



THE STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING VERBAL VIOLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: THE RESPECT FRAMEWORK APPROACH

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Abstract

Verbal violence in early childhood education is a growing concern due to its detrimental effects on children's psychological development. This study identifies strategies employed by schools to prevent verbal violence at TK Negeri 2 Banda Aceh, using an adapted application of the WHO's RESPECT framework. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews with three teachers from the Violence Prevention and Handling Team (TPPK) and the school principal, supplemented with documentation of school policies. Findings reveal that teachers implement preventive strategies through educational storytelling, visual media, habituation of polite language, and immediate restorative interventions during conflicts. Teachers demonstrate a strong shared understanding of verbal violence and actively challenge traditional gender norms through their instructional practices, using examples that illustrate hobbies and professions are not gender-specific. The principal supports these efforts through teacher training seminars, SOPs, and the formal establishment of the TPPK. The school utilizes daily songs, anti-bullying posters, and classroom rules to embed prevention messages into the school culture, and has creatively extended these messages to parents via WhatsApp through songs and chants. Teachers consistently model respectful communication and intervene promptly in peer conflicts using restorative approaches that emphasize forgiveness and reconciliation. The school lacks formal collaboration with health institutions but has established an informal referral pathway through the education office to the social services department. A new theme of "Communication" emerged as a central strategy, highlighting the importance of open dialogue between teachers, students, and parents. This study confirms that aligning teacher strategies with the RESPECT framework, specifically the pillars of relationship skills, environments made safe, child protection, and transformed norms, effectively fosters a safer school environment. However, significant gaps remain, including the absence of structured anti-violence campaigns, systematic professional development programs, and formal external partnerships.

Keywords: strategies, verbal violence, early childhood education, RESPECT framework

INTRODUCTION

Children are an investment in the nation's future, and their growth and development are profoundly shaped by their childhood environment. It is during this phase that the foundations of character, mental well-being, and personal potential are established. However, if this developmental process is disrupted by verbal abuse, a child's character formation can be hindered, potentially diminishing the quality of the future generation (Hawa & Susanti, 2022).

Nationally, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA) reported 21,241 Indonesian children were victims of abuse in 2022, with numbers rising in 2024 (Prastini, 2024). By early 2025, Simfoni PPA recorded 5,493 cases of violence (Maisari, 2025). Consequently, protection provided by teachers, school principals, and parents is essential (Kristanto & Fikri, 2023). Cases of child abuse in Aceh represent a long-standing issue; between 2012 and 2015, 1,326 cases were recorded across Aceh's 23 regencies, demonstrating that children in Aceh remain vulnerable and require better protection (D. Fitriani & Aziz, 2021). The Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 46 of 2023 concerning the Prevention and Handling of Violence in Educational Units provides a crucial legal framework for creating a violence-free educational environment (Hasanuddin et al., 2024).

Violence in the educational sphere manifests not only physically but also verbally (through speech), socially, and emotionally. Physical violence typically involves hitting or scratching, while verbal violence involves hurtful insults, threats, and harassment. Social violence encompasses actions such as spreading false information or ostracizing individuals (Safaat, 2023). Verbal abuse is not limited to adolescents and adults; it also occurs within early childhood education settings. Young

children may intentionally direct verbal abuse at their peers, saying unpleasant things that hurt feelings while regarding the behavior merely as a joke. They utter these words without realizing that such speech constitutes verbal abuse, harming a person's feelings and mental well-being (Ningsih et al., 2022). Verbal violence occurs when a child experiences feelings of insecurity and discomfort. Verbal violence manifests as insults, mockery, shouting, scolding, harsh rebukes, and threats. Such violence triggers behaviors typically observed in children who have experienced verbal abuse such as social withdrawal, shyness, crying when approached, and a fear of leaving the house or meeting others (Prastini, 2024).

The formation of a child's identity is a complex and dynamic process influenced by various interacting factors. One significant factor in this process is the school environment (Umar & Masnawati, 2024). The school environment plays a vital role in motivating students to attend school regularly and enjoy the learning process; a positive environment makes learning more enjoyable and contributes significantly to the nation's educational development. A conducive and supportive school environment can boost student learning motivation and foster enthusiasm for academic activities. Preventing verbal violence within educational institutions also requires a strong commitment from all stakeholders (Hikmawati et al., 2022). A conducive learning environment plays a strategic role in fostering optimal child development. Schools serve not merely as venues for knowledge transfer but also as spaces for cultivating character traits such as discipline, responsibility, and empathy. When students feel safe, valued, and motivated, the learning process becomes more effective, allowing their academic and non-academic potential to develop in a balanced manner (Febriani et al., 2025). Children's self-confidence, a crucial attribute for navigating life, plays a significant role in shaping a child's mental and character development (Aini & Eka, 2022). The goal of preventing verbal violence is to protect every individual by fostering a safe and supportive environment (Nurmala Hayati & Fadhilla Yusri, 2023). Violence prevention efforts must be carried out in a continuous, comprehensive, and sustainable manner (Kadafi et al., 2023). Consequently, educational institutions can become safe and comfortable spaces where children learn, grow, and reach their full potential (Sari & Mukhlis, 2024).

