married	Keçiören	Not specified	0	Male	Only child

4.2.3. Culturally appropriate childhood aggression

Study 2 is a grounded theory research exploring culturally appropriate childhood aggression. In this study, 41 interviews and five observations led to the identification of 9 themes, 38 categories, and 106 codes. As shown in Figure 4.6, these 9 themes provide a comprehensive perspective on childhood aggression.

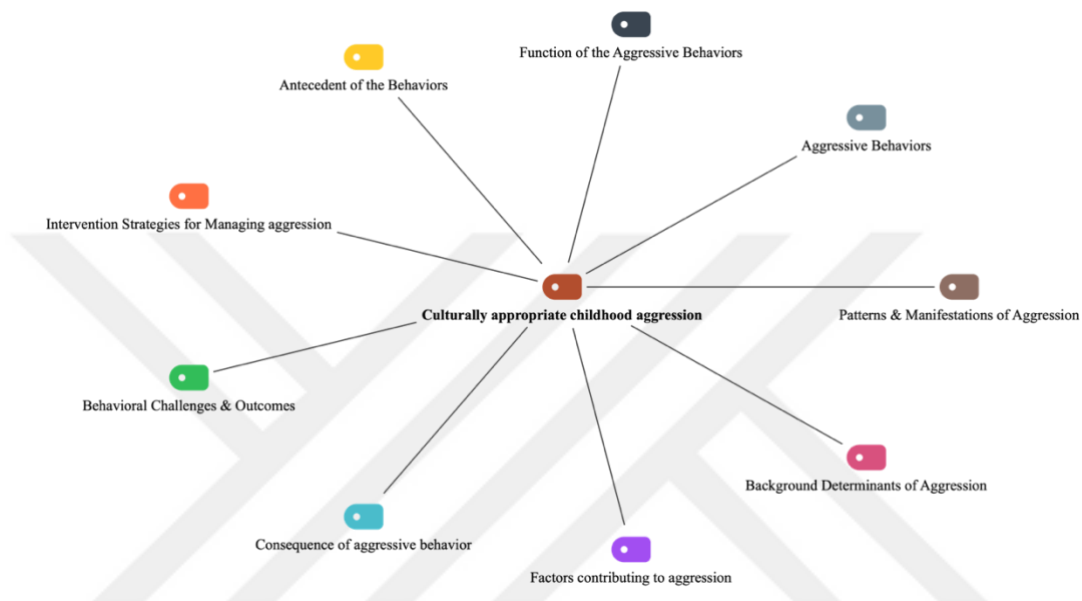


Figure 4.6. Themes of culturally appropriate childhood aggression

These themes include the antecedent of the behavior ($f=195$), aggressive behaviors ($f=375$), consequences of aggressive behavior ($f=249$), intervention strategies for managing aggression ($f=356$), function of aggressive behaviors ($f=161$), patterns and manifestations of aggression ($f=587$), factors contributing to aggression ($f=690$), background determinants of aggression ($f=804$), and behavioral challenges and outcomes ($f=109$). The following sections provide more detailed information on the categories and codes under the relevant headings.

4.2.3.1. Theme₁: Antecedent of the behaviors

One of the significant themes that emerged in Study 2 is the antecedent of the behaviors. This theme is crucial for detecting, investigating, intervening, and understanding problem behavior. During interviews, the researcher sought answers

to the question, “What happens before aggression?” However, as shown in Figure 4.7, a substantial and extensive number of codes emerged from in-class observations. Most of the codes under this theme were derived from these observations.

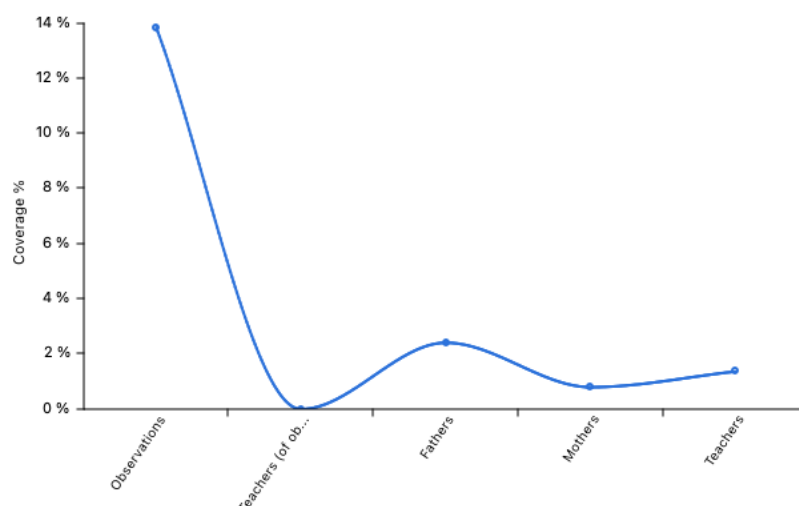


Figure 4.7. Code trend of antecedent of the behaviors across different document groups

The definition of antecedents of behavior refers to the factors that trigger aggression. This theme explains what happens right before a child displays aggressive behaviors and addresses the question of why. Four categories emerged as prominent triggers of aggression within this theme. As shown in Figure 4.8, these categories are emotional and situational triggers ($f= 93$), emotional and psychological triggers ($f= 36$), peer interactions and social dynamics ($f= 44$), and teacher-initiated actions ($f= 22$).

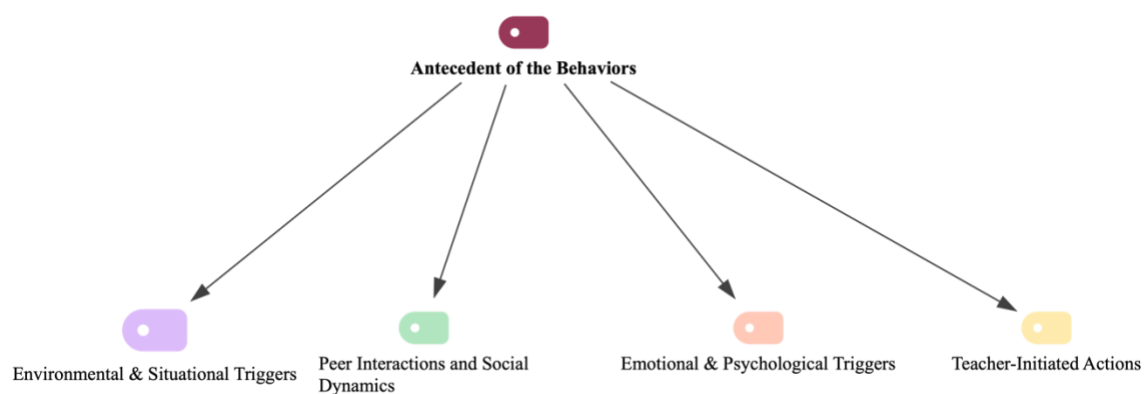


Figure 4.8. Theme 1 and its' categories

4.2.3.1.1. Category₁: Emotional & psychological triggers

Childhood aggression can be triggered by emotional and psychological factors or behaviors that provoke emotional reactions. One such trigger is unusual or expressive behaviors, which include physical, verbal, and nonverbal expressions of emotions, such as physical contact or frequent vocalizations in the environment. These behaviors are categorized under emotional and psychological triggers because they can disturb others, leading to emotional and psychological responses.

For example, “C2 (Male) was sitting on a chair with a Lego in his hand, pretending to drive a car. Two younger boys approached C2 and started hitting the back of his chair with their hands.” Similarly, M8 (31) explained, “For example, even with her brother, he plays that way. He has to touch her. He can touch his sibling out of the blue. And she says, ‘Don’t touch me, why are you touching me?’ He likes extreme contact.” These two examples show that sometimes a child who frequently displays aggression may be triggered by being touched by others or by simply touching others. The child might initiate conflict depending on how the recipient perceives the touch.

Additionally, unusual and expressive behaviors can also involve vocalizations that seem out of place, strange, or contextually inappropriate. For instance, “C2 (Male), during free play time, was drinking water while sitting on the mats. Suddenly, he began to laugh and giggle, continuing for almost two minutes.” The researcher could not understand the reason behind this laughter, as there were no other children nearby and nothing amusing occurring. However, during the observations, C2 consistently made sounds like “oooo” or “vooo.”

Another emotional and psychological trigger is the desire for recognition and attention, as shown in Table 4.20.

Seeking recognition and attention refers to behaviors aimed at gaining attention and validation from others. For example, T2 (36) described a situation as follows: “For instance, he's going to say something to A (child's name). He says ‘A’ over and over

again because he wants something. But if A doesn't turn to him, for example, this becomes a big problem for him.” This example shows how a child may try to gain a friend’s attention by repeatedly calling their name.

Table 4.20. Category 1 (Theme 1) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	f	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Emotional & psychological triggers	Behaviors and triggers evoke emotional and psychological reactions.	36	10	-
Unusual or expressive behaviors	Behaviors that are expressive such as physical contact and weird vocalization	15	7	They are like Tom and Jerry. It starts as a joke, but then it can turn into a serious fight where his brother hits him, he hits him back. (F12, 39)
Seeking recognition & attention	Displaying behaviors to seek attention and validation	9	4	During free play C5 showed lego toy in his hand to his friend. (C5, Male)
Emotional sensitivity & social perception	Being emotional and perceptive about incidents or statements	12	4	In free play time, a boy spoke up without targeting anyone, saying “I watch news and documentaries at home. (C1, Female)

The last emotional and psychological trigger is emotional sensitivity and social perception. This refers to being sensitive and perceptive to unsolicited remarks, comments without meaning, triggering statements, embarrassing actions in social settings, or unique traits or roles. For example, in one instance, “*While sitting on chairs and doing an activity, one child next to C1 (Female) burped. During this incident, the class was very quiet. Even the researcher did not hear or notice the burping.*” This embarrassing situation, such as burping, can trigger children, as it did in C1’s case.

4.2.3.1.2. Category2: Environmental & situational triggers

Environmental and situational triggers refer to factors within the classroom setting, activities, and play that may provoke aggression. One such factor in a classroom environment is spatial arrangements. This code captures incidents or conflicts related to space or seating arrangements. In some cases, children may argue about sitting

next to each other, or simply sharing the same space at the same time may lead to conflicts. In an observation of C2 (Male), the researcher noted spatial factors as a triggering element, as follows:

For the play activity, all the children were supposed to sit on mats and wait for the activity to start. A close friend of C2 sat next to two girls, squeezing between them. C2 went to sit next to his friend, but there was no space available.” (C2, Male)

Additionally, changes in activities and classroom transitions are also environmental and situational triggers, as shown in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21. Category 2 (Theme 1) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Environmental & situational triggers	Classroom, activity and play related triggers	93	15	-
Spatial factors	Space related issues such as conflict related space or being in a same space	20	4	At the end of the day while waiting for their parents to pick up C5 and his friends were playing with dough. C5 stood up and went next to his friend who was sitting opposite of him. (C5, Male)
Activity changes & classroom transitions	Change in routine, activity and transitions	29	5	Teacher said collect toys in the classroom. C2 started to collect toys. (C2, Male)
Play & object- related triggers	Playing, conflict during play, use of belonging and dispute over belongings	44	14	C1 and her friends were sitting on their chairs. C1's close girl friend next to C1 went to drink water. Another girl approached next to C1 to sit on the chair which belonged to C1's close girl friend. (C1, Female)

Changes in classroom routines, transition periods, and the gap time between activities can create situations that lead to aggression. These transitions may occur due to teacher directives, but children may complete tasks earlier than their peers, leading to a gap period where they might be left unsupervised, wandering or engaging in other activities. This is illustrated by the following example: “C2 (Male) and his friend finished their work earlier than their peers. They went to the mats and started playing by jumping on them.” In this case, the children were allowed to wander after finishing their tasks, and the teacher did not provide any additional assignments. This situation can potentially trigger aggressive behavior.

Lastly, aggressive behaviors can emerge due to play and object-related triggers. Imaginative play, free play, disputes over toys or objects, the use of others' belongings, and conflict during play are captured by this code. For example, before aggressive behaviors occurred, children were playing without any signs of conflict:

The cushions in the classroom were arranged like a bed. C2 opened the cushions and piled them on top of each other. C2 and his close male friend made an agreement to play a jumping game. Together, they jumped from the higher cushion to the bottom cushion. (C2, Male)

In some instances, children may use others' belongings, which can trigger aggressive behaviors. For example, in the case of C1 (Female): "*C1 was drawing a heart shape on a blank sheet of paper and started to color it with blue.*" Here, C1 was simply using her friend's coloring pens, and there was no conflict before the aggression. However, based on the researcher's observations, it is crucial to note that C1 frequently uses her friend's belongings, claiming that her own materials are more expensive. In such cases, there is covert oppression, where other children may feel suppressed and thus avoid reacting to conflicts. Although there may seem to be no conflict at a surface level, it is present subtly. This pattern was not limited to this incident and was supported by teacher confirmations.

4.2.3.1.3. Category3: Peer interactions and social dynamics

Social interactions, conflicts during peer interactions, and power dynamics within a friend group play a role as antecedents of aggressive behavior. Therefore, peer interactions and social dynamics is a category that includes positive peer interactions, social engagement and exclusion, power and status among peers, and peer conflicts and struggles, as shown in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22. Category 3 (Theme 1) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Peer interaction and social dynamics		44	12	

Table 4.22. (continued)

Positive peer interactions	Supportive interactions between two or more individual	5	2	During transition period two children held each other's hand while sitting. They continue to held hands for a long time. (C1, Female)
Social engagement & exclusion	Attempts to be part of a group, rejection from group	7	3	Close friend of C1 came to class in the morning. While hanging his bag to hanger, started to talk with C1. C1 said "I made a drawing for you" However, her friend said "I did not draw for you" (C1, Female)
Power & status among peers	Position of one's status, or claims regarding superiority	4	1	"I know how to read and write," a boy said after the teacher distributed the booklets. (C1, Female)
Peer conflict & struggles	Social conflict that creates disruption and dissatisfaction.	28	12	While children in the classroom were painting with watercolor paint, C5 was not satisfied with his brush and wanted to take his friends' brushes. After failing, C5 started to kept insisting and creating conflict on the brush issue. Then refused to use his brush. (C5, Male)

Positive peer interactions play a role in social interactions. These interactions refer to inclusive and supportive relationships between individuals. This concept can be perfectly illustrated by the following example:

During free playtime, C2, a close male friend, and a girl sat in a circle on the floor. They each took a water bottle and threw it in the air, trying to make it land vertically. They turned it into a game, taking turns throwing the bottle. When C2 noticed a child with special educational needs (with facial features resembling those of children with Down syndrome, although not actually diagnosed with Down syndrome) nearby, he said, 'Let M try once.' The girl replied, 'M can't do it,' but C2 insisted, 'Let him try it,' and gently took M's hand to sit him down and give him the bottle. M threw the bottle, but unfortunately, he missed. (C2, Male)

Another potential trigger in social dynamics is social engagement and exclusion, which involves efforts to engage with peers, either overtly or covertly, and the possible rejection of these attempts. The distinction here lies in the effort to participate in social interactions, either to join a group or to maintain the group's status. In observing C5, attempts at group inclusion and exclusion were evident:

At the end of the day, while waiting for their parents to pick them up, C5 and his three female friends were in the classroom. The three girls held hands and began spinning to the music. C5 grabbed two of the girls, holding each of

their hands, trying to join in the spinning game. However, the girls let go of his hands and refused to include him. (C5, Male)

In the example above, it's clear that C5 wanted to play and did not want to be left out, but the three girls rejected his attempt to join their group. Based on the researcher's observations, C5 often faces social exclusion, particularly with the female children in the classroom, as well as some of the male children. This observation is also supported by the teacher.

Another crucial aspect of peer interaction and social dynamics is power and status among peers. Power and status refer to one's attempt to assert superiority or position themselves as dominant. For example, during C1's (Female) observation:

I know how to read and write,' a boy said after the teacher distributed the booklets. 'No, you're illiterate,' said C1's close female friend, who was sitting across from him. She lifted the booklet in her hand, turned it towards him, and said, 'Read it then.' (C1, Female)

In this case, the boy may not have intended to assert superiority but could have been trying to boost his own confidence. However, his peers might have perceived it differently. As shown in the example, C1 did not participate in this interaction, but she observed it closely. The female child involved was a close friend of C1, and they often act together and influence each other's behavior.

Lastly, peer conflict and struggles refer to issues that arise within social dynamics, often due to emotional regulation difficulties, lack of social skills, or the nature of the relationship. In some cases, there may not be an overt conflict, but a child's behavior may be perceived as disruptive, leading to dissatisfaction. For example, M6 (31) notes that when a child asserts play autonomy, it can lead to disruption and subsequent peer conflict: *"She doesn't join the game her friend has set up. She tries to break it, whatever rules her friend has set up. She disrupts them and adapts the rules to her own wishes."*

In summary, peer interactions and social dynamics significantly influence children's behavior. In some cases, positive interactions, exclusion, power struggles, and

conflicts can lead to aggression. Observing these dynamics helps highlight the importance of fostering supportive relationships and addressing social challenges to ensure all children feel included and valued.

4.2.3.1.4. Category₄: Teacher-initiated actions

Teacher-initiated actions refer to the ways in which teachers interact with children and manage the classroom, which can influence the occurrence of aggressive behaviors. As shown in Table 4.23, these actions include promoting responsibility and structure, implementing corrective and disciplinary measures, and the overall influence of teachers on student behavior.

Table 4.23. Category 4 (Theme 1) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>F</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Teacher-initiated actions	Teacher originated behaviors, directives and classroom management strategies	22	9	
Encouraging responsibility & structure	To give responsibilities and structure to achieve organized classroom	6	3	Whole classroom went to workshop to make pickles. Whole classroom sat on the floor. Teacher called children one by one to make a pickle while others wait for their turn. C4 wait for her turn to make a pickle. She was one of the last children to be called out. (C4, Female)
Corrective and disciplinary actions	Using methods to correct and prevent the behavior or chaotic incidents	4	3	During lunch time, everyone sat on the chair in the lunch room. The teacher called out C5 and his friend who creates problems with C5. The teacher said “you two sit next to me” while pointing chairs next to herself. (C5, Male)
Teacher’s influence on behavior	Influence of teacher’s behaviors, lack of attention or lack of appropriate instructions.	12	7	The only pattern we notice is that if the attention is shifting elsewhere in the classroom, I am talking about the teacher's attention. (T1, 35)

First of all, encouraging responsibility and structure refers to instances where children are given tasks, directives, and responsibilities to maintain order and peace in the classroom. An example of this can be seen in the following incident:

That day, there was an issue between the small group of children and the others in the classroom. One three-year-old child drew on the blackboard with crayons. When the teacher noticed this, she handed the child a wet wipe and asked him to clean the blackboard. Meanwhile, C2 was drawing on a paper in a separate area of the room. The teacher noticed remnants of pencil shavings and asked C2 to clean them up and dispose of them in the trash. (C2, Male)

In this case, the teacher provided clear directives to foster a structured and clean environment, emphasizing responsibility.

Another action that might trigger aggression is the teacher's use of corrective and disciplinary measures. In such situations, teachers may intervene to address behavioral issues and restore order. For example, in the following situation, the teacher used a disciplinary action to correct a behavior:

The children were engaged in a glue activity. The teacher then instructed them to clean up their materials. When C5 began playing with the glue, the teacher attempted to take the glue away from him. Initially, C5 resisted, but the teacher persisted in removing the glue. (C5, Male)

Here, the teacher's attempt to confiscate the glue was an effort to resolve the situation and maintain classroom discipline. Additionally, teachers' behavior can influence student actions, particularly when there are issues with the teacher's attention or classroom management. For example, a lack of attention or inappropriate feedback from the teacher can escalate situations. One incident illustrates this:

Before interacting with the teacher, C2 had punched his male friend, and the punch was severe. Since the whole school was in the same classroom at the time, the teacher did not witness the conflict. Due to the severity of the situation, the researcher intervened to prevent further harm. A few minutes later, the teacher noticed the child who had been hurt, visibly upset, and asked the researcher about the incident. After learning what happened, the teacher approached the two children, smiled, and patted their jaws, saying, 'Oh, you guys.' (C2, Male)

In this example, the teacher's delayed reaction and nonchalant approach may have unintentionally encouraged further aggression, suggesting that inappropriate or passive responses can contribute to the continuation of aggressive behavior.

4.2.3.2. Theme₂: Aggressive behaviors

In Study 2, aggressive behaviors emerged in Study 1 was observed. Among 23 behaviors listed under Section 4.1.3.1.3, 17 behaviors were observed. The remaining behaviors were not present in the observed classrooms. These behaviors were categorized as relational ($f=91$), verbal ($f=91$), and physical aggression ($f=193$). The definition and description of each category and the codes of aggressive behaviors can be found under Section 4.1.3.1.3 and Table 4.8. As shown in Figure 4.9, physical aggression code emerged more frequently from observations and teacher interview data, while fathers and mothers spoke more about relational aggression.

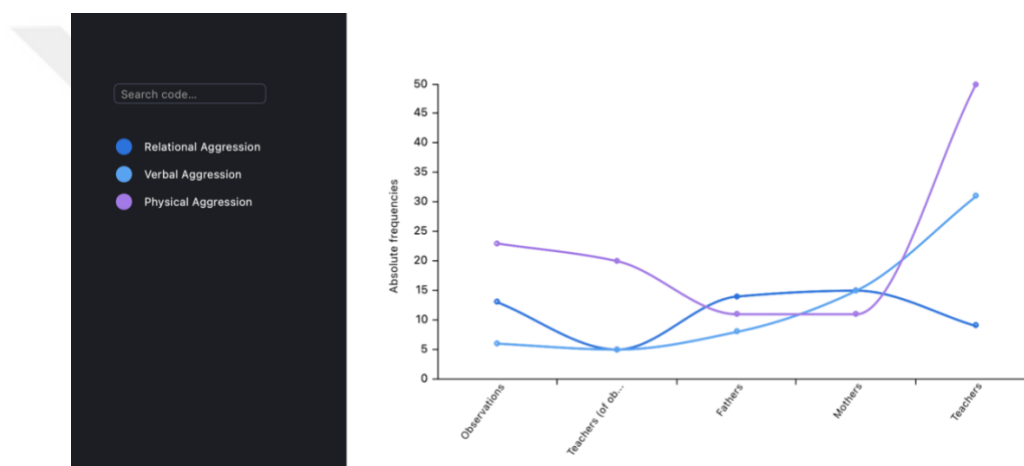


Figure 4.9. Code trend of aggressive behaviors across different document groups

4.2.3.2.1. Category₁: Relational aggression

Relational aggression refers to behavior that harms social relations. In Study 2, three relational aggression codes emerged: excluding, undermining others, and ignoring. As shown in Figure 4.10, these behaviors were identified as key forms of relational aggression.

Undermining others consists of humiliating, mocking, belittling and flaunting. The following example from C1's behavior illustrates undermining others:

In C1's classroom, one child burped quietly, so no one noticed. However, C1 pointed to her friend and loudly exclaimed, 'She burped!' Upon hearing this,

two other children tried to get the teacher's attention by loudly saying, 'Teacher, she burped!' (C1, Female)

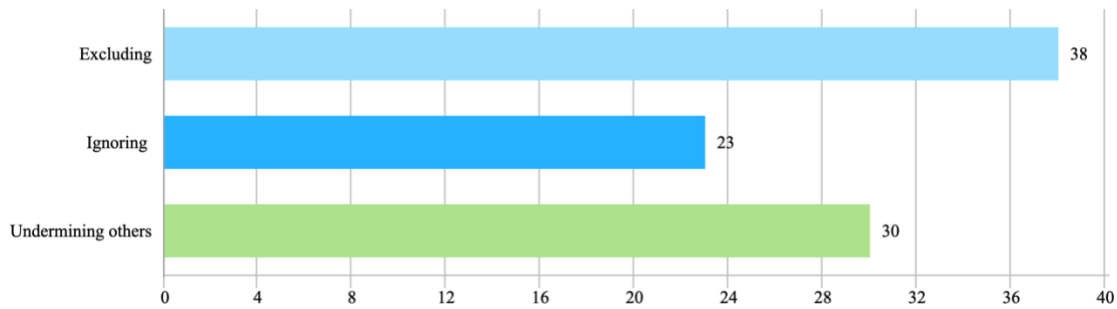


Figure 4.10. Relational aggression behaviors

Exclusion refers to deliberately refusing someone a place in a social group or rejecting their involvement in activities like play. For instance, “*C4 (Female) and her three female friends were sitting together, drawing. Another female child approached them, but C4 noticed her and said, “You cannot sit next to A,” indicating the girl should not sit next to C4.*” Ignoring refers to refusing to engage with someone or stopping any social interaction. For example, “*During lunch, C4 was sitting without eating. The male child sitting across from her called out C4’s name, but she responded, “No, I do not listen to you.”*” (C4, Female). In this case, C4 rejected any attempt at social interaction.

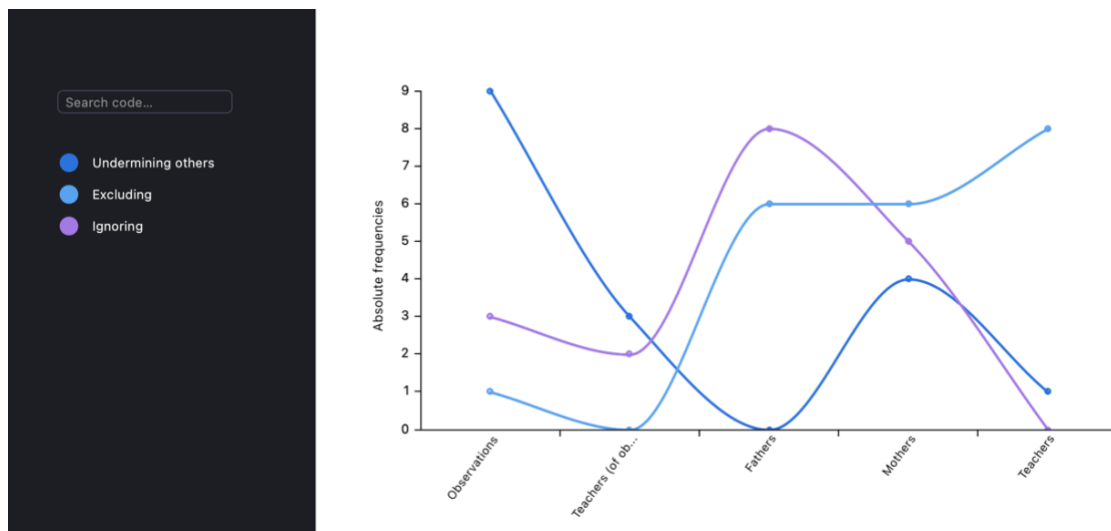


Figure 4.11. Code trend of relational aggression across different document groups

One final interesting observation is that, during the observations, undermining behavior was most commonly seen. However, fathers tended to mention ignoring behavior more frequently, while mothers and teachers discussed exclusion more. On the other hand, the teachers of the observed children did not report any exclusion behaviors, and fathers never mentioned undermining behavior, as shown in Figure 4.11.

4.2.3.2.2. Category₂: Verbal aggression

Verbal aggression refers to words or vocals that is harmful or disruptive to others. In Study 2, two verbal aggression codes emerged. As shown in Figure 4.12, these are offensive language and vocal outbursts.

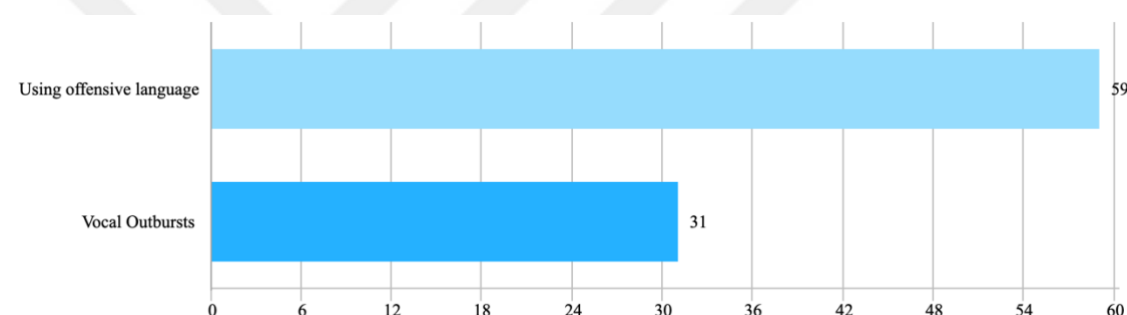


Figure 4.12. Verbal aggression behaviors

Using offensive language refers to the use of slangs, swearing, name-calling and saying hurtful things. For instance,

During free time, a boy spoke aloud without addressing anyone in particular, saying, “I watch the news and documentaries at home.” He was not directly interacting with C1 at the time. Upon hearing his statement, C1 paused from her painting, looked up at him, and remarked, ‘You watch cartoons.’ The boy responded, “No, I don’t watch them.” C1 then asked, “Are you a father? Fathers watch the news.” (C1, Female)

Name-calling, such as referring to someone as a “father,” might seem harmless, but the key factor is how the recipient perceives it. In this case, the boy was visibly upset and emotionally distressed. Furthermore, C1’s intent appeared to be harmful, as

reflected in the researcher's observations and the teacher's statements. According to these sources, C1 does not view others' superiority, valuable belongings, or merits in a favorable light.

Another form of verbal aggression is vocal outbursts, which include shouting, loud or high-pitched vocalizations. M3 (35) described her child's vocal outbursts, stating, *"He reacts like this, he yells a lot when you don't do something. When you do it, everything is fine, but when we don't, he reacts like this."*

An intriguing observation is that, aside from data gathered from direct observations, offensive language was mentioned more frequently than vocal outbursts across all other groups. However, as shown in Figure 4.13, the teachers of the observed children did not report any instances of vocal outbursts.

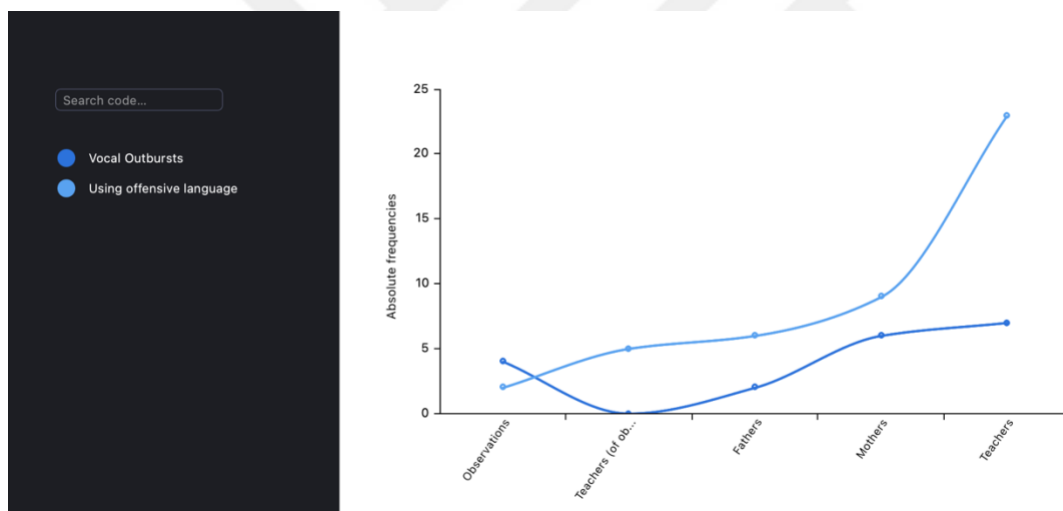


Figure 4.13. Code trend of verbal aggression across different document groups

4.2.3.2.3. Category3: Physical aggression

Physical aggression refers to any physical act or contact that harms others or objects. In Study 2, 12 codes of physical aggression emerged. As shown in Figure 4.14, these include hitting, throwing something or oneself, causing harm, pulling, pushing, pinching, getting on top of someone, interrupting play or ongoing educational activities, kicking, scratching, choking, and biting, respectively.



Figure 4.14. Physical aggression behaviors

Definitions and descriptions of physical aggressive behaviors can be found in detail under heading 4.1.3.1.3 and Table 4.8. One of the most commonly observed and mentioned behaviors is hitting. During observations, it was noted that children sometimes hit with their hands or use other objects as tools. An example of using objects as tools is illustrated in the following situation: In C4's (Female) classroom, *"when a boy said, 'You are not supposed to play with play dough,' C4 turned to the boy and said, 'I will never call you president.' He then hit the boy's knees with the pencil case in her hand."* In other cases, children hit using their body parts. For example, *"while waiting in line, C2 (Male) hit his friend twice in the stomach with his fist. He then kicked him with his foot. He made a fist again and hit him hard five or six times."* In this observation, C2 used his fist and hand as tools to hit his friend. Another behavior is biting, which is often described as a difficult behavior to manage. T10 (26) discussed biting and its challenges as follows: *"Once he bit his friend's leg. This was an issue that we had a hard time explaining to the parents, and we had a hard time solving it ourselves."*

Although these behaviors, as described and illustrated by the examples, seem to be overt and easily visible forms of physical aggression, the researcher's observations revealed otherwise. On the initial day of observing C1, the researcher wrote the following reflection about C1's pinching behavior: *"Pinching does not happen frequently. It seems like a loving gesture and does not hurt."* As a result, during the first few days, pinching was not considered aggression and was not included in the data. However, upon further observation and conversations with the teacher, a different perspective emerged. According to the reflections after speaking with the teacher, *"although pinching may seem like a loving gesture from a distance, C1 uses*

pinching to subtly establish dominance and authority, and to warn her peers about something she is dissatisfied with.” The following example illustrates this situation:

While gathering materials from their cabinets, a male child complained about C1 to the teacher. The teacher warned C1, saying, “Wait while your friend takes his materials from the cabinet.” (These cabinets were five-tiered, with C1’s cabinet on the top level, while the boys’ cabinets were on the lower levels. So, each time C1 needed to access her cabinet, she had to use a chair.) After waiting for a minute, C1 turned toward the boy and pinched both of his cheeks. She made eye contact and began whispering something. (C1, female)

4.2.3.3. Theme3: Consequence of aggressive behaviors

Another theme that emerged is the consequence of aggressive behaviors. This theme refers to immediate responses and reactions of the child’s own or other people, such as teachers, peers, and parents. This theme differs from outcomes because consequences refer to spontaneous incidents and reactions occurring right after the behavior, which are different from outcomes, especially long-term outcomes. As shown in Figure 4.15, five categories emerged that explain the consequence of aggressive behavior theme. These are passive, avoidant, or non-responsive reactions ($f=75$), corrective actions and behavioral adjustments ($f=63$), defensive and retaliatory responses ($f=47$), emotional and social consequences ($f=34$), social and peer influence responses ($f=30$).

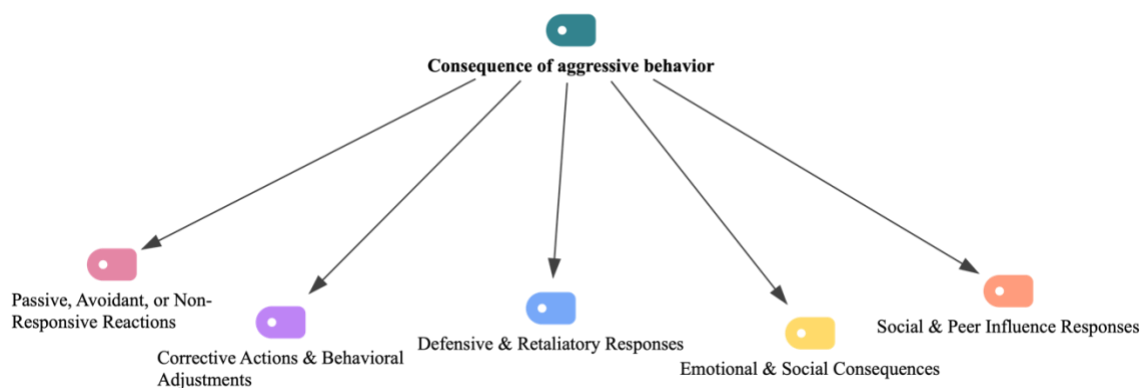


Figure 4.15. Theme 3 and its categories

As shown in Figure 4.16, among these five categories, passive, avoidant, or non-responsive reactions, defensive and retaliatory responses, and social and peer influence responses were more frequently observed in the observation data.

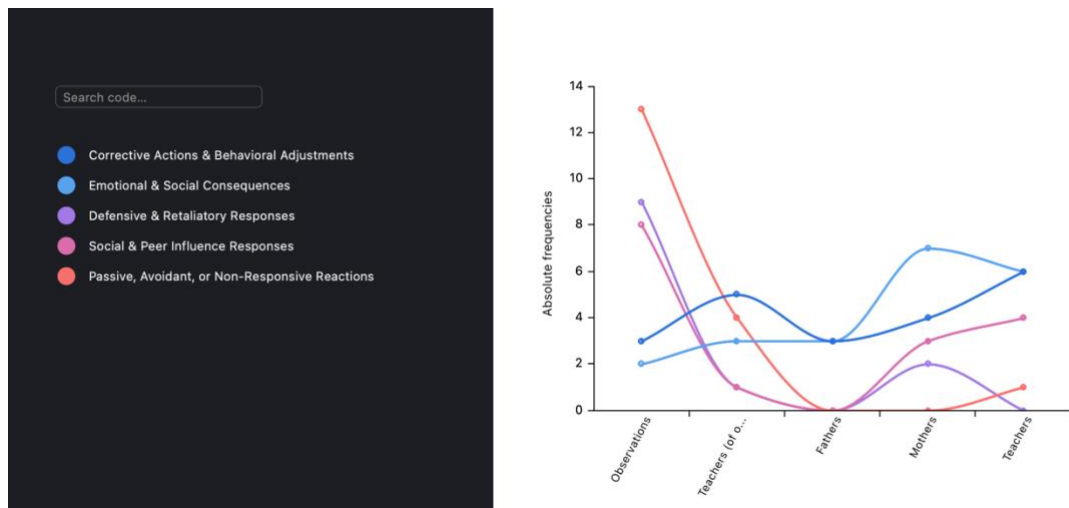


Figure 4.16. Code trend of categories of consequence of aggressive behaviors across different document groups

The fathers did not mention any of these categories, while the mothers did not mention passive, avoidant, or non-responsive reactions. The teachers of the observed children mentioned defensive and retaliatory responses; however, the interviewed teachers did not mention these responses at all.

4.2.3.3.1. Category₁: Corrective actions & behavioral adjustments

Corrective actions and behavioral adjustments refer to strategies used to deal with conflict situations and respond immediately to correct aggressive behaviors. This category describes how teachers and children in the classroom manage and deal with aggression through compliance, discipline, and conflict resolution strategies such as rule enforcement. This category also refers to actions that can be taken to correct aggressive behaviors. However, these actions can also be used to deal with conflict situations with a desire to quickly put an end to the situation. Therefore, these corrective actions and behavioral adjustments are not similar to intervention strategies. These actions might also be in a negative form, and aggressive behaviors might be followed by other negative behaviors. As shown in Table 4.24, codes of conditional conflict resolution, boundary and resource conflicts, compliance, and instructional responses were revealed as examples of corrective actions and behavioral adjustments.

Table 4.24. Category 1 (Theme 3) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (<i>n</i> /46)	Empirical indicators
Corrective actions & behavioral adjustments	The child's, teachers' and other children's responses to correct situation and manage behaviors	63	19	-
Conditional conflict resolution	Proposing condition as a requirement for reconciling	6	3	Teacher said "do not be angry to each other" C1 went next to girlfriend she was angry with and said "Let make up but next time draw a painting for me" C1 show her own painting and said "take this to home and make a drawing by looking at mine". (Previously C1 prepared a gift which was her painting to her friend and realized that her friend did not prepare anything although there was no agreement prior.) (C1, Female)
Boundary & resource conflicts	Disregarding boundaries and violating classroom rules	6	3	After C1 caused harm to crayon of her friend, her friend said "I will remove my crayons and put in the cabinet". C1 said "No, I still need it" and took green color from her friends' crayon set. (C1's crayons were in her cabinet) (C1, Female)
Compliance & instructional response	To put an end to situation accepting the circumstances and complaining or providing simple feedbacks to behavior	51	19	His brother gets angry, this time he kicks him out of the game. He says go play by yourself, don't interfere in my game, don't play with me. He cannot do anything to the brother. If he wants to continue playing with his brother, he has to fix himself or he has to go and play his own game. Which he usually prefers the first one. (M9, 39)

One of the common behaviors in this category is compliance and instructional responses. In response to aggression, children sometimes initially resist but, depending on the dynamics, eventually comply with the situation in order to resolve the conflict. By adjusting their behavior through compliance and providing instructional feedback, children attempt to address problems. For instance, as shown in the excerpt below, after receiving threats involving offensive language, opposing children tried to reason with C2 by offering behavioral and instructional feedback.