Since the potential for verbal violence in schools is growing, Banda Aceh Municipality specifically TK Negeri 2 Banda Aceh which is selected as a *Sekolah Penggerak* under the 2021 cohort (Decree Number: 0301/C/HK.00/2021), established a Team for the Prevention and Handling of Violence or known as TPPK, and formalized by school decree number of 050/TK-N2/BA/KPCK/X/2025 in order to address this concerning issue. This study aims to identify teacher's strategies for preventing verbal violence at TK Negeri 2 Banda Aceh, using the RESPECT framework as a structured analytical reference. While previous studies have examined teacher roles in child-friendly schools (Setiyono et al., 2024) and national child protection policies (A & Tanto, 2025), there is a lack of research explicitly analyzing teacher strategies through the lens of a comprehensive, evidence-based framework like the WHO's RESPECT.

Violence is defined as an act committed by an individual or group intended to inflict psychological or physical harm and/or damage the property of others; such violence can manifest openly or covertly (Prastini, 2024). The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a framework to address violence against women known as RESPECT. The RESPECT framework is an evidence-based global instrument that integrates seven pillars' strategies for comprehensive violence prevention, which are Relationship skills strengthened (**R**), Empowerment (**E**), Services ensured (**S**), Poverty reduced (**P**), Environments made safe (**E**), Child and adolescent abuse prevented (**C**), and Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms (**T**) (WHO, 2019). This framework has been used to address violence for women and girls globally (Ullman et al., 2025), and also has been previously adapted to local context in Indonesia (Wolter, 2023). This research modified the RESPECT framework to be used for children since its core strategies are highly effective for children because verbal abuse thrives on power imbalances, learned behaviors, and stressed environments.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method to gain a deeper

understanding of the context and meaning of the phenomenon under study (Septiani & Wardana, 2022). The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2026/2027 academic year at TK N 2 Banda Aceh. Research subjects are three teachers who are members of the TPPK and the school principal. Data collection techniques comprised of an in-depth interview with the four informants, and documentation of decrees, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and other visual materials. Data analysis followed the Miles & Huberman technique of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Researchers operationalized only five pillars of seven RESPECT framework since those five are closely related to the children's circumstances. The five pillars then categorized into the interview indicators for teachers and school principal which are directly mapped to the RESPECT pillars, as illustrated in Table 1 and 2.

Table. 1 Operational Mapping of Research Approaches to the RESPECT Framework for Teacher

No	RESPECT Pillars	Research Indicator
1	Relationship skills strengthened (R)	a. Teacher's understanding of verbal violence
		b. Teachers' effort in handling verbal violence
		c. Forms of individual support needed by teachers in handling verbal violence
		d. The teacher's process in providing education about verbal violence
2	Environments made safe (E)	a. Teachers' methods of monitoring and managing interactions among students during activities and outside the classroom
		b. Teachers' actions when identifying students who are victims or perpetrators of verbal violence
		c. Teachers' communication with parents regarding children's behavior and efforts to create a safe learning environment
3	Child and adolescent abuse prevented (C)	a. Teachers' knowledge of the forms, causes, and impacts of violence against children, particularly verbal violence.
		b. Teachers' efforts to educate students about behaviors that constitute verbal violence.
4	Transformed attitudes, belief, and norms (T)	a. Follow up actions taken by teachers when verbal violence occurs
		b. Method used by teachers to teach about gender equality in verbal violence
		c. Strategies used by teachers in handling verbal violence based on gender
		d. Teachers' way of handling student who are victims or perpetrators of verbal violence
		e. Instilling the habit of proper grammar and politeness toward others carried out by teachers.

Source: Adapted from WHO RESPECT (2019)

Table. 2 Operational Mapping of Research Approaches to the RESPECT Framework for Principal

No	RESPECT Pillars	Research Indicator
1	Services ensured (S)	a. Schools have collaboration with specific institutions regarding violence
		b. Principals' efforts in improving teacher competence in handling verbal violence
		c. Principal's efforts in effectively handling violence
2	Environments made safe (E)	a. The principal's mechanisms for monitoring interactions among teachers, students, and educational staff.
		b. The principal's collaboration with parents and other institutions to ensure a safe school environment.
		c. The provision of facilities that support the creation of a safe and conducive learning environment.
		d. The actions taken by the principal upon receiving reports of or identifying cases of verbal violence.
3	Child and adolescent abuse prevented (C)	a. Referral system already owned by schools for verbal violence
		b. Type of punishment given to students who commit verbal violence
		c. The principal's way of ensuring the fairness of punishment for students who commit verbal violence
		d. Implementation of anti-verbal violence campaigns
		e. The theme or important message delivered by the principal through anti-verbal violence campaigns
		f. The principal has an important role in increasing awareness about verbal violence

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study aims to identify teacher and school principal's strategies for preventing verbal violence at schools, using the RESPECT framework as a reference. Understanding of verbal violence by teachers and school principal is a crucial aspect of this study, as it influences efforts to prevent and address violence within the school environment. Consequently, the researcher conducted interviews with three teachers and the school principal to assess the extent of their understanding regarding verbal violence. These findings provide an overview of the verbal violence prevention efforts undertaken by teachers and school principals.

All three teachers demonstrated a strong and shared understanding of verbal violence, consistently defining it as encompassing both physical and psychological harm. FR described violence as "unpleasant treatment of children, whether physical or psychological," NR characterized it as "actions that make one feel unhappy and can disrupt a child's mental state," and NM elaborated that it involves "actions that involve the use of physical or psychological force, whether intentional or unintentional." In terms of verbal violence specifically, FR understood it as "violence that occurs through children's words that hurt someone's feelings, meaning their friends," NR defined it as "hurting someone's feelings with words," and NM described it as "violence that uses harsh language to wound or intimidate others." This shared understanding forms the basis of their educational efforts.

Teacher: Pillar Relationship Skills Strengthened (R)

In terms of pedagogical approaches to foster healthy relationships, all three teachers employ a consistent methodology by focusing on using language that is simple and easily understood by young children, primarily to discourage behaviors like mocking and name-calling. FR stated that she teaches children about "not teasing each other, not making fun of a friend's physical appearance, or speaking rudely to their friends," while NR similarly instructs children to avoid bullying and instead "love one another," and NM emphasizes that children should not "mock their friends, make fun of their friends, or speak rudely."

NR notably incorporates a positive, motivational approach by using religious stories, explaining that "when there is a fight, we separate them and provide guidance through the hadiths on compassion and the exemplary stories of the Prophet" to address conflicts and promote empathy among students. This integration of religious and moral reasoning into classroom practice reflects the cultural and religious context of Aceh, where Islamic values are deeply embedded in daily life and education.

Teacher: Pillar Environments Made Safe (E)

In terms of monitoring and managing interactions among students, the teachers demonstrated that they remain vigilant and responsive during both classroom activities and times outside the classroom. FR emphasized that when an incident occurs, her immediate action is to "stop the verbal violence behavior and make sure both children involved are safe," indicating a supervisory presence that prioritizes the physical and emotional security of all students. NR similarly described her role as needing to "immediately stop or break up the act" when conflicts arise, suggesting that her monitoring involves direct and prompt intervention to prevent escalation. NM, on the other hand, takes a preventive approach to managing interactions by involving children in "making rules, for example in the classroom together with their friends, about how to treat each other well," which creates a shared understanding of expected behavior and empowers children to self-regulate within a safe framework.

Regarding teachers' actions when identifying students who are victims or perpetrators of verbal violence, the data shows that all three teachers adopt a restorative and educational approach rather than a purely punitive one. FR explained that after stopping an incident, she "reminds them of class rules about speaking politely" and ensures the emotional safety of both parties involved. NR described a more comprehensive process where she asks about "the causes and consequences" of the incident and guides the children to "forgive one another and live harmoniously like one family," thereby addressing the needs of both victims and perpetrators while restoring a safe classroom atmosphere. NM added that she provides "the child an opportunity to stop and apologize, teaching them how to make amends and apologize sincerely," which demonstrates a commitment to helping perpetrators understand the impact of their actions while ensuring victims feel heard and protected.

In terms of communication with parents regarding children's behavior and efforts to create a safe learning environment, the teachers consistently identified family collaboration as essential. FR

emphasized that "the support must start from both parents and the people closest to the child," indicating that she views parental involvement as foundational to maintaining a safe environment both at school and at home. NR elaborated on their practice of "collaborating with parents, where we invite them to school or we visit them, to understand the family background and the child's living environment," which suggests a proactive approach to engaging families in understanding and addressing behavioral issues that may compromise safety. NM similarly noted that she involves parents "if further support is needed," showing that when incidents occur, she extends the safety net beyond the classroom to include the family.

Furthermore, the teachers' emphasis on open communication as a strategy for prevention, emerging as a new theme from the data, reinforces their commitment to creating a transparent environment where concerns about safety can be raised and addressed collaboratively. NR's observation that "the first education is at home" underscores the understanding that a truly safe environment requires consistency between school and family practices.

Teacher: Pillar Child and Adolescent Abuse Prevented (C)

The data shows that teachers are proactive in educating children about the causes and forms of verbal violence to prevent its occurrence at an early stage. The teachers repeatedly emphasized that their primary method for prevention is through continuous education and awareness-raising, which is achieved by integrating discussions about respectful behavior into daily classroom activities and routines. FR described her approach as simply "providing education to the children," while NR elaborated that "as teachers, we provide many directions and examples to the children about what violence is and what should not be done, such as not bullying their friends," and NM similarly stated that prevention is accomplished "by providing education."

Teachers reported using a variety of engaging media and pedagogical techniques to make these lessons accessible and memorable, including storytelling with pictures and educational videos. FR specifically mentioned "storytelling with pictures" and "playing relevant videos" as well as creating posters with positive words to be displayed in the classroom so that children remember them every time they enter. NR described using "interesting media such as picture books, illustrated stories, or playing educational videos (like polite characters or the film *Upin & Ipin*)" and noted that through positive viewing, children become motivated and understand the harmful impact of hurting others. NM, on the other hand, emphasized a more discussion-based approach, stating that she engages children "through group discussions by asking them about their experiences and opinions regarding verbal violence" and involves them in "making rules, for example in the classroom together with their friends, about how to treat each other well." This multifaceted approach aims to instill a fundamental understanding of what constitutes verbal violence and how to avoid it, thereby directly contributing to the prevention of abuse through early and consistent intervention.