C2 threatened to kill them, saying he would drive his car on them. Then, his two girlfriends he threatened said 'You'll go to jail then.' C2 said 'I will drive my big car into the jail, I will kill the police.' His friends objected for a while and insisted that he would go to jail. (C2, Male)

In another example of compliance and instructional response, after witnessing excluding behavior, another peer complied with the C1 and started to act together with C1. As a last resort, they complained. As it is seen in the excerpt below, responses and reactions sometimes come from another peer or the child, in this case C1, not the opponent.

After witnessing this, another girl did not object to this and agreed to exclude the boy. Then boy made another attempt to approach them with another toy in his hand. C1 said, ‘You are disrupting our play.’ C1’s girlfriend agreed to this statement, and together they complained to the teacher. (C1, Female)

4.2.3.3.2. Category2: Emotional & social consequences

As a consequence of aggression, emotional and social consequences, as shown in Table 4.25, refer to the emotional distress experienced by the child, teachers, parents, peers, or any other individual, and its impact on peer relationships.

Table 4.25. Category 2 (Theme 3) and its code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Emotional & social consequences	Reacting with emotions and its’ impact on social relations	34	17	-
Emotional distress & social reactions	Being emotionally and tense and uncomfortable friend relations	34	17	Our girl comes crying and says my brother hit me. (F8, 39)

A typical example of emotional distress and social consequences is crying, as demonstrated by the boy in the following excerpt:

Children were standing in line, with C2 at the front and a boy at the back. Behind the boy was a wall. After C2 hit the boy’s stomach with his fist, the boy crashed into the wall. After being hurt by both the punch and the wall, he started to cry. (C2, Male)

The term social refers to the influence of emotions on social relations. For instance, in one of C2’s (Male) observations, a boy who was exposed to aggression said, “‘*I am angry*’, with a tearful face. He threatened C2, saying, ‘*I won't play with you.*’”

4.2.3.3.3. Category₃: Defensive & retaliatory responses

Defensive and retaliatory responses refer to actions aimed at defending one's body, personal space, and belongings. They also involve protecting one's position and resisting outside interference, which often leads to retaliation. In summary, this behavior emerges when a child or their peers feel the need to defend themselves, whether it's to protect their physical well-being or to maintain their established position. The 'constant state' refers to a situation where a child reacts aggressively to others' behavior and retaliates by resisting and protecting their stance. For example, C2 heard the teacher's warning but resisted and retaliated by continuing to behave in the same manner.

C2 and his friend were playing by jumping on cushions. After the teacher's warning, C2 got off the cushion, but he and his friend continued the jumping game. During this process, they repeatedly climbed on top of each other. The teacher did not issue another warning after the initial one. (C2, Male)

As shown in Table 4.26, in addition to resistance and retaliation, defensive withdrawal and denial also emerged in the study.

Table 4.26. Category 3 (Theme 3) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Defensive & retaliatory responses	Behaviors to protect oneself or defending the behavior by resisting	47	8	
Defensive withdrawal & denial	Protecting one's space, boundary or objects.	23	7	Children from other classrooms were gathered in C3's classroom. C3 saw a puppet belonging to his classroom in a hand of a child from another classroom. After pulling puppet from child's hand, C3 put puppet back in the cabinets where it belongs to. (C3, Male)
Resistance & retaliation	Behavior that directly opposes or disregards an adult's corrective efforts and not avoiding the situation but rather persisting with their behavior	24	5	C2 was playing with play dough. The mother of a child C2 was angry with came to pick the child up from school. When the teacher saw the child off, C2 said, "I won't say goodbye because I am angry" in spite of other children saying "goodbye". (C2, Male)

Defensive withdrawal and denial refer to the child's defensive actions to protect their space or materials. 'Withdrawal' suggests that the child is retreating to safeguard themselves, which effectively ends the aggressive behavior. This process can also involve verbal expressions like "don't do that." For instance, in the example below, C4 caused harm to her friend's belongings, and the friend defended her property by pulling it toward herself:

C4 took a piece of her friend's playdough, turned around to the corner of the classroom, and placed it in her dough box. The girl whose dough was taken said, "Enough is enough," as she pulled the dough in front of her. (C4, Female)

4.2.3.3.4. Category4: Social & peer influence responses

As a consequence of aggression, one of the responses arises due to social and peer influence. This means that reactions to aggression are shaped by social dynamics and relationships. As shown in Table 4.27, one code that emerged in this category is social reinforcement and contagion.

Table 4.27. Category 4 (Theme 3) and its code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Social & peer influence responses	Responses to aggression emerging due to social relations and dynamics	30	11	
Social reinforcement & contagion	Mirroring the behavior as a response and encouraging behavior	30	11	While C2 was hitting his friend like a game, his friend tried to catch the C's fist with his palms. When C2 stopped swinging his fist, his friend got up, approached C2 and hit C2 with his fist. (C2, male)

Social reinforcement refers to behaviors that result from positively reinforcing a behavior. Furthermore, after aggression occurs as a consequence, this aggression might encourage others to behave in the same negative way. This peer-induced aggression occurs following the initial aggression. Another term, contagion, refers to a mirror aggression that results in a resonant behavior. This means that one child's actions or reactions elicit similar responses from their peers. This suggests that

children who were exposed to aggression might react similarly. This code can be explained by the following example: *“After hearing a burp, C1 (Female) mocked and humiliated her friend by exposing her. After hearing this, two other children tried to call for the teacher’s attention by saying, ‘Teacher, she burped’ in a loud voice.”* Here, initially, C1 undermined her friend by humiliating and mocking her. As a response, other children are encouraged to do the same and repeat the behavior by using the same phrase C1 used.

4.2.3.3.5. Category5: Passive, avoidant, or non-responsive reactions

The last category that emerged under the theme of the consequences of aggressive behavior is passive, avoidant, or non-responsive reactions. These reactions refer to non-responsiveness or minimal responses to aggression. As shown in Table 4.28, passive or avoidant behavior as code refers to ignoring aggression, being desensitized to behaviors, and avoiding the conflict situation altogether by physically moving away from the scene or emotionally detaching.

Table 4.28. Category 5 (Theme 3) and its code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Passive, avoidant, or non- responsive reactions	Nonresponsive or minimal responses	75	6	
Passive or avoidant behavior	Ignoring aggression and being desensitized to behaviors	75	6	After C1 pinched her friend, the child whose cheeks were pinched did not react. Then, C1 moved away physically from her friend. (C1, Female)

One instance of this issue was observed as follows. In this case, the girl who had a conflict with C1 chose to avoid, ignore, and physically move away to deal with aggression.

When another girl wanted to sit in the chair vacated by C1’s friend, C1 tried to protect the chair by pushing the girl away. The girl then moved and sat somewhere else. C1 said to her friend, “I protected your seat.” (C1, Female)

4.2.3.4. Theme4: Intervention strategies for managing aggression

Another theme that emerged in Study 2 is intervention strategies for managing aggression. This theme encompasses strategies aimed at preventing aggressive behavior, as well as resolving and reducing conflict situations. Based on the interviews and observations, five categories of intervention strategies emerged, as shown in Figure 4.17.

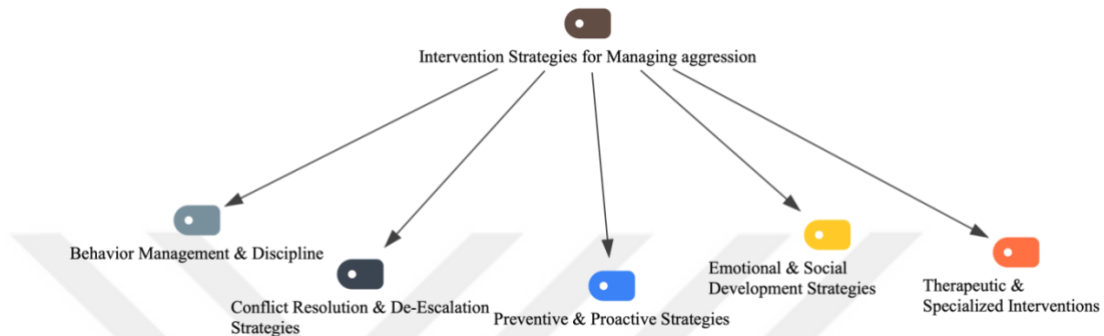


Figure 4.17. Theme 4 and its categories

The five categories identified are: behavior management and discipline ($f=174$), conflict resolution and de-escalation strategies ($f=89$), preventive and proactive strategies ($f=61$), emotional and social development strategies ($f=22$), and therapeutic and specialized interventions ($f=10$). Among these, behavior management and discipline were the most frequently mentioned across all participant groups. As shown in Figure 4.18, while therapeutic and specialized interventions were only mentioned by the teachers interviewed, preventive and proactive strategies were not observed at all.

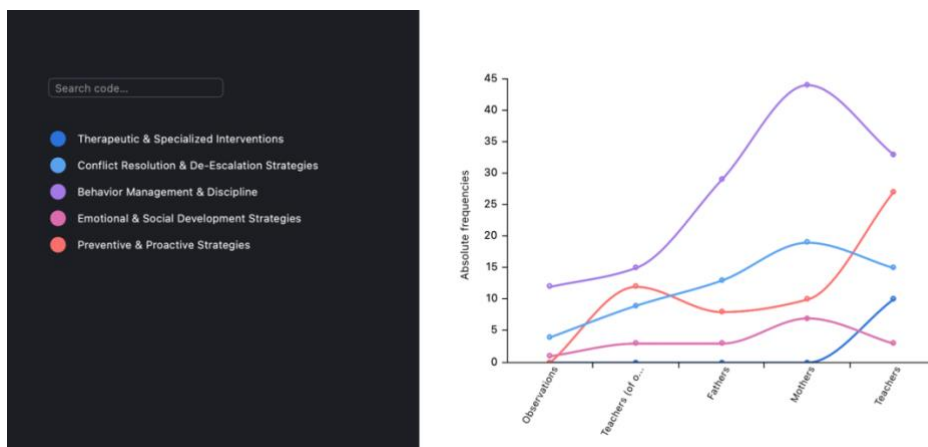


Figure 4.18. Code trend of intervention strategies for managing aggression across different document groups

4.2.3.4.1. Category1: Therapeutic & specialized interventions

One of the main intervention strategies to manage aggression is therapeutic and specialized intervention. This refers to providing, encouraging, or collaborating with families seek professional help. Furthermore, guidance and support within the school system are also included in this category. One code that emerged under this category is professional and therapeutic support, as shown in Table 4. 29.

Table 4.29. Category 1 (Theme 4) and its code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Therapeutic & specialized intervention	Professional and therapy	support 10	6	
Professional & therapeutic support	Providing encouraging specialized therapy and intervention	or 10	6	She was going to occupational therapy and we even said that the number of sessions should be increased. Our guidance counselor had also spoken to them but they were not in favor of it. (T12, 31)

This code refers to teachers' efforts to collaborate with guidance counselors and guide parents to suitable professionals for help. It also includes the use of a specific therapeutic approach, occupational therapy. Regarding a child who has an impulsivity problem, T3 stated:

He had a lot of impulsive behavior, and there were times when he hit his friends, for example. In this context, it was not something I could tolerate very much. At some point, I wanted him to be taken out of the classroom and spend time in counseling. And when he is ready, or when he feels he is ready, then he can join. (T3, 27)

4.2.3.4.2. Category2: Conflict resolution & de-escalation strategies

Other intervention strategies include conflict resolution and de-escalation strategies. These strategies aim to reduce conflict situations and decrease the frequency of aggression. To achieve the goals of this intervention, three different strategies emerged. As shown in Table 4.30, these are using gentle verbal and nonverbal cues, redirecting attention and behavior, and managing and resolving conflicts.

Table 4.30. Category 2 (Theme 4) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Conflict resolution & de-escalation strategies	Strategies to diminish conflict and reduce aggression	89	33	-
Using gentle verbal & nonverbal cues	Using gentle word, approaching to child and touching	30	22	My husband tries to talk to my daughter. For example, she should not be spoken to in such a condescending or patronizing way in my presence. For example, by saying that she is also small or that you were once small. For example, I saw him trying to soothe her a little more like this. (M11, 26)
Redirecting attention & behavior	Distracting and providing opportunities to put a distance to conflict	24	12	My approach is a little bit, you know, how do I attract the child's attention, how do I pull them away from there? I mean, how do I pull them in another direction? (F5, 33)
Managing & resolving conflicts	Encouraging and mediating conflict situations	26	18	"This is your brother and make your brother play too. Let him play too, not just you. Okay, he may be younger than you, he may not understand, he may not follow your rules. But at least make him hold the end of it, show him, even if it's fake. Tell him to be part of whatever you are playing." (F11, 32)

First, using gentle verbal and nonverbal cues involves calmly explaining and reasoning with children. This approach also includes physical touch and using a physical presence to guide the child away from the conflict or to redirect their attention. During the observation, this intervention was seen as follows:

After seeing C5 throwing toys, the teacher said, "Uh, C5, are we throwing the toys?" She approached C5, squatted down to his level, and made eye contact. She asked again, "What are we doing?" C5 responded, "We put them back." The teacher then asked, "Where is the place?" and C5 pointed to a spot in the closet, saying, "Here." (C5, Male)

In this example, the teacher used both verbal and nonverbal cues. By squatting to C5's level, making eye contact, and asking questions, the teacher engaged in an attempt to explain and reason with him. Another example comes from a father (F3, 33), who described how he uses gentle words and reasoning with his daughter to resolve conflict. He said, "*When I said, 'Look, we don't have any money on the card,*

we're going out to eat the hamburger you just asked for. Let's eat the hamburger instead of buying a toy,' she understood." This father shared his experience of dealing with his daughter's aggression when she wanted to buy a toy.

Another strategy for conflict resolution involves redirecting attention and behavior. This refers to efforts to distract children from ongoing conflicts and redirect their focus to other activities. This redirection does not always require changing direction entirely; it can be as simple as ending one activity and moving on to the next routine. For instance, during C4's observation, the teacher used a similar technique:

C4 got on top of her girlfriend, and then her close friend climbed on top of her as well. Three children ended up on top of each other. When the teacher saw this, she called out loudly and asked them to get in line. (C4, Female)

In this example, the teacher stopped the ongoing activity and, seeing that the activity was nearly over, quickly redirected the children's attention to getting in line. One mother described how she redirected attention by providing distractions, using the children's favorite toys or activities, as follows:

I try to keep them (children) occupied with whatever toy or activity I have at the moment. They're a little easier to distract because they're small. I usually play with the younger child because he/she is more easily deceived. I say, "Let's play this game with your baby." For example, since my older daughter likes writing and drawing, I say things like, "Let's paint this picture, let's draw this baby." This is how we find a distraction method. (M7, 36)

The final conflict resolution strategy is managing and resolving conflicts. This involves adults intervening in conflicts by offering practical problem-solving advice, encouraging children to talk through conflicts, and playing a mediating role. One mother described her mediating approach by likening it to a courtroom, explaining how she encourages children to talk and negotiate about their issues:

I don't interfere much. Most of the time, I hear them even if I'm in another room. Although I hear them, I listen to each one separately, and we set up a courtroom. I say, "Tell me your side first, then we'll listen to you. What do you want to say about this? Why did you do this?" Since I already know what happened, I just want to hear it from them. Do they change it? How do they say it? They don't change it much, but they tell me in a way that suits them.

In that case, since I already know the details, I usually offer a solution. I say, “Look, you can handle it this way, or you can try this. It's up to you. If you want to continue, this is how it will be... But if you don’t want to continue, that’s fine too. You may not accept it, and then you may not play.” (M9, 39)

4.2.3.4.3. Category₃: Behavior management & discipline

Behavior management and discipline is another emerging category that refers to strategies aimed at correcting or directing behavior. As shown in Table 4.31, these strategies include direct discipline responses, teaching boundaries and accountability, ignoring, reinforcement, and punishment.

Table 4.31. Category 3 (Theme 4) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Behavior management & discipline	Discipline methods to reduce likelihood of behavior and correct the behavior	174	39	-
Direct discipline responses	Instant emotional responses and reprimanding behaviors	75	29	Of course, people do things, but I don't react too much, I mean, I get angry. For example, he says, “Dad, okay, don't get angry, promise, I won't do it again”. That's how he softens me. (F6, 51)
Teaching boundaries & accountability	Reminding about personal space and how one’s actions might influence others	7	3	We keep our hands to ourselves; you know, personal space. Everybody has a space, of course we have to respect others. There is a bubble, if someone enters that space, the bubble bursts. So then we are entering someone else's space, personal space. We have done activities related to these. We have done activities expressing that we should keep our hands to ourselves, that we use our hands to love, that we use our hands for good behavior, for good behavior. (T12, 31)
Ignoring	Dealing with behaviors by ignoring to calm child or extinct the behaviors.	19	10	I didn't say anything to him after that second. I didn't say anything calming, I didn't say anything like punishing or getting angry, I didn't say anything like why are you doing this, why don't you do this, and I stopped the communication there and then. (T2, 36)
Reinforcement & punishment	Removing or introducing stimulus to increase desired behaviors or decrease negative behaviors	77	31	Now they have learned. I have warned them so many times that this should not happen anymore, that there should be rules in the classroom. You have also seen, I showed you, a behavior chart board in our classroom. I put a star on it for every good behavior, for example. (T14-C2, 44)

The first of these strategies is direct discipline responses, which refers to immediate reactions when a behavior first occurs. These responses are typically aimed at quickly intervening, such as reprimanding or emotional reactions. During observations, it was noted that this code emerges first, before teachers use other follow-up techniques. For instance, after C5 (Male) threw toys, the teacher said, “‘C5, is that how we collect?’ She then picked up one of the plastic blocks from the floor and held it out to C5. ‘C5, I want you to collect all these blocks in the classroom,’ she added.” In this case, the teacher first reprimanded the behavior and then used other strategies.

Another common strategy is reinforcement and punishment. Both can be either positive or negative. Negative punishment involves removing stimuli to reduce aggression, while positive punishment involves introducing stimuli to reduce aggression. In the current study, positive reinforcement was also observed. Positive reinforcement refers to introducing stimuli to increase desired positive behaviors. For instance, M6 (31) described her husband’s behavior when her daughter displayed aggression: “He says, ‘If you do that again, I’ll break your hand.’ If she does it again, he goes and squeezes her hand. He says, ‘You can’t do that,’ so he tries to hurt her so she won’t do it.” In this case, the father uses physical violence in an attempt to reduce aggression.

In one of the more intriguing cases, F2 (34) explained his preference for negative punishment as his choice of intervention. He disciplines his child by removing attention and affection, aiming to reduce negative behaviors. F2 said:

F2, 34: “I’m sulking. I don’t talk for 3 to 4 days. I don’t look at his face; when I go to bed. For example, every morning they kiss me goodbye but whoever is to blame, my son or my daughter, whoever is at fault, doesn’t kiss me. Or I don’t kiss him.”

M2, 26: “You don’t sit at the same table.”

F2, 34: “We don’t sit at the same table. I say, ‘You are grounded.’ I say, ‘You will eat your food after I eat mine.’ In the evening, when they go to bed, they kiss me, I kiss them, and they go to bed like that. The punished one has no right to kiss. After that, after a day or two, they start coming to me. They

say, ‘I realized my mistake, I apologize, I won't do it again.’ I accept it. When he repeats the same mistake, this time I extend the sulking period a little longer. This time I don’t look at him at all. Then he understands.”

4.2.3.4.4. Category4: Emotional & social development strategies

Emotional and social development strategies refer to techniques that adults use to support children's social and emotional growth. Within this category, as shown in Table 4.32, two key strategies emerged: assigning responsibility to foster positive engagement and encouraging emotional awareness and empathy.

Table 4.32. Category 4 (Theme 4) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Emotional & social development strategies	Strategies that contribute emotional and social skills	22	17	-
Assigning responsibility to foster positive engagement	Providing children with specific tasks and responsibilities	4	3	Sometimes when he first comes to school, I take him with me, <i>let's do some great activities today C5, can you be my helper today?</i> When I give him certain responsibilities, I see that he tries to fulfill them. (T17-C5, 40)
Encouraging emotional awareness & empathy	Promoting emotion, empathy and prosocial skills	18	14	“Look, I mean, you didn't let this friend of yours into the game, but when you wanted to enter this game, what would you do if they didn't let you in, would you be upset? Yes, I would be sad.” She is aware of it, she knows it, but she may not do anything about it. (F10,44)

Encouraging emotional awareness and empathy emerged as a particularly common strategy. This approach involves techniques that enhance emotional and social skills, ultimately reducing aggression. In the example below, the teacher initially removed C5 from the conflict situation. Without a prior plan, when the opportunity arose, the teacher used the moment to talk about emotions and empathy. The discussion about animals happened naturally.

As a result of C5’s aggressive behavior, the teacher took him aside. While C5 was playing with toy animals next to the teacher, they started talking. During the conversation, C5 mentioned seeing a cat with its tail cut off. They discussed the pain the animal might have suffered and how to treat animals with kindness. The teacher then asked, ‘Well, does it hurt when you hit your

friend?’ This led to a conversation about the consequences of harming others and the importance of empathy. (C5, Male)

4.2.3.4.5. Category5: Preventive & proactive strategies

Last but not least, preventive and proactive strategies refer to intervention techniques designed to prevent problematic behavior before it occurs. As shown in Table 4.33, three strategies emerged to achieve this: teaching moral and social expectations, strengthening parent-school collaboration, and identifying and monitoring behavior patterns.

Table 4.33. Category 5 (Theme 4) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Preventive & proactive strategies	Strategies that aim behaviors before it happens and enforcing norms and rules	61	28	-
Teaching moral & social expectations	Rule enforcement and imparting ethical and religious lessons	11	6	For example, I try to explain it in a sweet way. For example, let's say he yelled at his mother, I tell him that Allah does not like those who yell at their mothers. He will punish them in the afterlife and write sins. That kind of attention-grabbing... I try to say things that will attract their attention. I try to say different things. (F5, 33)
Strengthening parent-school collaboration	Existence of interaction between parents and school concerning aggression	38	22	Well, this is the detail that I found most critical. Throughout the year, the parents argued that this behavior happened at school, so this behavior should be solved at school. He said that he did not want to talk about these behaviors at home and spoil his relationship with his child. But I think a parent is of course responsible for their child's behavior at school. (T1, 35)
Identifying & monitoring behavior patterns	Using observation and monitoring and preventing behavior happening beforehand by considering problematic issues	12	12	For example, I have to observe children all the time. I am with them even in free time, if you pay attention. I go to them when they are playing or I try to separate the ones I feel are forming as a group. Because when they come together, I cannot coordinate or intervene. By the time I intervene, the incident has already happened. (T13-C1, 37)

Strengthening parent-school collaboration is one of the most common primary and preventive strategies mentioned. It refers to the interaction between families and preschools, emphasizing the importance of effective communication and collaboration in addressing behavioral and developmental challenges in young children. However, in some cases, collaboration may be limited or nonexistent. Through communication, schools aim to address potential problems and aggression. T1 stated that her school implemented a policy that requires parents to be open to communication and referrals to external support services. She described this process as follows:

We try to take steps toward more positive discipline in our school. If the child is not cooperative and these behaviors continue, we do not delay in informing the family. Sometimes, something happens at home, and once we understand and resolve it, the child relaxes at school. If we feel the family needs help with parenting, we do not hesitate to refer them outside. Parents are aware of this policy when they enroll in school. (T1, 35)

Although T1 stated that parents expect this policy when they register their children, as shown in T1's quotations in Table 4.33, in some cases, parents resisted. They tried to deflect accountability and did not want to participate in the intervention.

4.2.3.5. Themes: Function of the aggressive behaviors

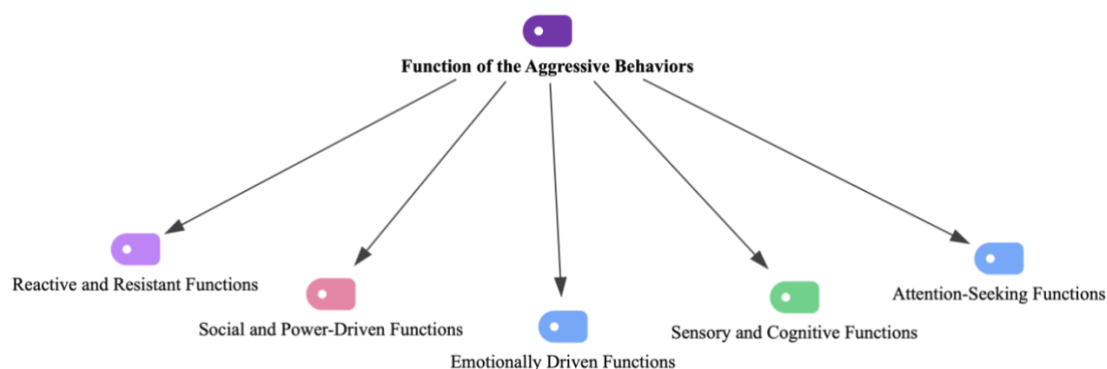


Figure 4.19. Theme 5 and its' categories

Another significant theme that emerged in Study 2 is the function of aggressive behaviors. This theme refers to the purpose the aggressive behaviors serve and the aims and goals children seek to achieve by using aggression as a tool. After

interviews and observations, five categories emerged as functions of aggression as shown in Figure 4.19.

There are reactive and resistant functions ($f=62$), social and power-driven functions ($f=48$), emotionally driven functions ($f=30$), sensory and cognitive functions ($f=18$), and attention-seeking functions ($f=3$). Among the five categories that emerged, reactive and resistant functions were observed more frequently than the other categories. On the other hand, attention-seeking was mentioned only by the interviewed teachers and mothers. As seen in Figure 4.20, fathers did not contribute any valuable information to this theme.

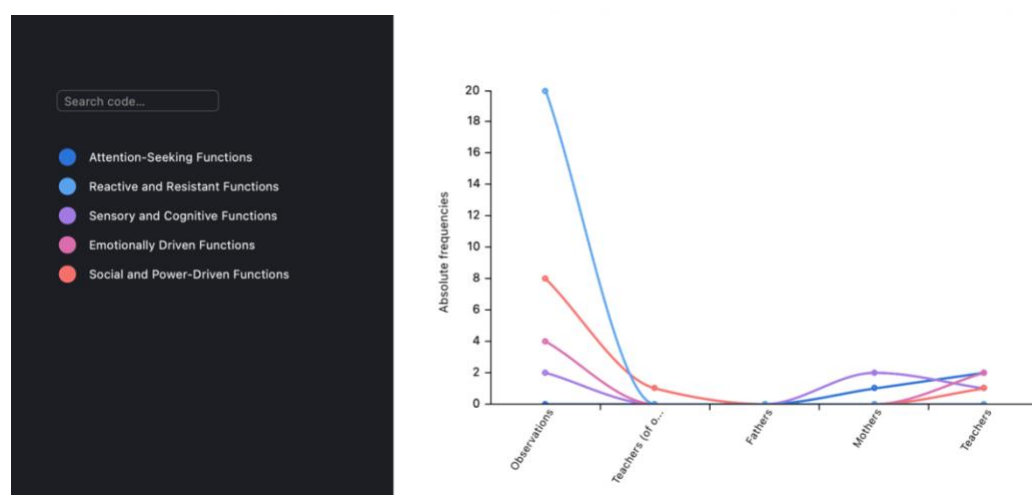


Figure 4.20. Code trend of function of the aggressive behaviors across different document groups

4.2.3.5.1. Category₁: Attention-seeking functions

Attention-seeking functions are one of the purposes aggression can serve. This category describes a child's behaviors aimed at seeking attention, such as using offensive language, interrupting class activities, and constantly seeking the teacher's or parent's attention. In such cases, the child craves attention and uses aggressive behaviors to fulfill this need. Similar to the case described in Table 4.34, T9 described a child's need for attention. In the quotation below, she explains how the child, when the teacher's attention was directed elsewhere, did not hesitate to harm himself:

He can do anything that attracts attention, even something like this that happened in English class. He took scissors in his hand. They were doing an activity with scissors in class, and he tried to cut his hair. Our teacher asked him what he was doing, and he said, “I didn’t cut it; I pretended to cut it.” Even in the smallest things, he needs to do something to attract attention. ...He is constantly doing something and saying, “Look at me.” Sometimes I do something, and he stands up and disturbs his friends. I called him to me, we did things together, and one day I took him on my lap to fulfill his need for attention. “Look at me, the teacher took me on her lap.” Immediately, something like this happened. He wants to share it with his friends. He wants constant attention, which can be tiring, considering the other children's need for attention. (T9, 30)

Table 4.34. Category 1 (Theme 5) and its code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Attention-seeking functions	Utilizing aggression to garner attention and become a focal point	3	2	-
Attention-seeking	To behave aggressively in hopes to catch someone’s eye, attract attraction to receive love and care	3	2	Heavy swearing. I was even surprised, where do you learn it from? Once he said he learned it from my grandfather. When we talked to the family, they said it had nothing to do with it, but of course I don't know how true that is. Also, when he draws attention from there, he continues that behavior. Even if we talk to him, even if we push him, he still does it. (T9, 30)

4.2.3.5.2. Category2: Reactive and resistant functions

Another category that describes the function of aggressive behaviors is reactive and resistant. The reactive and resistant function refers to using aggression as a tool in response to rules, authority, and defensive or oppositional behaviors. As shown in Table 4.35, two codes emerged that serve reactive and resistant functions.

Table 4.35. Category 2 (Theme 5) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Reactive and resistant functions		62	4	-

Table 4.22. (continued)

Resistance and opposition	To act against and defy authority	42	4	C2 threw the car he was holding fast on the ground. His friend then threw a small hard toy in the air. There was no teacher in the classroom, but a trainee teacher. The trainee teacher warned “we don't throw toys”. After this warning, C2 threw the toy in his hand in the air. The trainee teacher warned again and said that the free time would not be extended because they threw the toys. (C2, Male)
Behavior as a game	behavior is part of a game or playful activity, aggressive behaviors that has the aim of playing	20	3	He and his friend jumped from the higher mat to the lower mat together. After jumping 1-2 times, C2 jumped again and fell on top of his friend. He sat on top of his friend's body by putting his weight on it. He did not get up immediately but kept his weight for 30-40 seconds. The teacher warned him, saying, “We are not jumping.” C2 got up from where he was. However, they continued this jumping game. In this process, they continued to jump on top of each other with their friend from time to time. The teacher did not warn them again after the first warning. (C2, Male)

The two categories that emerged are resistance and opposition, and behaviors as a game. ‘Behavior as a game’ refers to using aggression as part of a playful interaction. This code belongs to this category because the child challenges authority through play, engaging in aggressive behavior as a reaction to rules. The second category, resistance and opposition, refers to any resistance against the teacher, other children, or any other figure of authority. These behaviors typically occurred after scolding, reminders of rules, or teachers’ directives about the end of an activity.

Interestingly, the figure of authority does not always have to be a teacher. In some cases, if another child asserts authority, they can become the authority figure. For instance, in one situation, C1 gave directives to her friends, controlling them and assigning them roles as dogs. Since controlling her friends and taking on a leadership role was a recurring pattern for C1, the teacher attempted to address the behavior. As shown in the following quotation, C1 persisted in this behavior, even intensifying it. One key indicator of opposition and resistance is the act of maintaining eye contact with the teacher.

C1 and two girls were playing house. C1 and her two friends decided to pretend to be dogs. They mimicked aggressive dogs, barking and screaming at another friend. During this, C1 consistently maintained eye contact with

the teacher. This occurred right after the teacher had warned C1 for giving orders to her friends by pretending to be a dog and not controlling them properly. (C1, Female)

4.2.3.5.3. Category₃: Sensory and cognitive functions

Sensory and cognitive functions are among the functions of aggression. This refers to aggressive behaviors that serve to fulfill the need for stimulation and engagement. The emergence of this category implies a need for sensory input. As shown in Table 4.36, one of the codes that emerged here is seeking stimulation and engagement.

Table 4.36. Category 3 (Theme 5) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Sensory and cognitive functions	Fulfill the need for stimulation and engagement	18	7	-
Exploration	To explore and experience once something caught the attention of child	6	4	In the beginning, for example, this child is tactile. I mean, he needs to touch something. But I think awareness emerges later on. (T12, 31)
Seeking stimulation and engagement	To outsource stimulus due to need for interaction and stimulation	12	4	When C2 was sitting in the November 10 activities, there was a 4-year-old boy in front of him. C2 hit and kicked the back of the chair in front of him with his foot. (C2, Male) (Reflective notes: In the process, they waited for a long time for their turn. When it was their turn, C2 did not want to participate.)

This code reflects when a child engages in behaviors because they are seeking stimulation or more engaging activities during idle or unstructured times. These unstructured idle times might be related to the teacher's ineffective use of timing and transitions. However, this is also related to boredom. For instance, while playing, if a child starts to take fewer turns and roles and becomes bored, this may lead to aggression, as described in the following quotation:

C2, a boy, and a girl were playing a game where they threw a water bottle in the air and tried to land it on a flat surface. They were sitting in a circle. Each of them put a toy box in front of themselves and tried to throw the bottle upright into the box. Except for C2, the other two children were taking more turns. C2 took the toy box in his hand and threw it in the air. The box he

threw fell on top of the other two toy boxes. C2 stood up, picked up the toy box, and threw it in the air again. The box landed on the other child who was playing. (C2, Male)

4.2.3.5.4. Category4: Emotionally driven functions

One possible function of aggression is emotionally driven functions. These refer to the expression of emotions through aggressive behavior and the situations in which internal emotional mechanisms play a significant role. As shown in Table 4.37, three codes emerged as key emotionally driven functions.

Table 4.37. Category 4 (Theme 5) and its' code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Emotionally driven functions	To express of emotions	30	6	-
Defense mechanism	To harm or something or someone to guard something or defending ones feeling as a reaction	10	5	Children from other classrooms were gathered in C3's classroom. C3 saw a puppet belonging to his classroom in a hand of a child from another classroom. After pulling puppet from child's hand, C3 put puppet back in the cabinets where it belongs to. (C3, Male)
Retaliation	To revenge and retribute as a response to past experience	14	5	The dentist came to school. During the dental check-up, C2 was sent to the back of the line because he was causing a disturbance. He went in front of the child at the back. At first, he swayed a little in his position. Then he made a fist and started waving his hand towards his boyfriend behind him. C2 made a fist and hit his friend twice in the stomach. He kicked him with the back of his foot. He made a fist again and hit him hard five or six times. (C2, Male)
Emotional expression through behavior	Expressing strong emotions non-verbally or behaviorally	6	3	C2 and his friend threw the cushions in the air, playing with them like toys, and kept hitting each other. This attracted the attention of another girl. She took the cushion from C2 and continued the pillow fight. C2 got angry and walked away by kicking the toys underneath with his foot (C2, Male)

These are defense mechanisms, retaliation, and emotional expression through behavior. Retaliation is one of the most frequent codes in this category. It refers to behavior that directly responds to a previous action, where the child engages in an act of revenge or retribution. The purpose of retaliation is often to restore balance or

social order or to punish the other child for a behavior perceived as harmful or inappropriate. However, it is important to consider the child's personal history when interpreting this behavior, as children's thinking skills differ from those of adults.

For example, in the following quotation, C1 tried to exclude a girl with a pink tiara. From an outside perspective, this may seem like typical aggression. However, to provide context, the researcher's reflection and the teacher's confirmations reveal that C1 did not like anyone possessing prettier or more expensive items than herself. The girl with the pink tiara also had beautiful blonde hair. According to the teacher, in previous years, C1 would overtly express aggression by breaking this specific child's hair clips or tiaras and pulling her hair. The teacher mentioned that this year, C1 no longer displays overt aggression but instead shows it covertly, which can sometimes cause observers to doubt their interpretation. C1's retaliation in this case was directed at the girl's beautiful tiara and hair, as well as her hand-holding with another child. It is important to note that this was not the only behavior directed towards this child that day.

Two girls were holding hands during a transition, one of whom wore the fancy pink tiara. These two children were far from C1 and her friends. C1 turned to her three close friends, pointing at each one individually, and said, "I'm friends with you and you and you. You and I are buddies. She said, 'You and her are buddies.'" C1 then took the three friends with her and approached the two girls. Pointing to one of the girls, she said, "You are not her friend, we are her friends." The other friends confirmed by saying, "Yes." C2 and her three friends left but returned shortly afterward. C2 looked toward the girl with the pink tiara and said, "I looked at your crown, I didn't do anything." (C1, Female)

4.2.3.5.5. Categorys: Social and power-driven functions

The social and power-driven function is one of the functions of aggression. Social and power-driven functions refer to displaying aggressive behaviors to establish hierarchy, power, and dominance. As seen in Table 4.38, three codes named envy-driven behavior, social exclusion and peer regulation, and assertion of power emerged under this category.

Table 4.38. Category 5 (Theme 5) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (<i>n</i> /46)	Empirical indicators
Social and power-driven functions	Behaviors originated due to social dynamics, hierarchy	48	6	-
Envy driven behavior	Actions motivated by jealousy of another child's possessions or status.	7	3	C1's girlfriend had two stickers on the inside of her locker. C1 first removed one sticker. When her friend objected, she said 'but I don't have a sticker'. She took a sticker and put it on her hand. She started to remove the second sticker and her friend said, "No, not that one, don't take that one." C2 hesitated at first and then said 'OK, but that's not the place for that'. She took the sticker off and stuck it in an invisible place in the closet. (C1, Female)
Social exclusion and peer regulation	Ostracizing, embarrassing, or marginalizing others to regulate social group norms	8	3	During free playtime, C2, a close male friend, and a girl sat in a circle on the floor. They each took a water bottle and threw it in the air, trying to make it land vertically. They turned it into a game, taking turns throwing the bottle. When C2 noticed a child with special educational needs (with facial features resembling those of children with Down syndrome, although not actually diagnosed with Down syndrome) nearby, he said, 'Let M try once.' The girl replied, 'M can't do it,' but C2 insisted, 'Let him try it,' and gently took M's hand to sit him down and give him the bottle. M threw the bottle, but unfortunately, he missed. C2 said "You can't play. No." and went in front of M and turned his back to M. "M can't play," he said again, stretching his arms out to his sides to prevent M playing. His girlfriend supported him again saying "M can't play." (C2, Male)
Assertion of social power	To apply force, control and dominance over others and manipulate them	33	6	While doing their activity, C1 said something to her girlfriend about the activity. She meddled with the color of the pencil her friend was using. Her friend said, "I am using pink, don't interfere with me." C1 said, "I will interfere and I am older than you." (C1, Female)

One of the most common codes that emerged in this category is the assertion of control. This refers to power dynamics and behaviors that demonstrate control, dominance, and superiority. As seen in the following excerpt, C1 consistently positioned herself as the one in charge, often taking on roles like that of a mother or dog owner. She did not tolerate challenges to her authority and reinforced her control by excluding other children, as demonstrated in the following example.

In the house corner, C1 and two of her female friends were playing a game. C1 assumed the role of the parent, while the other two children crawled on the floor in the role of children. One of the girls said that she would grow up and walk soon. C1 responded, “Then get out of our game. You don't know how to walk yet.” (C1, Female)

4.2.3.6. Theme₆: Patterns & manifestations of aggression

Patterns and manifestations of aggression is the theme that emerged and explains the way aggression manifests, the perception regarding it, and its patterns. When it comes to patterns and manifestations, three key issues emerged, as shown in Figure 4.21.