Teacher: Pillar Transformed Attitudes, Beliefs, and Norms (T)

The data reveals that the teachers' strategies for transforming underlying attitudes and social norms are both reactive, in response to incidents, and proactive, through ongoing instructional practices. When an incident of verbal violence occurs, the teachers have a clear and agreed-upon reactive protocol that involves immediately stopping the behavior. FR stated that she would "immediately stop the verbal violence behavior and make sure both children involved are safe" before reminding them of class rules about speaking politely. NR similarly explained that "as a teacher, I must immediately stop or break up the act" and then proceeding to ask about causes and consequences while guiding children to forgive one another and live harmoniously "like one family." NM described her approach as "giving the child an opportunity to stop and apologize, teaching them how to make amends and apologize sincerely" while also involving parents if further support is needed. During this process, all teachers consistently use the opportunity to reiterate that such behavior is unacceptable and hurtful to others.

On the proactive front, teachers demonstrate a clear awareness of traditional gender norms and actively work to challenge them through their instructional strategies. FR explained that she uses storytelling and examples, such as when a boy is teased for playing with cooking toys, she would explain that "there are also men who become chefs, it's fine if a boy plays with cooking toys." NR similarly provides explanations that hobbies and professions are not limited to one gender, giving the example that if a boy likes cooking, he "can become a great chef at a hotel" and if a girl likes fishing, "that is also a normal thing." NM stated that her method involves "teaching that gender-

based teasing language is a form of verbal violence." All three teachers also teach children how to report incidents, with FR and NM both emphasizing the importance of teaching victims to "report, seek help, and speak with a trusted adult."

Finally, a consistent theme across all teachers is the systematic and explicit teaching of polite language. FR explained that children are taught "polite ways to communicate" using words like "please, sorry, and thank you," while NR stressed that "teachers and parents must be the main examples" and that when children use inappropriate language, they are taught how to respond politely. NM similarly emphasized teaching children from an early age to use polite phrases such as "please, sorry, and thank you." This collective emphasis on modeling and explicit instruction highlights the critical importance of teachers and parents acting as role models for respectful communication, with NR specifically noting that "the first education is at home."

Principal: Pillar Services ensured (S)

The findings regarding this pillar reveal a combination of existing efforts and acknowledged limitations in institutional support structures. When asked about collaboration with specific institutions concerning violence, particularly verbal violence, EP stated that the school does not currently have formal partnerships with external agencies. The principal explained, "There is none," indicating that no formal agreements have been established with institutions such as child protection agencies or psychological services. However, EP elaborated on the school's informal referral pathway, noting that "if verbal violence does occur at school, the school will report it to the Banda Aceh municipality education office in the PAUD (early childhood education) division, and after that it will be forwarded to the social services department," which demonstrates an understanding of the hierarchical reporting structure within the government system even in the absence of direct institutional collaboration.

In terms of improving teacher competence in handling verbal violence cases, EP described a significant effort that had been undertaken at the school. The principal explained, "We had one, some time ago, we held a sort of seminar. A seminar about bullying, anti-bullying for children. We conducted that training, an assessment seminar on what constitutes bullying. Because we didn't understand, it turned out that was bullying. We thought it was just joking, teasing, having fun, but it turned out to be bullying. So, I gave that seminar to the teachers here, that's the latest one." This response reveals that the principal has proactively organized a seminar on bullying and anti-bullying for teachers, recognizing that many educators were previously unaware that certain behaviors they considered playful teasing actually constituted bullying. The seminar served to raise awareness and equip teachers with a better understanding of what constitutes bullying and verbal violence.

Regarding the effectiveness and speed of handling violence cases, EP confirmed the existence of formal administrative documents, stating, "The decree exists. The decree is already in place. For example, if a case like that occurs, the teacher who handles it is already designated. The decree already exists. The SOP also exists. An SOP about violence." The documentation checklist confirms that the school possesses both a *Surat Keputusan Tim Pencegahan dan Penanganan Kekerasan* (Decree on the Team for Prevention and Handling of Violence) and a *Standar Operasional Prosedur* (Standard Operating Procedure), indicating that the school has taken steps to institutionalize its response mechanisms, even though collaboration with external institutions remains undeveloped.

Principal: Pillar Environments Made Safe (E)

The data for this pillar reveals a comprehensive and well-articulated approach by the principal to creating a safe school environment through multiple strategies. In terms of mechanisms for monitoring interactions among teachers, students, and educational staff, EP described an integrated approach that combines direct supervision with proactive educational measures. The principal explained that the school utilizes songs and posters as daily reminders about bullying prevention, stating, "Because we instill in the children, we convey it through songs, songs that are sung every day every morning after the children's exercise, songs about bullying, and also in the classrooms there are posters about bullying and also about the rules in the classroom." This indicates that monitoring and prevention are embedded into the daily routine through repetitive, child-friendly methods that keep the message of kindness and respect consistently present in the school environment.