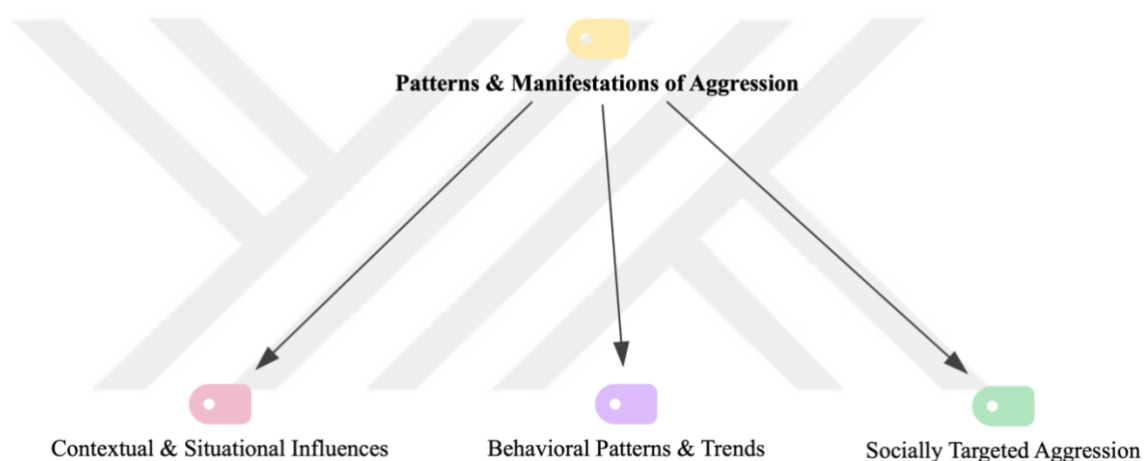


Figure 4.21. Theme 6 and its categories

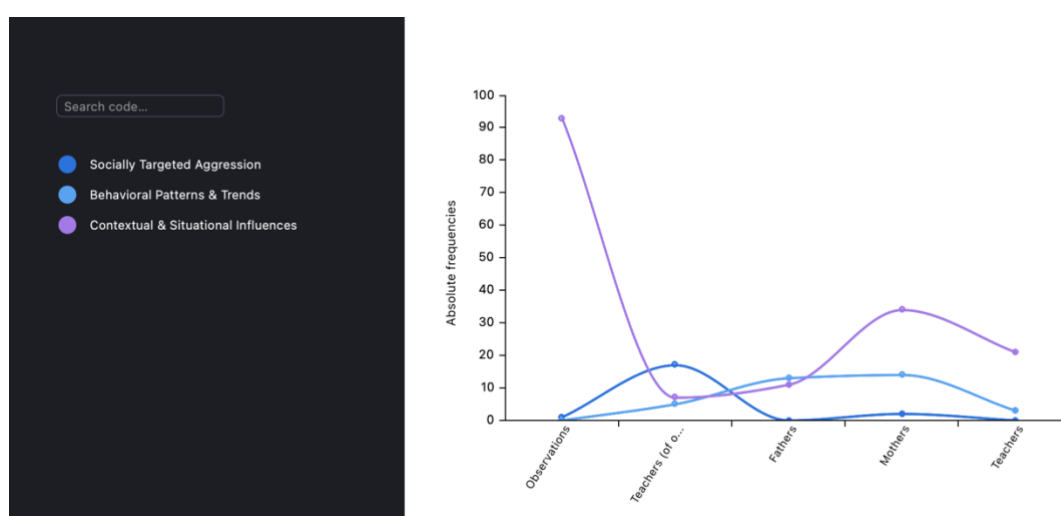


Figure 4.22. Code trend of patterns & manifestations of aggression across different document groups

These are contextual and situational influences ($f=522$), behavioral patterns and trends ($f=35$), socially targeted aggression ($f=30$). Among the three categories, a large amount of data concerning contextual and situational influences emerged through observation. Furthermore, the socially targeted aggression category only emerged from the teachers of the observed children who were interviewed. As shown in Figure 4.22, behavioral patterns and trends did not emerge from observation.

4.2.3.6.1. Category₁: Socially targeted aggression

Aggression manifests itself in various ways. For this reason, one of the categories that emerged is socially targeted aggression, which refers to the social aspect of aggression. People construct social understanding and behave based on their perceptions. To clarify, as shown in Table 4.39, socially targeted aggression emerged in two ways.

Table 4.39. Category 1 (Theme 6) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (<i>n</i> /46)	Empirical indicators
Socially targetted aggression	Social construct of aggression	30	8	-
Perception & social labels	Labelling children and relativity and subjectivity of labels	4	4	Researcher: No other child in your class has this behavior. I mean, why did you choose him? What was the difference that distinguished him from his peers? T15-C3 (42): Being active. (Reflection: even though he met the study criteria, the child was selected because he was labeled. However, even though he seems to be the most aggressive because the class size is six, when compared to the other observed classes, the teacher would not have chosen this child if he was in another class. In another class, he might not have appeared so aggressive).
Peer directed aggression	Directing aggression toward specific child in an overt or covert ways.	26	5	She chooses a person. The children she deals with are already known, the children in his team are already known. Apart from that, the same team chooses the child to put pressure on. In the past years, it was two different children. They put pressure on two girls for a very long time. For example, one of our children has very beautiful hair, so beautiful that it attracts attention. They pull her hair, glue her hair, break her crown. (T13-C1, 37)

These categories include perception and social labels and peer-directed aggression. As shown in Table 4.39, perception and social labels refer to labeling children as

aggressive and how perceptions of aggression vary depending on different perspectives, making it a relative concept. When it comes to peer-directed aggression, it describes the perpetrator selectively targeting certain peers, often passive or vulnerable children. The aggressor may have a predetermined set of victims in mind while being more tolerant of others. Furthermore, some of these interactions may manifest in covert ways, making them difficult to observe directly. During observation, the researcher noted that although C1's aggression was directed at various people, on some days, C1 persistently targeted one child. To confirm this pattern, the teacher was asked about it during the observation process. As seen in the following excerpt, the teacher acknowledged this behavior and attributed it to the personal characteristics of the targeted child.

Researcher: I saw her engaging in aggressive behaviors with a few other children, but it was probably the fourth time with D (a girl in the class). I documented this behavior four times.

T13-C1 (37): As you may have noticed, D is normally a calm and very quiet child. The children C1 targets are passive; she does not choose those who are likely to oppose her or react to her aggression.

T13-C1 (37) also describes how this aggression is direct to other children in a covert way as follows:

What did I notice? For example, what she usually does is pretend to like the friend next to her, and when she wants to say something, she squeezes their cheek, like, "Do you understand? Do you hear me?" ...But in reality, she is commanding them by squeezing their cheek as if she likes them. That caught my attention. So, under normal circumstances, she is actually hurting her friend. (T13-C1, 37)

4.2.3.6.2. Category₂: Behavioral patterns and trends

Behavioral patterns and trends form another category that explains the recurring ways in which aggression manifests. This category explores how and when aggression captures the attention of adults, its connection to developmental milestones, life course changes, and predictive factors. As shown in Table 4.40, two key codes emerged that describe these patterns and trends. These are behavioral consistency and predictability and aggressive development over time.

Table 4.40. Category 2 (Theme 6) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (<i>n</i> /46)	Empirical indicators
Behavioral patterns and trends	Development and prediction of aggression	35	18	-
Behavioral consistency & predictability	Duration and predictors elements of aggression such as facial expressions.	17	11	I observe this behavior in C5 every day. From time to time in other children too, they can get angry and react to an event. ...It happens from time to time, but I rarely see it in other children. I specifically chose C5 because it is a behavior that I observe every day, every hour of the day in C5. (T17-C5, 40)
Aggressive development over time	Changes in development and milestones depending on different circumstances	18	13	When she wants more, she reacts more strongly. She shows bigger reactions. For example, how can I put it? The phrase 'going to the park' comes up, for example at home. An hour passes. It means going to the park, she memorizes it. We don't feel like going to the park either, or we have something else to do. I say, "We'll go another place." My daughter says, "But you said the park." We insist, I mean, the child has memorized it, she heard it once at home. What she say will happen. Since she has this in her mind, she will go to that park once. If you don't go there, you know, it becomes a problem. (F3, 33)

Firstly, behavioral consistency and predictability describe whether aggression is short-lived or prolonged. Furthermore, this code also refers to precursor signs of aggression, including changes in facial expressions, body language, and emotional state. These signs allow parents or teachers to anticipate and intervene in aggression before it escalates. One father (F11, 32) stated below that they can anticipate behaviors, as body language provides clues to incoming aggression:

It's not a sudden explosion in the child, but a slow one. I can see that she feels bad emotionally; it's obvious. ...The way she looks, for example, her facial expressions, her movements, the things she does, she shows it so much that we can say, "Yes, something is going to happen soon," or "They are going to have a conflict together soon," or we think something else is going to happen. (F11, 32)

However, not every child is same in this respect. T17-C5 (40) stated that "*No, it happens directly, it happens instantly.*" This implies that she has difficulty anticipating when aggression will occur. Another code that emerged is aggressive development over time. It describes how aggression changes depending on different

circumstances. The code refers to the development of aggressive behaviors in a child over time, particularly during the preschool and early school years. Initially, the child exhibited more solitary play and difficulty sharing or playing cooperatively with peers. Around ages 3-4, the child began displaying more oppositional behaviors. These behaviors seemed to increase when the child started attending preschool and kindergarten, potentially due to exposure to new social situations and peer interactions. Furthermore, the intensity of aggression also increases depending on the context, such as the chaos and commotion of the environment and the individuals involved.

In the excerpt below, a father noted that he first observed aggressive behaviors when his child started attending an early childhood institution:

When did we first realize this? Her brother was born. My daughter was 3 years old when her brother was born, and she started kindergarten that month or 1–2 months before he was born. I can say she was almost 3.5 years old. (F3, 33)

Similarly, F9 (33) also supported this argument by saying *“If we say that it started in preschool, as I said, we can say that it developed around the age of 4-5 years. That’s about a year or so.”* Although they each specified different ages, they both emphasized the role of starting school in the emergence of aggression. Additionally, F3 (33) highlighted the birth of a sibling as a contributing factor.

4.2.3.6.3. Category₃: Contextual & situational influences

The last category that emerged is contextual and situational influences. This refers to external conditions that influence aggression and how aggression manifests. The only code that emerged under this category is how aggression shapes aggression.

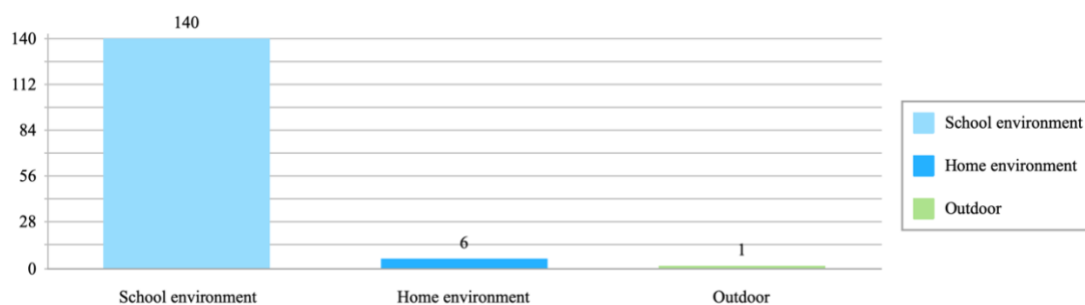
This is a broad and comprehensive code. As shown in Table 4.41, it refers to how the presence of an individual influences aggression and how contextual factors significantly impact aggressive behavior in children.

Table 4.41. Category 3 (Theme 6) and its code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Contextual & situational influences	External conditions that influence aggression	522	34	-
How environment shapes aggression	Influence of contextual factors and presence of someone	522	34	C2 has a friend K, likes to play with his friend K, likes to misbehave (T14-C2, 44)

Firstly, as an environmental factor in some cases the presence of a specific individual makes difference. For instance, T14-C2 (44) stated that “*C2 has a friend K, likes to play with his friend K, likes to misbehave*”. The teacher's claim was consistent with the observation of the researcher. In reflections, the researcher stated that “*On days when K is absent, the frequency of aggressive behaviors was lower. However, as soon as K entered the classroom, C2 displayed aggression.*” The researcher also highlighted that most of the recorded observations regarding C2’s aggression occurred when C2 was with K.

Another environmental factor is location. As shown in Figure 4.23, interviews and observations suggest that aggression is most commonly associated with the school environment. However, it is important to note that most of the school-related aggression codes likely stem from in-class observations.

**Figure 4.23.** Distribution location coded segments aggression take place

When it comes to specific places in the school, as shown in Figure 4.24, aggression primarily occurred in the classrooms.

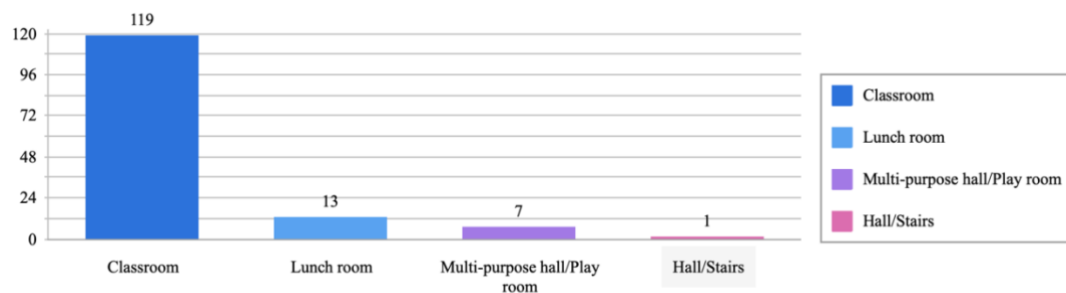


Figure 4.24. Distribution school environment coded segments aggression take place

Aggression was also observed in the lunchroom, multipurpose hall or playroom, and halls or stairs. These locations were identified during observations. It is important to note that not every school had a dedicated playroom, so some classrooms held play activities within their own rooms.

Another factor to consider is the type of activity. Most instances of aggression were observed during free play periods, followed by transitions, art, literacy, and breakfast or lunch, as shown in Figure 4.25.

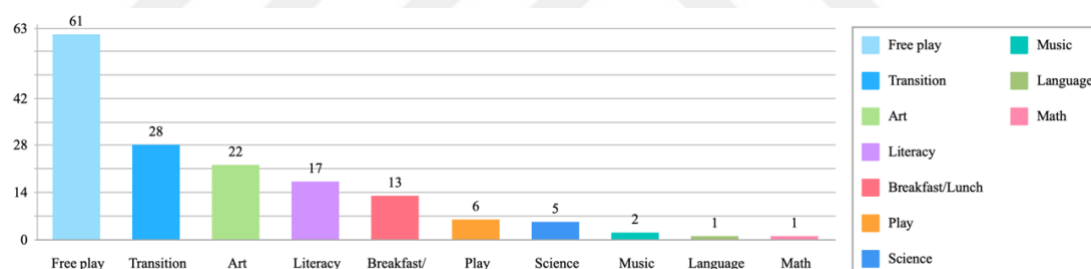


Figure 4.25. Types of activities

However, it is important to note that no movement or outdoor activities were conducted by the teachers, so there were no behaviors to observe in these settings. The teachers primarily preferred to conduct free play, art, and literacy activities. Another consideration within environmental factors is the gender of the opponents. Most of the coded aggression was directed towards both male and female children. The category ‘other child’ or ‘others’ refers to situations where the child’s gender is unknown or when children are considered as a group. As shown in Figure 4.26, grandparents were mentioned only once.

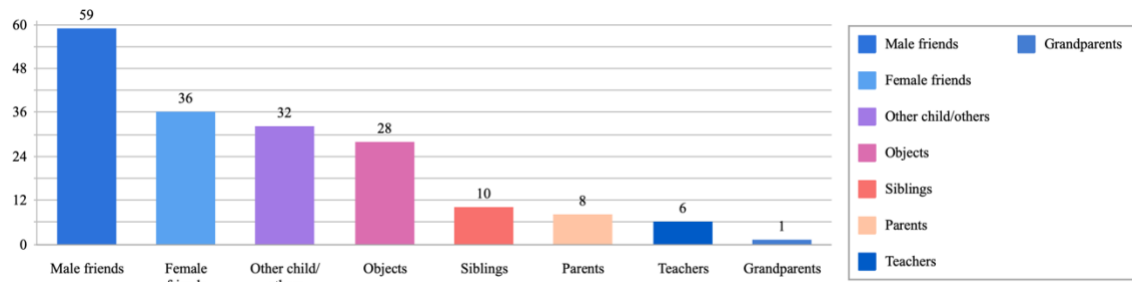


Figure 4.26. To whom aggression is directed at

4.2.3.7. Theme7: Factors contributing to aggression

The theme of factors contributing to aggression emerged, encompassing environmental, emotional, cognitive, and personality-based factors. Five key issues emerged regarding the factors contributing to aggression, as shown in Figure 4.27.

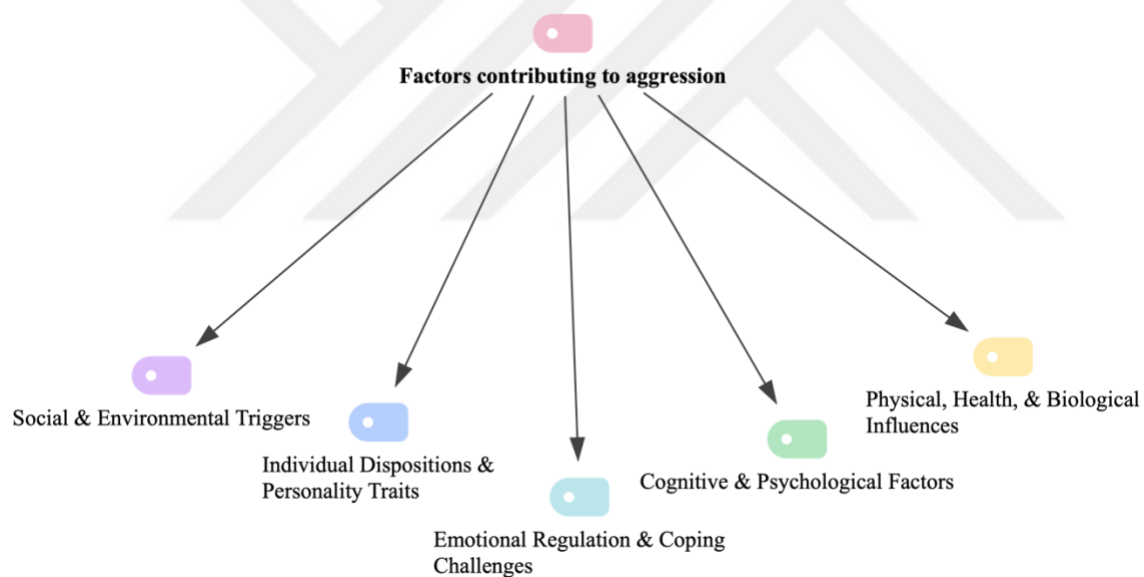


Figure 4.27. Theme 7 and its categories

These are social and environmental triggers ($f=392$), individual dispositions and personality traits ($f=156$), emotional regulation and coping challenges ($f=73$), cognitive and psychological factors ($f=46$), physical, health, and biological influences ($f=23$). Among the five categories, the largest amount of data concerning social and environmental triggers emerged through observation and interviews with teachers. Additionally, as shown in Figure 4.28, cognitive and psychological factors

emerged only from interviews with teachers, as well as from those who were both observed and interviewed.

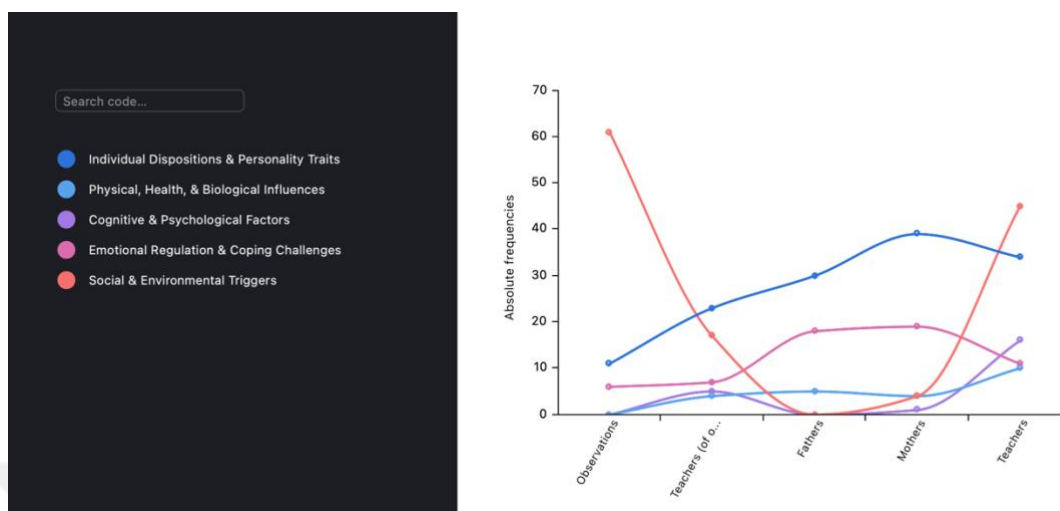


Figure 4.28. Code trend of factors contributing to aggression across different document groups

4.2.3.7.1. Category₁: Individual dispositions & personality traits

One of the factors contributing to aggression is individual disposition and personality traits. This category encompasses the personality characteristics that influence a child's behavior and their predisposition to aggression. As shown in Table 4.42, nine distinct codes emerged to explain this category.

These codes include core personality traits, craving novelty and stimulation, high energy and activity levels, high cognitive abilities, a disciplined and rule-oriented personality, negative emotional traits, social and emotional sensitivity, a competitive and status-driven personality, and strong-willed and controlling behavior.

One of the recurring codes is competitive and status-driven personality. This refers to a child's desire to outperform others, preoccupation with their own identity and performance, and the desire to be the focal point or hold a leadership position. As seen in the excerpt below, both confirmation and the researcher's reflections highlight how C1 did not like others talking about their achievements. When this happened, C1 would either ignore or object to others' capabilities. Interestingly,

everyone in the classroom knew how to write their names, and there was no skepticism about C1's abilities. Instead, C1 challenged others' successes, even when they had no direct relevance to her.

During free play time, C1 and a group of friends were painting. The teacher asked the children to write their names on their artwork, and to facilitate this, she created PVC-coated name tags with everyone's names on them. At that moment, one male child looked at another child's paper, pointed to a letter in the name, and said, "This is the letter of my name." C1 then approached the paper, looked at it, took some paint, and tried to write her name on her friend's paper. The child pulled the paper in front of him and said, "I know," indicating that he knew how to spell his name. C1 responded, "No, you don't know." (C1, Female)

Table 4.42. Category 1 (Theme 7) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Individual dispositions & personality traits	Characteristics of a child that is associated with aggression.	156	39	-
Core personality foundation	Inherent and stable personality character traits	2	2	I think the first one is personality. ...I don't know, I mean, I think the biggest thing is character. (F10, 44)
Craving novelty & stimulation	Due to boredom and monotony constant seeking for stimulation and outlet	24	8	The children come school; they are at school from 9 am to 6 pm. After 6pm, their families pick them up and they go home, most of them go to bed early in the evening anyway. When they go home, all the children talk about is tablets, phones, television. ...They spend very limited time with their families. The child spends most of the day here, in the same classroom. We try to change the environment as much as we can, but when we act within the limited possibilities, of course, after a while the child gets used to it. They get bored, and when they get bored, they express it clearly verbally, saying, "We get bored, teacher." I mean, I agree, actually with the effect of being here all day long. But we can only change location within the possibilities. (T13-C1, 37)
High energy & activity level	Having high levels of energy and possible link with ADHD	27	15	I mean, the younger one is cute, he came later. Let's say he is a bit active, not hyperactive, but a bit active, a bit cheerful compared to his older brother. Sometimes he can stir things up by teasing his older brother from the outside. I have such a son. (F12, 39)

Table 4.42. (continued)

High cognitive abilities	Perception of the child's exceptional intellectual abilities	6	5	This child is a bright child. A child who comes to Pre-K knowing how to read and write. We heard from previous teachers he was tactile and impulsive. If a child is tactile and impulsive plus he has a bright side, the first thing that comes to our minds is that he is bored in the classroom and that is why he exhibits these behaviors. (T1, 35)
Disciplined & rule-oriented personality	Likes rules, routine and structure	2	2	He's a disciplined kid. I mean, or I don't know because I got him used to it, he likes rules. For example, when he complained about a few students in the class, I asked him, did those students have any negative attitude towards you? He said no. The problem is that they don't listen to the teacher, for example. When the teacher tells them to do something, they don't do it. That means he doesn't like those who act against the rules, he keep his distance. (M9,39)
Negative emotional traits	Having personal traits that is perceived negative such as holding grudges, seeking revenge, love being the focus of attention	8	6	For example, one day a friend of his did something to him, I didn't realize it. The next day he harmed that friend by remembering what he did and take revenge. (T17-C5, 40)
Social & emotional sensitivity	Being emotional and social	8	8	C1 likes to coordinate with her friends during free time. For example, you can never see C1 alone, she always has a group of friends she can guide (T13-C1, 37).
Competitive & status-driven personality	Desire to outperform others and desire to be focal point in social group	31	13	For example, when I praise a child's activity, like the one we had today, when I say, "Your activity is very good," C1 says, "I haven't finished it yet." C1 always wants to be popular in a class, C1 always wants to be praised, C1 always wants you think everything she did was right. This doesn't show itself directly, but when you spend time in the same class you can understand it. (T13-C1, 37)
Strong-willed & controlling behavior	Having stubborn, assertive, controlling temperament.	48	19	She directs her friends a lot while playing. You be a doctor now, you be a policeman now, I'm going to be this now. ...She says these things a lot and distributes roles a lot. Yes, when she distributes roles a lot, of course she gets angry if someone does not fit this role. I mean, when that person disrupts the game, she tries to take that person out of the game, he does not want that person. (M12, 39)

Another common code is strong-willed and controlling behavior, which refers to children with a temperament that is stubborn, assertive, and prone to exhibiting

controlling and dominant behavior. A child with this trait often tries to dictate the rules and roles in games and becomes frustrated when others do not follow their instructions. In one example, the child wanted to play her way on the playground. After her friend defied her wishes, she swore or made offensive hand gestures:

The other person says, “Let’s go down the slide.” She says, “No, let’s go on the trolley.” She runs straight to the slide. She also goes to the seesaw. She doesn’t wait; neither does the other person wait for her, nor does my daughter follow her. When both children don’t follow each other, she turns around, looks back at him to see if he’s coming, and either says or gestures something offensive. She says, “You’re like that, why did you go there? Come here,” and gets angry with him. (M6, 31)

4.2.3.7.2 Category₂: Physical, health, & biological influences

Other factors contributing to aggression are physical, health, and biological influences. This category describes the way biology, sensory, and health-related issues play a role in defining aggression. As shown in Table 4.43, physical, health, and biological influences can be classified into three codes: instinctual and innate reactions, dietary and physical constraints, and health and developmental challenges.

Table 4.43. Category 2 (Theme 7) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (<i>n</i> /46)	Empirical indicators
Physical, health, & biological influences	Physical, sensory and health related influences	23	8	-
Instinctual & innate reactions	Innate and driven by an internal, instinctual force that the child cannot fully control.	2	1	I mean, let me put it this way, that child's is completely internal, something that comes from within. We have already told this to the family in this way. So, there is something inside and it comes out. So, it's like a completely instinctive thing. I mean, he can't prevent it, but he tries to prevent it in some periods of time, but it doesn't happen. (T12, 31)
Dietary & physical constraints	Influence of food intake and indoor environment on aggression	2	2	When I take them to nature, when I take them for a picnic, when I take them for a bike ride, their movements naturally decrease in this way. You know, home environment, indoor environment, building environment, concrete environment. ...I think these things affect them. (F12, 39)

Table 4.43. (continued)

Health & developmental challenges	Influences of developmental differences and health issues	19 7	I expect different characteristics from 5-year-olds, also because they have been attending school for 3 years. But first of all, I try to teach the rules of collective life. Especially when I send them to the sink, you may have noticed that I am constantly suggesting very simple rules, such as “Did you flush the toilet? Don't come without washing your hands. Or did you wash your hands? At lunch we don't talk until we finish eating. Or when we go to an event, we line up.” I have to repeat these things over and over again because this is a group with no established rule coordination. (T13-C1, 37)

The most common of these codes relates to health and developmental changes. This code encompasses the underlying developmental and health implications in children, such as maternal mental health challenges, difficulties in sensory processing and body awareness, and chronic health conditions.

One of the most notable cases regarding health conditions involved maternal mental health. F6 (31) described the difficulties both he, as a father, and his child experienced due to the mother's mental health condition. He stated: *“He was younger than a child. We found a babysitter until he was a year old. The babysitter took care of him for six months.”*

He also mentioned that his child was monitored by the Ministry of Health from birth until the age of 18. Furthermore, the severity of the mother's mental health condition becomes evident in the following statement:

I sent my child to the crèche when necessary. I took care of him, I found a babysitter. At one point, they were going to take him under the protection of the Ministry of Health. I didn't let them. I said, “I'm the father, for better or worse.” (F6, 31)

4.2.3.7.3. Category3: Cognitive & psychological factors

The third factor influencing aggression is cognitive and psychological factors. This category describes the influence of thought processes, past experiences, and cognitive development on aggression. Within this category, two codes emerged. As shown in Table 4.44, the most common code is impulsivity and self-control deficits.

Table 4.44. Category 3 (Theme 7) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Cognitive & psychological factors	Influence of cognition, thought and psychological issues	46	16	-
Past experiences & learned behaviors	Past negative experiences with another teacher, school or and absence of meaningful consequences & implications for destructive actions.	11	6	In terms of behavior, I can actually talk about it right now, damaging friends' things. I think the reason for this is more or less their past experiences because probably when the child breaks, breaks, tears something, whatever it is, it has somehow been replaced so that the child does not feel the lack of it or is not exposed to any consequences related to it. Let's say, if I broke the TV in the house, I can't watch TV for a while. I think this nuance is not fully established in him. I mean, at that moment, there is the logic that if something breaks or breaks down, you buy a new one. (T3, 27)
Impulsivity & self-control deficits	Sudden, spontaneous urges and lack of ability to control these urges.	35	13	Previous teachers said that this child is very touchy, that he needs contact. But you know, it's not like that, yes, he comes and hugs from time to time and fulfills that need, but it's not like that. It's a bit more about making people uncomfortable. It's like each of them sitting on the carpet and poking their friend next to them. I mean, after that he touches her hair, touches her, hits her, etc. (T12, 31)

This code refers to behavior driven by sudden, spontaneous urges or internal motivations without prior thought, planning, or external provocation. The actions are typically unrestrained and may reflect an immediate desire to act based on emotion, mood, or fleeting impulses. While describing impulsivity, T1 states in the following excerpt how a child's innate desire leads them to act upon urges without any specific reason and without choosing a specific child. It can be said that being impulsive and harming friends became an identity for this child.

They changed their shoes, and as they walked to class, he suddenly bumped his shoulder into his friend beside him, causing him to stumble slightly. The goal was not to knock him down or hurt him, but the behavior was persistent and frequent. When we look at the numbers, it happened more than 20 times a day. It was not directed at a single child but at whoever happened to be nearby at that moment. When this behavior is observed over the course of a year, it becomes a serious concern. Everyone knows this child's name.

Everyone complains about the same child. It is not a punch in the stomach or a quick hit. It is more like the kind of playful nudge one friend might give another. But it happens suddenly, without reason, leaving others wondering, “Why did he just touch me?” And when someone finally says, “Don’t...” it does not stop. If it had only happened once before, after that, it happens three times, then four. There is a clear persistence and a sense of stubbornness. This is the kind of behavioral issue we are dealing with. (T1, 35)

4.2.3.7.4. Category4: Emotional regulation & coping challenges

Another category identified is emotional regulation and coping challenges. This category reflects a lack of ability to control emotions, frustration, and setbacks. As shown in Table 4.45, two codes emerged related to emotional regulation and coping challenges: frustration with competition and setbacks, and difficulty managing emotions and mood.

Table 4.45. Category 4 (Theme 7) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Emotional regulation & coping challenges	Challenges in regulating emotions and setback	73	26	-
Frustration with competition & setbacks	Becoming frustrated when desires are not met.	52	21	When I observe that what the child wants is not being done, I say, “Oh, he’s going to hurt his friend again.” (T14-C2, 44)
Difficulty managing emotions & mood	Difficulties in understanding emotions, regulating mood and emotions, and projecting emotions to others	21	10	Sometimes out of the blue, if he was not in a good mood that day, he would come to class and behave in a way that would harm his friends (T5, 24)

Frustration with competition and setbacks is the most frequently mentioned code. It refers to a child’s frustration when their desires are not met. Aggressive behaviors tend to escalate when the child is prevented from obtaining something they want, or when they are forced to do something they do not wish to do. Participants discussed instances where children became frustrated when they could not obtain certain toys or access a playground. However, as shown in the following excerpt, one father mentioned feeling blamed for situations beyond his control, where the child experiences frustration even when instant satisfaction is not possible:

When she's with me, she doesn't just want to play a game or ask for something to give me attitude. I pick her up from daycare, we get in the car, it's hot. ...So, she thinks it's because of me. The child is giving me attitude: "Dad, it's too hot." She touches, her hand burns and says, "Dad, my hand is burned" and so on. You know, she blames it on me. She wants me to open the windows immediately, that is, she expects the air conditioner to cool down right away. She expects it to be cool when she gets in the car. (F3, 33)

4.2.3.7.5. Category5: Social & environment triggers

The last factor contributing to aggression is social and environmental triggers. These can be defined as the external influences of school and classroom settings, and social relationships. Table 4.46 shows three codes related to this category: socioeconomic influences, social and peer influences, and classroom and school environment.

Table 4.46. Category 5 (Theme 7) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Social & environmental triggers	Influence of external classroom characteristics and social relations.	392	24	-
Socioeconomic influences	Impact of socioeconomic status on children's access to resources and experiences.	11	5	When I first took office, the children were better at play, but now they find it very difficult to play. These children come from a lower socioeconomic level... They don't have all the opportunities like our children. They encounter some things for the first time. I'm sure most of them don't even have Legos at home. It is not a place where families are very conscious. I have a few parents with master's degrees. I had one parent with a master's degree, and some of them were even illiterate. So, it is a school with a wide range of parents. I was lucky in terms of parents, but they were still very uninformed, a bit closed. I rarely saw A's mother and father at school. But his mother would pick him up and drop him off. He had a brother; the lady was interested but there was nothing she could do. So, he probably didn't have many toys. So, I think he is very hungry for toys. He doesn't want to share many toys; he immediately sets up games. Because he is hungry for toys. For example, our children have all kinds of toys at home. Maybe they don't appreciate it, don't go, don't play with it, don't even wonder about it. But those students are very curious about the new toy. Because it is a different environment from their homes. Maybe a student in a school in Çankaya would not do this. But the students there are very hungry for materials. (T4, 39)

Table 4.46. (continued)

Social & peer influences	Peer dynamics that construct social relations that might lead to peer rejection, bias towards different children, in-class group formation	39	12	T16-C4 (49): C4 and A don't want F to sit next to them. At story time or at the table, they change places. Researcher: Because they are aware that he has autism? T16-C4 (49): They are aware that he is different. But they cannot make sense of what the difference is. I explained it to C4 like this, because C4 emphasized it a lot. When we were talking about something in class before, we talked about the fact that people are different. Everyone is different, their appearance is different, their habits are different, their behavior is different, we said that we are different. (T16-C4, 49)
Classroom & school environment	Physical characteristics of classroom and teachers' classroom management deficiencies	342	22	I took over the class of a fellow teacher who was working at the school, and she is still working at the school. Since our personality traits are slightly different, this is reflected in the classroom climate. Also, the children were younger last year, they were 4 years old. Most of them are the class that has been in the same school since the age of 3. Of course, what does this bring with it? They get used to each other. Of course, the fact that our teacher was calm and the children did not obey the rules was a bit challenging for me. (T13-C1, 37)

Among the most frequently mentioned codes is the classroom and school environment. This refers to the physical characteristics of classrooms and the classroom management skills of teachers. One notable issue is class size. As shown in Figure 4.29, during observations, the number of children in a classroom ranged from four to 40, with 40 children typically observed during lunch hours or special activities.

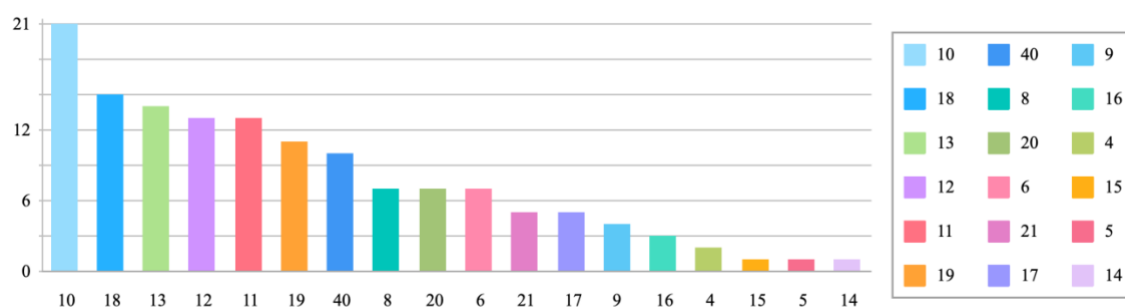


Figure 4.29. Number of children in one class during observations

Additionally, during observations, the number of adults in a classroom ranged from zero to eight, with the highest number of adults observed during lunch hours when

the entire school gathered in one lunchroom. Zero adult cases, as shown in Figure 4.30, occurred when the teacher stepped outside to prepare learning materials.

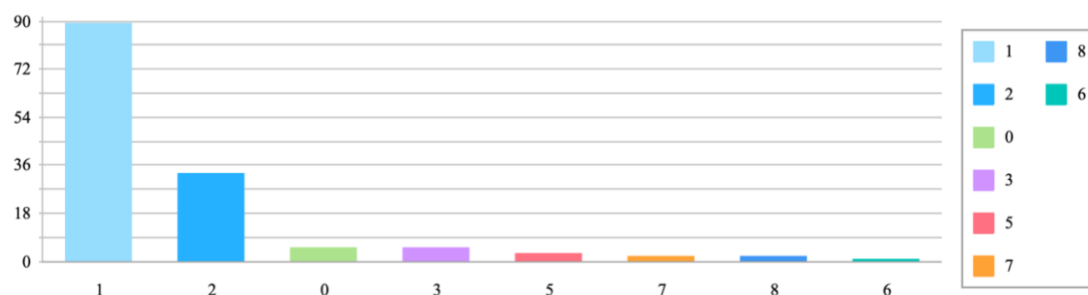


Figure 4.30. Number of adults in one class during observations

Furthermore, the physical characteristics of classrooms also play a role. Some classrooms are spacious and well-equipped, while others face challenges like limited space, lack of appropriate materials, and shared spaces with older students. Many classrooms lack sufficient play areas, outdoor spaces, and age-appropriate furnishings. One teacher described her classroom as follows:

T13-C1(37): Let me explain that our school is a handover school, also known as a protocol school. The original building was not designed as a kindergarten. It was initially used to accommodate workers, then parts of it were converted into restrooms before being turned into a formal kindergarten. As you can see, the building structure is not ideal for a kindergarten setting. Over time, additional classrooms were added to the building. My classroom is physically one of the larger ones in our school, but in terms of square footage, it's actually quite small and lacks the necessary equipment. To be frank, our classroom cannot comfortably accommodate 22 children. It's simply too small for the number of students. For instance, I'm unable to conduct active games inside the classroom, so I have to take the children to the common area for that. In the classroom, I focus on quieter games that can be played sitting down and require less space.

Researcher: So, do you think the materials in the classroom are sufficient?

T13-C1(37): Yes, our school principal is supportive when it comes to materials. Whenever we need them, we can reach out to him and receive them. So far, we have not encountered any issues with materials.

As can be seen, the C1 teacher did not express concerns about materials but rather about the physical characteristics of the school, which are a result of its old and

unplanned construction. Similarly, the C4 teacher raised concerns about physical characteristics; however, C4's school is newly constructed, and this is its first year of operation.

T16-C4 (49): For example, (the principal interjected, “we lack materials”). Exactly, as our principal mentioned, our materials are not yet at the level we would like because our school is new. Unfortunately, we haven't received much material support. We don't have many of the things we need, and there are some physical features that are not suitable for a kindergarten. For instance, the windows, I'm concerned that they are so high, made of glass, and that one wall is entirely glass. Even though the glass is shatterproof, it still doesn't feel very safe. Additionally, the marble section on that floor is very dangerous for us.

Researcher: Moldings, ledge?

T16-C4 (49): Exactly. It is not very safe there, and we have such problems in the classroom. Our materials are incomplete, and we are missing cabinets.

4.2.3.8. Themes: Background determinants of aggression

The theme of background determinants of aggression explains factors that play a role in shaping aggression, though they may not be immediately apparent. Four key issues emerged, as shown in Figure 4.31.

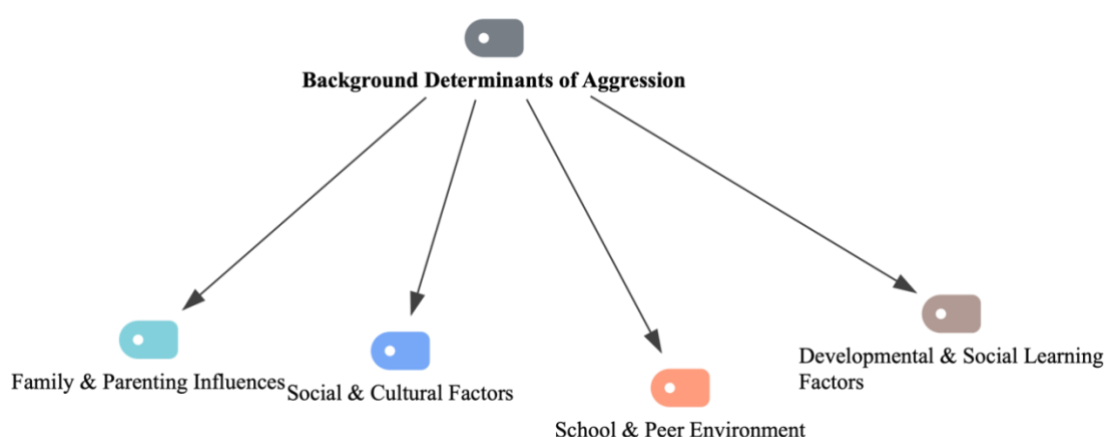


Figure 4.31. Theme 8 and its categories

These factors include family and parenting influences ($f=284$), social and cultural factors ($f=200$), school and peer environment ($f=185$), developmental and social

learning factors ($f=135$). Among these, a large amount of data was provided by mothers, fathers, and teachers who were interviewed. As shown in Figure 4.32, both mothers and fathers discussed family and parenting influences the most.

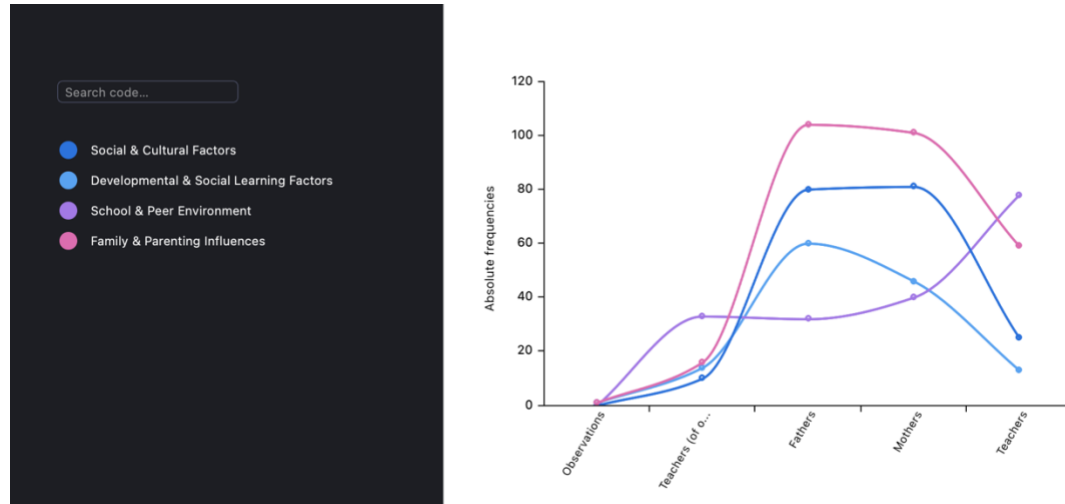


Figure 4.32. Code trend of background determinants of aggression across different document groups

Social and cultural factors were followed by the school and peer environment, with developmental and social learning factors coming last. Based on the observations, there was no mention of any relevant data regarding the background determinants of aggression.

4.2.3.8.1. Category₁: Social & cultural factors

Social and cultural factors are key background determinants of aggression. These factors explain how broader social constructs influence aggression. As shown in Table 4.47, the cultural and economic context, as well as the influence of media and technology, emerged as significant social and cultural factors.

Table 4.47. Category 1 (Theme 8) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (<i>n</i> /46)	Empirical indicators
Social & cultural factors	Larger and broader social constructs	200	37	-

Table 4.47. (continued)

Cultural & economic context	Working conditions and marital harmony	91	28	I have a good relationship with my husband. We have been together for 7 years. We met at the school where we both work. We understand each other very well most of the time because we work in the same place. We maintain a friendly relationship with each other, we protect our love and respect. We always show it to each other. We don't see each other much right now because he is a physical education teacher and I am at home. However, we have a swimming pool at the school where he teaches swimming. He is very busy at the moment. People also use the pool after work, so he stays there until late, sometimes arriving home around 9 or 10 PM. Despite this, we spend a lot of time together, and our relationship is very good. (M12, 39)
Media & technology influence	Influence of television, internet, tablet, telephone, applications and toys	109	34	For example, violent games and violent weapons. At the beginning of the year they were making a lot of weapons out of Legos, I definitely do not compromise on this. As soon as I notice it, or as soon as the children complain about it, I immediately make them finish that game. I generally do not compromise on violent games. (T17-C5, 40)

Cultural and economic context refers to parents' work conditions and marital harmony. The work conditions refer to parents' work environments, schedules, and job requirements. From an economic perspective, challenges such as flexible versus strict work schedules and jobs requiring frequent travel were explored. From a cultural perspective, marital harmony focuses on family dynamics, especially between mothers and fathers. This aspect involves occasional conflicts, role balancing, and the maintenance of marital bonds. Marital harmony and working conditions interact and influence each other, with work-related stress potentially impacting marital relationships and, in turn, aggression. Thus, these factors are grouped under the broader term 'cultural and economic context.'

Couples often experience occasional disagreements but generally maintain harmonious relationships. The arrival of children can strain relationships, as the increased responsibilities may reduce quality time and communication. For example, F3 (33) stated, *"I can say for myself that after the second child, my relationship with my spouse has changed. Maybe it's the same for her, but I think it has decreased somewhat."* However, F3 was also mindful of his wife's struggles, noting, *"It's*

especially difficult for my wife. I mean, I understand my responsibilities, but the mother is more burdened, especially during these months.”

From an economic perspective, the relationship between parents’ working conditions and childhood aggression is illustrated by T5, who described a child in her classroom:

Her mother was an expatriate worker, and her father was a pharmacist. They were doing very well financially and traveled abroad frequently for vacations due to her mother’s job. ...For instance, when her father or mother went abroad, she would sometimes stay with her grandmother. If she exhibited that behavior 2-3 times a week, it would immediately make me think that the parents might be abroad. The child was displaying this behavior a lot that week. I would often wonder if the parents were away, or if there was an issue with them. Most of the time, my suspicions turned out to be correct. (T5, 24)

The second code that emerged here is media and technology influence. This code refers to children's media and technology habits as well as the role these play in their lives. It also includes parents’ concerns about technology usage. Additionally, this code examines children’s preference for violent toys. In terms of toys, the media and technology code explores situations where a child shows interest in or prefers toys linked to violence, such as toy weapons or action figures involved in combat. These toys can include actual weapons, or children might use items like Legos to mimic guns. The reason toy preferences are included in this code is that toys are often marketed through media products. Moreover, children tend to choose toys they are exposed to in media.

Many parents express concerns about their children’s excessive screen time, exposure to inappropriate content on platforms like YouTube, and the potential negative effects on their behavior and well-being. Several parents mention their efforts to limit and control their children's access to technology by setting time limits, using parental controls, and restricting certain types of content. However, they also acknowledge the challenges in enforcing these rules, as children often find ways to bypass the restrictions or become upset when their access is limited. Regarding children’s attempts to avoid restrictions, F3 (33) shared: *“I downloaded YouTube*

Kids and even deleted regular YouTube. Do you know she restored it? She actually went out of her way to restore it. She probably downloaded it from the App Store.”

Many parents also expressed complaints about YouTube Shorts, comparing it to TikTok. One father described the challenges posed by YouTube Shorts as follows:

When I open the lion cub cartoon and give it to her, I come back 10 minutes later and don't find her watching it. She's opened short videos instead. She taps on the voice search, then says, "a short video about Yoda." Of course, it immediately pops up in front of her. She opens one, and once she does, that's enough for her. As she scrolls, she encounters a world of unrelated content. (F3, 33)

Regarding technology and media usage, one father reflected on the impact of the pandemic:

For example, we had a problem during the pandemic, and I think everyone faced a similar issue. My child was one who didn't know much about phones and tablets. But since he couldn't go outside due to the pandemic, he developed a habit of using the phone, even if it was just a small one. We set restrictions on the amount of time he could use it. As much as we can, we try to limit his screen time and encourage him not to watch or look at it too much. (F9, 33)

4.2.3.8.2. Category₂: Developmental & social learning factors

Another set of background determinants of aggression includes developmental and social learning factors. These factors explore personal development, learned behaviors, and family-related dynamics. As shown in Table 4.48, two codes emerged: family and intergenerational influences, and early social and emotional development.

Family and intergenerational influences is one of the most common codes. It refers to the complex dynamics of relationships and roles within the family, including the structure of the family and intergenerational issues. This code examines factors such as intergenerational support, trauma, the presence of single or divorced parents, living with a mother's boyfriend, child guardianship, the nationality of the parents, living with grandparents, and sibling relationships, among others.

Table 4.48. Category 2 (Theme 8) and its' code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Developmental & social learning factors	Influence of personal development and family dynamic	135	35	-
Family & Intergenerational influences	Influence of sibling, family related dynamics, trauma and intergenerational support	116	32	He doesn't say these things to others in the classroom. But his brother is more sincere, we are more at home, so he can say these things. Isn't he influenced by his friends? Of course he is affected. I don't think he is bullied by his friends. But sometimes there may be joking, pushing and shoving among his friends. ...But in the home environment, because the older brother is more friendly, they can do things more quickly. They can start with a game and then turn it into a small fight. (F12, 39)
Early social & emotional development	Describes early development through cycle of victimization and recognition these behaviors as age-appropriate and part of a natural process	19	12	Now it's the last year, school will end, they will start primary school. And these children will now go directly to an environment with recess next year, where they sit in the classroom, do activities, go to recess, and they will go to an environment where there is no control. Because so far, they have not experienced any pressure. But as this age progresses, C1 will see that there may be violence from the other side, there may be damage to their belongings, there may be pushing. Children will express their discomfort in some way. (T13-C1, 37) (Reflective note: E is a close friend of C1. According to the teacher's statement, E was first bullied by C1. Then E started to exhibit similar behaviors. E is one of C1's four closest friends. (C1, Female)

One of the first issues addressed by this code is the variety of family structures. T14-C2 (44), for example, highlights how parental separation and the presence of a boyfriend in the household create confusion regarding authority, leading the child to be unsure about who is responsible for discipline:

He is an only child, and his parents are separated. The mother has a boyfriend at home, and they live together. In this situation, the child becomes confused, I mean, there's a sense of hierarchy confusion. ...I've observed that it starts at home. ...They live together at home, and the child struggles to understand the hierarchy. He doesn't know who is who, and he can't comprehend it. As a

result, he doesn't know who will discipline him. When this happens, the child experiences confusion. (T14-C2, 44)

The teacher in the following excerpt also discusses how constant changes in the caregiver role, in addition to the presence of the boyfriend, contribute to confusion in family dynamics:

The child was raised by the grandmother, and before that, by the paternal grandmother. When the parents separated, the child was automatically placed with the grandmother. The mother works all day, and when she does, the child feels somewhat disconnected. He is at school all day. (T14-C2, 44)

This excerpt also reveals intergenerational support provided by both the maternal and paternal grandmothers. Although there are constant changes in caregiving, there is no negative information about the grandmothers. However, there are cases where intergenerational support can have a more negative impact, as illustrated in the following extreme example:

There was a lot of change in my daughter's behavior when my mother-in-law was with us versus when she left. My daughter was more irritable and aggressive when my mother-in-law was here. But after she left, the child became much more relaxed. I didn't trust my mother-in-law, so I put a camera in the house. I caught a few things and told my wife about it. I said, "Look, your mother yells at the children like this. She threatens them. Please warn your mom!" She did warn her, but I noticed it was still happening. I even witnessed it firsthand. One morning, as I was getting ready for work, my mother-in-law and the kids were in the living room. I heard her say to my daughter, "I will throw you down from there," referring to our third-floor apartment. I walked into the room and said, "Who are you throwing?" She denied it, but I heard it clearly. I said, "If you threaten the children again, I will throw you down from there." The child's behavior is, without a doubt, a result of her actions. (F2, 34)

4.2.3.8.3. Category3: School & peer environment

School and peer Environment is another background determinant of aggression. It refers to the influence of teachers, peers, and teachers' practices, such as setting rules and boundaries, on aggressive behavior. As shown in Table 4.49, three key codes emerge in this context.

Table 4.49. Category 3 (Theme 8) and its' code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
School & peer environment	Impact of teachers, teacher's practices and peers on aggression	185	39	-
Rules & boundaries	Rules, boundaries and red lines that emphasize routines and rituals	81	37	My husband prefers a quieter atmosphere in the afternoons and doesn't want the children making noise. For example, he wants them to sit down and behave calmly. He tries to set strict rules. So in the evening, for example, he has a rule of no noise when he is resting. After that, there are other rules... For example, he has a strict rule that my child should be softer towards his sibling, that he should not be jealous, that he should share. (M11, 26)
Peer influence & group dynamics	Interactions within peer groups and influence of peer dynamics	66	28	I mean, among the students themselves, maybe this belongs to our region. Turkish children and foreign children are automatically segregated. There is inevitably a grouping among themselves because they do not understand each other's languages. In the classroom, at first, of course, there are children who cannot get used to it, who cannot make friends, who cannot participate in games, but in the course of the semester this problem disappears completely. In order to overcome this, I constantly change the places of the children or encourage them to play with each other. But still, because they don't speak their mother tongue, because they don't understand each other, they automatically turn to the child or friend they understand, whose language they understand. (T2, 36)
Teacher & school influence	Relation and understanding between teacher & children and coordination between teachers across different classes	38	18	We had a similar understanding of education with him (referring to the other teacher in the class). Therefore, we did not have much conflict in the classroom. But you know, there could be a difficulty in the partnership system. If your understanding of classroom management or your perspective on children was not the same with your partner, there would inevitably be a duality in the classroom. I mean, he would say one thing and you would say another. (T5, 24)

These are rules and boundaries, peer influence and group dynamics, and teacher and school influence. Rules and boundaries are among the most commonly mentioned codes in this category. They refer to classroom and family rules that emphasize routines, rituals, safety, and behavioral expectations, as well as boundaries that

individuals are not meant to cross in relation to rules and routines within the classroom or family context. Both parents and teachers set non-negotiable rules.

These rules generally concern prohibiting physical aggression, disrespectful language, dangerous behaviors, intentional harm to others, disrespect toward elders, unhealthy snacks, sharing toys, and misuse of technology. As stated by T13-C1(37), rules are non-negotiable due to factors such as group dynamics and class size:

The rules that we don't compromise on, if we had fewer children in the class, maybe I could be more flexible. But the large number of children and the implicit peer pressure make me less flexible on the rules. When I say rules, for example, I try to establish a routine before story time. We had breakfast, we came to our classroom, went to the toilet, washed our hands, drank water in the classroom. What do we do next? We all get on the carpet together and move on to a story-time activity. I think children can adapt to the rules more easily if you establish routines. For example, we don't talk to each other during story time. That's why I always give suggestions: Eyes on the teacher, ears on the teacher, eyes on the book, we listen without talking. For example, I don't let them lie down during story time because they hurt each other with their feet, hands, or heads and distract one another. I believe that if I establish routines, the rules will be accepted more quickly. That's why I try to establish routines and introduce the rules alongside them. (T13-C1, 37)

Another code is peer influence and group dynamics. This refers to the overall cohesiveness, interactions, and the distribution of power and control within the group. It also highlights the influence of peers resulting from group dynamics. Regarding peer dynamics, T13-C1 (37) provided a striking example describing C1's relations with her peers:

Let me tell you this. You know how in popular culture, especially in foreign movies, there are, for example, 3-4 girls in adolescent high school groups. One of the girls is the leader. There are always girls around her whom she humiliates and insults, but at the same time, she coordinates them and keeps them close because she never wants to be alone. Unfortunately, C1 is like this, too. It's a bit of adolescent behavior. She has constant friends around her. Physically, yes, what you say is true. She doesn't hurt them. She doesn't push them, hit them, or pull their hair. But she won't risk losing her friends completely. She doesn't want to provoke a negative reaction from them. But she does react to establish authority through verbal insults and pressure. Somehow, she has taken the children under her coordination. (T13-C1, 37)

4.2.3.8.4. Category4: Family & parenting influences

The last background determinant of aggression is family and parenting influences. This category describes how parenting styles, conflicts regarding parenting and bond between parent and child influence aggression. As shown in Table 4.50, four codes emerged describing family and parenting influences.

Table 4.50. Category 4 (Theme 8) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Family & parenting influences	Influence of parenting and relation between parent and child	284	38	-
Parenting consistency & conflict	The role of consistency and relational dynamics in parenting	56	27	For example, even if my wife says something and I think it is wrong, I don't do anything there. In front of the children, I would never say no, this is wrong, you are saying the wrong thing to the children. I approve her there and then, but afterwards we talk about how it shouldn't have happened or how we can fix it if we can fix it, and if we can't fix it, there is nothing to do anymore. But we never mislead each other in front of the children. Or in any way, like your father is wrong, or your mother is wrong, or she is lying (F11, 32)
Parental influence & supervision	Parental influence in shaping children's behavior and influence parent's attitude towards aggression	49	22	We haven't talked to C1's mother yet, but I know from previous years that her reaction is 'C1 wouldn't do it, something was done to C1 and she reacted'. But you would agree that a child cannot learn on her own that the shoes she wears are branded, the clothes she wears are branded, or that she can put others under pressure with her pinching behavior. I think C1 showed the behavior she was exposed to her friends. (T13-C1, 37)
Parenting styles & authority	Parenting strategies regarding child rearing practices, control over rules & boundaries	113	30	There were times when I didn't get what she wanted. Let me give you an example of that. I said to myself, how can I do it? How can I leave this market without buying what she wants? One day we went through this. She cries so much. I mean, I guess every parent is like that, they can't stand their child. There are some who do, to establish that rule. No matter how much she cries, they won't buy the what she wants. I got out, sat in the car, and she kept crying. I mean, she keeps crying just to get me to buy something. So, I went back, I bought. (F3, 33)

Table 4.50. (continued)

Parental bonding & presence	Emotional bond with parent and child, being present in child's life	66	23	Let me tell you, my wife is more interested, to tell the truth. Because I work during the day, I can't spare much time during the day, and when I come back in the evening, you know, I'm tired from work. For example, let me tell you for my own daughter, she has this habit. She has a very intense need to play. For example, if she spends all hours of the day playing, jumping and jumping, she doesn't say I'm tired. She is always in a state of motion. So, to be honest, I can't spare much time for that because I'm tired. But generally, for example, I spend as much time as I can for her in the evening so as not to offend her. (F9, 33)

The codes identified in this study include parenting consistency and conflict, parental influence and supervision, parenting styles and authority, and parental bonding and presence. One of these codes is parental consistency and conflict, which refers to disagreements or agreements between spouses or between parents and grandparents regarding rules and disciplinary approaches. Concerning consistency, some parents mentioned that, although they may have differences in understanding, they made an effort to prevent their children from sensing their disagreements. One father explained this as follows:

Say, if one of us says something, the other supports it. As a father, I try not to be rigid while the mother is more lenient. We usually stand on the same side with my wife and make sure the children feel we are unified on the issue. Of course, we discuss things internally, but when something is said in the moment, we both try to present a united front. (F10, 44)

Contrary to F10 stated above, some parents complained about inconsistencies in parenting and disagreements about rules in front of the children. In addition to parents, grandparents also played a role, as described by T5:

There was an environment of inconsistency within the family. In other words, I especially observed an inconsistency in terms of rules and behaviors. This was not limited to the parents. As I mentioned, the child stayed with his grandparents when his parents were sometimes absent or when they went abroad. I believe this was also because he was the only grandchild of his grandmother. We also spoke to the mother about this. There was a lot of, "I want to play with this, I want to eat this, let's do that, I want to go here, let's go there, I will play with him, okay, you can play with him." There was a little more flexibility in this environment. Later, when the mother or father

returned from abroad and went back to their home, the child encountered rules and the responsibilities that should exist in that household. At that point, I think the child experiences duality, which he then reflects in the classroom environment. (T5, 24)

Another issue related to inconsistency was the possibility of child abuse. Parents often had differing views on how to discipline children. Two teachers reported their suspicions about potential child abuse based on their observations. While they were not certain, they felt concerned. For example, F6 (51) mentioned the disciplinary methods used by his wife: *“She gets angry when the child misbehaves and hits him, for example on the butt. I tell her not to hit him in a way that could damage his face.”*

Similarly, F5 (33) described his approach to disciplining his son during an interview with his wife, M5 (32). The mother’s disapproval and resignation were evident:

As a child, he was someone who cried constantly from the moment he was born. I would hit him from time to time. My little boy is used to this, because when he was younger, I would hit him on the back. I hit him on the head, and he would never stop crying, no matter what I did. I would take him on my lap and try everything, but he wouldn’t stop. I used to get angry and hit him, for example. When I say I was hitting him, I don’t mean very hard, but I was angry in those moments. I would hit him, and then I would pick him up again and show him love. Since my little son is used to this, for example, he doesn’t throw such tantrums. The moment he feels that you don’t love him, he doesn’t destroy things. This is because we have been angry and hit him in the past since he was a child. He is more or less used to it, so he doesn’t find it strange. Let me say that he is a child who is used to a little more harshness. (F5, 33)

Another important issue is parenting styles and authority, which involves parenting strategies, control over rules and boundaries, and parents’ understanding of child-rearing. Two main issues related to this code emerged from the data: maternal and paternal permissiveness, and maternal and paternal authoritativeness. The first relates to lenient parenting strategies, while the latter refers to strict, rule-oriented parenting. One father discussed his belief that rules were against the nature of childhood:

I think it's fair to say that I don’t make rules. And why is that? For example, I want the child to be a child. Last night, when I was at home, I bought some nuts and a Coke. I was watching TV, and the children were spoiling

themselves. I couldn't even hear the sound of the TV, but I didn't yell at them. Maybe I told my wife to warm up their milk and let them quiet down. Let them go to bed, and then I would watch TV. But I have never slapped any of my children like that. Thank God, I have never slapped any of my children. (F8, 39)

Other participants mentioned that one parent was more permissive while the other was more authoritative. One mother shared her perspective, explaining that she found it difficult to set rules for her only child, who was conceived through IVF:

My first daughter is a test-tube baby. That's why I can't set many rules. I don't want her to get upset. I don't know, if she wants something, I'll get it for her right away. I never give it a second thought. But my husband is not like that. He makes her cry. If she had ice cream that day, he would never buy her a second one. (M6, 31)

Another mother, who practiced authoritative parenting, compared herself to the "bad cop," while her more permissive husband played the "good cop":

I mean, now I am a bit of an authority in the house, while my husband is softer. If a rule is to be set, I am the authority at home. But because my husband is soft, the children say, "My father will do it," and they turn to him. So, when I say something, they know it won't be done. This kind of dynamic is always present between me and my children. But you know, there is always anger, always bad policing, and since I am the one who gets angry, I am the one who ends up in arguments at home with the children. My husband is always the good cop. He even does things that should not be done. In fact, this is a hundred percent of our arguments with my husband. (M10, 35)

Parental bonding and presence refer to the emotional connection between parent and child, as well as the quality time spent together. M9 described how her husband, despite loving his children, was reluctant to engage with them:

My husband loves children very much, but his understanding of love is a little different. Spending time and playing with children, the things I do, don't give him joy. ...Sometimes there are board games with the children, and I say, "You can play these with your father." They go to him and say, "Let's play chess" or "Let's play this, let's play that." He sits and plays, and I don't know if he's playing out of fear of me, but he plays. I can feel that he's playing unwillingly. I feel it, and probably the children feel it too. We have a lot of discussions about that point as well. You know, if you love children, you should spend time with them because children grow up playing. ...But if you look at it, he really loves his children and favors them a lot. (M9, 39)

The final aspect of the parental bond discussed is the presence of parents. In the quotation, M9's husband is physically present but emotionally distant. In contrast, T2 (36) describes how parental absence and neglect can affect a child's educational life, feelings of abandonment, self-esteem, and, ultimately, lead to behavioral problems. While T2 does not claim that the child's behavioral issues stem solely from abandonment, it is suggested that the mother's absence results from deeper, ongoing issues within the family.

The reason the child didn't come in the second semester was because the mother left and went away. She left, and after a month, she remarried. So, two siblings were abandoned by their mother, to put it that way. There were probably very serious problems in the family at home. ...The mother, of course, abandoned them, and they were not in contact with her. During the second semester, I was in contact with his aunt. They didn't bring him to school, and I insisted that they bring him. If not, at least enroll him in a school close to their home. But he wasn't enrolled anywhere. I stayed in constant contact with his family, with his aunt, and he was no longer in touch with his mother. He visited me once. Even then, he only said something to me in class. When he came that day, I saw him calmer, but he was sad. He came to me, and we talked a bit. He said, "My mom will forgive me." I don't know what he meant, but that's what he said. He told me, "My mom will forgive me, teacher." I said, "You didn't do anything wrong. Why would your mom forgive you?" (T2, 36)

4.2.3.9. Theme9: Behavioral Challenges & outcomes

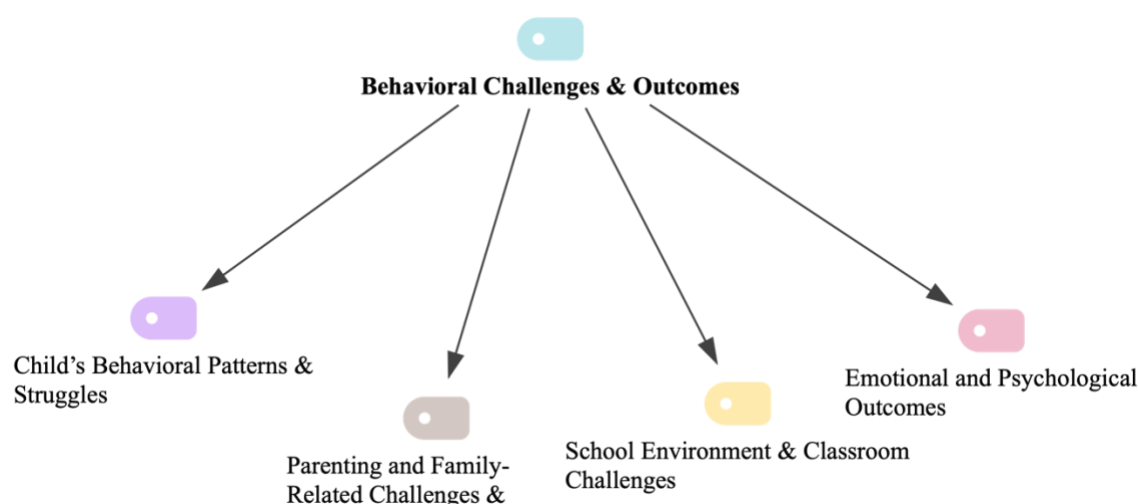


Figure 4.33. Theme 9 and its categories

Childhood aggression comes with its implications, which include behavioral challenges and outcomes. Behavioral challenges and outcomes is the theme that emerged, explaining the difficulties and hardships that children and those around them experience, as well as the possible implications of aggression. When it comes to behavioral challenges and outcomes, four key issues emerged, as shown in Figure 4.33.

These include child's behavioral patterns and struggles ($f=40$), parenting and family related challenges and outcomes ($f=40$), school environment and classroom challenges ($f=26$), emotional and psychological outcomes ($f=2$). Among the four categories, a large amount of data regarding parenting and family related challenges and outcomes came from mothers, and fathers. Additionally, as shown in Figure 4.34, teachers, who were only interviewed separately, primarily discussed school environment and classroom challenges as well as child's behavioral patterns and struggles. Observations did not reveal any relevant data concerning behavioral challenges and outcomes.

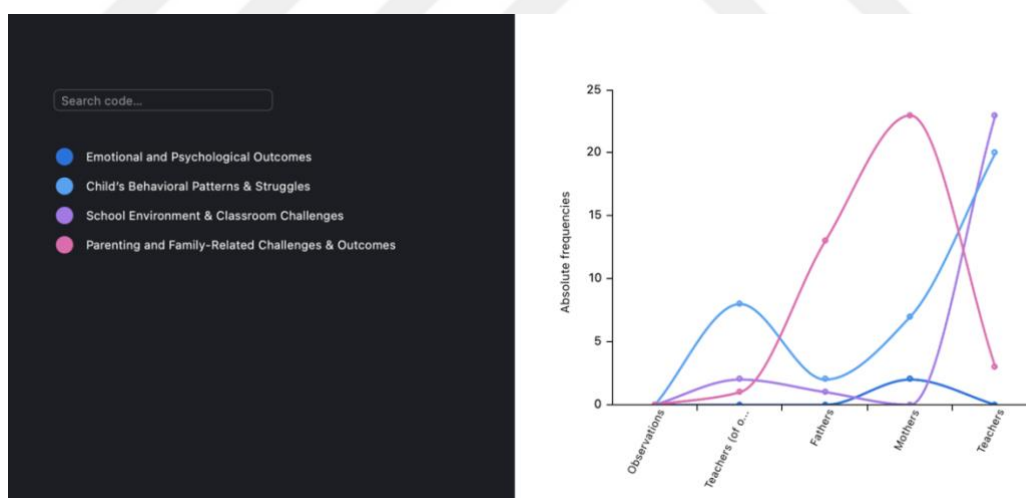


Figure 4.34. Code trend of behavioral challenges and outcomes across different document groups

4.2.3.9.1. Category₁: Emotional and psychological outcomes

One of the primary challenges and outcomes of aggression is emotional and psychological impact. It refers to emotional reactions and outcomes, as well as how

aggression influences individuals psychologically in social settings. As shown in Table 4.51, one code that emerged here is emotional influence and contagion.

Table 4.51. Category 1 (Theme 9) and its' code

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Emotional and psychological outcomes	Emotional influences of aggression which creates psychological hardships in social settings.	2	1	-
Emotional influence and contagion	Interaction and exchange of emotions between parents and child.	2	1	Sometimes it can be really difficult, but in those cases I say, M12 you calm down. Because really at that moment your nerves get tense too. And you tend to react in an angry way. It happens from time to time, there are times when I explode, I shout, there are times when I get angry with him, but sometimes I try to calm myself down and then try to calm him down. (M12, 39)

It refers to the mutual influence of emotions between the parent and the child. As seen in the following quotation, M12 mentioned that the child's emotions are not isolated; rather, there is an exchange and emotional synchrony between her, her husband, and the child:

My daughter is giving us a hard time. She cries and beats herself up. When she says, "I won't do it, I won't go, I want this," I tell her, "No, this is not going to happen." Then she continues to cry a little bit. I don't want to tell her, "It won't happen if you cry," or "I don't know, just cry, it's not important." I don't want to say those things to her. Instead, I tell her to calm down a bit and that we'll talk about it again later. I tell her, "You calm down." ...But as I said, sometimes it can be really difficult. In those moments, I tell myself, "M12, you calm down." Because really, your nerves get tense too, and you tend to react angrily. It happens from time to time. I explode, I shout, and there are times when I get angry with her. But sometimes, I try to calm myself down first, and then I try to calm her down. (M12, 39)

4.2.3.9.2. Category2: Child's behavioral patterns & struggles

Another outcome and challenge of childhood aggression is the child's behavioral patterns and struggles. This refers to the risk of aggressive behaviors becoming a de

facto behavioral pattern and its long-term outcomes. Three codes emerged under behavioral patterns and struggles. As shown in Table 4.52, these are peer and sibling relationship struggles, social and emotional consequences, and persistent and repetitive behavior challenges.

Table 4.52. Category 2 (Theme 9) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Child's behavioral patterns & struggles	The possibility of aggression becoming pattern of behavior and its' impact on social and emotional context	40	24	-
Peer and Sibling Relationship Struggles	Impact of aggression on peer and sibling relationship	7	5	It affects their friendships, they can actually make friends with anyone, but girls especially don't want to play with C5 because he is active and has this kind of violent behavior. Some of the boys also play with C5, I mean a few students try to play with C5. They have difficulty in choosing friends, making friends. (T17-C5, 40)
Social and Emotional Consequences	Being labelled, ostracized from social context and broader systematic implications	28	18	
Persistent & Repetitive Behavior Challenges	Challenges of addressing systematic behavior and risk of persistence of habits over time.	5	5	We don't think there are any serious consequences at the moment, but this is still childhood, so there is adolescence, there is adulthood. When the process is prolonged, the fact that these habits are permanent is of course a concern, in the end. Imagine that your child raises his/her hand to you, I mean, I am thirty-three years old. I have never encountered such a thing in my family and we cannot accept such a thing, to be honest. (F9, 33)

One of the common challenges is the social and emotional consequences. It refers to the social aspect of being labelled as aggressive, being ostracized by peers and even parents, and the inability to establish relationships. This implies that the negative outcomes may have broader systemic implications beyond the immediate context,

such as in future schooling years. T17-C5 (40) described, in the following quotation, how aggression has social and emotional consequences. She stated that once a child is labelled, social relations and dynamics in the classroom change. It is interesting to see another child's relief due to C5's absence from the classroom.

There are many negative consequences because they are labeled. Most of the children said one day, "C5 didn't come." One of my student teachers said, "C5 didn't come today, what a beautiful day." You know, this really upset me. It made me sad that even children think this way. Plus, there are labels among the parents: "C5 did this to my daughter today," "C5 did that to my son today." This labeling thing really bothers me a lot; it's something I don't want to have in my class. Most of the time, I try to ignore some things and intervene without letting the other children know, so that there is no labeling. But unfortunately, because there is labeling, I may not be able to prevent it from time to time. Labeling is harmful. It affects their friendships. They can be friends with anyone, but girls especially do not want to play with C5 because he is active and has such violent behaviors. Some of the boys also play with him; a few students try to play with C5. He has difficulty making friends. (T17-C5, 40)

4.2.3.9.3 Category3: School environment & classroom challenges

The third category is the school environment and classroom challenges. It refers to challenges teachers and children face in the classroom due to aggressive behaviors. As shown in Table 4.53, two codes emerged: communication and parental cooperation issues, and classroom disruptions and management difficulties.

One of the most common issues is communication and parental cooperation. Challenges in communicating the teacher's perspective to parents and parents' refusal to involve and cooperate with the teacher are explained by the code of communication and parental cooperation issues. Regarding parents, in the following excerpt, T17-C5 (40) described difficulties dealing with other parents and trying to raise awareness regarding the importance of integrating C5 into society.

I am really having a lot of difficulty. I am trying to explain to the parents that C5 is a child, and that we need to make an effort to integrate every child into society. Some of them understand, they say, "Yes, teacher, you are very right, God help you." Others say, "Why is he hurting my child? Then my child will hit him/her from now on," and they say things like that. (T17-C5, 40).

Table 4.53. Category 3 (Theme 9) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
School Environment & Classroom Challenges	Challenges teachers and other children experience in the classroom	26	11	-
Communication & Parental Cooperation Issues	Challenges in reaching out to parents and convincing parents to actively involve in	16	8	I think his family was a hindrance. They don't improve themselves in this area. I don't think they set rules; I don't think they enforce them. I couldn't reach the family, just like I wanted. ...Yes, the woman was interested, but she was only getting information about her child. I mean, I don't think she was doing anything to fix it, she didn't. Maybe she only talked to him once. She told me that she told him about this issue, but I don't think it was much more sufficient. (T4, 39)
Classroom Disruptions and Management Difficulties	challenges of classroom management that a teacher faces and discipline challenges parents experience	10	7	I was constantly on my guard because of the deterioration of the atmosphere in the classroom and the need to constantly control that child, his behavior that could harm someone, cause serious physical harm, or harm himself. At the end of the year, I even made a sentence like this: "I gave alms for the time I spent with that child without any accidents". (T11, 37)

4.2.3.9.4. Category4: Parenting and family-related challenges & outcomes

The last behavioral challenge and outcome is parenting and family-related challenges and outcomes. This category refers to challenges in the home environment and their outcomes concerning parenting and family. As shown in Table 4.54, three codes emerged, which are intergenerational influence on behavior, family conflicts and disruptions, and parental stress and struggles.

Parental stress and struggles are the most common code. It refers to the emotional and psychological strain caused by aggression and its outcomes, such as parental frustration and social embarrassment. In the following quotation, M10 described and summarized how constant problem behaviors make parents feel helpless and emotionally drained:

Sometimes I feel so frustrated. ...We brought my daughter here (to work) yesterday because she is always creating chaos at home. My son is touching this. “No, you can’t touch this, no, you can’t. We won’t play the game right now.” A constant domination. And my son says, “No, I want to play with it, don’t interfere,” and so on. So, yesterday, we found the solution by bringing my daughter here (to work) and leaving my son alone (in the care of his grandmother) for a while. We fed my daughter here; we spent time with her. You know, spending some individual time is good for them. We were more interested in her and so on. We went home as if we had never been there. My daughter continued the chaos as if it had started in the morning. I felt frustrated, tired from the whole day, like I couldn’t go one step further, and I said I wanted to go to the bathroom and relax. I mean, I want to stay there by myself. (M10, 35)

Table 4.54. Category 4 (Theme 9) and its codes

Category/ Codes	Description	<i>f</i>	Participants (n/46)	Empirical indicators
Parenting and Family-Related Challenges & Outcomes	Challenges and outcomes of aggression in home environment	40	19	-
Intergenerational Influence on Behavior	Problematic behaviors being passed down from one generation to the next	2	2	Inevitably, as I said, she tries to solve things with violence. She tries to solve things by shouting, calling, crying. It also affects the little one, and the little one tries to learn the same things by looking at her. This of course reflects minus to her and to me. I have to warn her extra this time. Her sister sees it, she doesn’t follow what I say. (M7, 36)
Family Conflicts & Disruptions	Influence of aggression as marital tension and familial disharmony	11	3	I mean, it makes his mother nervous, it makes us nervous, it makes his brother nervous. I mean, his brother can actually tolerate his brother a little more if he wants to, but you say, son, look, either get along or break up. Ours do neither. (F12, 39)
Parental Stress and Struggles	Emotional psychological strain, parental frustration and embarrassment parents experience	27	16	Researcher: Is there a negative consequence for you, for your family environment? M6: Of course there are, we can go and be humiliated in front of our friends. All of a sudden, our child turns out to be a swearer. (M6, 31)

4.2.4. Developing culturally appropriate childhood aggression theory

In the current study, as the final step in line with grounded theory and situational analysis, a culturally appropriate childhood aggression theory is developed.

Additionally, in accordance with situational analysis, several maps were prepared, including the messy situational map, ordered situational map, relational analysis map, social spheres/power arenas map, and positional map.

Firstly, among the nine themes, four are in a sequential relationship. The antecedent of the behaviors triggers the emergence of aggressive behaviors. In response to these behaviors, other individuals react, which falls under the theme of the consequences of aggressive behavior. Following this, adults in the scene react and intervene in the problematic behavior and conflict situation. As depicted in Figure 4.35, interventions may sometimes fail, whether in the short term, immediately, or in the long term.