In terms of collaboration with parents and other institutions to ensure a safe environment,

EP described a structured and graduated approach to parental involvement. The principal explained that when issues arise, "first the classroom teacher calls them in, in a familial manner, and informs them that their child tends to speak in ways that hurt friends, perhaps asking about the home environment so that language used at home is not brought to school. So, we do that by calling the parents to ask about the child's social environment at home and why the child speaks like that." This demonstrates a systematic process where teachers first engage with parents in a family-oriented manner, seeking to understand the home environment and its influence on the child's language and behavior. EP further emphasized the importance of measured and sensitive communication, explaining that before contacting parents, "the teacher and I sit down together first. What will be conveyed? What will be discussed? What should the invitation look like? We must not seem to be judging the child or judging the parents. This is solely for the child's well-being. We first prepare the language, what needs to be promised. The teacher might convey it incorrectly and offend the parents. So, we sit down, the teachers and I, we discuss it with the teacher. The next day the teacher proceeds to meet the parents." This thoughtful approach reflects a deep understanding of the need to maintain positive relationships with parents while addressing behavioral concerns.

Regarding the provision of facilities that support the creation of a safe and conducive learning environment, EP described the use of anti-bullying posters displayed in classrooms, as well as classroom rules posted within the classroom, which serve as visual reminders of expected behavior and contribute to a culture of safety and respect. In terms of actions taken upon receiving reports of or identifying cases of verbal violence, EP described a clear and graduated response protocol. The principal explained that the first step involves addressing the child directly, stating, "we first counsel the child." If there is no change in the child's behavior, the intervention escalates to involving the parents. EP elaborated, "if indeed there is no change in the child, then we go to the parents. The child will be reported by the classroom teacher. If the classroom teacher is unable to handle it, then it escalates to the principal." This indicates a tiered approach where teachers handle initial interventions, and more persistent or serious cases are escalated to the principal. While EP noted that home visits have been necessary for other reasons, such as illness, the principal indicated that "until now there has never been" a situation requiring a home visit specifically for bullying or verbal violence, suggesting that the graduated school-based interventions have generally been sufficient.

Principal: Pillar Child and Adolescent Abuse Prevented (C)

The findings for this pillar reveal that while the principal has implemented several preventive measures, there are both strengths and opportunities for development in the school's approach. Regarding the referral system for verbal violence, EP described an informal but embedded system rather than a formal referral mechanism. The principal explained that awareness about bullying and verbal violence is communicated through daily songs and posters, as described in the Environments Made Safe pillar. This indicates that the school has integrated anti-bullying messages into the daily routine through song and visual displays, creating a constant reinforcement of positive values. However, this is more of an awareness tool than a formal referral system, and EP did not describe a structured protocol for referring children to external professionals.

In terms of the type of guidance given to students who commit verbal violence, EP emphasized that in early childhood education, the approach is not punitive but rather educational and guiding. The principal explained, "Because in PAUD (early childhood education), there is no punishment. What we have is guidance and direction. Because young children do not yet know what is wrong and what is right." This reflects a developmentally appropriate philosophy that recognizes young children are still learning to distinguish right from wrong. EP provided a concrete example of this guiding approach, describing how teachers address verbal teasing: "for example, when a child teases a friend by saying they are dark-skinned, skinny, short, it turns out that is bullying. As usual, after every teacher attended that seminar, the teachers are now able to say that it is not allowed because everything is God's creation. Whether they are chubby, short, or dark-skinned, all of that is God's creation." This illustrates how teachers, having been equipped through the seminar, now use religious and moral reasoning to teach children that all people are creations of God and should be respected regardless of their physical appearance.

Regarding the fairness and proportionality of guidance, EP explained that the school monitors changes in behavior as evidence that the approach is working, stating, "I feel it is fair

because there is a change." If problematic behavior continues, the school escalates to involving parents, ensuring that each child receives appropriate attention based on their individual circumstances. This flexible, individualized approach reflects a commitment to fairness and to understanding the root causes of the behavior.

In terms of anti-verbal violence campaigns, EP described several initiatives that serve as campaigns, although they are not packaged as formal events. The principal explained, "We share anti-bullying songs with parents. Also, recently we created a bullying chant to share with parents via WhatsApp. So, this campaign includes verbal violence." This reveals that the school has created and shared anti-bullying songs and even developed a bullying chant to engage parents through digital platforms like WhatsApp. These creative efforts extend the anti-bullying message beyond the classroom and into the home, involving parents in the awareness-raising process. Regarding the themes or important messages that the principal wishes to convey, EP acknowledged that there is no campaign specifically focused solely on verbal violence, but important messages are conveyed during parenting activities and orientation events. The principal stated, "The important message is, well, because in this kindergarten verbal incidents are rare, and if they do occur, the verbal violence is very low. Usually during parenting activities. Parenting meetings with parents, and also at the beginning of the new school year, we also communicate the school rules and regulations during the school orientation." EP explained that parenting meetings, held twice a year, serve as the primary forum for communicating important messages about behavior and expectations. The school's rules and regulations are also communicated during these sessions, which provides a platform for discussing respectful communication.