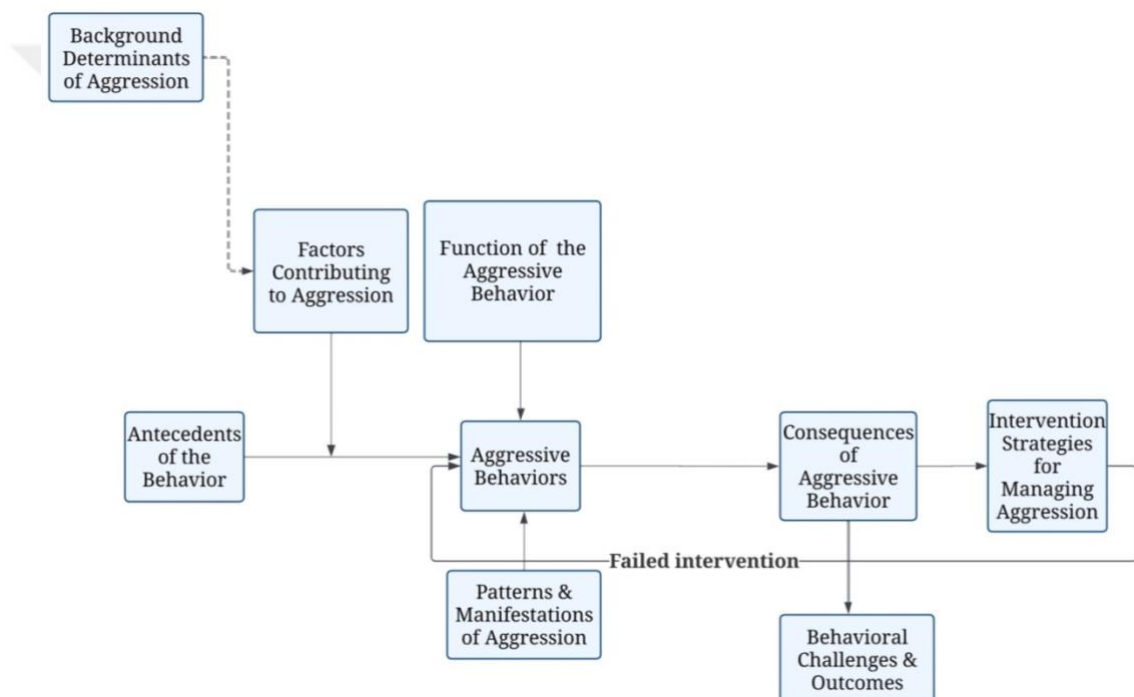


Figure 4.35. Culturally appropriate childhood aggression theory

As intervention fails, children may react or continue to display aggression, thereby restarting the sequential cycle. If an intervention fails, it might contribute to triggering factors. To clarify, for example, in a classroom setting, the teacher may intervene in the aggressive behavior; however, if the intervention fails, the child might retaliate by increasing the intensity of the behavior or redirecting aggression toward others.

Beyond the sequential relationships, factors contributing to aggression determine whether children respond to certain triggers with aggression. Thus, as shown in Figure 4.35, these factors are positioned between the antecedent of the behavior and the aggressive behaviors. As the name implies, background determinants of aggression influence these contributing factors, but their role is more distant and occurs in the background. They are placed in a more distal position and are indicated by a dotted line. The function of aggression and patterns and manifestations of aggression are located around aggressive behaviors and directly linked to them, as they play a role in understanding the context and intent behind the behavior. Finally, behavioral challenges and outcomes are placed under the consequences of aggressive behaviors. This placement is due to the fact that these are implications and long-term results of the consequences of aggression. To highlight the “long-term” nature, a double line is used in Figure 4.35.



Figure 4.36. Messy situational map

As required by situational analysis, the first step was to create a messy situational map, shown in Figure 4.36. In this initial step, code frequencies and words were examined. Prominent codes or words were transcribed in a disorganized manner. These words or codes acted as keywords, offering explanations and providing clues for the study.

Individual Non-human & Human Elements/Actors- Key individuals and significant (unorganized) people in the situation Human actors & elements Female friends Grandparents Male friends Other child/others Sibling influence Teacher Paternal permissiveness Peers Non-human elements Object Violent toys Collective Human Elements/Actors- Particular groups; specific organizations Class size Classroom Family dynamics/structure Home-school collaboration Intergenerational support Peer influence Working conditions Discursive Constructions Individual and/or Collective Human Actors-As found in the situation Attention seeking Bias towards peer difference Excluding Resistance Resonance behavior Political/Economic Elements-The state; particular industries; local/regional/global orders; political parties; politicized issues Media/Technology Socioeconomic Temporal Elements-Historical, seasonal, crisis, and/or trajectory aspects Inconsistent parenting Marital harmony Parental absence Parental disconnect/alienation Frustration Emotional distress Major Issues/Debates (Usually Contested) Power & control Ambiguity of motivation Abuse Free play Impulsivity Red lines Negative punishment Positive punishment

Figure 4.37. Ordered situational map

Following the creation of the messy situational map, the researcher organized the identified words or codes into categories proposed by Clarke (2005). As a result, the ordered situational map, illustrated in Figure 4.37, was developed. These categories encompass individual non-human and human elements/actors, collective human elements/actors, discursive constructions involving individual and/or collective

human actors, political/economic elements, temporal elements, and major issues/debates.

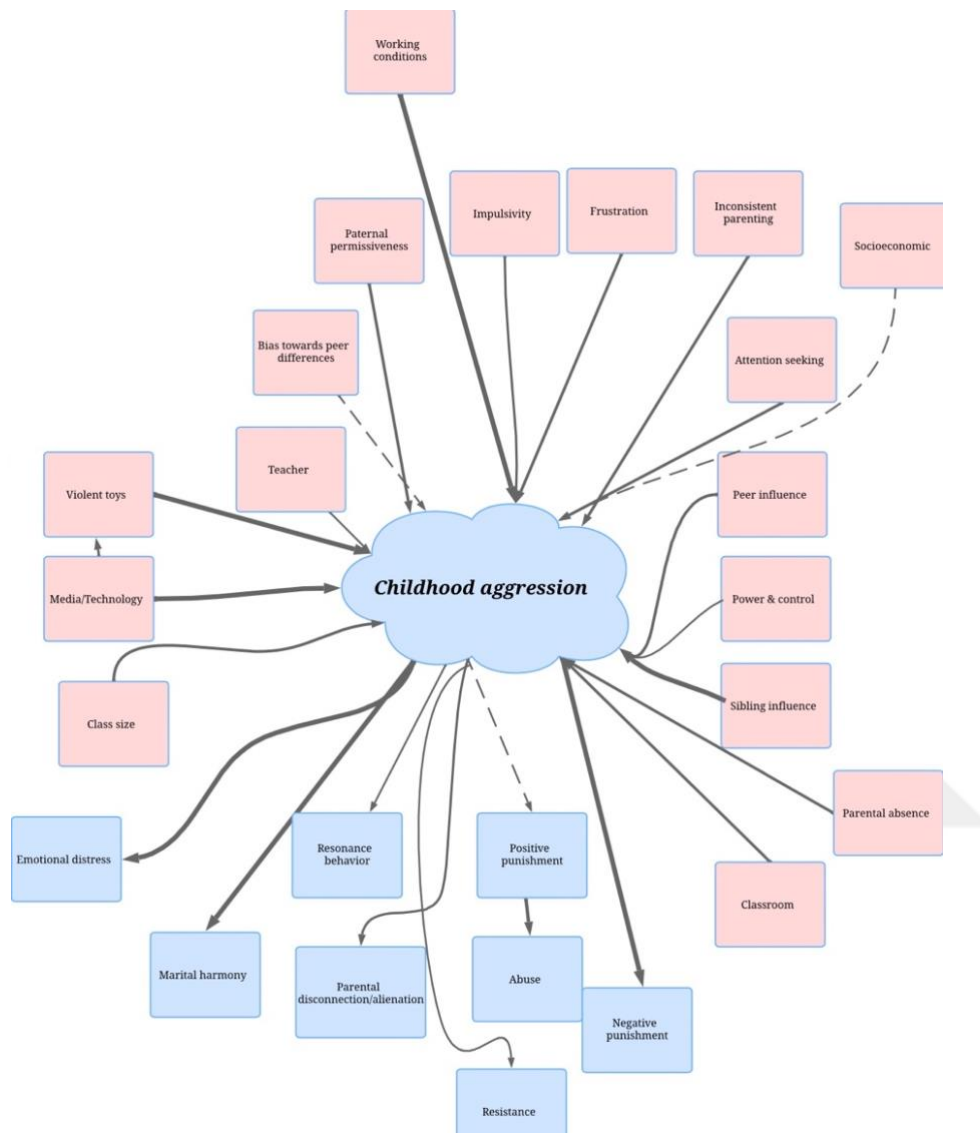


Figure 4.38. Relational analysis map

As the third map, a relational analysis map was created. The most prominent elements from the previous maps were selected. In Figure 4.38, relationships were depicted using lines or arrows. The dotted lines indicate a weak relationship, reflecting the less frequent mention of specific words or codes when describing childhood aggression. Conversely, the thicker lines represent a strong relationship, signifying the frequent mention of certain words or codes in relation to childhood aggression.

The fourth map created was the social spheres/power arenas map. As illustrated in Figure 4.39, children are positioned at the center of the map. Surrounding them are their peers, who frequently interact with each other in social settings. The arrows in Figure 4.39 represent these interactions. In the outer circle, direct caregivers and influencers are placed, with interactions between parents and teachers occurring within this circle. Furthermore, both parents and teachers interact with children, as shown by the arrows in Figure 4.39. A third circle contains wider social and structural influences, including the school, cultural and parenting norms, as well as media and technology. As highlighted in Figure 4.39, interactions between the school and teacher, as well as between cultural and parenting norms and parents, are emphasized. In the outermost circle, distal structural forces are represented, such as socioeconomic conditions, working conditions, and legal and policy frameworks. The legal and policy frameworks refer to school policies on discipline, intervention strategies, and guidance and counseling services.

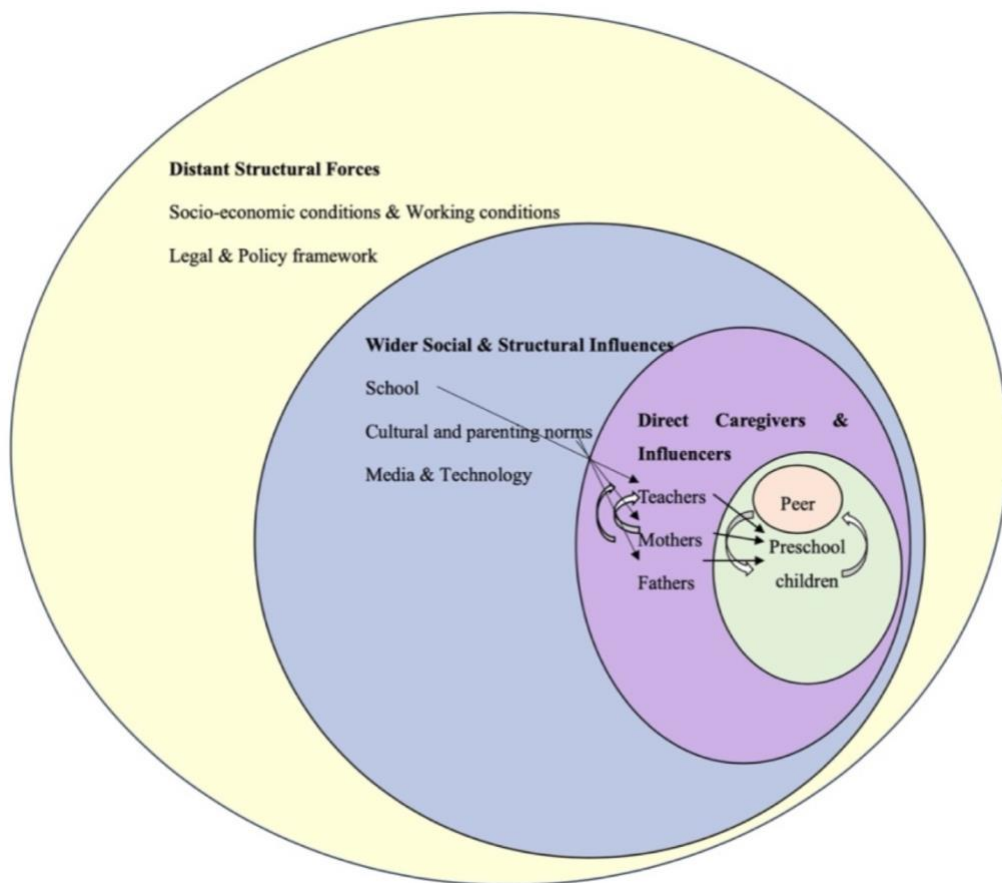


Figure 4.39. Social spheres/power arenas map

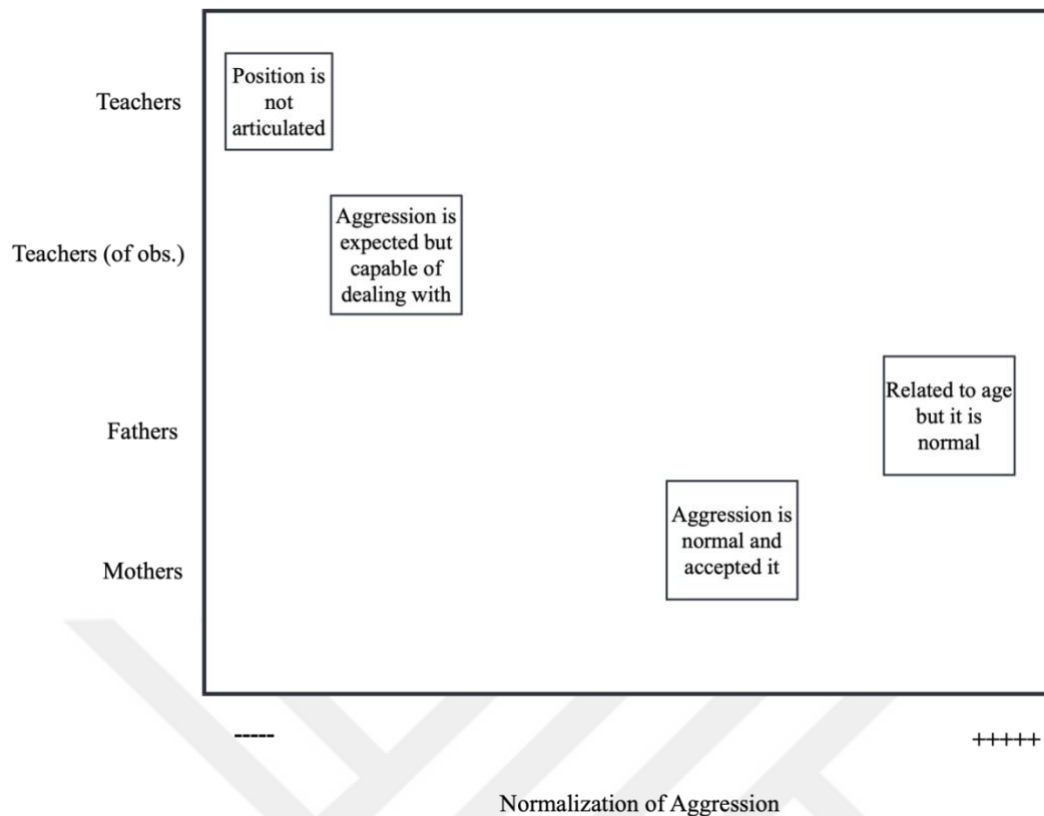


Figure 4.40. Positional map displaying normalization of aggression

The final map is the positional map, which depicts the normalization of aggression. In Figure 4.40, the X-axis shows the frequency with which participants mentioned the issue, with ‘----’ indicating fewer mentions and ‘++++’ indicating more frequent mentions. Positional maps illustrate how different groups position themselves regarding specific issues. In Study 2, one such issue is the normalization of aggression, with participants holding varying views on the matter.

The Y-axis represents different groups of participants. As shown in Figure 4.40, teachers who only participated in the interviews did not provide any insights regarding this issue; therefore, their position is not represented. Teachers involved in the observation study provided limited input on the normalization of aggression, adopting the view that “aggression is expected but manageable.” Fathers were the group that discussed this issue the most, asserting that it is age-related and developmentally normal. Lastly, mothers mentioned the issue less frequently than fathers but more than teachers. Their position can be summarized as “aggression is normal and accepted.”

4.2.5. Key findings

- Culturally appropriate childhood aggression is explored through nine key themes: antecedents of aggression, aggressive behaviors, consequences of aggression, intervention strategies, functions of aggressive behavior, patterns and manifestations, contributing factors, underlying determinants, and behavioral challenges and outcomes.
- Emotional and psychological triggers, such as unusual or expressive behavior, attention-seeking actions, and heightened emotional sensitivity to incidents, are often observed before aggression.
- Environmental and situational triggers, such as spatial factors, changes in activities, classroom transitions, and play or object-related triggers, often precede aggression.
- During covert oppression, children are suppressed, leading to no overt reaction. These covert interactions may appear conflict-free on the surface but are, in fact, conflicted beneath the surface.
- Peer interactions and social dynamics, including positive peer interactions, social engagement and exclusion, power and status among peers, and peer conflict or struggles, can also trigger aggression.
- Peer-initiated actions, such as encouraging responsibility and structure, corrective and disciplinary measures, and teachers' influence on behavior, are frequently observed before aggression.
- Out of the 23 aggressive behaviors identified in Study 1, only 17 were observed in Study 2.
- Among these behaviors, physical aggression was the most commonly observed, while relational and verbal aggression occurred equally.
- Teachers reported physical aggression more frequently than mothers and fathers, with mothers mentioning it the least.
- In Study 2, three relationally aggressive behaviors were identified. In order of frequency, these are excluding, undermining others, and ignoring.
- Two verbally aggressive behaviors were noted in Study 2. From most to least frequent, these are using offensive language and vocal outbursts.

- Name-calling is a form of using offensive language. Some words, though seemingly innocent and harmless, can be perceived as aggressive based on the reaction they provoke and the harm they cause. Therefore, the key factor in determining aggression is the perception of the recipient.
- In Study 2, 12 physically aggressive behaviors were identified. Listed from most to least frequent, these include hitting, throwing objects or oneself, causing harm, pulling, pushing, pinching, getting on top of someone, interrupting play or ongoing educational activities, kicking, scratching, choking, and biting.
- Biting is reported as a particularly challenging behavior to manage, as it is difficult to address and explain to parents.
- At times, physical aggression was displayed covertly, and its aggressive nature could only be fully understood after confirmation from the teachers.
- Corrective actions and behavioral adjustments such as conditional conflict resolution, boundary and resource management, compliance enforcement, and instructional responses occur immediately following aggression.
- Emotional and social consequences such as emotional distress and social reactions arise as a result of aggression.
- Defensive and retaliatory responses such as defensive withdrawal, denial, resistance, and retaliation occur as consequences of aggression.
- Social and peer influence responses, including social reinforcement and contagion, are also consequences of aggression. This suggests that aggression can encourage others to adopt similar behaviors, leading children to imitate aggression as a learned response.
- In addition, passive or avoidant reactions, where individuals disengage or refrain from responding, may result from exposure to aggression.
- Therapeutic and specialized interventions, such as professional and therapeutic support, are utilized as strategies for managing aggression. Occupational therapy and collaboration with guidance counselors and professionals are employed as intervention methods.
- Conflict resolution and de-escalation strategies such as using gentle verbal and nonverbal cues, redirecting attention and behavior, and managing and

resolving conflicts are utilized as intervention strategies for managing aggression.

- Behavior management and discipline strategies, such as direct disciplinary responses, teaching boundaries and accountability, selective ignoring, reinforcement, and punishment, are implemented to address and manage aggression.
- Emotional and social development strategies, including assigning responsibility to promote positive engagement and fostering emotional awareness and empathy, are used to help manage aggression.
- Preventive and proactive strategies, such as teaching moral and social expectations, enhancing parent-school collaboration, and identifying and monitoring behavioral patterns, are essential for effectively managing aggression.
- Aggressive behaviors serve various functions, including attention-seeking, reactive and resistant behaviors such as opposition and defiance, using behavior as a game, sensory and cognitive functions like seeking stimulation and engagement, and emotionally driven functions such as defense mechanisms, retaliation, and emotional expression. Additionally, social and power-driven functions such as envy-driven behavior, social exclusion, peer regulation, and the assertion of social power use aggression as a tool to achieve children's goals and desires.
- Aggression is a socially constructed phenomenon that is frequently associated with labeling; however, these labels are inherently subjective and context-dependent.
- Children may selectively target specific peers and direct aggression toward them, either overtly or covertly.
- The duration of aggression can vary; in some instances, it manifests as a persistent behavior, with the child exhibiting aggressive actions on an almost daily basis. Conversely, aggression may occur suddenly, without prior indication, though in certain cases, it can be anticipated based on cues such as facial expressions, body language, and the child's emotional state.
- The development of aggression is influenced by a range of factors, including life events such as attending preschool or kindergarten and the birth of a

sibling. These specific milestones can have a notable impact on the child, often leading to an increase in the frequency and intensity of aggressive behaviors.

- Contextual and situational factors, such as external conditions, also affect aggression. For instance, the presence of a particular individual, the location, the type of activity at school, and the gender of the opponent can all influence aggressive behavior.
- Aggression is more commonly observed in school environments, with a higher incidence occurring in the classroom. In preschool settings, aggressive behaviors tend to be most prevalent during free play, followed by transitions and art activities, respectively.
- Aggressive behaviors are generally directed toward male peers, followed by female peers. While not as frequently mentioned, adults, such as parents, teachers, and grandparents, can also be the targets of aggression.
- Social and environmental triggers, individual dispositions and personality traits, emotional regulation and coping challenges, cognitive and psychological factors, as well as physical, health, and biological influences, all significantly contribute to the manifestation of aggression.
- With regard to individual dispositions and personality traits, children exhibiting strong-willed, controlling behaviors, competitive or status-driven personalities, elevated energy levels, and a pronounced need for novelty and stimulation are more predisposed to displaying aggressive behaviors.
- In terms of physical, health, and biological influences, instinctual and innate reactions, as well as dietary and physical constraints, and health or developmental challenges, all play a role in the occurrence of aggression.
- Past experiences and learned behaviors, as well as impulsivity and deficits in self-control, are fundamental cognitive and psychological factors that contribute to aggression.
- Emotional regulation and coping challenges, such as frustration resulting from competition and setbacks, alongside difficulties in managing emotions and mood, play a significant role in the development of aggressive behaviors.

- Social and environmental factors, including socioeconomic influences, peer interactions, and the classroom or school environment, are significant contributors to the manifestation of aggression.
- Family and parenting dynamics, along with social and cultural factors, the school and peer context, and developmental and social learning processes, all function as pivotal background determinants of aggression.
- Cultural and social factors, such as the broader cultural and economic context, and the influence of media and technology, serve as important background determinants of aggressive behavior. Similarly, developmental and social learning factors, such as familial and intergenerational influences and early social-emotional development, contribute substantially to aggression.
- Parenting practices, including consistency in discipline, the quality of parent-child relationship, parental supervision and influence, parenting styles, and the nature of parental bonding and presence, are frequently cited as significant background determinants of aggression.
- Children's behavioral patterns and challenges, including difficulties with peer and sibling relationships, social and emotional consequences, and persistent, repetitive behaviors, are key areas of concern. These issues are often influenced by family dynamics, such as intergenerational patterns, family conflicts, disruptions, and parental stress. In the school environment, challenges like poor communication between parents and teachers, classroom disruptions, and difficulties in behavior management further impact children's struggles. Additionally, emotional and psychological factors, including emotional contagion and influence, contribute significantly to these behavioral patterns and their outcomes.
- Every aspect of the study is situated within a specific cultural context, with culture being evident in each theme and code. However, as defined in this study, culture is most prominently reflected in categories or codes related to cultural and economic context, which explore factors such as parents' working hours and conditions, and marital harmony; media and technology influence; family and intergenerational influences, which include sibling

relationships, family dynamics, and intergenerational support; and family and parenting influences, encompassing aspects such as parenting consistency and conflict, parental influence and supervision, parenting styles and authority, and parental bonding and presence.

- The culturally appropriate childhood aggression theory consists of nine themes. The theory outlines a sequential relationship, beginning with the antecedents of aggression, followed by the aggressive behaviors, the consequences of these behaviors, and the intervention strategies for managing aggression. If the intervention is unsuccessful, the cycle returns to aggressive behaviors. Background determinants of aggression play a supportive role in shaping factors that contribute to aggression, which in turn influence whether the antecedent leads to aggressive behavior. The function of aggressive behaviors and the patterns and manifestations of aggression are closely related to aggressive behavior, as they explain the purpose and nature of aggression. Finally, behavioral challenges and outcomes represent the long-term consequences of aggressive behaviors.
- In this model, power dynamics and social spheres are structured in layers: distant structural forces surround broader social and structural influences, which in turn encircle direct caregivers and influencers, ultimately affecting the child and their peers.
- Distant structural forces, such as socio-economic conditions, working conditions, legal and policy framework, create a larger framework that influences the immediate social and structural environments surrounding a child. Additionally, wider social and structural influences, such as societal norms, cultural values, and broader systems of power, create a larger framework that influences the immediate social and structural environments surrounding a child. These wider forces shape the behaviors and expectations within families, schools, and communities. In this context, direct caregivers (such as parents, teachers, and grandparents) and influencers (such as media or community leaders) are key figures who, in turn, affect children's behavior and interactions with their peers. Essentially, these layers of influence, from

distant societal forces down to the immediate relationships, interact to shape how a child perceives and responds to aggression.

- Aggression is less normalized by teachers and more normalized by parents.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This chapter is divided into two sections: Study 1 and Study 2. An overview of Study 1, the interpretation of its findings and their connection to existing literature is provided in this section. The implications and recommendations for further studies are discussed in the subsequent section, under heading 5.1. Furthermore, an overview and interpretations of the findings from Study 2 and their connection to existing literature is presented under heading 5.2. Additionally, the discussions and implications of the study and recommendations for further studies are also included in this section.

5.1. Discussion of Study 1

5.1.1. Overview of Study 1

Study 1 investigated childhood aggression by gathering perspectives from various experts, including psychological guidance counselors, child development specialists, clinical psychologists, child psychiatrists, and early childhood educators. To achieve these objectives, research questions focused on the definition of aggression, the classification of childhood aggression, and the characteristics of these classifications were addressed. Findings related to these questions are discussed under heading 5.1, in connection with the existing literature.

5.1.2 Discussion of findings

5.1.2.1 Operational definition of childhood aggression

Different fields within the social sciences have described childhood aggression in various ways. For instance, the psychological sciences have emphasized emotional

dysregulation, motivation, and cognition (Berkowitz, 1993a; Dodge et al., 2006). Educational sciences is focused on behaviors such as relational, verbal, or physical aggression and the impact of these behaviors on social relationships (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Tremblay (2000) argued that aggression is critical for psychiatrists, as it can be a symptom of psychiatric disorders such as ADHD or behavioral problems. Similarly, in this study, psychiatrists and psychologists highlighted the biological and medical aspects of aggression. However, coded segments regarding these aspects were more limited compared to other aspects of aggression. Furthermore, an experimental analysis of the biological, neurological, or hormonal factors and their impact on aggression was not conducted. Existing studies have supported the claims of the participants by highlighting various genetic predispositions, hormonal imbalances, and neurological factors (Berkowitz, 1993a; Raine, 2002). Additionally, Tremblay (2000) noted that patients with mental health disorders, such as conduct disorder, are medically treated by psychiatrists, which highlights the biological or medical aspect of aggression. Underwood (2003) also highlighted the variation in terminology and definitions across different fields or disciplines. Participants from various fields defined childhood aggression by emphasizing different focal points and key terms. This variation may be related to exposure to specific terminology and issues during professional education, which shapes views regarding childhood aggression.

In this study, childhood aggression is defined as physical and emotional harm directed at oneself, others, the environment, or objects. As previously mentioned, the participants used different terminologies or defined childhood aggression by highlighting its various characteristics. However, this definition represents a common phrase upon which all participants agreed. Traditional views consider aggression as being directed at others. However, the perspective of developmental psychology also includes acts directed at oneself or objects (Dodge et al., 2006; Tremblay, 2000). Underwood (2003) states that aggression directed at oneself is less common in early childhood and is often associated with frustration and a lack of emotional regulation. Therefore, the definition in this study leans toward a more holistic view. Including oneself and the environment or objects may stem from the professional experiences of participants. Early childhood education experts may encounter children throwing

their toys and causing harm to their friends' belongings. This study also highlighted that aggression must be viewed as a recurring pattern of behavior. This means that to be regarded as an aggressive behavior, children need to display it consistently. Moreover, it is critical to address these behaviors to prevent them from becoming chronic. This claim is supported by Tremblay & Nagin's (2005) findings that aggression has an early onset, and if not addressed, it becomes an established behavioral pattern.

Another aspect of this definition emphasized the importance of understanding children and recognizing that the children's surroundings are critical. This means that aggression is not an isolated construct; it interacts with variables surrounding children. This view is supported by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological systems theory, which highlights the importance of the environment, individuals, and macro-level structures surrounding children. Furthermore, aggression is a reaction to negative conditions and a lack of adult support (Cummings et al., 2000). Therefore, understanding aggression from a broader and more sensitive context is advised by Dodge et al. (2006).

Regarding childhood aggression, participants also distinguished between aggression in adulthood and childhood by mentioning different developmental factors such as deficiencies in expressing and regulating emotions. This indicates that instead of harmful intent, children behave aggressively for specific reasons. By highlighting these distinguishing features, the participants indicated that childhood aggression is different due to children's developmental characteristics. This suggests that understanding intent is critical for effectively addressing aggressive behaviors. Thompson and Goodman (2010) also claimed that the motivation behind aggression is functional. In early years, emotional development is an ongoing process; thus, due to limitations, children navigate difficulties with aggression (Denham et al., 2003). Moreover, children lack the cognitive abilities necessary to carry out harmful intentions (Dodge et al., 2006). Therefore, based on existing literature and participants' statements, it can be concluded that, while children might have intentions and carry out aggressive acts, these intentions are not necessarily to cause

harm; they serve a functional role, with harm occurring as an unintended consequence.

Conclusively, the operational definition of aggression is classed as an umbrella term encompassing the characteristics of aggression, the function of aggression in early childhood (EC), and aggressive behaviors. This indicates that childhood aggression is a multifaceted and complex construct. Therefore, the social function and dynamics of aggression must be acknowledged while defining it (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). In the following sections, the characteristics of childhood aggression, the function of aggression in Early Childhood, and aggressive behaviors are discussed in detail.

5.1.2.1.1. Characteristics of childhood aggression

In this study, the participants claimed that children display different types of aggression depending on their age. Younger children tend to exhibit physical aggression while older children, starting from 60-72 months, tend to display relational and verbal aggression. This shift may indicate the development of language and cognitive skills; as children improve their verbal abilities, they might start to use words instead of physical acts. Previous studies have indicated that children display physical aggression starting at 17 months (Tremblay et al., 1999). Similar to the current study, previous findings suggested that the use of physical aggression decreases while verbal aggression increases as children grow (Tremblay & Nagin, 2005). Vaillancourt (2005) implied that children learn to cope with physical aggression as they mature. Underwood (2003) also stated that this shift indicates that as children grow, they begin to use more intricate, socially driven forms of aggression.

Additionally, participants claimed that the emotions leading to aggression also differ. Younger children act upon various forms of emotions such as frustration, sadness, anxiety, worry, or disappointment rather than just anger. This situation may reflect the developmental characteristics of young children, who have difficulties expressing emotions and cannot manage them. These claims are supported by previous studies, which suggest that aggression occurs more frequently due to emotional dysregulation

rather than as a reaction to provocation (Eisenberg et al., 2001; Dodge et al., 2006; Thompson & Goodman, 2010).

On the other hand, participants also claimed that aggression can be a symptom of psychological disorders. This means that in some cases, children who display aggression may do so due to underlying disorders, and various behavioral problems may accompany aggression. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) and various studies have confirmed aggression as an indicator of neurodevelopmental and psychological disorders (APA, 1994; Keenan & Wakschlag, 2000). Aggression plays an important role in the early identification of psychopathology, allowing timely intervention (Dodge et al., 2006).

Excerpts from participating experts revealed that aggression exhibits gender-based differences. Boys tend to exhibit more physical aggression, while girls display relational and verbal aggression. Research has also revealed similar findings, establishing a link between physical aggression and boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). However, some oppose the idea of segregating behaviors based on gender and emphasize the impact of various variables (Card et al., 2008). Bjorkqvist (1994) supported these findings and claimed that boys tend to display more verbal aggression. Similarly, in the current study, one participant alleged that verbal aggression is more commonly displayed by boys. Therefore, it is prudent to be cautious and avoid overgeneralizations.

As previously mentioned, the intent behind aggression is one of the characteristics of childhood aggression. This study revealed that intent and perceptions of intent are shaped by cultural family practices. Families may use physical actions to express affection or communicate, and these practices may be normal within the family but can conflict with social norms or the practices of other families. Psychologists investigating culture have pointed out that in different cultures, the expression of emotions and the purposes of using different physical acts vary (Cole et al., 2006). Rogoff (2003) also claimed that children model the behaviors they experience and internalize social cues from their immediate surroundings; however, these norms may differ from those in educational contexts. As Kağıtçıbaşı (2007) noted,

aggression is not an isolated construct and interacts with culture. Hence behaviors considered normal in one cultural setting may be perceived differently in another.

In addition to the cultural aspect of intention, participants argued that to comprehend aggressive behavior, it is also critical to consider the perspectives of the children who experience these behaviors. This suggests that even if children have innocent intentions and no desire to cause harm, those who witness such behaviors can still feel hurt. Berkowitz (1993) asserted that the impact of aggression depends on the emotional capacity of the behavior and the perceived intent. To gain a deeper understanding, it's essential to explore the viewpoints of those impacted by aggression more thoroughly. The differing perceptions of intent may be related to the ambiguous nature of intent in early childhood, as children are likely to have intentions that differ from harming (Thompson & Goodman, 2010).

This study also revealed that, to label aggression as pathological, it must occur in multiple settings, and persist frequently and for more than six months. This implies that not all children who display aggressive behaviors can be clinically diagnosed with psychological disorders that include aggression as a symptom. According to the American Psychiatric Association (1994), to diagnose children with behavioral issues, aggression as a symptom must meet these criteria. Based on this finding, it can be inferred that further investigation is needed to understand the origins of the aggressive behavior if children display aggression only in school or home environments. Furthermore, it is established that aggression is a common behavioral pattern among young children, and it is important to know when to seek help (Tremblay & Nagin, 2005). These criteria for pathological aggression distinguish developmental behavior problems from clinical issues.

Regarding aggression in early childhood educational settings, findings have revealed that children are more likely to display aggression during free play. This indicates that children are more prone to exhibit aggressive behaviors during less supervised and structured periods of their daily routine. Research supporting these findings also claimed that aggression is likely to occur in less supervised settings, such as open-ended activities and playgrounds, where power dynamics between peers come into

play (Smith, 2010). Without supervision during rough-and-tumble play, the play can escalate into aggression (Pellegrini, 2002). Based on these findings and existing literature, it can be concluded that a lack of supervision and structure is a key factor leading to aggression.

This study indicates that sudden socio-cultural changes and events impact aggression. Participants identified these changes and events as the pandemic, the birth of a sibling, divorce, accidents and so on. This finding aligns with previous research investigating the psychological effects of COVID-19, which revealed that sudden changes in routines and anxiety lead to behavioral problems (Orgilés et al., 2020). Similarly, Cicchetti and Toth (1998) emphasized the impact of stress and trauma on the ability to regulate emotions, which in turn leads to increased aggression. Moreover, since divorce and the birth of a sibling are among the most significant changes that disrupt the lives of young children, numerous studies have established a link between these events and aggression (Martinez & Forgatch, 2002). These findings indicated that changes and stressful events trigger aggression by disrupting children's emotional regulation and stability. The impact of these events may be related to the cognitive, emotional, and verbal development levels of young children; thus, these events may be linked to aggression among young children rather than adults.

Findings of the current study also revealed that emotional regulation and the ability to control aggression are closely associated with developmental factors such as cognitive development. Participants implied that it is common to encounter aggression in younger children since they are still developing and lack higher-order skills. Similarly, Thompson and Goodman (2010) supported the association between emotional regulation and executive functioning, which is one aspect of cognitive development. Supporting the interpretations of participants in the current study, previous research has also claimed that social cues may be misinterpreted due to underdeveloped cognitive processing, which may lead to reactive aggression (Dodge et al., 2006). Based on these findings and literature, it can be concluded that the developmental characteristics of young children might explain some aspects of childhood aggression.

Brain development is also revealed to be important concerning aggression. Previous research has found that the prefrontal cortex, responsible for regulation and executive functioning, continues to develop until adolescence (Casey et al., 2005). Raine (2002) claimed that underdeveloped brain function is one of the reasons for difficulties in emotional regulation. This study only mentions the biological factors or medical issues and these findings do not stem from experimental research or methods to evaluate the underlying biological factors. This study's biological findings come from the claims and expert opinions of the participants.

A conflicting finding in this study is that rural and socio-cultural backgrounds are linked to aggression. However, this arises from opposing statements regarding the relationship between aggression and lower or higher socio-economic backgrounds. This conflicting nature of socio-economic background also aligns with existing research. Research similarly links low SES with adversity, inconsistent parenting, and limited access to resources, which increases the likelihood of developing behavioral problems such as aggression (McLoyd, 1998; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). In this study, while establishing a relationship between high SES and aggression, participants provided examples of long parental working hours, which aligns with previous studies by Luthar and Becker (2002). This existing research lists the possible reasons for this association: academic pressure, emotional neglect due to work conditions, and over-scheduling. These findings indicate that it is challenging to relate aggression solely to poverty, as various variables are at play.

Another interesting finding regarding aggression is that it exists on the spectrum. This means that not all forms of aggression can be considered the same, and each has different implications. Previous studies have also claimed that aggression is multifaceted and has various forms, leading to different developmental outcomes (Dodge et al., 2006; Tremblay, 2000). Blair (2004) argued that some forms of aggression may indicate neurological risks, while other forms may be characteristics of age. In light of this finding and existing literature, it is important to avoid generalizations concerning aggression and to consider all facets of aggression.

Negative connotations, stigma, and labeling concerning aggression is another notable aspect of aggression. Existing literature discusses labels and stigmas concerning self-

fulfilling prophecies. When labeled as aggressive, children may embrace these labels as characteristics of their personality and act accordingly (Caprara et al., 2007). Furthermore, these labels reportedly prolong educational experiences and impact teachers' expectations and their relationships with peers (Jones & Jones, 2012). Hence, aggression, stigmas, and labels interact mutually. This means that aggression may lead to stigmas and labels, which in turn, may contribute to the aggression.

5.1.2.1.2. Function of aggression in EC

One of the aspects of aggression commonly referenced while defining childhood aggression is its function. This study revealed that aggression plays a role in expressing emotions and frustrations and serves as a form of communication. The literature also indicates that children with poor emotional regulation tend to use physical acts and vocalizations to communicate (Denham et al., 2003). Regarding emotional expression, Siegel and Bryson (2011) claimed that powerful emotions lead to significant behaviors. Similar to emotional development, children with immature language development also use aggression to communicate (Perry, 2001). In this study, participants also claimed that using aggression as a communication tool is closely associated with language development. A study found that children with delayed language tend to display aggression compared to their peers (Cole et al., 2010). Taking these findings and existing literature into account, it can be concluded that this function of aggression is closely related to the developmental characteristics of young children. Therefore, it is expected that as children grow, this function of aggression will diminish.

Moreover, childhood aggression is used as a tool to express various emotions such as worry, frustration, anger, and sadness. In contrast to childhood aggression, adults generally use aggression primarily to express anger. This finding is also supported by previous research, which claimed that aggression stems from difficulties in regulating emotions rather than from the emotions themselves (Denham et al., 2003). Berkowitz (1993) claimed that aggression in adulthood emerges after encountering injustice, provocation, or conflict resulting in anger and leading to aggression. In childhood, however, the lack of ability to understand, classify, and control emotions

is associated with the emergence of aggression (Thompson & Goodman, 2010). This indicates the need for supporting the emotional regulation of young children.

The final function mentioned in defining aggression is using aggression to obtain desired objects and goals. In this context, there is a specific categorization of aggression that describes this function, known as instrumental aggression (Dodge et al., 2006). Instrumental aggression is defined as using aggression to acquire an object or achieve a goal (Tremblay, 2000). Furthermore, existing studies have revealed that children learn through exploration, and during this stage some of their actions may be aggressive (Hay, 2005). This means that in a trial-and-error process, children might use aggression to obtain an object. Children may adopt these behaviors as a pattern without any feedback from caregivers.

5.1.2.1.3. Aggressive behaviors

In this study, participants identified various types of aggressive behaviors. Two of the most commonly mentioned aggressive behaviors are hitting and pushing. In previous literature, these two behaviors were commonly referred to as aggression (Crick et al., 2006; Harlow & Lauersdorf, 1974; Tremblay & Nagin, 2005). Furthermore, some of the least mentioned aggressive behaviors include getting on top of someone, choking, scratching, and wetting oneself. In early childhood, some aggressive behaviors are considered typical, temporary, and mild; however, behaviors like choking or other severely damaging actions are considered symptoms of behavioral and emotional disorders (Keenan & Wakschlag, 2000). Hence, the emergence of these behaviors may signal the need for referral to professionals (Tremblay & Nagin, 2005). Since these behaviors are considered atypical, some participants may not encounter them daily, leading to lesser instances of mention. Biting is another prominent behavior; participants expressed concern about the intensity and prolonged effects of biting. Biting is considered a high-intensity behavior that emerges as a result of immature language development and emotional regulation (Oliver, 2022; Potegal, 2023). The problematic nature of biting stems from the risk of harming other children and the challenges caregivers and teachers face in creating safe environments (Gartrell, 2004).

5.1.2.2. Types of aggression

In the current study, aggression is characterized based on location, variables related to behavior, forms of expression, the presence of intent, and so on. Childhood aggression was divided into eight different groups with various subcategories and codes. The most commonly used categorizations were: relational, verbal, and physical aggression. This is consistent with previous literature (Coie & Dodge, 1998; Crick et al., 1997; Vissing et al., 1991). Buss (1961) also proposed several categorizations: physical-verbal, active-passive, and direct-indirect. In this study, two other categories from the literature, active and passive, were not mentioned by any participant. This may be related to the fact that there are various overlapping types of aggression (Cohen et al., 2006). Another categorization that emerged in the current study is proactive and reactive aggression. This finding aligns with previous literature, where proactive aggression is associated with premeditated acts, while reactive aggression occurs as a response to provocation (Dodge & Coie, 1987). Additionally, Feshbach's categorization, which categorizes aggression based on intent, such as hostile and instrumental, was also revealed in the current study. However, it is crucial to mention that this categorization was primarily proposed by psychologists in the current study. This may be related to the fact that each profession focuses on aggression from its perspective and field of expertise.

As mentioned, verbal aggression was one of the prominent categories that emerged in this study. Participants listed behaviors such as vocal outbursts, wailing or crying, using offensive language, and belittling others as verbal aggression. Some of these behaviors are difficult to categorize, as Crick and Grotpeter (1995) consider verbal insults and name-calling as relational aggression. Furthermore, Underwood (2003) characterized belittling as an indirect type of aggression and considers it relational.

Relational aggression is another commonly mentioned categorization. Participants provided examples of relational aggression, such as spreading rumors, ignoring, belittling others, and excluding. Relational aggression is defined by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) as causing harm through relationships. Researchers have claimed that the term "relationship" is key to differentiate relational aggression from physical

or verbal aggression. Therefore, it might be confusing to differentiate relational aggression from verbal aggression. In line with this interpretation, participants in this study were divided on classifying undermining behaviors, which refer to mocking, belittling, or flaunting. Some classified it as verbal aggression, while others classified it relational. However, as Crick and Grotpeter (1995) stated, if the verbal statements target relationships, then it is relational aggression. This means that relational aggression can include verbal statements.

The last categorization that is highly emphasized is physical aggression, which includes behaviors such as biting, hitting, and pushing. Tremblay and his colleagues (2005) described physical aggression as using physical force through objects or one's body parts. Similarly, in the current study, physical aggression is also described as causing harm through physical contact. Furthermore, similar to Tremblay and Nagin (2005), participants stated that aggression can occur as a result of physical contact, such as hitting, or through objects, such as throwing toys.

5.1.3. Educational Implications and recommendations for further studies

In Study 1, the operational definition of childhood aggression, aggressive behavior, and types of aggression were investigated from the perspectives of experts in Türkiye. This study conceptualizes childhood aggression based on these findings. First, the importance of this study derives from creating definitions and related themes within the Turkish context and from professionals who deal with these issues daily. These insights provide a conceptual framework for researchers to build upon. Furthermore, the findings also offer guidelines for teachers, parents, researchers, and other professionals to understand and comprehend childhood aggression. Consequently, these individuals can distinguish aggressive behaviors occurring in classrooms by referring to the operational definitions and lists of aggressive behaviors. Although various definitions and lists of behaviors (Braine, 1994; Carpenter, 2002) are available in the literature, the findings of Study 1 provide an understanding of childhood aggression within the Turkish context.

Moreover, the findings of the study imply that there is more than one categorization of aggression, and each professional group classifies it from its perspective. This

suggests that there is no single answer or solution to aggression. This idea aligns with inclusive, developmentally appropriate early childhood education and individualized or differentiated instruction (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Unal et al., 2022). Hence, teachers need to observe children, and with knowledge of the classifications from different expert groups, collaboration with other medical professionals may be facilitated. This means that if a teacher understands hostile aggression, as categorized by psychologists, after constant observation, they can decide whether a child needs a referral to a psychologist.

Another implication of this study relates to the characteristics of childhood aggression. Understanding the characteristics of aggression helps teachers plan for managing it. For instance, if a teacher recognizes that aggression is a recurring incident, as the findings suggest, then they need to develop a long-term intervention plan to address the issue. Another example can be drawn from this study, which suggests that aggression in early childhood is due to developmental characteristics such as cognition, limited emotional regulation skills, and limited vocabulary (Ostrov & Crick, 2007; Gratz & Roemer, 2004). Therefore, intervention programs designed to decrease childhood aggression need to incorporate these issues as a dimension of the program. Furthermore, parents should be trained about these dimensions and informed that children display aggression to express emotions such as sadness, frustration, fear, as well as anger. This will encourage parents to help children express and understand their emotions. Additionally, understanding the characteristics of aggression will assist researchers in distinguishing typical behaviors from aggressive behaviors.

In future studies, while information on the years of experience of the experts was collected in Study 1, this information was not considered in the presentation and interpretation of the results. Future studies could take this information into account.

5.2. Discussion of Study 2

5.2.1. Overview of Study 2

Study 2 explored childhood aggression and aimed to develop a culturally appropriate theory of childhood aggression. To achieve this, questions addressing childhood

aggression, its characteristics and dimensions, and its interaction with culture were directed to preschool teachers, mothers and fathers. Additionally, to create an appropriate framework for understanding childhood aggression, in-class observations were conducted. Under heading 5.2, findings regarding these questions and observations are discussed in connection with existing literature.

5.2.2. Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of Study 2 under each thematic title. It builds upon culture and cultural context. Literature defines culture as the accumulation of products and elements of human beings and society (Tylor, 1871). Any element of human inheritance, such as family, community, science, life cycle, food, clothing, economy, and technology is considered part of culture (Barry, 1980). In the current study, individual and family activities, which are listed as cultural elements by Barry (1980), are considered focal points. At this point, defining culture from the researcher's perspective is crucial. In this study, culture is defined as the accumulation of any element associated with family, parents, child-rearing practices, family relations, family dynamics, and the child as well as elements that interact with the child, such as teachers, schools, policies, work, peers, grandparents, and social norms. In summary, it encompasses the totality of elements associated with family and child.

5.2.2.1. Antecedents of the behavior

In Study 2, antecedents of the behavior is one of the first themes that were revealed. It was found that emotional and psychological triggers, such as unusual or expressive behaviors, attention-seeking behaviors, or incidents that might disrupt the senses, occurred prior to aggression. Similarly, existing studies have associated sensitivity to aggression (Hubbard et al., 2002). Furthermore, children who failed to obtain their peers' attention were found to behave aggressively (Denham et al., 2003). Hence, in the study, in a possible scenario, children were trying to seek the attention of their peers, and after failing to do so, they resorted to aggression, possibly to attract attention or express their frustration.

Other triggers of aggression are environmental and situational factors, including spatial factors, changes in activities, classroom transitions, and play or object-related triggers. Literature supports this finding, stating that in classroom settings, the frequency of aggression increases during transitions and in crowded class sizes (Arsenio et al., 2000). Especially during early childhood, children engage in conflicts regarding sharing play materials or objects, as they are still learning prosocial behaviors (Vaughn et al., 2000). These findings highlight the importance of regulating environmental factors and supporting prosocial skills.

Some triggering incidents that occur before aggression involve peer interaction and social dynamics. These include positive peer interactions, social engagement, exclusion, power dynamics, and peer conflict. Literature states that status among children, peer dynamics, and exclusion impact aggression (Crick et al., 1999). Furthermore, hierarchies and power imbalances are associated with relational aggression (Pellegrini et al., 2007). Similarly, children who display covert aggression may not receive overt reactions. Superficially, there may seem to be no conflict, but beneath the surface, conflict may exist. A previous study revealed that children may internalize feelings of being dominated or marginalized if they do not have the capability to express their objections (Monks et al., 2003).

Lastly, peer-initiated actions are worth mentioning. Participants highlighted the importance of encouraging responsibility, corrective measures, and disciplinary actions. Regarding corrective and disciplinary actions, Webster-Stratton and Reid (2003) argued that these actions can be perceived as adverse, leading children to react with aggression. Children may react aggressively towards their peers in such encounters due to power and status struggles, as discipline is often viewed as the responsibility of adults or caregivers. This scenario is plausible since Pianta and colleagues (2008) claimed that even teacher interventions can backfire if they do not consider the sensitivity and needs of children.

5.2.2.2. Aggressive behaviors

Study 2 reveals that physical aggression was observed more frequently than relational and verbal aggression. Research has shown that physical aggression is

more common during early childhood; as children grow and develop cognitively and linguistically, they begin to display relational and verbal aggression more frequently (Ostrov & Crick, 2007). Furthermore, the teachers in this study reported physical aggression more than parents. This aligns with the findings of De Los Reyes and Kazdin (2005), which claim that behavioral problems are reported more by teachers than by parents. Additionally, it is suggested that parents may interpret or react to these behaviors differently due to their limited time with their children, and their roles as parents may lead to bias (Rescorla et al., 2014). In terms of types of physical aggression, hitting, throwing objects, and various other harmful behaviors were observed in the current study. This finding parallels claims made by experts from Study 1 and also aligns to literature (Tremblay & Nagin, 2005). Biting, one of the forms of physical aggression, was reported as one of the most problematic behaviors. This finding aligns with arguments from experts of Study 1. The problematic nature of biting may relate to teachers' anxiety when dealing with and communicating with parents. An interesting finding regarding physical aggression was that some children displayed covert physical aggression, which initially confused the researcher, who failed to recognize the aggressive nature of the behavior until confirmed by the teachers. Physical aggression is typically associated with overt actions that are easy to see and understand (Monks et al., 2003). These behaviors were observed in one specific child, and the nature of this behavior imitated relational aggression, suggesting that although the behaviors were physical, they were subtle and difficult to identify. The emergence of this behavior may relate to the child's past experiences. It is important to note that this child had previously displayed relational aggression, and both the child and their parents received backlash from other parents. Consequently, the child may have sought to conceal these aggressive behaviors from others while meeting their own needs.

In the study, relational aggression was characterized by excluding, undermining, and ignoring others. In the literature, exclusion is one of the most commonly mentioned forms of relational aggression (Ostrov et al., 2004). Furthermore, mocking, flaunting, and belittling—behaviors that undermine others—are considered early forms of dominance and social control (Monks et al., 2008). In terms of verbal aggression, the use of offensive language and vocal outbursts were observed in this study. Vocal

outbursts, such as shouting, are commonly cited as forms of verbal aggression in literature and are associated with difficulties in regulating emotions and impulses during early childhood (Denham et al., 2002; Underwood, 2003). In this study, name-calling was categorized as a use of offensive language; the victim's perspective is a critical element in determining whether or not to consider it aggressive. This finding indicates that perception is key in assessing whether minor behaviors are damaging, threatening, or aggressive (Smith et al., 2002).

5.2.2.3. Consequences of aggressive behaviors

Another theme that emerged in Study 2 was the consequences of aggressive behaviors, which describes incidents and circumstances occurring immediately after aggression takes place. One consequence of aggression is corrective actions and behavioral adjustments, which include conflict resolution, boundary and resource management, and compliance enforcement. In this respect, researchers have emphasized the contribution of conflict resolution to prosocial development (Webster-Stratton, 2000). Furthermore, previous research has established the importance of boundaries in guiding behaviors in early childhood (Gartrell, 2004). However, it is important to note that not all behaviors, incidents, events, or responses categorized as consequences in this study were applied by teachers. Some of these were responses or reactions from peers, people who were exposed to the behaviors, and bystanders. Sometimes, a peer might want to mediate a conflict due to annoyance and a desire to end disruption. In some cases, they may desire to assert dominance and control the situation.

Another consequence of aggressive behaviors is emotional distress. Existing research has revealed that children who were exposed to aggression and victimization display emotional distress, such as anxiety (Putallaz et al., 2007). Defensive and retaliatory responses are another consequence and include defensive withdrawal, denial, resistance, and retaliation. Research has also claimed that victimized children tend to withdraw from conflict situations to defend or retaliate (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Literature associates withdrawal with anxiety and low confidence, while retaliation is linked to poor conflict resolution skills (Schwartz et al., 1993).

Regarding denial and resistance, Camodeca and Goosens (2005) argued that these behaviors serve to protect oneself when children anticipate blame or misunderstanding. Another consequence is avoidance and passive reactions. Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996) found that children who are repeatedly victimized and lack support tend to avoid conflict situations.

Another interesting consequence of aggression is social reinforcement and contagion. This means that aggression does not remain isolated but has the potential to influence others to behave similarly. This can be explained by social learning; as Bandura suggested, peer reinforcement and modeling are among the most effective ways to learn positive behaviors (Bandura, 1973). To gain peer approval and adapt to group dynamics, children tend to imitate behaviors (Dishion et al., 1996). The likelihood of other children imitating aggressive behaviors may be related to the status of the child who initially displayed aggression. If a child is dominant and considered a leader, the likelihood of others imitating aggression may increase.

5.2.2.4. Intervention strategies for managing aggression

As the cycle of antecedents, behaviors, and consequences continued, intervention strategies were employed to provide resolutions to problem situations, and intervention strategies were used. In this sense, participants revealed that professional and therapeutic support was utilized for managing aggression and guiding parents. Occupational therapy was one of the methods used to manage aggression (Case-Smith & Arbesman, 2008). In educational settings, counselors and psychologists are the most commonly referred to professionals, as their services are readily available in various schools (Farrell, 2009). Furthermore, existing literature has established the significance of teachers working collaboratively with specialists to address behavioral problems and improve children's overall development (Stormont et al., 2005).

Another intervention strategy that emerged in the current study was conflict resolution and de-escalation. Gentle verbal and nonverbal cues were highlighted by the participants to redirect attention or behavior and resolve conflicts (Cohen et al.,

2021; Peel, 2012). Additionally, literature also suggests the significance of redirecting attention and channeling it toward more productive projects (Landry et al., 2006). In addition to conflict resolution, behavior management and discipline strategies were emphasized as intervention strategies by participants. In this regard, Skinner (1953) argued that positive reinforcement is influential in changing behavioral patterns by emphasizing desired behaviors. In this study, some participants reported using punishment as a way to address problem behaviors, specifically physical punishment. It is claimed that consistency is key when using punishment; if punishment is not appropriate, it is likely to increase the frequency of aggressive behaviors (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998). In this study, little is known about the consistency of punishment. However, one limitation regarding punishment is its intensity. For instance, some participants admitted to using physical punishment starting from infancy. This concern was confirmed by a meta-analytic review that investigated 35 studies (Pan et al., 2024). This review found a strong positive relationship between punishment and violent behaviors, emphasizing that the intensity and severity of punishment contribute to the strength of this relationship. In another review article, Gershoff (2010) indicated that the likelihood of aggression increases as a result of corporal punishment, and the short-term benefits of using punishment are not worth the risks and negative outcomes associated with it.

Another intervention strategy preferred by the participants was emotional and social development strategies. This involves using methods to promote positive engagement, foster emotional awareness and develop empathy. Children with healthy emotional and social development are less likely to display aggressive behaviors (Belacchi et al., 2022). Furthermore, a meta-analysis investigating 213 intervention programs and their impact revealed that intervention strategies focusing on social and emotional learning are effective in managing aggression (Durlak et al., 2011). Consequently, various intervention studies include the emotional and empathic dimensions of their programs while aiming to decrease the frequency of aggression (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003). As preventive interventions are crucial for addressing problem behaviors (Shepard & Dickstein, 2009), the participants also utilized preventive and proactive strategies. These strategies included teaching moral

and social expectations, enhancing parent-school collaboration, and identifying behavioral patterns. Since preventive interventions target problem behaviors and circumstances, it is important to observe and identify potential problem situations (Al-Hendawi et al., 2025; Shepard & Dickstein, 2009). Regarding parent-school collaboration, various studies have revealed the importance of parental involvement and collaboration in addressing development and problem behaviors (Herath & Herath, 2024; Park et al., 2011; Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024).

5.2.2.5. Function of aggressive behaviors

In the current study, another theme that was investigated was the function of aggressive behaviors, referring to the purposes these behaviors serve. It was revealed that aggressive behaviors serve various functions. In this study, children sometimes displayed aggression to seek engagement and stimulation, aligning with the argument proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994). Specifically, while describing proactive aggression, researchers point out that it serves to attract attention and stimulation. Furthermore, in this study, children utilized aggression as a tool to assert dominance, gain control, and exclude peers. This function is driven by power dynamics. During early childhood, control, social hierarchy, and power play an integral role in peer relationships (Lu et al., 2024). Hence, children may use aggression as a tool to integrate into peer groups. This argument is supported by previous research, which claimed aggression as a way to assert status among preschoolers; as hierarchies stabilize, children tend to use aggression less often (Roseth et al., 2007). Apart from proactive functions, children also use aggression to resist, defy, oppose, defend, retaliate, and express themselves. Dodge (1991) specifically classified a type of aggression as reactive aggression, which describes the use of aggression as a reaction to defend oneself.

5.2.2.6. Patterns and manifestations of aggression

Aggression is a socially constructed phenomenon, and it was revealed that children who display aggression are often labeled. Berkowitz (1993) confirmed the findings that aggression is socially constructed, stating that social and cultural contexts are

integral elements in understanding aggression. Furthermore, in this study, these labels were observed to be subjective and context-dependent. This means that while labeling children, factors such as class size, class demographics, the characteristics of other children, and the characteristics of the child may influence adults or other children. For instance, in the current study, the class size was very small, and one child was particularly active, leading to that child being labeled as aggressive. However, it was sensed that if this child were part of a crowded classroom with various active and energetic children, they might not be considered aggressive to the same extent. Consequently, over time, the child may adopt aggression as a patterned behavior. Aligning with this interpretation, Janzen (2022) stated that children form identities influenced by stigmatization, especially in educational settings. Furthermore, research suggests that the social roles of individuals influence how a child and their aggressive behavior are perceived (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). In this study, this specific child was perceived as aggressive from the perspectives of the teacher and peers in the classroom. Hence, the roles and identities of these individuals may significantly influence the labeling of this child, while the parents of this child may not perceive their child as aggressive.

Similar to social context, social dynamics also play a significant role in shaping aggression. In this respect, it was revealed that children may specifically select certain peers to direct overt or covert aggression toward. Literature has established that children can target specific individuals, and the process of selecting victims is closely related to social dynamics, hierarchy, and power (Pepler et al., 2006). Furthermore, it was revealed that aggression, whether overt or covert, can adversely impact both the victim and the aggressor (Monks et al., 2003).

Another characteristic of aggression is that its duration may vary. This means that in some cases, children display aggression almost daily. Regarding persistent aggression, Tremblay (2000) claimed that it is an outcome of repeated failures to regulate emotions. However, in this study, aggression sometimes occurred suddenly without any prior indication. Previous research has associated such sudden outbursts of aggression with acute frustration and stress (Winiarski et al., 2018). Aside from sudden outbursts, in some cases, facial expressions, body language, and the

emotional states of the children indicated the possibility of aggression. These indicators were reported by participants and further confirmed through observations. Literature also recommends observing body language, facial expressions, and various cues to prevent and intervene before the impending outburst (Quarmley et al., 2023).

Shifting focus slightly, this study revealed that the development of aggression is influenced by various factors and milestones, such as starting school and the birth of a sibling. Since these events bring about changes in the child's routine, they may cause changes in the child's behavior. For instance, after starting school, various dynamics change, and social interactions and dynamics become integral to children's lives (Martin et al., 2005). Aligned with this, a review study found that various life events, such as the death of a family member, influence aggression (Navarro et al., 2022). Regarding the birth of a sibling, 14.3% of longitudinal studies found an increase in aggression following the birth of a sibling (Volling, 2012). Freud (1946) also characterized the birth of a sibling as one of the most traumatic life events during childhood. Early childhood is a crucial period for emotional development and emotional regulation, which is closely associated with aggression, and welcoming a sibling during this age can be challenging (Thompson & Goodman, 2010).

In this study, most aggressive behaviors in a classroom setting occurred during free play and transitions. It is important to note that these periods are less structured than other types of activities. Research has revealed that unstructured time provides children with opportunities to engage in rough-and-tumble play (Scott & Panksepp, 2003). Regarding transition periods, Ergin and Bakkaloğlu (2019) claimed that in Turkish preschools, children spent approximately 35% of two hours of school time in transition. Hence, this frequent change in routine and the conflicts occurring during these transitions may explain the high incidence of aggression during these times. Another reason for the high incidence of aggression during transitions may be due to classroom infrastructure (Guardino & Fullerton, 2012).

Lastly, in this study, aggression was noticeably directed more towards boys than girls. Literature supports this finding, indicating that boys are more exposed to aggression than girls, especially physical aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Furthermore, in this study, adults such as mothers, fathers, grandparents, and teachers were also targets of aggression, albeit less frequently than peers or siblings. This aligns with previous research, where children exhibiting aggressive behaviors towards adults was less common than towards peers (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998). This previous research linked aggression towards adults to frustration and anger towards rules and authority.

5.2.2.7. Factors contributing to aggression

As aggression was investigated from a comprehensive perspective, factors contributing to aggression were also revealed in this study. In this regard, it was found that individual dispositions and personality traits are associated with aggression. Participants noted traits such as being strong-willed, controlling, competitive, status-driven, having elevated energy levels, and craving for stimulation in children who displayed aggression. Aligning with this finding, various studies have found that impulsivity and the need for stimulation are associated with an increased likelihood of displaying aggressive behaviors (Connor et al., 2019; Perez et al., 2016). Gershoff (2002) claimed that children with these traits experience difficulties controlling impulses, and when bored, these impulses can lead to aggression. In this sense, difficulties with self-control and limited self-regulation abilities contribute to higher aggression in young children (Lone & Albotuaiba, 2022). Similarly, competitiveness and being status-driven are closely associated with social dominance, leading children to use aggression as a tool to achieve it (Hawley, 1999).

Other noteworthy factors affecting aggression are physical, health, and biological influences. These influences are reported as instinctual, innate, dietary and physical constraints as well as health and developmental challenges. First, instinct as a biological factor is associated with reactive aggression, as Berkowitz (1993) noted. It was claimed that the fight-or-flight response is an instinctual code embedded in human beings that activates stress reactors when perceived threats occur, leading to aggression (Connor et al., 2019; Kunimatsu & Marsee, 2012; Siligato et al., 2024). In addition to instinct, dietary choices, such as poor diet, influence mood regulation,

which can lead to aggression (Wallner & Machatschschke, 2010). In this study, sugary food consumption was specifically mentioned. Regarding the relationship between sugar and aggression, existing research presents conflicting arguments. Some studies conducted experimental research that revealed no relation between sugar and aggression, suggesting that adults' perceptions regarding sugar consumption are the reason for this rumor (Kruesi et al., 1987; Voltas et al., 2024; Wolraich et al., 1995). Conversely, another research has indicated that fructose intake leads to aggressive behaviors, among various other outcomes (Johnson et al., 2021). Hence, it is difficult to decide whether sugar influences children to behave aggressively or if participants' perceptions are the real issue.

One key factor to consider is the influence of emotional regulation and challenges in coping, such as frustration and limited ability to manage emotions and mood, on the development of aggression. Existing research supports participants' reports, revealing that children with limited emotional control, such as frustration, display higher levels of aggressive behaviors (Ersan & Tok, 2020). This indicates that emotional regulation difficulties play a role in aggression. Building on this idea, social and environmental factors were also highlighted as crucial elements closely associated with childhood aggression. In the current study, these social and environmental factors include socioeconomic influences, peer interactions, and the classroom or school environment. Regarding socioeconomic status, one study found a link between relational aggression and lower socioeconomic status (Baker et al., 2018). However, it was also found that social cognitive abilities can mitigate the adverse impact of lower socioeconomic status on aggression. Similarly, another study revealed that various factors, including socioeconomic status, influence aggression (Hong et al., 2023). Moreover, a meta-analytic review found that the association between social class and aggression is not a fixed concept, and aggression is not a set pattern of behavior for any specific group (Chen et al., 2024).

Another social factor revealed in this study is peer interactions. Supporting this finding, Kamper-DeMarco and Ostrov (2019) found that aggression is not an isolated incident; children's aggressive behaviors influence others to behave similarly. It was claimed that the degree of friendship is closely associated with the frequency of

aggression, indicating that children with good friendships are less likely to display aggression compared to peers with poor friendships. Similarly, another study found a link between peer relationships and aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

The last factor is environmental elements, such as class size, inadequate materials, poor classroom designs, and crowded classrooms, which were reported by participants. In this respect, it was found that classroom design is related to children's behaviors (Garcia Ancheita, 2005). Similarly, Broekhuizen et al. (2016) indicated that good classroom quality is an indicator of fewer behavioral problems in a classroom. Another study found that larger classrooms are associated with problem behaviors and classroom management issues (Steen, 2016). In summary, the literature supports the claims of the participants who related aggression to the school and classroom environment and its quality.

5.2.2.8. Background determinants of aggression

A new dimension of childhood aggression that arises is the background determinants of aggression. In the current study, family and parenting dynamics, social and cultural factors, school and peer contexts, and developmental and social learning processes play a central role as the background determinants of aggression.

One important determinant is cultural and social factors. In this study, these are exemplified as broader cultural and economic contexts, media, and technology. The influence of broader cultural and economic factors, as well as individualistic factors on development and behavior, was theorized by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Berkowitz (1993) also argued that one of the elements shaping children and their behaviors is society's acceptance and perception of aggression. For instance, in a cross-cultural study, it was found that children from Asian countries were discouraged from expressing themselves compared to children from Western countries (Knyazev et al., 2008). Aligning with this study, it was also revealed that aggression was observed less among Asian children compared to their Western counterparts (Bergeron & Schneider, 2005). Another study found that aggression implies assertion and competence in Italy, while in China, it implies psychological problems (Chen et al.,

1995; Schneider & Fonzi, 1996). Moreover, teachers in Greece consider aggression more problematic than teachers in America (Kalykaki, 2001). In Türkiye, mothers view aggression as a temporary phase but experience anxiety and disappointment (Bayram Özdemir & Cheah, 2013; Cheah & Rubin, 2004). Since perceptions and acceptance regarding aggression differ across societies, the frequency of aggression can vary accordingly. This idea is confirmed by a study investigating aggression in 24 countries, which found that, following Chile and Iran, children from Türkiye displayed more aggression than those from other countries (Rescorla et al., 2011). Additionally, it was found that children in Türkiye behave more aggressively and are, in turn, more exposed to aggression than their American peers (Metin Aslan, 2020). All these findings confirm this study's proposition of cultural context as a background determinant.

In addition to cultural context, economic conditions were found to be related to aggression (Neppi et al., 2016). The mentioned study revealed that economic hardships lead to stress and conflict between parents, which, in turn, are associated with behavioral problems. However, there is another reality. In this study, participants also mentioned long working hours and business trips, indicating that even in the absence of economic hardship, economic factors such as working conditions also influence aggression. Existing studies have revealed that inflexible working conditions and long work hours are related to problem behaviors (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2020; Pilarz, 2021). Studies investigating frequent work travel and long-term parental absence due to work have found that children whose parents' work requires their absence are more likely to display problem behaviors (Moeller et al., 2015; Wheeler et al., 2018).

Another cultural factor is media and technology. In this study, participants associated aggression with television, YouTube, reels, video games such as Roblox, and screen time. Supporting this argument, research has revealed that violence on television impacts aggression (Dodge et al., 2006). One study claimed that 10% of childhood aggression can be explained by violence on television (Wood et al., 1991). These arguments are also confirmed by the "Bobo doll" experiment, which demonstrated children's capacity to model the violent behavior they are exposed to (Bandura et al.,

1963). However, participants in this study did not mention the word “violence”; instead, concerns regarding media and technology were expressed using the term “inappropriate.” This term indicates that aside from violence, the participants were also concerned about other characteristics of media and technology. One study revealed that spreading rumors, manipulating people, damaging relationships, and various other forms of indirect aggression also impact aggression (Coyne et al., 2004). In addition to concerns regarding television, studies have also shown that violent video games and the hours spent playing these games are indicative of aggression among young children (Anderson, 2004; Dodge et al., 2006). Building on the idea of the impact of media and technology, children can also be exposed to aggression within the family. Participants reported that even though children may not be direct victims of violence, the behavior patterns of family members and older generations can contribute to aggression. Further, research has revealed that children who witness family conflict are more likely to display aggression (Hsieh et al., 2021).

The last element regarding background determinants of aggression revealed in this study is parenting practices. The participants highlighted consistency among parents in discipline, the quality of the parent-child relationships, parental presence, and parenting styles. First, consistency among parents refers to whether mothers and fathers are aligned regarding specific parenting practices. In this study, various participants reported inconsistency and explained its influence on children’s behaviors. The research argues that children need routines, consistency, predictability, and structure in a family, which are difficult to achieve through inconsistent parenting, making it hard for them to comprehend and follow expectations (Lindsey & Caldera, 2005). Lack of consistency, both interpersonal (among parents) and intrapersonal (within one parent), leads children to experience frustration, negative emotions, and aggression (Bandura, 1977; Berkowitz, 1993a; Carrasso et al., 2015). Second, regarding the quality of the parent-child relationship, it was found that a good relationship, characterized by warmth and support, is an indicator of fewer problem behaviors and less aggression (Lamb, 2010). In the Turkish context, family members are reported to have close relationships (Ataca et al., 2005). Kağıtçıbaşı (1970; 2013) classified child-rearing practices in Türkiye as

emotionally warm, although they are restrictive and highly controlled. This means that parents in Türkiye are warm and supportive but also supervise their children strictly (Sunar, 2002). These research findings indicate that the warm nature of Turkish families contributes to diminishing aggression. However, the strict, restrictive, and controlling nature of their families may influence child aggression differently. Research has claimed that Turkish families prefer non-punitive disciplinary methods, such as rewards and reasoning (Kircaali-Iftar, 2005). In this study, some participants used these non-punitive methods; however, others reported using highly strict parenting methods and positive punishment. As mentioned previously, using punitive discipline methods can lead to an increase in aggression (Pan et al., 2024). Hence, it can be concluded that one aspect of Turkish families, which is warmth, contributes to preventing problem behaviors such as aggression, while another aspect, which is strictness, may lead to an increase in aggression.

When it comes to parenting styles, Baumrind (1991) claimed that authoritarian parenting, characterized by low warmth and high control, is associated with higher levels of aggression, while authoritative parenting, characterized by high warmth and high structure, is related to lower levels of aggression. However, it has been claimed that Turkish parenting styles differ from both Western and Asian cultures, reflecting an interaction of both (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007). Specifically for this reason, Kağıtçıbaşı theorized the Model of Family Change and characterized the typical Turkish family as a model of emotional/psychological interdependence (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2002). This model indicates higher levels of both interdependence among family members and autonomy (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). This model also supports the idea of warm parenting and a supportive family environment.

5.2.2.9. Behavioral challenges and outcomes

In this study, different struggles, challenges, and outcomes were described by participants. One concern and outcome reported was that aggression tends to be a repetitive and persistent behavior pattern. Thomas and Bierman (2006) supported this claim with a longitudinal study conducted on 4,907 children, finding that children in high-aggression classrooms displayed aggression more frequently than others.

Another issue mentioned by the participants was difficulties with peer and sibling relationships. In this respect, a study revealed that only physical aggression negatively impacts sibling and peer relationships (Swit et al., 2024). It was found that relational aggression is associated with more positive relationships. This confusing finding may be related to social hierarchy and power status among peers. If an aggressor positions themselves as a leader and holds a higher social status, others might conform to the aggressor's behaviors to be part of the group. However, another study revealed that both relational and physical aggression have detrimental impacts on relationships and can lead to rejection (Crick et al., 1999). In this study, another challenge presented was poor and difficult communication regarding aggression between parents and teachers. In one study, preschool teachers reported that successful interventions for aggression were hindered by poor communication with parents (Türkoğlu, 2019). This research argued that preschool teachers face challenges when parents deny their child's wrongdoing, avoid collaboration, and exhibit inconsistent communication. The teacher participants in this study also mentioned challenges regarding classroom management, behavior management, and classroom disruption. Previous research found that behavioral problems, such as aggression, were one of the reasons teachers experience difficulties in classroom management (Dursun, 2025). However, Uchegbu (2020) found that teachers believe that their relationships with children are not affected by the challenges of aggression and classroom management; however, teachers can feel threatened by these challenges. Aligning with the literature, although teachers reported difficulties, some believed they were capable of managing aggression.

5.2.2.10. Developing a culturally appropriate childhood aggression theory

In Study 2, nine themes conceptualized a culturally appropriate childhood aggression theory. This theory provides a framework for understanding the development of aggressive behaviors, starting from the antecedents of behavior to intervention strategies. This means that triggering factors exist that lead to aggression, followed by the consequences of those behaviors. Consequently, intervention occurs, and if it fails, the cycle begins anew with the display of aggressive behaviors. Similar to this cycle, the social information processing model explains aggression through six

stages: encoding cues, interpreting cues, clarifying goals, response construction, choosing a response, and enacting behavior (Crick & Dodge, 1994). However, this model focuses on social cues and cognition while overlooking biological dispositions and environmental factors (Huesmann, 1998). In contrast, the current study emphasizes triggering factors, labeled as antecedents of behavior, focusing on psychological, emotional, environmental, and social factors. Another theory that outlines a cycle of behaviors is the frustration-aggression theory (Dollard et al., 1939), which emphasizes frustration, emotions, goals, and social norms but overlooks observational learning (Berkowitz, 1989). The current study also emphasizes emotions, frustration, and social issues, but it differs by considering modeling, observational learning, and the influences of the social environment as essential components of aggression. Similarly, the cognitive neoassociation theory provides a pattern for behavior by emphasizing the connection between cognition, emotion, and stimulus (Berkowitz, 1993a). Although the current study highlights negative factors such as the physical characteristics of the classroom, class size, and adverse environmental conditions, it differs from the cognitive neoassociation theory, which emphasizes specific unpleasant conditions such as hot weather, physical pain, etc. (Berkowitz, 2012a). The final theory to conceptualize aggression through a cycle of behaviors is the general aggression model (Bushman & Anderson, 2020). This theory and the current study's theory are similar in that they both provide distal background modifiers or determinants that influence behavior (Allen & Anderson, 2017). However, the general aggression model does not emphasize specific occasions and triggers occurring immediately before an aggressive act; it focuses instead on personality and distal causes (Anderson & Carnagey, 2004). Furthermore, unlike the general aggression model, this study's theory does not address the cognitive processes and internal states of children while they decide how to behave and the decision-making process.

Regarding the overall components of the theories, the current theory not only provides a pattern and a cycle for explaining aggressive behavior but also offers insights into background determinants, influencing factors, long-term outcomes and challenges, functions, patterns, and manifestations of aggression. As noted, the "distal causes and processes" of the general aggression model provide similar

explanations to the background determinants and influencing factors of the current theory (Allen & Anderson, 2017). The current theory explains aggression by considering psychological, environmental, emotional, social, biological, physical, cognitive, personality, individual dispositions, culture, family, and teacher influences. Similarly, the social information processing model, social cognitive theory, bioecological systems theory, and behaviorism emphasize the social environment and social influences (Bandura, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dollard et al., 1939; Skinner, 1974). However, in contrast to the current study, these four theories overlook biological factors, emotions, and innate dispositions. In a similar vein, biological theory, ethological theory, psychoanalytical theory, sociobiological theory, and excitation transfer theory explain aggression through biological, innate, and physiological factors (Freud, 1920b; Krahe, 2001; Lorenz, 1966; Zillmann, 1971). However, these theories differ from the current theory due to their lack of emphasis on environmental factors, social norms, and learning. Thus, the current theory provides a comprehensive perspective. However, one of the issues with the current theory is its lack of explanation regarding the cognitive decision-making process and schemas, which is emphasized by the cognitive schema theory and the social information processing model.

A critical element of the current theory is its focus on social-cultural factors, family, school, and peers. Similar to this study, the social cognitive theory describes aggression as a learned behavior influenced by media, parents, teachers, and peers (Bandura, 1973). However, the emphasis of the social cognitive theory is on learned behavior rather than the characteristics of the family, teacher actions, or interventions (Bandura, 1986). When comparing it to the social information processing model, these factors are crucial in shaping aggression through cultural perceptions of aggression (Dollard et al., 1939). Regarding these elements and their interactions, the bioecological systems theory shows similarities with the current theory. As displayed in Study 2 through the social spheres/power arenas map, both the current theory and the bioecological systems theory highlighted these elements and their interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Moreover, similar to the current theory, the general aggression model, behaviorism, and cognitive schema theory also consider these

elements integral to explaining and understanding aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2018; Beck, 1976; Skinner, 1974).

Various theories emphasize different elements. However, the current theory categorizes and lists aggressive behaviors from the perspective of early childhood. These categories include verbal, relational, and physical aggression, which is similar to Bandura's (1986) identification of these three categories. Although he did not specifically use the term "relational," his description of behaviors matches this term. Similar to the current theory, while the categorization of aggressive behaviors differs in the social information processing model, general aggression model, frustration-aggression model, cognitive schema theory, and behaviorism, distinctions between different behaviors are still made (Anderson & Bushman, 2018; Beck, 1976; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dollard et al., 1939; Skinner, 1974). However, it is important to note that these theories did not always use the terms, but in some cases, they described and characterized different behaviors.

In line with the current study's aim, the newly developed theory specifically conceptualizes childhood aggression. Among the 13 theories mentioned in the literature, only two describe childhood aggression specifically: social cognitive theory and bioecological systems theory (Bandura, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Some of the other theories also apply to adults. One of the main distinctions of this study is the development of a theory specifically for younger children.

Regarding the cultural aspects of the theory, the current study investigates culture from individual and family contexts. Thus, marital harmony, family structure, parenting styles, and intergenerational relations are considered integral parts of the theory. The current theory displays similarities to bioecological systems theory and social cognitive theory in emphasizing these elements (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bandura, 1986). However, while behaviorism mentions family and parenting, it emphasizes these elements only in terms of reinforcement, punishment, and rewards (Skinner, 1974). Additionally, although the general aggression model addresses marital harmony, family structure, and parenting (Anderson & Bushman, 2002), it does not provide any information regarding intergenerational relations (Anderson &

Bushman, 2018). Similar to this study's theory, the cognitive schema theory and the social information processing model also provide explanations regarding family structure and parenting (Beck, 1976; Crick & Dodge, 1994). However, concerning these elements, this newly developed theory does not share common ground with other theories.

5.2.3. Educational Implications and Recommendations for Further Studies

In light of the key themes and findings, this section provides educational implications and recommendations for future studies. Based on the discussed themes, Study 2 has various implications. First, the current study offers insights into incidents and situations occurring prior to aggression. Understanding and recognizing these triggers may enable educators, parents, and other caregivers to predict and prevent an aggressive behavior before it occurs. This implication aligns with the goal of primary or preventive intervention, which is to identify risk factors and develop prevention plans (Coie et al., 1993). The study provides pathways to these triggering factors, which teachers and caregivers can utilize. For instance, if children display aggression during classroom transitions, teachers can revise their daily plans, classroom management strategies, or classroom design. However, since each child may exhibit different patterns, ongoing observation and revision of the factors list is required. Hence, for future studies, researchers can explore different circumstances, contexts, and backgrounds to identify and revise the triggering factors that occur before children display aggression. Identifying the antecedents of aggressive behaviors can enable teachers, policymakers, researchers, and NGOs to develop more effective and in-depth intervention programs.