Finally, regarding the principal's role in increasing awareness about verbal violence, EP described the graduated involvement process already detailed in the Environments Made Safe pillar, where the principal becomes involved when teacher-level interventions are insufficient. The principal emphasized the importance of thoughtful preparation before engaging with parents, explaining, "We first prepare the language, what needs to be promised. The teacher might convey it incorrectly and offend the parents." This demonstrates a leadership approach that is both supportive and strategic, ensuring that teachers are prepared and that communication with families is handled with sensitivity and respect. EP noted that while the principal can provide support to teachers, "school is only for a short time," highlighting the crucial role of parents and the home environment in reinforcing positive behavior. The principal concluded that despite having these systems in place, serious cases of bullying have been rare, stating, "but God willing, until now there has been none" in terms of situations that required extensive intervention beyond the school level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of how early childhood educators and school leadership at TK Negeri 2 Banda Aceh implement strategies to prevent verbal violence, as analyzed through the adapted RESPECT framework. The discussion synthesizes the results across the pillars of Relationship skills strengthened (**R**), Environments made safe (**E**), Child and adolescent abuse prevented (**C**), Transformed attitudes, beliefs, and norms (**T**), and Services ensured (**S**), while situating these findings within the broader literature on violence prevention in educational settings.

The study reveals that teachers demonstrate a strong and shared understanding of verbal violence, consistently defining it as encompassing both physical and psychological harm caused by hurtful words. This foundational knowledge is critical, as previous research has established that educators' awareness and recognition of verbal abuse significantly influence their capacity to address it effectively (Ningsih et al., 2022). The teachers in this study not only understood verbal violence conceptually but also translated this understanding into concrete pedagogical practices. Their emphasis on using simple, age-appropriate language to teach children about respectful communication aligns with developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education, where abstract concepts must be made tangible for young learners (Aziza et al., 2021). The consistent approach across the three teachers, FR, NR, and NM, in discouraging behaviors such as mocking, name-calling, and speaking rudely suggests a shared professional culture that prioritizes positive relationship building. This finding is significant because it indicates that the school has cultivated a collective ethos around preventing verbal violence, rather than relying on individual

teacher initiatives, which resonates with the principles of the RESPECT framework's emphasis on relationship skills as a foundational pillar (WHO, 2019).

A notable finding within the Relationship skills pillar is the approach of NR, who incorporates religious narratives, specifically hadiths on compassion and the exemplary stories of the Prophet, into conflict resolution and empathy-building activities. This integration of religious and moral reasoning into classroom practice reflects the cultural and religious context of Aceh, where Islamic values are deeply embedded in daily life and education (D. Fitriani et al., 2021). The use of such narratives to teach children about kindness and forgiveness represents a culturally responsive strategy that aligns with the local context while advancing the universal goals of violence prevention. Previous studies have similarly highlighted the effectiveness of religiously grounded interventions in promoting prosocial behavior and reducing aggression among children, suggesting that such approaches can be particularly powerful in communities where religion plays a central role in socialization (Kadafi et al., 2023). This finding also underscores the importance of considering cultural and religious dimensions when adapting evidence-based frameworks like RESPECT to local contexts, a consideration that has been emphasized in previous adaptations of the framework in Indonesia (Wolter et al., 2024).

The teachers' emphasis on collaboration with parents and the child's immediate environment as the primary form of support represents another key finding. All three teachers consistently identified family involvement as essential, with practices ranging from inviting parents to school to visiting families at home to understand the child's living environment. This recognition of the family's role in reinforcing positive behavior aligns with the broader literature on the importance of home-school partnerships in early childhood education (Sari & Mukhlis, 2024). The teachers' understanding that "the first education is at home," as articulated by NR, reflects an awareness that school-based interventions alone are insufficient without consistency between home and school environments. This perspective is supported by research demonstrating that children's behavior is shaped by the interaction between family and school contexts, and that effective prevention requires alignment between these two spheres (Hikmawati et al., 2022). However, the finding that teachers primarily rely on reactive parental involvement, where parents are contacted after incidents occur, suggests an opportunity for more proactive partnership-building, such as regular parenting workshops or ongoing communication about positive discipline strategies.

The study reveals that teachers implement restorative rather than punitive approaches when addressing verbal violence incidents, with all three teachers describing processes that involve immediately stopping the behavior, facilitating apologies, and guiding children toward forgiveness and reconciliation. This approach is consistent with the principles of restorative justice in education, which emphasize repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than merely punishing offenders (Reswita & Bernadet Buulolo, 2023). The teachers' practices of asking about causes and consequences, as described by NR, and providing opportunities for sincere apology, as described by NM, reflect a commitment to helping children understand the impact of their words and develop empathy for others. This restorative approach is particularly appropriate for early childhood settings, where young children are still developing social and emotional competencies and may not fully understand the implications of their actions (Wahab et al., 2021). The finding that teachers use incidents as teachable moments to reinforce classroom rules about politeness and respect further demonstrates their commitment to transforming attitudes and norms through everyday interactions.