As suggested by preventive measures, based on the theme of antecedents of aggressive behaviors, teachers and parents need to observe the social dynamics and the hidden meanings behind these dynamics. This need arises from the role of social dynamics, hierarchy, and power plays on aggression, particularly relational aggression (Pellegrini et al., 2007). Therefore, teachers and parents should create an environment that encourages respect, expression, and inclusion. Aggression should

be regarded as a serious issue with broader and long-term implications; thus, agents from the broader context should also consider possible solutions.

Moreover, this study provides information regarding aggressive behaviors and the categories of aggression. The findings imply that teachers and caregivers need to recognize various types of aggression, including relational, verbal, and physical aggression (Coie & Dodge, 1998; Crick et al., 1997; Vissing et al., 1991). By acknowledging the underestimated and covert types of aggression and their implications, teachers and caregivers can mitigate the long-term negative impacts of aggression on child development and adult outcomes. Hence, this study's identification and categorization of aggressive behaviors provide guidelines for educators. Since this guideline originates from the Turkish context, it can offer more meaningful and context-based guidance. Furthermore, discrepancies among reports from different participant groups indicate that relying on only one group can lead to unsuccessful interventions. To prevent this situation, this study involves multiple participant groups. However, based on these findings, it can be concluded that teachers, families, and other professionals such as counselors, should have good communication to avoid clouding their judgment.

Another implication of this study is the contagion and modeling of aggression. Since aggression is not an isolated behavior pattern but rather one that is imitated by other children (Kamper-DeMarco & Ostrov, 2019), teachers and parents should be conscious of this and refrain from encouraging or reinforcing such behaviors. Furthermore, teachers and parents should display as appropriate behaviors. Aggression needs to be addressed and intervened upon, with interventions including the aggressor and other children, especially those who encourage or reinforce the aggressor.

Regarding intervention, Guralnick (2001) emphasizes the professional responsibility to evaluate, design, and implement appropriate intervention programs for developing young children. The findings of this study support similar conclusions, indicating that schools need to be equipped with opportunities and resources to support services and offer information regarding proper referrals to other professionals. Policymakers

should encourage schools to collaborate with counsellors, psychologists, and other specialists. Furthermore, policymakers should facilitate children's access to these services and promote early screening or support for problematic situations. Moreover, professional education opportunities should be provided to teachers to enhance their knowledge of intervening in aggression, classroom management strategies, language development, emotional regulation, and empathy. Most importantly, this theoretical information should be applied in practice.

Another important implication relates to aggression being a socially constructed and context-dependent phenomenon. This suggests that teachers and parents need to be cautious when describing and labeling children as aggressive. Furthermore, teachers should create classroom environments that prevent other children from labeling specific individuals and request cooperation from parents. This cooperation is essential because other parents may contribute to labeling a specific child. By requesting cooperation, teachers can help prevent the mislabeling of a child.

In this study, the factors and background determinants contributing to aggression provide insights into the complex nature of aggression. This implies that one must look beyond observed behavior and investigate the factors contributing to aggression. The study provides a guideline regarding where to look to determine the source of the problem. Investigating and understanding influencing factors is crucial, as aggression is a problematic behavior that needs to be addressed; prolonged aggression is associated with long-term negative outcomes, such as psychiatric disorders (Ostrov & Houston, 2008). In addition to addressing the behavior itself, parent education should be provided to promote parenting skills, consistency in discipline, and positive parent-child relationships. To achieve this, social workers, educators, and other professionals should collaborate with parents.

One of the final implications of Study 2 is the development of a conceptual framework and a culturally appropriate theory for future studies. Additionally, the findings of the study provide overall insights into childhood aggression. Thus, early childhood educators and parents may benefit from understanding child-triggering factors and establishing routines to prevent aggression. Even if these changes cannot

prevent aggression, this theory offers clues to understanding the origins of the determinants of the behavior. Consequently, early childhood educators may draw inferences regarding their classroom and teaching practices, while parents may reflect on their family dynamics, relationships with their children, and parenting styles.

In terms of recommendations for future studies within the scope of Study 2, although observations and interviews for the current study were collected from various districts of Ankara, there was a lack of emphasis on the participants' backgrounds. Therefore, to support the cultural argument in future studies, participants can be asked about their places of origin, hometowns, and how long they have resided in Ankara. By obtaining information regarding participants' hometowns, future studies may strengthen the cultural argument. Furthermore, gathering data from different cities and villages can provide a more comprehensive cultural approach and be beneficial for future research. While information regarding parents' monthly income, occupation, and location of residence was collected, some of this information was obtained from their teachers, leading to missing data or ambiguities. Thus, while interpreting the findings, these variables were not particularly helpful. In future studies, establishing a systematic approach to gathering information regarding socio-economic backgrounds may strengthen the implications of the study. Moreover, although the current study was strengthened by using observational methods, future studies could consider including more participants and extending the observation period.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE (STUDY 1)

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
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20 MAYIS 2022

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Prof. Dr. Refika OLGAN

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Sümeyra Eryiğit'in "Çocukluk çağı saldırganlığının tanımlanması ve incelenmesi" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 0311-ODTÜİAEK-2022 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkan

**B. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
(STUDY 2)**

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 08800 ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TÜRKİYE T: +90 312 210 22 91 F: +90 312 210 79 99 u.aram@metu.edu.tr www.usam.metu.edu.tr	 ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu	18 OCAK 2024
Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)	
İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu	
Sayın Prof. Dr. Refika Olgan Danışmanlığımı yürüttüğünüz Sümeyra ERYİĞİT'in " <i>Erken çocuklukta kültüre uygun çocukluk çağı saldırganlığı teorisinin Türkiye bağlamında durumsal analiz yoluyla oluşturulması: Gömülü Teori yaklaşımı</i> " başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0197-ODTÜİAEK-2024 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır. Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.	
Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN Başkan	
Prof. Dr. I. Semih AKÇOMAK Üye	Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut Üye
Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ Üye	Doç. Dr. Murat Perit ÇAKIR Üye
Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL Üye	Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ Üye

C. CURRICULUM VITAE

Sümeýra Eryiđit

Education

- **Middle East Technical University (2017- 2025):** PhD - Early Childhood Education. Advisor: Prof. Dr. Refika Olgan
- **Middle East Technical University (2014-2017):** MS - Early Childhood Education. Thesis title: Ongoing mechanism in the tactile communication between children and adults in picture storybooks for 4-to-6-year-olds Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Refika Olgan
- **Bođaziđi University (2007-2013):** BA

Work Experience

- Kocaeli University (2014-2015)- Research Assistant
- Middle East Technical University (2015 - 2024)- Research Assistant
- Kocaeli University (2025-present)- Research Assistant

Scholarships and Fellowships

- Ministry of National Education Scholarships (for Teacher Candidates)- received from Credit and Dormitories Institution (KYK)-(2007-2012)

Academic Honors and Prizes

- Honor Certificate from Bogazici University-2013

Conferences and presentations

Demirtař-İlhan, S., Eryiđit, S., & Tantekin-Erden, F. (2019). *Frequency of mainstream curriculum models: Investigation of early childhood education doctoral dissertation and international journals in Turkey*. Individual paper presentation presented at the 6th International Eurasian Educational Research Congress, Ankara, TR.

- Ertan, N. C., Tonga, F. E., Tantekin-Erden, F., & Eryiğit, S. (2018, June). *What is the secret for success? Early childhood education in PISA high achiever countries: Finland, Estonia, Japan, Singapore and China*. Individual paper presentation presented at the 70th OMEP World Assembly and International Conference, Prague, CR.
- Çetin, M., Cengizoglu, S., Eryiğit, S., Özlen-Demircan, H., Tonga, F. E., & Şenyurt, E. (2018, May). *Okul öncesi dönem çocukları hangi bilim etkinliklerini tercih ediyor?: Bir bilim fuarı deneyimi*. Individual paper presentation presented at the 5th International Eurasian Educational Research Congress, Antalya, TR.
- Eryiğit, S. (2016, July). *Comparison of representation of female characters in turkish award winner-caldecott books*. Poster session presented at the 68th OMEP World Assembly and International Conference, Seoul, KR.
- Eryiğit, S., & Olgan, R. (2018, May). *Investigating ongoing tactile communication between a preschool teacher and young children: Nonverbal socialization in a classroom*. Individual paper presentation presented at the 5th International Eurasian Educational Research Congress, Antalya, TR.
- Eryiğit, S., & Olgan, R. (2018, June). *Ongoing mechanism in tactile communication between children and adults in the picture storybooks for 4-to-6-year-olds*. Individual paper presentation presented at the 70th OMEP World Assembly and International Conference, Prague, CR.

Publications

- Eryiğit, S., & Olgan, R., (2020). An investigation of ongoing tactile communication in a preschool classroom. *Changing Educational Paradigms* (pp.347-364). Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
- Eryigit, S., & Olgan, R. (n.d.). *Ongoing mechanism in the tactile communication between children and adults in picture storybooks for 4-to-6-year-olds*. [Electronic resource]. METU. <http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12621498/index.pdf>
- Eryiğit, S., Tonga Çabuk, F., Erden, F., & YALÇIN, F. (2024). Finding Clues and Implications for Success on the PISA: An Overview of Chinese, Singaporean, Estonian, Canadian, and Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care. *Erzincan Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 26(2), 339-351.

Tonga, F. E., Eryiğit, S., Yalcin, F., & Erden, F., (2022). Professional development of teachers in PISA achiever countries: Finland, Estonia, Japan, Singapore and China. *Professional Development in Education*, 48(1), 88-104.



D. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

1. Giriř

Saldırganlık, olumsuz sonuçları olan ve deęiřime diren gösteren, uzun sreli bir problem davranıřı olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Huesmann vd., 1984; Keltikangas-Jarvinen ve Pakaslahti, 1999). Shaw ve arkadaşları (2000), saldırganlıęı “belirli bir kiři ya da nesneye ynelik, incitmek veya korkutmak niyetiyle yapılan ve bu eylemin saldırgan niyet tařıdıęı konusunda fikir birlięi olan davranıř” řeklinde tanımlamaktadır (s. 398). Saldırganlık doęrudan ya da rtk biimlerde ortaya ıkabilir (Coie ve Dodge, 1998; Crick vd., 1997).

Saldırganlık farklı biimlerde sınıflandırılmıřtır. Dodge (1991), saldırganlıęı planlı ve dlle ynlendirilen "aktif ynelimli saldırganlık" ile, tehdit veya kıřkırtmaya tepki olarak geliřen "tepkisel saldırganlık" řeklinde ayırmıřtır. Saldırgan davranıřlar erken ocuklukta bařlayarak yařam boyu srebilir (Shaw vd., 1996) ve erken yařlardaki saldırgan eęilimler, ilerleyen dnemlerde de devam etme eęilimindedir (Reebye, 2005; Robins, 1966).

Bu davranıř; zayıf akran iliřkileri, akademik bařarısızlık, antisosyal eęilimler, sosyal kurallara uymama, paylařım glkleri ve dřk z-motivasyon gibi birok olumsuz sonuca neden olabilmektedir (Leff vd., 2001; Sprague ve Perkins, 2009; Sumi vd., 2012). Ayrıca saldırganlık, sosyal problem zme, empati kurma ve duygu dzenleme gibi biliřsel-davranıřsal srelerle iliřkilendirilmiřtir (Crick ve Dodge, 1994; Eisenberg ve Fabes, 1999; Kaukiainen vd., 1999).

Cinsiyet, saldırganlık trlerinde belirleyici bir deęiřkendir. Kadınlar daha ok iliřkisel saldırganlık sergilerken, erkeklerde fiziksel saldırganlıęa daha sık rastlanmaktadır (Reebye, 2005). Bunun yanında, ebeveynin eęitim durumu, sosyo-ekonomik dzeyi, medeni hali; ocuęun yařı, kardeř sayısı, akran iliřkileri, erken

deneyimleri ve ebeveyn-çocuk etkileşimi gibi birçok faktör saldırganlıkla ilişkili bulunmuştur (Bowlby, 1958, 1982; Kadan, 2010; Karakuş, 2008; Stauffacher ve DeHart, 2006).

Sosyal etkileşimin gelişimdeki rolü, Piaget ve Vygotsky gibi öncü teorisyenlerce vurgulanmış; kültürün çocuğun gelişiminde belirleyici bir unsur olduğu belirtilmiştir (Fung, 2011). Nitekim, farklı kültürel bağlamlarda yapılan araştırmalar, erken çocukluk dönemindeki saldırgan davranışların çeşitliliğini gözler önüne sermektedir (Dearing vd., 2015; Ostrov ve Keating, 2004; Ostrov vd., 2013). Örneğin, Batı ülkelerindeki çocuklar kendini ifade etmeye daha çok teşvik edilirken (Knyazev vd., 2008), Asya'daki çocuklar daha az saldırgan davranış göstermektedir (Bergeron ve Schneider, 2005). Ülkeler saldırgan davranışları farklı şekillerde değerlendirebilir: İtalya'da saldırganlık sosyal yeterlilikle ilişkilendirilirken, Çin'de psikolojik sorun belirtisi olarak görülmektedir (Chen vd., 1995; Schneider ve Fonzi, 1996).

Bununla birlikte, saldırganlıkla ilgili psikolojik literatürün büyük oranda Amerika ve Avrupa merkezli olduğu görülmektedir (Arnett, 2008). Arnett (2008), dünya nüfusunun yalnızca %5'ini oluşturan Amerikan vatandaşlarının, psikolojik araştırmalarda %70 oranında temsil edildiğini ve bu katılımcıların %80'inin Avrupalı kökenli olduğunu belirtmiştir. Oyserman vd. (2002) ise Batı kökenli teorilerin bireyciliği öne çıkardığını ve kolektivist kültürleri yeterince yansıtmadığını ifade ederek, bu alanın genişletilmesi gerektiğine dikkat çekmişlerdir. Bu noktada, saldırganlık üzerine geliştirilen baskın teoriler (Freud, 1920; Dollard vd., 1939; Crick ve Dodge, 1994; Bandura, 1973) da Batı kültürlerine dayanmaktadır.

Gömülü kuram yöntemiyle yapılan erken çocukluk dönemi saldırganlığına dair iki önemli çalışma bulunmaktadır (Ermann, 2019; Lazar, 1995). Lazar (1995) medyayı ele alırken, Ermann (2019) annelerin deneyimlerine odaklanmıştır. Ancak saldırganlığı çok boyutlu ve bütüncül bir yaklaşımla ele alan kuramsal bir modelin eksikliği dikkat çekmektedir (Doğan, 2020).

Hofstede'in (1984) bireycilik-kolektivizm boyutunda Türkiye, 37 puanla kolektivist; ABD ise 91 puanla bireyci kültür olarak konumlandırılmıştır. Kolektivist

toplumlarda topluluğa aidiyet, bireysel ihtiyaçların önündedir (Dumludağ vd., 2015). Bu nedenle, kültürel yapının göz önünde bulundurulduğu psikolojik modellerin geliştirilmesi önemlidir (Peterson ve Marin, 1988; Hardin vd., 2014). Kağıtçıbaşı (1995) bu duruma dikkat çekerek, her araştırmanın başarıya ulaşabilmesi için, araştırmanın yürütüldüğü kültüre uygun teorik temeller geliştirilmesi gerektiğini vurgulamıştır.

Türkiye’de saldırganlığa dair bazı çalışmalar bulunsa da (Diken vd., 2010; Kadan, 2010), bu çalışmalar Türkiye bağlamında yeni kuramlar üretmemektedir. Türkiye’nin kültürel özgünlüğü göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, çocukluk dönemi saldırganlığına yönelik özgün ve kültüre uygun bir kuram geliştirme gereksinimi bulunmaktadır (Doğan, 2020). Mevcut literatür incelendiğinde, Türkiye bağlamında yapılmış gömülü kuram temelli ya da yeni kuramsal çerçeve sunan bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Ancak çocukların saldırganlık eğilimleri ve bu davranışlara yönelik tutumların kültürden kültüre değiştiği göz önünde bulundurulduğunda (Chen vd., 1995; Knyazev vd., 2008), bu konuda yapılacak araştırmalar büyük önem taşımaktadır.

Bu doğrultuda, bu araştırma Türk kültürüne özgü çocukluk dönemi saldırganlık kuramını geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Gömülü kuram yaklaşımı ve durumsal analiz yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilecek çalışma, çocukluk dönemi saldırganlığını çok boyutlu biçimde ele alarak, Türkiye bağlamında kültürel olarak duyarlı bir kuramsal yapı oluşturmayı hedeflemektedir.

Araştırmada, çocukluk saldırganlığını araştırmak ve çocukluk saldırganlığı kuramını oluşturmak için Çalışma 1 ve Çalışma 2 olmak üzere iki ardışık çalışma planlanmıştır. Yanıtlara ulaşmak için, Çalışma 1 ve Çalışma 2 için aşağıdaki araştırma soruları önerilmiştir.

Çalışma 1 için araştırma soruları:

1. Saldırganlığın tanımı nedir?
 - 1.1. Çocukluk dönemi saldırganlığının özellikleri nelerdir?
 - 1.2. Çocukluk saldırganlığının kategorileri nelerdir?
 - 1.2.1. Her bir saldırganlık kategorisinin özellikleri nelerdir?

Çalışma 2 için araştırma soruları:

1. Çocukluk saldırganlığı nasıl ortaya çıkar?
 - 1.1. Çocukluk saldırganlığının boyutları ve özellikleri nelerdir?
 - 1.2. Belirtilen boyutlara bağlı olarak çocukluk saldırganlığı nasıl ortaya çıkmaktadır?
2. Kültür çocukluk saldırganlığı ile nasıl etkileşim içindedir?

2. Yöntem

Çalışma 1

Çalışma 1, nitel metodolojiye dayalı betimleyici fenomenolojik bir yaklaşımla yürütülmüştür. Bu yöntem, belirli bir olgunun bireylerin yaşam deneyimleri perspektifinden anlamını keşfetmeyi amaçlar (Creswell, 2014). Araştırma süreci beş aşamadan oluşmuştur: teorik hazırlık, planlama, pilot uygulama, veri toplama, veri analizi ve Çalışma 2'ye hazırlık.

Örneklem, kartopu örnekleme yöntemiyle oluşturulmuştur. Bu teknikte başlangıçta belirlenen az sayıda katılımcı, araştırma sorusu hakkında bilgi sahibi olabilecek diğer bireylere yönlendirme yapar (Bryman, 2012). İlk aşamada internet taramaları ve uzman görüşleriyle adaylar belirlenmiş, uygun görülenlere e-posta gönderilmiştir. Görüşmeyi kabul eden katılımcıların önerileriyle örneklem genişletilmiştir. Katılımcı seçiminde şu iki ölçüt esas alınmıştır:

1) Katılımcının eğitim geçmişi, çocuk gelişimi, klinik psikoloji, çocuk psikiyatristi, erken çocukluk eğitimi, psikoloji, psikolojik danışmanlık ve rehberlik alanları ile ilgili olmalıdır.

2) Normal gelişim gösteren ve saldırgan davranışlar sergileyen okul öncesi yaştaki çocuklarla herhangi bir vaka deneyiminin olması gerekmektedir.

Hennink vd. (2017) 9 görüşmede kod doygunluğuna, 16–24 görüşmede anlam doygunluğuna ulaşıldığını; Hennink & Kaiser (2022) ise örneklem büyüklüğünün 9–17 arası olması gerektiğini belirtmiştir. Bu doğrultuda çalışmada 5 pilot ve 13 ana

katılımcıyla görüşme yapılmıştır. Pilot veriler anlamlı bulunduğundan, bu katılımcılar ana çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir.

Katılımcı profili, 17'si kadın, 1'i erkek olmak üzere toplam 18 kişiden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcılar erken çocukluk eğitimi (n=6), tıp (n=3), psikolojik danışmanlık ve rehberlik (n=3), psikoloji (n=3) ve çocuk gelişimi (n=3) gibi alanlardan mezundur. Grup toplamında 14 yüksek lisans ve 10 doktora derecesi bulunmaktadır.

Araştırmada, çocukluk saldırganlığının tanımı, sınıflandırılması ve özelliklerinin keşfi amacıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Patton (2015), görüşmenin duygular, inançlar ve düşünceler gibi gözlemlenemeyen yapıları anlamak için etkili olduğunu belirtmektedir. Görüşme formu, 4 ana ve 8 alt sorudan oluşmaktadır. Etik onay alındıktan sonra örnekleme süreci başlatılmış, katılımcılara e-posta yoluyla bilgilendirme ve çevrim içi görüşme bağlantıları gönderilmiştir. Pilot çalışma, 5 katılımcıyla çevrim içi platformda; ana görüşmeler ise 9 katılımcıyla çevrim içi, 4 katılımcıyla yüz yüze gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmeler 25–56 dakika sürmüş, gönüllü onam alınarak kayıt altına alınmıştır.

Veri analizinden önce, kodlayıcılar arası tutarlılık için erken çocukluk eğitimi alanında uzman bir araştırmacının desteği alınmıştır. Güvenilirlik sağlandıktan sonra analiz süreci başlamıştır.

Araştırmada tematik analiz yöntemi benimsenmiştir. Bu analiz, verilerin anlamlı temalar etrafında düzenlenmesini sağlayan temel nitel analiz tekniklerinden biridir (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Çalışmada Braun ve Clarke'ın (2006; 2022) altı aşamalı yaklaşımı uygulanmıştır: (i) veriye aşinalık, (ii) kodlama, (iii) tema oluşturma, (iv) temaları gözden geçirme, (v) tema tanımlama ve adlandırma, (vi) raporlama. Bu süreçte tümevarımsal bir yaklaşım benimsenmiş, kodların ve temaların doğrudan veriden türetilmesine özen gösterilmiştir (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 1990).

Çalışma 2

Çalışma 2'de nitel metodoloji kullanılmıştır. Morse (1991), nitel paradigmanın “nasıl” sorusuna odaklandığını ve yeni bir teori oluşturmak için bu paradigmanın

uygunluğunu vurgulamıştır. Bu doğrultuda mevcut çalışma, araştırma sorularını değerlendirmek ve amaca ulaşmak amacıyla gömülü teori yöntemiyle tasarlanmıştır. Gömülü teori, birçok disiplinde yaygın olarak kullanılan sistematik, tümevarımsal ve karşılaştırmalı bir nitel araştırma yaklaşımıdır (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006).

Glaser ve Strauss (1967), gömülü teorinin temel bileşenlerini şu şekilde sıralamıştır: eş zamanlı veri toplama ve analiz, hipotez yerine kodlara odaklanma, sürekli karşılaştırma, analiz sürecinde not alma ve teoriye ulaşmak için örnekleme kullanımı. Gömülü teori yöntemi daha sonra farklı felsefi yaklaşımlarla ele alınmış; pozitivist, yapılandırmacı ve yorumsamacı biçimleri ortaya çıkmıştır (Sebastian, 2019). Pozitivist yaklaşım, ön bilgilerin yanlılığa neden olabileceğini savunur ve teoriyi doğrudan veriden inşa eder (Glaser ve Strauss, 1967). Buna karşılık, yorumsamacı yaklaşım ön bilgilerin araştırmaya etkisini kabul eder (Strauss ve Corbin, 1990); yapılandırmacı yaklaşım ise ön bilgilerin kontrollü şekilde katkı sağlayabileceğini öne sürer (Charmaz, 2014).

Son yıllarda Clarke (2003, 2005) tarafından geliştirilen “durumsal analiz”, yapılandırmacı gömülü teorinin bir uzantısı olarak tanımlanmıştır (Clarke vd., 2015). Bu yaklaşım, insan dışı unsurları da araştırmaya dahil ederek ekolojik bir bakış açısı sunar. Bina, çevre, teknoloji gibi nesneler araştırma kapsamında değerlendirilir. Durumsal analiz, üç tür harita içerir: durumsal harita (unsurlar ve ilişkileri), sosyal dünyalar/arenalar haritası (aktörlerin konumları), konumsal harita (verilerden doğan pozisyonlar). Bu haritalar, araştırmaya farklı bir perspektiften yaklaşılmasını sağlar (Clarke vd., 2015).

Bu çalışmada durumsal analiz yöntemi tercih edilmiştir. Bunun iki nedeni vardır: Birincisi, Bandura (1986), insan davranışının biliş, çevre ve davranışsal faktörlerin etkileşimiyle şekillendiğini savunur. İkincisi, Bandura (1983), saldırganlığı karmaşık bir olay olarak tanımlar ve yalnızca davranış değil, bu davranışa neden olan faktörleri de içerdiğini belirtir. Bu nedenle insan dışı unsurların da saldırganlık bağlamında incelenmesi önemli görülmektedir.

Bu çalışma, 60-72 ay aralığındaki okul öncesi çocukları, çocukların öğretmenleri ve ebeveynleri ile yürütülmüştür. Çalışmada ebeveynlerle çocukları hakkında ve

öğretmenle sınıftaki bir çocuk hakkında görüşülmüştür. Bu sebeble, çalışma kapsamında gözlemlenecek ve hakkında görüşülecek çocuklar için çeşitli şartlar bulunmaktadır. Bu şartlar, normal gelişim gösteriyor olmak, özel eğitim gereksinimi olmamak, saldırganlıkla ilgili herhangi bir klinik tanısı olmamak, ana dili Türkçe olmak, 60 ile 72 ay aralığında olmak, araştırmacının kriter olarak sağladığı zarar verici ve incitici davranışları rutin olarak sergilemek ve ailenin çalışmaya katılmaya onay vermesidir. Mevcut çalışmaya katılacak yetişkinler için belirli bir kriter bulunmamaktadır.

Gömülü teori çalışmalarının örneklem büyüklüğü için Creswell (2013) 20-30 katılımcıdan 50-60 görüşme yapılmasını önerirken, Charmaz (2008) örneklem büyüklüğünün yeni bir kategori ortaya çıkmayana kadar değişebileceğini belirtmektedir. Bu doğrultuda, örneklem büyüklüğüne ulaşmak için teorik örnekleme kullanılmıştır. Teorik örnekleme, gömülü teori yöntemiyle ilişkili bir örnekleme türüdür ve araştırmacı veri doygunluğuna ulaşana ve verinin doğasını kavrayana kadar örneklem seçimini gerektirir (Clarke vd., 2015). Teorik örneklemede, ilk katılımcılar belirlenen kriterlere göre seçilmiştir. İlk veriler analiz edildikçe, teorik doygunluğa ulaşmak için daha fazla katılımcı seçilmiştir. Mevcut araştırmada, pilot çalışma için 7 katılımcı (1 çocuk, 2 öğretmen, 2 anne, 2 baba) ve çalışmanın ana bölümü için 35 katılımcı ile görüşülmüş; 4 çocuk gözlemlenmiştir. Pilot çalışma verileri toplandıktan sonra, veri doygunluğunun zenginleştirilmesi ve pilot çalışma sonrasında herhangi bir değişiklik yapılmasına gerek olmaması nedeniyle pilot verinin, çalışmanın ana bölümüne dahil edilmesine karar verilmiştir.

Bu çalışmada hakkında görüşme yapılan veya gözlemlenen çocukların 20'si kız, 21'i ise erkektir. Bu çocuklar arasında, en çok büyük çocuk ve tek çocuk bulunmaktadır. Sadece 1 ortanca çocuk olarak çalışmaya katılmıştır. Aileler genellikle 3 ile 4 kişiden oluşurken, çocukların yaklaşık 24'ünün sadece 1 kardeşi vardır. Sadece 2 çocuk 2 kardeşe sahiptir. Çocukların tamamının 2 veya 2'den az kardeşi vardır. Aileler ve okul öncesi öğretmenleriyle ilişkili değişkenler söz konusu olduğunda, ebeveynlerin ve öğretmenlerin çoğu 31 ila 40 yaş arasındadır. Toplam 41 katılımcının 25'i lisans derecesine sahiptir. 5 katılımcı ilkökul, ortaokul veya lise mezunu; 1 katılımcı doktora mezunudur. Çocuklar, Türkiye'nin başkenti olan Ankara'nın 10 farklı

ilçesinde ikamet etmektedir. 41 çocuktan 7'si Ankara'nın Çankaya ilçesinde, 7'si Altındağ ilçesinde, 6'sı Mamak ilçesinde ve 5'i de Yenimahalle ilçesinde ikamet etmektedir.

Bu çalışmada öğretmenlerden ve ebeveynlerden veri toplamak için yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme protokolü ve sorularından yararlanılmıştır. Çocuk gözlemleri için gözlem formundan yararlanılmıştır. Görüşme soruları ve gözlem formu kapsamlı bir literatür taramasından sonra oluşturulmuştur. İlk aşamada, olası görüşme soruları toplanmış ve uygun olanlar seçilmiştir. Gözlem formu, öğretmen ve ebeveyn görüşme formu nihai hâlini aldıktan sonra 6 erken çocukluk eğitimi ve 1 çocuk gelişimi uzmanından formun uygunluğuna yönelik görüşler alınmış; gerekli düzenlemeler yapılmıştır. Resmi izinler alındıktan sonra pilot çalışma 1 çocuk, 2 öğretmen, 2 anne ve 2 baba ile uygulanmıştır. Pilot çalışmadan sonra, gerekli düzenlemeler yapılarak görüşme formuna son hali verilmiştir.

Ebeveyn görüşme formu 13 ana sorudan oluşmaktadır. Bu sorulardan 3 aileyi, aile bireylerini ve ailelerin çocuk yetiştirme tutumları hakkında bilgi edinmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Diğer 10 soru çalışma kapsamında seçilen çocuğun davranışlarını anlamaya yöneliktir. Bu formun amacı ailenin gözünden çocuk ve çocuğun davranışları hakkında bilgiler edinmektir.

Öğretmen görüşme formu 12 ana sorudan oluşmaktadır. Bu sorulardan 3 öğretmeni, sınıfı ve öğretmenin genel tutumları hakkında bilgi edinmeyi; 9 soru çalışma kapsamında seçilen çocuğun davranışlarını anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu formun amacı öğretmenin gözünden çocuk ve çocuğun davranışları hakkında bilgiler edinmektir.

Örnekleme ulaşmak için örneklem bölümünde tanımlanan kriterler katılımcıların seçiminde referans olarak kullanılmıştır. Çalışma 2 için erken çocukluk öğretmenlerine ve ebeveynlerine ulaşılmıştır. Çalışma 1'in sonucu olarak oluşturulan kılavuz ile öğretmenlere tanımlar, sınıflandırma, saldırgan davranışların listesi ve kriter listesi de dahil olmak üzere çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda çocukları seçmeleri için kılavuzlar iletilmiştir. Sınıflarındaki çocuklardan biri kriterleri

karşılıyorsa, öğretmenler çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Ebeveynlere kriterlerin listesi verilmiştir, ancak ebeveynlerin konu ile ilgili hassas olmaları ihtimalin göz önünde bulundurularak olası sorunların önlenmesi için davranışların tanımların ve listesin verilmemiştir. Kriterlerin karşılanması durumunda, ebeveynler çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Çocukların Çalışma 1'de oluşturulan tanımlara ve davranış listesine uyup uymadığı araştırmacı tarafından değerlendirilmiştir. Katılımcılar belirlendikten sonra öncelikle öğretmenler ve ebeveynlerle görüşmeler yapılmış; öğretmenler aracılığıyla seçilen 5 çocuk sınıf içerisinde gözlemlenmiştir. Veri toplama sırasında, veriyi kolay ve daha güvenilir toplamak amacıyla ses kaydı kullanılmıştır. Araştırmacı, tatmin edici zengin veriye ulaşana kadargörüşmelere ve gözlemlere devam etmiştir

Görüşmelerin yapılacağı yerler katılımcılarla birlikte kararlaştırılmıştır. Katılımcıların onamları alınmış ve katılımcılara gizlilik ve anonimlik konusunda bilgi verilerek çalışmadan çekilme haklarının olduğu bildirilmiştir. Veri toplama sırasında bir baba isteksiz olduğunu belirtmiş, bazı babalar eşleriyle görüşme yapmak koşuluyla gönüllü olmuştur. Literatür, ikili görüşmelerin aynı mevcut ilişkiye sahip veya ortak paydası olan çiftler için uygun olduğunu bildirmiştir (Kvalsвик ve Ogaard, 2021). Bu nedenle, 4 anne ve baba çifti ikili görüşmelere katılmıştır. Görüşmeler 22 dakika ile 78 dakika arasında sürmüştür. Kaydedilen görüşmeler yazılı hale getirilmiştir. Görüşme formlarında gizliliği sağlamak için katılımcılar rumuz ile kodlanmıştır. İlk aşamada, güvenilirliği sağlamak için iki adet görüşme verisi erken çocukluk eğitimi alanında uzmanlaşmış araştırmacı ile birlikte kodlanmış ve ana araştırmacının kodlarıyla diğer araştırmacının kodları karşılaştırılarak kodlayıcılar arası uzlaşma yapılmıştır. Kodlar arasında ilişkiler kurularak güvenilirlik ve tutarlılık sağlanmıştır. Veri analizi, veri toplama sırasında eşzamanlı olarak yapılmış ve örneklem büyüklüğü için belirleyici faktör olmuştur.

Çalışmanın örneklem büyüklüğü veri doyumuna bağlı olduğundan dolayı, veri analizi ile veri toplama eş zamanlı olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Hem veri toplama hem de analiz sırasında ileride başvurmak üzere yansıtıcı notlar ve günlükler tutulmuştur. Çalışmada, deşifre metinleri MAXQDA aracılığıyla kodlanmış ve analiz edilmiştir. Mevcut çalışmada kodlama hepten gidimsel çıkarım yoluyla yapılmıştır (Charmaz, 2006). Hepten gidimsel çıkarım, yeni bir teoriyi formüle etmek için önceki literatürü

veya teoriyi referans olarak kullanmak olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Peirce, 1955). Hepten gidimsel çıkarım yoluyla araştırma literatürü ve mevcut teorileri kavrar, toplanan verilerden önceden var olan teorilerle benzerlikler veya farklılıklar gösterebilecek yeni bir teori ortaya çıkacaktır (Timmermans ve Tavory, 2012). Hepten gidimsel çıkarım yoluna ilave olarak durumsal analiz yöntemi de kullanılmıştır.

Durumsal analizde veri analizi, gömülü teori kapsamında araştırmacının yapacağı her adımı içerir. Ancak, mevcut çalışmada durumsal analizin üç temel haritası daha ileri bir adım olarak dahil edilecektir (Clarke vd., 2015). Üç tür harita sunmak, araştırmacının hem insani hem de insani olmayan unsurları dahil ederek teoriyi sunmak için çeşitli görünümeler sağlamasına olanak tanıyacaktır. Bu haritaların işlevleri yukarıdaki araştırma modeli bölümünde daha detaylı açıklanmıştır. Clarke ve diğerleri (2015), birinci ve ikinci tür haritaların, durumsal haritalar ve sosyal dünyalar/arenaların, araştırmanın ilk aşamasında oluşturulduğunu, devam eden veri analizi bulgularına bağlı olarak haritalardaki unsurların değişebileceğini ve veri toplamaya rehberlik edebileceğini açıklamıştır. Durumsal haritalar araştırmacı tarafından kullanılsa da genellikle sosyal dünyalar/arenalar haritası yazılı çalışmada veya tezde kullanılır. Sosyal dünyalar/arenalar haritaları araştırılan konunun bölgesel düzeyde organizasyonunu ortaya koyar. Konumsal haritalar ise veri analizi sonrasında ortaya çıkar ve araştırılan konunun ortaya çıkan konumları hakkında bilgi sağlar. Bu haritaların çeşitli örneklerine açıklık getirmek amacıyla aşağıda yer verilmiştir.

Özet olarak, bu çalışmada gömülü teori yöntemi için uygun görülen açık ve eksenel kodlama yapılmış ve bir sonraki aşamada ise durumsal analiz uygulanmıştır (Clarke vd., 2015). Açık kodlamada satır satır kodlama yapılırken, eksenel kodlamada açık kodlamada ortaya çıkan kodlar arasında ilişkiler kurulur (Kelle, 2007).

3. Bulgular

Çalışma 1

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye bağlamında uzmanların bakış açısından saldırganlığın tanımını yapmak, saldırgan davranışları listelemek ve sınıflandırmaktır. Bu amaç

doğrultusunda çalışmada iki büyük tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu temalar erken çocukluk döneminde saldırganlığın operasyonel tanımı ve saldırganlık türleridir. İlk tema olan erken çocuklukta saldırganlığın operasyonel tanımını yaparken birçok katılımcı doğrudan tanım vermektense erken çocukluk döneminde saldırganlığın özellikleri, işlevi ve davranışlar hakkında konuşmuştur. Dolayısıyla belirtilen üç öge ilk temanın altında kategori olarak yer almıştır. Öncelikle saldırganlığı tanımlarken tanımın odak noktası uzmanın alanına göre değişmektedir. Bu nedenle, farklı disiplinlerden uzmanlar farklı anahtar terimler kullanmaktadır. Psikiyatristler ve psikologlar çocukluk çağı saldırganlığını tanımlarken saldırganlığın biyolojik ve tıbbi yönlerini vurgulamaktadır. Katılımcılar, erken çocukluk döneminde, saldırganlık her zaman zarar verme amaçlı olmadığını; altta yatan başka motivasyonlar olabildiğini beyan etmişlerdir. Bu sebeple, katılımcılar saldırganlığı duygular, kışkırtma, dürtüsellik, dikkat çekme, dil, fiziksel temas, hayal kırıklığı, hedefe ulaşma, problem çözme, beden farkındalığı, ebeveyn-çocuk ilişkileri, cinsiyet, akran ilişkileri ve saldırgan davranışlar gibi anahtar kelimeleri vurgulayarak tanımlamıştır. Katılımcılar çocukluk çağı saldırganlığını, kişinin kendisine, başkalarına, çevresine, veya nesnelere yönelik fiziksel ve duygusal zarar verme olarak tanımlanmaktadır.

Çalışma kapsamında, katılımcılar saldırganlığın birçok özelliğinden bahsetmişlerdir. Örneğin, saldırganlığın münferit bir olay değil; yinelenen bir davranış biçimi olduğu ifade edilmiştir. Ayrıca, saldırgan davranışlar bir spektrumda yer aldığı ve tüm saldırganlık biçimleri aynı etkilere sahip olmadığı belirtilmiştir. Spektrumun uçlarında bulunan davranışlar sebebiyle, erken çocukluk döneminde saldırganlık, psikolojik bir bozukluğun belirtisi olabileceği belirtilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, önemli sayıda çocuk, bir belirti olarak saldırganlık nedeniyle profesyonellere yönlendirilmektedir. Katılımcıların beyanına göre, saldırganlığın patolojik olarak kabul edilebilmesi için birden fazla ortamda ortaya çıkması, sıklığının artması ve altı aydan uzun süre devam etmesi gerekir. Bütün bu sebeplerden dolayı saldırganlık olumsuz çağrışımlar taşır ve genellikle damgalama ve etiketleme ile ilişkilendirilir.

Katılımcılar çocukluk çağı saldırganlığını genellikle çocuğa yönelik anlayış ve destek eksikliği ile ilişkilendirilmiştir. Bu nedenle olaya sadece çocuğun bakış açısından değil, çevresinin bakış açısından da bakılmalıdır. Örneğin, ani sosyo-

kültürel değişiklikler çocukları etkileyebilir ve saldırganlığa katkıda bulunabilir. Katılımcılar bu örneklerle ilave olarak pandemi, kardeş doğumu, ebeveyn ayrılığı, kazalar veya diğer stres faktörleri gibi olaylar saldırgan davranışı tetikleyebileceğini belirtmişlerdir. Bunun yanı sıra, kırsal ve sosyo-kültürel geçmiş de saldırganlıkla ilişkili olduğu belirtilmiştir. Bazı katılımcılar düşük sosyo-ekonomik geçmişe sahip çocukların daha yüksek saldırganlık riski altında olduğunu savunurken, diğerleri daha yüksek sosyo-ekonomik geçmişe sahip çocukların da uzun ebeveyn çalışma saatleri gibi faktörler nedeniyle saldırganlık sergileyebileceğini öne sürmektedir. Katılımcılara göre saldırganlık, yalnızca çevresel değil, gelişimsel faktörlerle de yakından ilişkilidir. Özellikle bilişsel gelişim ve duygusal düzenleme becerileri, saldırganlığın kontrolünde kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Öte yandan, katılımcılar saldırganlığın bazen bir iletişim biçimi olarak işlev görebileceğini; çocuklar hayal kırıklığı ve yoğun duygularını ifade etmek için saldırgan davranışlara başvurabileceğini belirtmişlerdir. Bu yönüyle saldırganlığın dil gelişimiyle de ilişkili olduğu görülmektedir. Çalışmada, ayrıca saldırganlık, gelişimsel süreçte keşif yapma ya da istenen nesne ve hedeflere ulaşma amacıyla da kullanılabildiği sonucu ortaya çıkmıştır. Katılımcılara göre çocukluk çağı saldırganlığı, duyguları ifade etme ve düzenleme becerisinin sınırlı olması gibi gelişimsel faktörler nedeniyle yetişkin saldırganlığından farklıdır; dolayısıyla çocukluk çağındaki saldırganlık zararlı bir niyetten ziyade işlevsel bir amaca hizmet eder. Ancak niyet, çocukluk saldırganlığını tanımlarken vurgulanan kilit unsurlardan biridir. Bir çocuğun saldırganlığının ardındaki niyet, davranışlarını anlamak ve yorumlamak için çok önemli olduğu katılımcılar tarafından belirtilmiştir. Katılımcılar, kültürel aile uygulamaların da niyet algılarını şekillendirdiğini vurgulamıştır. Bazı ailelerin sevgilerini saldırgan olarak yorumlanabilecek fiziksel eylemlerle ifade ettikleri belirtildi. Katılımcılar saldırgan davranışı tam olarak anlamak için yalnızca çocuğun niyetini değil, aynı zamanda davranışı deneyimleyenlerin bakış açılarını da dikkate almak gerektiğini vurgulamıştır. Zarar algısının, saldırganlığa maruz kalan çocuklar arasında farklılık gösterebildiği ifade edilmiştir. Çocukluk saldırganlığını yetişkin saldırganlığından farklı kılan öğelerden biri ise çocukların bunu genellikle endişe, üzüntü, fiziksel acı, hayal kırıklığı, kaygı ve hayal kırıklığı gibi duyguları ifade etmek için kullanması olarak beyan edilmiştir. Salırganlığa yol açan duygular da yaşa göre değişir. Katılımcılar küçük çocuklarda, sadece öfkeden ziyade kaygı, endişe, üzüntü, hayal

kırıklığı ve hayal kırıklığı duyguları genellikle saldırgan davranışlara katkıda bulunduğundan bahsetmiştir. Bunun aksine, katılımcılar yetişkin saldırganlığı temel olarak öfke tarafından yönlendirildiğini belirtmiştir.

Türkiye bağlamında, uzmanlar 23 farklı saldırgan davranış türü belirlemiştir. En sık belirtilen saldırgan davranışlar arasında vurma, itme, zarar verme, saldırgan bir dil kullanma, ısırma, yüksek ses tepkileri, dışlama, çekme ve aşağılayıcı davranışlar/söylemler yer almaktadır. En az belirtilen davranışlar arasında birinin üstüne çıkma, boğma, tırmalama, altını ıslatma, çimdikleme ve tokatlama yer almaktadır. Bunlar arasında ısırma, şiddeti ve neden olduğu uzun süreli ağrı nedeniyle en sorunlu davranış olarak bildirilmektedir. Dışlama ve saldırgan bir dil kullanma mesela isim takma gibi, saldırganlığın en hafife alınan biçimleri olarak kabul edilmiştir.

Katılımcılar saldırganlığı, mekanın doğasına (evde, sokakta, okulda), davranışın kökenine (model alma, engellenme, ebeveyn tutumu ve bağlanma), tıbbi iyilik haline (patolojik, patolojik olmayan), hedefin doğasına (başkalarına yönelik, kendine yönelik, çevreye yönelik), temsil biçimine (dolaylı, doğrudan), davranışın rolüne (proaktif, reaktif), davranışın türüne (sözlü, ilişkisel, fiziksel) ve niyete (kazara, veya kasıtlı, (dışavurumcu, düşmanca ve araçsal saldırganlık) göre sınıflandırmıştır. Katılımcılar çocukların yaşlarına bağlı olarak farklı saldırganlık türleri sergidiğini belirtmiştir. Küçük çocuklar fiziksel saldırganlık gösterme eğilimindeyken, 60-72 ay arasındaki çocukların öncelikle ilişkisel ve sözel saldırganlık gösterdiği ifade edilmiştir. Buna ek olarak, saldırgan davranış cinsiyete göre de farklılık gösterdiği beyan edilmiştir. Genellikle erkeklerin daha fazla fiziksel saldırganlık sergilediği, kızların ise sözel ve ilişkisel saldırganlığa daha yatkın olduğu iddia edildi. Ancak bir katılımcı, erkeklerin kızlardan daha fazla sözel saldırganlık sergilediğini öne sürmüştür. Katılımcılar sözlü saldırganlık olarak, yüksek ses tepkilerini, ağlamayı veya feryat etmeyi, saldırgan bir dil kullanmayı ve aşağılayıcı davranışlar/söylemlerden bahsettiler. Bunun yanı sıra, dedikodu yaymak, aşağılayıcı davranışlar/söylemler, görmezden gelmek ve dışlamak ilişkisel saldırganlık biçimleri olarak sınıfladılar. Son olarak, fiziksel saldırganlığın ısırma, zarar verme, boğma, vurma, tekmeleme, çimdikleme, çekme ve tırmalama gibi davranışları içerdiği

belirtildi. İlginç olarak, uzmanlar ‘aşağılayıcı davranışlar/söylemler’ hem sözel hem de ilişkisel saldırganlık olarak kabul etmektedir.

Çalışma 2

Bu çalışmanın amacı, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, annelerin, babaların bakış açıları ve sınıf için çocuk gözlemlerinden yola çıkarak Türkiye bağlamında kültüre uygun çocukluk çağı saldırganlığı teorisi üretmektir. Kültürel olarak uygun çocukluk saldırganlığı dokuz ana tema üzerinden incelenmektedir: Saldırganlığın öncülleri, saldırgan davranışlar, saldırganlığın sonuçları, müdahale stratejileri, saldırgan davranışın işlevleri, örüntüler ve tezahürler, katkıda bulunan faktörler, altta yatan belirleyiciler, davranışsal zorluklar ve sonuçlar.

Saldırganlığın öncülleri teması altında, olağandışı veya dışavurumcu davranışlar, dikkat çekici eylemler ve olaylara karşı artan duygusal hassasiyet gibi duygusal ve psikolojik tetikleyiciler genellikle saldırganlıktan önce gözlemlendi. Bunun yanı sıra, mekansal faktörler, aktivitelerdeki değişiklikler, sınıftaki geçişler, oyun veya nesne ile ilgili tetikleyiciler gibi çevresel ve durumsal tetikleyicilerde genellikle saldırganlıktan önce geldiği orta koyuldu. Ayrıca, sınıf içinde gerçekleşen olumlu akran etkileşimleri, sosyal etkileşim ve dışlama, akranlar arasında güç ve statü çatışması, akran çatışması veya mücadeleleri dahil olmak üzere akran etkileşimleri ve sosyal dinamikler de saldırganlığı tetikleyebildiği ortaya koyuldu. Son olarak, çalışmada sorumluluk ve düzeni teşvik etme, ve disiplin önlemleri etkisi gibi akran tarafından başlatılan eylemler, saldırganlık öncesinde sıklıkla gözlemlendiği ortaya konulmuştur.

Bu çalışmada, Çalışma 1’de tespit edilen 23 saldırgan davranıştan sadece 17’si gözlemlenmiştir. Bu davranışlar arasında en yaygın olarak fiziksel saldırganlık gözlemlenirken, eşit oranda ilişkisel ve sözel saldırganlık görülmüştür. Öğretmenler, anne ve babalara kıyasla daha sık fiziksel saldırganlık bildirirken, bu durumdan en az bahseden anneler olmuştur. Çalışma 2’de 12 fiziksel saldırgan davranış tespit edilmiştir. En sık görüldenden en az görülene doğru sıralanan bu davranışlar arasında vurma, nesneleri veya kendini fırlatma, zarar verme, çekme, itme, çimdikleme, birinin üzerine çıkma, oyunu veya devam eden eğitim faaliyetlerini kesme,

tekmeleme, tırmalama, boğma ve ısırma yer almaktadır. Çalışma 1’de de belirtildiği üzere ısırma, ele alınması ve ebeveynlere açıklanması zor olduğu için yönetilmesi özellikle zor bir davranış olarak bildirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada, ayrıca ilişkisel olarak saldırgan üç davranış tespit edilmiştir. Bunlar sıklık sırasına göre dışlama, aşağılayıcı davranışlar/söylemler ve görmezden gelmedir. Ek olarak, iki sözel agresif davranış kaydedilmiştir. Bunlar, en sık görüldenden en az görülene doğru, saldırgan bir dil kullanmak ve yüksek ses tepkileridir. İsim takmak, saldırgan bir dil kullanmanın bir biçimi olduğu katılımcılar tarafından belirtilmiştir. Bazı kelimeler, görünüşte masum ve zararsız olsa da, uyandırdıkları tepki ve neden oldukları zarara bağlı olarak saldırgan olarak algılanabildiği ifade edilmiştir. Bu nedenle, saldırganlığı belirlemede kilit faktör alıcının algısı olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Bu çalışma sürecinde davranışlarla ilgili ilginç olarak görülebilecek bir durum ise davranışın doğasını anlamada yaşanan zorluklardır. Gözlem sürecinde, zaman zaman fiziksel saldırganlık gizli bir şekilde sergilenmiş ve saldırgan davranışın doğası ancak öğretmenlerin onayından sonra tam olarak anlaşılabilmiştir. Çünkü gizli baskı sırasında çocuklar bastırılmış ve bu sebeple ve açık bir tepki göstermedikleri gözlemlenmiştir. Bu gizli etkileşimler yüzeyde çatışmasız görünebilir, ancak aslında yüzeyin altında çatışmalıdır.

Saldırganlığın sonuçları olan üçüncü tema, davranışın hemen ardından gerçekleşen anlık tepki ve sonuçları kast etmektedir. Bunlardan birisi, düzeltici eylemler ve koşullu çatışma çözümü, sınır ve kaynak yönetimi, itaat yaptırımı ve öğretimsel tepkiler gibi davranışsal düzenlemeler saldırganlığın hemen ardından gerçekleşti. Ayrıca, duygusal üzüntü ve sosyal tepkiler gibi duygusal ve sosyal sonuçlar; savunmacı geri çekilme, inkar, direniş ve misilleme gibi savunmacı ve misilleme tepkileri saldırganlığın sonuçları olarak ortaya çıktığı gözlemlenmiştir. Buna ek olarak, bireylerin saldırganlığa maruz kalmaları sonucunda pasif ya da kaçınmacı tepkiler verebildikleri ortaya koyulmuştur. Son olarak, sosyal pekiştirme ve etkilenme dahil olmak üzere sosyal ve akran etkisi de saldırganlığın sonuçları olarak bulunmuştur. Bu durum, saldırganlığın başkalarını benzer davranışları benimsemeye teşvik edebileceğini ve çocukların öğrenilmiş bir tepki olarak saldırganlığı taklit etmelerine yol açabileceğini göstermektedir.

Saldırganlığa müdahale konusuna gelecek olursak öncelikle profesyonel ve terapötik destek gibi terapötik ve özel müdahaleler, saldırganlığı yönetme stratejileri olarak kullanıldığı beyan edilmiştir. Müdahale yöntemleri olarak ergoterapi, rehber öğretmenler ve profesyonellerle iş birliği vurgulanmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra çalışmada yumuşak sözlü ve sözsüz ipuçları kullanma, dikkati ve davranışı yeniden yönlendirme ve çatışmaları yönetme ve çözme gibi çatışma çözme ve gerilimi azaltma stratejileri, saldırganlığı yönetmek için müdahale stratejileri olarak kullanıldığı ortaya koyulmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra, saldırganlığı ele almak ve yönetmek için sınırların ve hesap verebilirliğin öğretilmesi, seçici görmezden gelme, pekiştirme ve ceza gibi davranış yönetimi ve disiplin stratejileri uygulandığı ortaya koyulmuştur. Yetişkinler aynı zamanda olumlu katılımı teşvik etmek için sorumluluk vermek, duygusal farkındalık ve empatiyi teşvik etmek de dahil olmak üzere duygusal ve sosyal gelişim stratejileri, saldırganlığı yönetmeye yardımcı olmak için kullandıklarını beyan etmişlerdir. Son olarak, ahlaki ve sosyal beklentilerin öğretilmesi, ebeveyn-okul iş birliğinin geliştirilmesi ve davranış kalıplarının belirlenip izlenmesi gibi önleyici ve proaktif stratejiler, saldırganlığın etkili bir şekilde yönetilmesi için gerekli olduğu ortaya koyulmuştur.

“Saldırgan davranışlar ne amaçla kullanılır ve işlevi nedir?” sorusuna cevap olarak katılımcılar birçok işlevden söz etmiştir. Saldırgan davranışlar, dikkat çekme, karşı çıkma ve meydan okuma gibi tepkisel ve dirençli davranışlar, davranışı bir oyun olarak kullanma, uyarılma ve katılım arama gibi duygusal ve bilişsel işlevler ve savunma mekanizmaları, misilleme ve duygusal ifade gibi duygusal güdümlü işlevler dahil olmak üzere çeşitli işlevlere hizmet ettiği beyan edilmiştir. Ek olarak, kıskançlık odaklı davranış, sosyal dışlama, akran düzenlemesi ve sosyal güç iddiası gibi sosyal ve güç odaklı işlevler, saldırganlığı çocukların hedeflerine ve arzularına ulaşmak için bir araç olarak kullanıldığı ortaya çıkmıştır.

Katılımcılara göre, saldırganlık, sıklıkla etiketleme ile ilişkilendirilen sosyal olarak inşa edilmiş bir olgudur; ancak bu etiketler doğası gereği öznel ve bağlama bağlıdır. Sosyal bir davranış olduğu için sosyal ilişkilerde farklı resimler ortaya çıkabileceği belirtilmiştir. Örneğin, çocuklar özel olarak belirli akranlarını hedef alabilir ve saldırganlığı açık ya da gizli olarak onlara yöneltebilir. Katılımcılar, bu

gerçekleştirilen saldırgan davranışların süresi değişebileceğini; bazı durumlarda, çocuğun neredeyse her gün saldırgan eylemler sergilemesiyle birlikte kalıcı bir davranış olarak ortaya çıkabileceğini beyan etmişlerdir. Tersine, saldırganlık önceden bir belirti olmaksızın aniden ortaya çıkabileceği, ancak bazı durumlarda yüz ifadeleri, vücut dili ve çocuğun duygusal durumu gibi ipuçlarına dayanarak tahmin edilebileceği belirtilmiştir. Çalışmada, ortaya çıkan saldırgan davranışlar genellikle erkek akranlara yönelik olduğu ve bunu kadın akranların takip ettiği bulunmuştur. Sıklıkla bahsedilmese de ebeveynler, öğretmenler ve büyükanne ve büyükbabalar gibi yetişkinler de saldırganlığın hedefi olabileceğini belirtmişlerdir. Bu davranışlardan akranlara yöneltilecek davranışlar incelendiğinde, saldırganlık okul ortamlarında daha yaygın olarak gözlenmekte ve sınıfta daha yüksek oranda görülmektedir. Gözlemlere göre, okul öncesi ortamlarda, saldırgan davranışlar en çok serbest oyun sırasında görülme eğilimindedir, bunu sırasıyla sınıf aktivite geçişleri ve sanat etkinlikleri takip eder.

Çalışmada, saldırganlığın gelişiminin, okul öncesi veya anaokuluna başlama ve bir kardeşin doğumu gibi yaşam olayları da dahil olmak üzere bir dizi faktörden etkilendiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu belirli dönüm noktalarının çocuk üzerinde kayda değer bir etkisi olabilir ve genellikle saldırgan davranışların sıklığında ve yoğunluğunda bir artışa yol açabilir. Buna ek olarak, dış koşullar gibi bağlamsal ve durumsal faktörlerin de saldırganlığı etkilediği beyan edilmiştir. Örneğin, belirli bir bireyin varlığı, konum, okuldaki etkinlik türü ve rakibin cinsiyeti saldırgan davranışı etkileyebildiği belirtilmiştir.

Bu çalışmada katılımcılar saldırganlığa katkıda bulunan faktörlerden bahsetmişlerdir. Öncelikle, sosyal ve çevresel tetikleyiciler, bireysel eğilimler ve kişilik özellikleri, duygusal düzenleme ve başa çıkma zorlukları, bilişsel ve psikolojik faktörlerin yanı sıra fiziksel, sağlık ve biyolojik etkilerin tümü saldırganlığın ortaya çıkmasına önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunduğu ortaya koyulmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra bireysel eğilimler ve kişilik özellikleriyle ilgili olarak, kararlı, kontrolcü davranışlar, rekabetçi veya statü odaklı kişilikler, yüksek enerji seviyeleri ve belirgin bir yenilik ve uyarılma ihtiyacı sergileyen çocuklar saldırgan davranışlar sergilemeye daha yatkın olduğu belirtilmiştir. Fiziksel, sağlık ve biyolojik etkiler açısından, içgüdüsel

ve doğuştan gelen tepkilerin yanı sıra beslenme ve fiziksel kısıtlamalar ile sağlık veya gelişim zorluklarının tümü de saldırganlığın ortaya çıkmasında rol oynamakta olduğu belirtilmiştir. Son olarak, geçmiş deneyimler ve öğrenilmiş davranışların yanı sıra dürtüsellik ve öz denetimdeki eksiklikler, saldırganlığa katkıda bulunan temel bilişsel ve psikolojik faktörlerdir.

Çalışmadaki katılımcılar saldırganlığa katkıda bulunan öğelerden bahsederken öncelikle sosyoekonomik etkiler, akran etkileşimleri ve sınıf veya okul ortamı dahil olmak üzere sosyal ve çevresel faktörlerden bahsetmişlerdir. Aile ve ebeveynlik dinamiklerinin yanı sıra sosyal ve kültürel faktörler, okul ve akran bağlamı ile gelişimsel ve sosyal öğrenme süreçleri, saldırganlığın arka planındaki önemli belirleyiciler olarak işlev görmektedir olduğu belirtilmiştir. Katılımcılar, daha geniş kültürel ve ekonomik bağlam ile medya ve teknolojinin etkisi gibi kültürel ve sosyal faktörlerin, saldırgan davranışın önemli arka plan belirleyicileri olarak hizmet ettiği vurgulamışlardır. Benzer şekilde, ailesel ve nesiller arası etkiler ve erken sosyal-duygusal gelişim gibi gelişimsel ve sosyal öğrenme faktörleri de saldırganlığa önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunduğu belirtilmiştir. Son olarak, ebeveynler arasında disiplin tutarlılığı, ebeveyn-çocuk ilişkisinin kalitesi, ebeveyn denetimi ve etkisi, ebeveynlik stilleri ve ebeveyn bağının ve varlığının doğası dahil olmak üzere ebeveynlik uygulamaları, saldırganlığın önemli arka plan belirleyicileri olarak sıklıkla belirtilmektedir.

Katılımcılar çocukluk dönemi saldırganlığında bahsederken bazı zorluklar, endişeleri ve uzun soluklu sonuçlardan bahsetmişlerdir. Akran ve kardeş ilişkilerinde zorluklar, sosyal ve duygusal sonuçlar ve ısrarcı, tekrarlayan davranışlar da dahil olmak üzere çocukların davranış kalıpları ve zorlukları temel endişe alanları olarak veyan edilmiştir. Bu sorunlar genellikle nesiller arası örüntüler, aile çatışmaları, aksaklıklar ve ebeveyn stresi gibi aile dinamiklerinden etkilendiği belirtilmiştir. Katılımcılar, okul ortamında, ebeveynler ve öğretmenler arasındaki zayıf iletişim, sınıf içi aksamalar ve davranış yönetimindeki zorluklar gibi zorluklar çocukların mücadelelerini daha da etkilemekte olduğunu beyan etmişlerdir. Ayrıca, duygusal bulaşma ve etkilenme de dahil olmak üzere duygusal ve psikolojik faktörler, bu davranış kalıplarına ve sonuçlarına önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunur.

Çalışmanın her yönü belirli bir kültürel bağlam içinde yer almakta, kültür her tema ve kodda kendini göstermektedir. Ancak, bu çalışmada tanımlandığı şekliyle, kültür en belirgin şekilde ebeveynlerin çalışma saatleri ve koşulları ve evlilik uyumu gibi faktörleri araştıran kültürel ve ekonomik bağlamla ilgili kategorilerde veya kodlarda; medya ve teknoloji etkisi; kardeş ilişkileri, aile dinamikleri ve nesiller arası desteği içeren aile ve nesiller arası etkiler; ve ebeveynlik tutarlılığı ve çatışması, ebeveyn etkisi ve denetimi, ebeveynlik stilleri ve otoritesi ve ebeveyn bağı ve varlığı gibi hususları kapsayan aile ve ebeveynlik etkilerinde yansıtılmaktadır.

Kültürel olarak uygun çocukluk dönemi saldırganlık teorisi dokuz temadan oluşmaktadır. Teori, saldırganlığın öncülleri ile başlayan, ardından saldırgan davranışlar, bu davranışların sonuçları ve saldırganlığı yönetmek için müdahale stratejileri ile devam eden sıralı bir ilişkinin ana hatlarını çizmektedir. Müdahale başarısız olursa, döngü saldırgan davranışlara geri döner. Saldırganlığın arka plan belirleyicileri, saldırganlığa katkıda bulunan faktörlerin şekillendirilmesinde destekleyici bir rol oynar ve bu da öncülün saldırgan davranışa yol açıp açmadığını etkiler. Saldırgan davranışların işlevi ve saldırganlığın örüntüleri ve tezahürleri, saldırganlığın amacını ve doğasını açıkladıkları için saldırgan davranışla yakından ilişkilidir. Son olarak, davranışsal zorluklar ve sonuçlar saldırgan davranışların uzun vadeli sonuçlarını temsil etmektedir

Bu modelde, güç dinamikleri ve sosyal alanlar katmanlar halinde yapılandırılmıştır: Uzak yapısal güçler daha geniş sosyal ve yapısal etkileri çevrelemekte, bunlar da doğrudan bakım verenleri ve etkileyenleri çevrelemekte ve nihayetinde çocuğu ve akranlarını etkilemektedir. Sosyo-ekonomik koşullar, çalışma koşulları, yasal ve politik çerçeve gibi uzak yapısal güçler, bir çocuğu çevreleyen yakın sosyal ve yapısal ortamları etkileyen daha geniş bir çerçeve oluşturur. Buna ek olarak, toplumsal normlar, kültürel değerler ve daha geniş güç sistemleri gibi daha geniş sosyal ve yapısal etkiler, bir çocuğu çevreleyen yakın sosyal ve yapısal ortamları etkileyen daha geniş bir çerçeve oluşturur. Bu daha geniş güçler aileler, okullar ve topluluklar içindeki davranışları ve beklentileri şekillendirir. Bu bağlamda, doğrudan bakım verenler (ebeveynler, öğretmenler ve büyükanne ve büyükbabalar gibi) ve etkileyenler (medya veya toplum liderleri gibi), çocukların davranışlarını ve

akranlarıyla etkileşimlerini etkileyen kilit figürlerdir. Esasen, uzak toplumsal güçlerden en yakın ilişkilere kadar bu etki katmanları, bir çocuğun saldırganlığı nasıl algıladığını ve saldırganlığa nasıl tepki verdiğini şekillendirmek için etkileşime girer.

4. Tartışma

Çalışma 1

Çocukluk çağı saldırganlığının tanımı, uzmanların mesleki altyapılarına göre değişmektedir. Psikologlar ve psikiyatristler saldırganlığın biyolojik yönlerine (ör. genetik yatkınlık, hormonal etkiler) dikkat çekerken (Berkowitz, 1993; Raine, 2002; Tremblay, 2000), erken çocukluk eğitimcileri davranışsal yönler ve sosyal etkilere odaklanmaktadır (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Bu farklılıklar mesleki eğitim ve deneyimlerle şekillenmektedir (Underwood, 2003). Tüm katılımcılar saldırganlığı; bireyin kendisine, çevresine ya da başkalarına yönelik fiziksel veya duygusal zarar verme davranışı olarak tanımlamakta hemfikirdir. Bu tanım, saldırganlığın tekrarlayan, gelişimsel olarak bağlam içinde anlaşılması gereken bir olgu olduğunu vurgular (Dodge et al., 2006; Tremblay & Nagin, 2005).

Saldırganlık yaşla birlikte farklı biçimlerde ortaya çıkmakta; küçük yaşlarda fiziksel saldırganlık baskınken, dil gelişimiyle birlikte ilişkisel ve sözel biçimler ön plana çıkmaktadır (Tremblay et al., 1999; Underwood, 2003). Cinsiyete dayalı saldırganlık eğilimlerinde erkek çocukların fiziksel, kız çocukların ise ilişkisel ve sözel saldırganlığa daha yatkın olduğu ifade edilmiştir (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Ancak bu konuda katılımcılar arasında istisnai görüşler de bulunmaktadır ve genellemeler konusunda temkinli olunması önerilmektedir (Bjorkqvist, 1994; Card et al., 2008). Saldırgan davranışlar duygusal düzenleme eksiklikleriyle ilişkilendirilmekte ve çoğu zaman zararlı niyet taşımaktan ziyade duyguların dışavurumu şeklinde gerçekleşmektedir (Denham et al., 2003; Thompson & Goodman, 2010). Bu bağlamda, saldırganlık sosyal bağlamla iç içe geçmiş, tepki niteliğinde bir davranış olarak ele alınmaktadır (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cummings et al., 2000). Saldırganlığın tanınmasında kültürel faktörler de etkili olmaktadır. Ailelerin sevgi ifade biçimleri veya iletişim tarzları saldırgan davranışla karıştırılabilir (Cole et al., 2006; Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007). Ayrıca, saldırgan davranışlara verilen tepkiler çocuğun

etiketlenmesine ve bu etiketi içselleştirmesine neden olabilmektedir (Caprara et al., 2007; Jones & Jones, 2012).

Bu çalışmada katılımcılar, erken çocukluk döneminde gözlemlenen saldırgan davranış türlerini tanımlamış ve en sık dile getirilen örnekler arasında vurma ve itme davranışları yer almıştır. Bu bulgular, önceki literatürde de yaygın olarak saldırganlık göstergesi olarak tanımlanan davranışlarla örtüşmektedir (Crick et al., 2006; Harlow & Laursdorf, 1974; Tremblay & Nagin, 2005). Öte yandan, boğma, tırmalama, birinin üzerine çıkma ve altını ıslatma gibi daha nadir ifade edilen davranışların ciddi duygusal ya da davranışsal bozuklukların belirtisi olabileceği, bu nedenle profesyonel yönlendirme için uyarıcı işaretler olarak değerlendirilmesi gerektiği vurgulanmıştır (Keenan & Wakschlag, 2000; Tremblay & Nagin, 2005). Bu tür davranışların katılımcılar tarafından daha az dile getirilmesi, onların sınıf ortamında seyrek karşılaşılan, atipik davranışlar olmasından kaynaklanabilir. Özellikle ısırma davranışı, birçok katılımcı tarafından yüksek yoğunluklu ve uzun vadeli etkileri olan problemlili bir davranış olarak ele alınmıştır. Isırma, çocukların henüz gelişmemiş dil becerileri ve sınırlı duygusal düzenleme kapasiteleri ile ilişkilendirilmiş ve bu durum literatürde de desteklenmiştir (Oliver, 2022; Potegal, 2023). Isırmanın diğer çocuklara zarar verme riski taşıması ve öğretmenlerin güvenli sınıf ortamı sağlama çabalarını zorlaştırması, bu davranışın öğretmenler açısından özel bir endişe kaynağı olmasına neden olmaktadır (Gartrell, 2004).

Katılımcılar saldırganlığı, mekanın doğasına (evde, sokakta, okulda), davranışın kökenine (model alma, engellenme, ebeveyn tutumu ve bağlanma), tıbbi iyilik haline (patolojik, patolojik olmayan), hedefin doğasına (başkalarına yönelik, kendine yönelik, çevreye yönelik), temsil biçimine (dolaylı, doğrudan), davranışın rolüne (proaktif, reaktif), davranışın türüne (sözlü, ilişkisel, fiziksel) ve niyete (kazara, veya kasıtlı, (dışavurumcu, düşmanca ve araçsal saldırganlık)) göre sınıflandırmıştır. En yaygın üç kategori olan fiziksel, sözel ve ilişkisel saldırganlık, literatürle tutarlı biçimde tanımlanmıştır (Crick et al., 1997; Gelles & Harrop, 1991). Fiziksel saldırganlık, vurma, itme, ısırma gibi doğrudan zarar verici davranışları; sözel saldırganlık ise bağırma, hakaret etme, ses patlamaları gibi ifadeleri içermektedir. İlişkisel saldırganlık ise dedikodu yayma, dışlama ve görmezden gelme gibi ilişkisel

zarar verme biçimleriyle tanımlanmıştır (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Katılımcılar bu türleri açıkça ayırt ederken, küçümseme ya da alay gibi bazı davranışların sözel mi yoksa ilişkisel mi olduğu konusunda fikir ayrılığı yaşamıştır (Underwood, 2003). Ayrıca, saldırganlık davranışları niyet temelli olarak da ikiye ayrılmış; proaktif saldırganlık planlı ve güç odaklı eylemlerle, reaktif saldırganlık ise tetikleyiciye tepki olarak açıklanmıştır (Dodge & Coie, 1987). Feshbach'ın (1964) düşmanca ve araçsal saldırganlık ayrımı da bu çalışmada psikologlar tarafından sıklıkla dile getirilmiştir. Ancak literatürde yer alan aktif-pasif saldırganlık kategorisi (Buss, 1961), katılımcılar tarafından kullanılmamış, bu durum bazı türlerin örtüşmesiyle ilişkilendirilmiştir (Cohen et al., 2006). Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma saldırganlığın yalnızca davranışsal değil, aynı zamanda niyet, bağlam ve toplumsal ilişkiler temelinde de çeşitlendiğini ortaya koymuştur.

Çalışma 2

Çalışma 2, çocukluk saldırganlığını kültürel bağlamda çok yönlü biçimde ele almış ve bulgularını davranışın öncülleri, agresif davranışlar, saldırgan davranışların sonuçları, saldırganlığı yönetmek için müdahale stratejileri, saldırgan davranışların işlevi ve saldırganlık örüntüleri ve belirtileri, saldırganlığa katkıda bulunan faktörler, arka plan belirleyicileri, davranışsal zorluklar ve sonuçlar, şeklinde dokuz ana başlıkta sunmuştur.

İlk olarak, saldırgan davranışlardan önce gelen koşullar “davranışın öncülleri” altında toplanmıştır. Bu öncüller, duygusal ve psikolojik tetikleyiciler (örn. dikkat çekme isteği, dışavurumcu davranışlar), çevresel ve mekânsal faktörler (örn. sınıf geçişleri, oyuncak paylaşımı), akran etkileşimi (örn. dışlanma, sosyal baskı) ve akran inisiyatifli disiplin uygulamaları şeklinde sıralanmıştır. Bu bulgular, sınıf içinde yapılandırılmamış veya düşük denetimli anlarda saldırganlığın artabileceğini ve sosyal hiyerarşilerin davranışlara yön verebileceğini göstermektedir (Arsenio et al., 2000; Monks et al., 2003; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003).

Çalışmada saldırgan davranışlar olarak, fiziksel saldırganlık (ör. vurma, nesne fırlatma, ısırma), ilişkisel saldırganlık (ör. dışlama, aşağılayıcı davranışlar/söylemler) ve sözel saldırganlık (ör. yüksek sesle tepkiler, aşağılayıcı davranışlar/söylemler)

gözlemlenmiştir. Fiziksel saldırganlığın erken yaşlarda daha yaygın olduğu, öğretmenlerin bu tür davranışları daha çok rapor ettiği ve bazı davranışların gizli saldırganlık biçiminde gerçekleştiği saptanmıştır (Tremblay & Nagin, 2005; Underwood, 2003).

Saldırgan davranışların sonuçları olarak dört temel grup ortaya çıkmıştır: Davranışsal düzenleme (örn. çatışma çözümü, sınır koyma), duygusal sıkıntı (örn. korku, ağlama), savunma ve misilleme (örn. geri çekilme, karşılık verme) ve sosyal pekiştirme (örn. diğer çocukların saldırganlığı taklit etmesi). Özellikle sosyal pekiştirme ve bulaşma, saldırganlığın grup içinde yayılabileceğini ve sosyal öğrenme yoluyla kalıcı hale gelebileceğini ortaya koymaktadır (Bandura, 1973; Putallaz et al., 2007).

Katılımcılar saldırgan davranışlar ortaya çıktığında çeşitli yöntemlerle müdahale ettiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Saldırgan davranışlara müdahale stratejileri olarak öğretmenlerin ve ebeveynlerin başvurduğu çeşitli yöntemler belirlenmiştir. Profesyonel ve terapötik destek (psikolog, danışman, ergoterapist), çatışma çözme, davranış yönetimi, sosyal-duygusal gelişim destekleme ve önleyici stratejiler (örn. sosyal normların öğretimi, ebeveyn-okul iş birliği) bu stratejiler arasındadır (Stormont et al., 2005; Durlak et al., 2011). Ancak bazı katılımcıların fiziksel ceza kullanımını onayladığı da görülmüştür; bu tür yaklaşımların saldırganlığı artırabileceği literatürce desteklenmektedir (Gershoff, 2010; Pan et al., 2024).

Saldırgan davranışların işlevi olarak saldırganlığın dikkat çekme, kontrol kurma, etkileşim başlatma, statü kazanma gibi çeşitli amaçlara hizmet ettiği gözlemlenmiştir. Proaktif saldırganlık dikkat ya da güç elde etmeye, reaktif saldırganlık ise savunma veya misillemeye yönelik olabilmektedir (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 1991). Bu, çocukların saldırgan davranışları iletişim ya da düzen sağlama amacıyla kullanabildiğini göstermektedir.

Çalışmada katılımcılar, saldırganlığın sosyal olarak inşa edilen ve bağlama duyarlı bir davranış biçimi olduğu vurgulamıştır. Sınıfın dinamiği, öğretmen ve akranların algısı saldırgan etiketinin oluşumunda belirleyici olabilir (Janzen, 2002; Crick &

Grotpeter, 1995). Ayrıca, saldırganlığın günlük veya geçici olarak ortaya çıkabildiği, bazı durumlarda ise bedensel ve duygusal ipuçlarıyla önceden tahmin edilebildiği bulunmuştur (Quarmley et al., 2023). Eğitim hayatına başlama, kardeş doğumu, aile içi değişiklikler gibi kritik yaşam olaylarının saldırganlık davranışını tetiklediği de görülmüştür (Volling, 2013; Navarro et al., 2022).

Saldırganlığa katkıda bulunan faktörler bireysel, biyolojik, duygusal ve çevresel boyutlarda ele alınmıştır. Dürtüsellik, uyarılma ihtiyacı, rekabetçilik, kontrol eğilimi gibi kişisel özellikler saldırganlıkla ilişkilendirilmiştir (Connor et al., 2019). Bunun yanı sıra şekerli gıdalar, içgüdüsel tepkiler, kötü beslenme ve sağlık sorunları gibi biyolojik faktörlerin de etkili olabileceği belirtilmiştir. Sınıf kalabalıklığı, yetersiz materyal, sosyal etkileşim eksikliği ve düşük sosyoekonomik düzey de saldırgan davranışların artmasına neden olan çevresel faktörler arasında yer almaktadır (Broekhuizen et al., 2017).

Çalışmada, saldırganlıkla ilişkili arka plan belirleyicileri arasında kültür, aile yapısı, ebeveynlik stilleri, medya etkisi ve ekonomik koşullar ön plana çıkmıştır. Türkiye bağlamında, sıcak ama denetleyici aile yapısının saldırganlık üzerindeki etkileri ele alınmış; ebeveynlikte tutarsızlık, aşırı disiplin ya da ilgisizlik gibi faktörlerin saldırganlık riskini artırdığı belirtilmiştir (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2002; Pan et al., 2024). Ayrıca medya ve dijital içeriklere maruz kalma da çocukların saldırgan davranışları modellemesine neden olabilmektedir (Bandura vd., 1963).

Son olarak, saldırgan davranışların sonuçları ve beraberinde getirdiği zorluklar ele alınmıştır. Kalıcı saldırganlık örüntüleri sınıf düzenini ve sosyal ilişkileri bozmakta, öğretmenlerin sınıf yönetimini zorlaştırmaktadır (Dursun, 2025). Akran ve kardeş ilişkilerinde sorunlar yaşanmakta, öğretmen-ebeveyn iletişimindeki zayıflıklar müdahaleleri etkisiz kılabilir (Türkoğlu, 2019). Tüm bu bulgular, erken çocukluk dönemindeki saldırganlıkla başa çıkmak için çok yönlü, gelişimsel ve bağlamsal yaklaşımların gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Çalışma 2’de geliştirilen teori, çocukluk çağı saldırganlığını kültürel olarak uygun biçimde açıklayan bütüncül bir yapı sunmakta; davranışın öncüllerinden müdahale

stratejilerine kadar bir döngü içinde saldırganlığı kavramsallaştırmaktadır. Bu teori; duygusal, psikolojik, sosyal, çevresel, biyolojik ve kültürel faktörleri dikkate alarak saldırgan davranışları anlamlandırmakta, aynı zamanda sözel, fiziksel ve ilişkisel saldırganlık biçimlerini ayırt edebilmekte ve çocukların içsel durumları ile çevresel koşulların etkileşimini vurgulamaktadır. Sosyal bilgi işleme modeli, hayal kırıklığı-saldırganlık teorisi, genel saldırganlık modeli, sosyal bilişsel teori ve biyoekolojik sistemler teorisi gibi kuramlarla hem benzerlikler hem de farklılıklar gösteren bu yaklaşım; gözlemsel öğrenme, kültürel normlar, aile yapısı ve sosyal rollerin çocukluk dönemi saldırganlığı üzerindeki etkilerini bütünsel olarak ele almakta ve mevcut kuramların çoğunun ihmal ettiği erken çocukluk dönemine özgü yapıları ön plana çıkarmaktadır.

5. Öneriler

Çalışma 1

Bu çalışma, Türkiye bağlamında çocukluk saldırganlığını kavramsallaştıran önemli bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Tanımların, davranış listelerinin ve tür ayrımlarının yerel uzman görüşleriyle oluşturulmuş olması hem uygulayıcılar hem de araştırmacılar için pratik bir kaynak oluşturmaktadır. Öğretmenlerin saldırganlığı tanıyabilmeleri için farklı meslek gruplarının bakış açılarına aşina olmaları ve uzmanlarla iş birliği içinde hareket etmeleri önerilmektedir (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Ünal et al., 2022).

Bulgular, saldırganlığın tekrarlayan bir yapı göstermesi nedeniyle uzun vadeli müdahale planlarının önemine işaret etmektedir. Müdahale programlarının bilişsel gelişim, sınırlı duygusal düzenleme ve dil gelişimi gibi faktörleri içermesi gerektiği vurgulanmıştır (Ostrov & Crick, 2007; Gratz & Roemer, 2004). Ayrıca, ebeveynlerin bu konularda bilgilendirilmesi ve çocukların duygularını ifade etmeleri için desteklenmesi gerektiği ifade edilmiştir.

Çalışma 2

Çalışmada öne çıkan müdahale stratejileri arasında profesyonel destek (psikolog, danışman), çatışma çözme, davranış yönetimi ve duygusal-sosyal gelişim destekleme yer almaktadır (Case-Smith & Arbesman, 2008; Stormont et al., 2005). Cezaya

dayalı müdahalelerin etkisi tartışmalı bulunmuş ve yoğun fiziksel cezaların saldırganlığı artırdığı tespit edilmiştir (Gershoff, 2010; Pan et al., 2024).

Önleyici stratejiler; empati eğitimi, ebeveyn-okul iş birliği ve sosyal normların öğretilmesini içermektedir (Durlak et al., 2011; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003). Bu stratejiler, özellikle saldırganlığın sık görüldüğü yapılandırılmamış zaman dilimlerinde (ör. serbest oyun, geçişler) uygulanmalıdır (Scott & Panksepp, 2003; Ergin & Bakkaloğlu, 2019). Son olarak, sosyo-kültürel faktörler, yaşam olayları ve toplumsal rollerin saldırganlığın örüntülerini şekillendirmedeki rolü vurgulanmıştır (Pepler et al., 2006; Volling, 2013).



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