The teachers' proactive strategies for preventing verbal violence, including storytelling with pictures, educational videos, and group discussions, represent a multifaceted approach to raising awareness and building children's understanding of respectful behavior. FR's use of posters with positive words displayed in the classroom, NR's use of films like "Upin & Ipin" to model polite behavior, and NM's emphasis on co-creating classroom rules with children all reflect a commitment to creating a preventive rather than merely reactive environment. These strategies align with research demonstrating that visual media and storytelling are effective tools for teaching young children about complex social concepts and values (Fitriani & Aziz 2021; Isna Fajriana, 2024). The finding that teachers use a variety of media and pedagogical techniques to make lessons accessible and memorable suggests an understanding that young children learn best through multiple modalities and repeated exposure. This aligns with the principles of early childhood education, which emphasize the importance of play-based, experiential, and multisensory learning (Febriani et al.,

2025). The involvement of children in creating classroom rules, as described by NM, is particularly noteworthy, as it empowers children to take ownership of their behavior and fosters a sense of agency and responsibility within the classroom community.

A significant finding of this study is the teachers' explicit attention to challenging traditional gender norms through their instructional strategies. FR's example of explaining that boys can become chefs and NR's explanation that cooking and fishing are not gender-specific activities reflect a deliberate effort to counteract stereotypical assumptions that can lead to gender-based teasing and verbal violence. This proactive approach to addressing gender norms is crucial, as previous research has demonstrated that gender-based teasing is a common form of verbal violence in schools and can have lasting negative effects on children's self-esteem and mental health (Prastini, 2024). The teachers' framing of gender-based teasing as a form of verbal violence, as articulated by NM, represents an important step in transforming attitudes and beliefs about acceptable behavior. This finding is consistent with the RESPECT framework's emphasis on transforming attitudes, beliefs, and norms as a key strategy for violence prevention (WHO, 2019). However, the study also reveals that teachers' strategies for addressing gender norms are primarily reactive, responding to incidents as they occur, rather than being systematically integrated into the curriculum. This suggests an opportunity for more structured and proactive approaches to gender equality education in early childhood settings.

The explicit teaching of polite language, including phrases such as "please," "sorry," and "thank you," emerged as a consistent theme across all three teachers. This focus on language socialization reflects an understanding that verbal violence is not only about the presence of hurtful words but also about the absence of respectful communication norms. The teachers' emphasis on modeling polite language and requiring children to use it consistently aligns with research demonstrating that habit formation and repeated practice are essential for internalizing social norms (Wahab et al., 2021). The finding that teachers stress the importance of parents as role models for polite language, as articulated by NR, again highlights the recognition that school-based efforts must be reinforced at home. This emphasis on modeling is consistent with Bandura's social learning theory, which posits that children learn behavior through observing and imitating others (Reswita & Bernadet Buulolo, 2023). The teachers' intentional efforts to model respectful communication in their own interactions with children and to hold children accountable for using polite language represent a practical application of this theoretical framework.

The findings regarding the principal, EP, reveal a leadership approach that is both supportive and strategic, with a clear commitment to creating a safe school environment. The principal's organization of a seminar on bullying and anti-bullying for teachers represents a significant effort to build teacher competence and awareness. EP's reflection that many teachers previously did not recognize that playful teasing could constitute bullying highlights a common challenge in violence prevention: the normalization of harmful behaviors through lack of awareness (Wolter, 2023). The seminar served to raise teachers' consciousness and equip them with a better understanding of what constitutes verbal violence, which has evidently translated into changed classroom practices. This finding underscores the importance of ongoing professional development in violence prevention and suggests that even limited training can have a significant impact on teacher attitudes and practices. However, the principal's acknowledgment that this was a single event rather than a sustained professional development program suggests an opportunity for more systematic and continuous capacity-building efforts, particularly given the dynamic nature of social and behavioral issues in schools.

The principal's confirmation of formal administrative structures, including the Surat Keputusan designating teachers responsible for handling violence cases and the Standard Operating Procedure for addressing incidents, indicates that the school has taken important institutional steps toward systematizing its response mechanisms. The existence of these documents, confirmed by the documentation checklist, demonstrates a formal commitment to violence prevention and handling that goes beyond informal practices. This is consistent with the requirements of Permendikbudristek No. 46 of 2023, which mandates that educational units establish prevention and handling mechanisms for violence (Hasanuddin et al., 2024). The fact that the school has both a designated team and a formalized procedure suggests a level of institutional readiness that may not be present in all early childhood settings. However, the principal's description of the SOP and the decree was

somewhat general, and the researcher did not have access to the actual documents for detailed review, which limits the ability to assess their comprehensiveness and effectiveness. Future research could examine the content and implementation of such documents to better understand their role in supporting violence prevention efforts.

The principal's approach to creating a safe environment through daily songs about bullying, anti-bullying posters displayed in classrooms, and classroom rules represents a creative and developmentally appropriate strategy for embedding prevention messages into the school culture. The use of songs, in particular, is a culturally resonant and child-friendly method that aligns with the principles of early childhood education, where music and rhythm are powerful tools for learning and memory (Mukti et al., 2023). The sharing of anti-bullying songs and the development of a bullying chant for parents via WhatsApp extends these prevention messages beyond the classroom and into the home, representing an innovative approach to engaging families in violence prevention. This use of digital communication platforms to reach parents reflects an adaptation to contemporary communication patterns and demonstrates the principal's willingness to leverage technology to support prevention efforts. However, the finding that these campaigns are not structured or scheduled as part of the annual curriculum, but rather occur informally and spontaneously, suggests an opportunity for more systematic planning and integration of anti-violence messages into the school's programs and events.

The principal's graduated response protocol, beginning with teacher intervention, escalating to parental involvement, and potentially involving the principal and even home visits for persistent cases, reflects a thoughtful and systematic approach to addressing verbal violence. The careful preparation that precedes parental communication, where the principal and teachers plan the language and approach to avoid judgment and maintain positive relationships with families, demonstrates a high level of cultural sensitivity and professionalism. This approach recognizes that parents may become defensive if they feel blamed for their child's behavior, and that maintaining a collaborative, non-judgmental relationship with families is essential for effective intervention (Nellyana et al., 2024). The principal's emphasis on not seeming to "judge the child or the parents" reflects an understanding that shame and blame can be counterproductive and that families are more likely to cooperate when they feel respected and supported. This approach is consistent with restorative and trauma-informed practices in education, which emphasize empathy, understanding, and partnership over punishment and blame (Lodi, Ernesto; Environ, 2021; Matsyah et al., 2025).

The finding that the school has not established formal collaborations with external institutions, such as child protection agencies or psychological services, represents a significant gap in the school's prevention and handling mechanisms. While the principal described an informal referral pathway through the education office to the social services department, this does not constitute a systematic partnership that would ensure timely and appropriate support for children and families in need. Previous research has demonstrated that effective violence prevention requires multi-sectoral collaboration and that schools cannot address the issue in isolation (Wolter et al., 2024). The absence of formal partnerships with health and social service institutions means that the school may lack access to specialized expertise, such as psychological counseling or child protection services, that could be critical for supporting children who have experienced or perpetrated verbal violence. This finding suggests that the school is not yet fully implementing the "Services ensured" pillar of the RESPECT framework, which emphasizes ensuring that children and families have access to appropriate services and support (WHO, 2019). The principal's expressed awareness of this gap and desire to address it suggests openness to developing such partnerships, which could be supported by connecting with existing networks and resources within the municipality.

The principal's characterization of the school as having few and minor incidents of verbal violence is noteworthy and merits reflection. On one hand, this may reflect the effectiveness of the school's preventive strategies and the success of its efforts to create a positive school culture. On the other hand, it may also reflect underreporting or a lack of awareness among teachers about what constitutes verbal violence, an issue that the principal acknowledged was present before the seminar. Previous research has found that verbal violence is often normalized and underreported in educational settings, particularly when it is seen as "just joking" or "teasing" rather than abuse (Prastini, 2024). The principal's statement that "verbal violence is very low" may therefore reflect a

combination of actual low incidence and a need for continued awareness-raising about what constitutes violence. The fact that the school has established formal structures, including the TPPK and SOP, suggests a proactive stance toward addressing violence, which may contribute to a school culture where such behaviors are not tolerated and therefore are less common. However, without systematic data collection on incidents, it is difficult to assess the true prevalence of verbal violence in the school, which is a limitation of this study.

The integration of religious and moral reasoning into the school's approach to addressing verbal violence is a notable feature of the findings from both teachers and the principal. The principal's description of teachers explaining that all people are "creations of God" and should therefore be respected regardless of physical appearance reflects the embedding of religious values into classroom practices. This approach is culturally appropriate for the context of Aceh, where Islamic values are central to social life and education (Fitriani & Aziz, 2021). The use of religious teachings to promote respect and kindness has been shown to be effective in violence prevention interventions in religious communities, as it appeals to individuals' moral and spiritual frameworks and provides a strong rationale for treating others with dignity (Kadafi et al., 2023). However, this approach also raises questions about inclusivity, as it assumes a shared religious framework that may not be universally shared by all families. Future research could explore the implications of using religious reasoning in violence prevention in multicultural contexts and examine strategies for ensuring inclusivity while respecting cultural and religious diversity.

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on violence prevention in early childhood education by providing a detailed, context-specific analysis of teacher and principal strategies through the lens of the RESPECT framework. While previous studies have examined teacher roles in creating child-friendly schools (Setiyono et al., 2024) and national child protection policies (A & Tanto, 2025). This study is among the first to explicitly analyze teacher strategies through the comprehensive, evidence-based RESPECT framework adapted for children. The study's identification of both strengths, such as the teachers' restorative approaches and attention to gender norms, and gaps, such as the absence of formal external collaborations and structured anti-violence campaigns, provides a nuanced picture that can inform both practice and policy. The finding that the school has established formal administrative structures, including the TPPK and SOP, but has not yet developed systematic partnerships with external institutions or integrated anti-violence campaigns into the school's annual program, suggests a school that is in the early to middle stages of developing a comprehensive approach to violence prevention. This finding is consistent with the staged approach to implementing the RESPECT framework, which recognizes that full implementation requires time, resources, and ongoing commitment (WHO, 2019).

The study also reveals the importance of leadership in supporting violence prevention efforts. The principal's proactive efforts to organize teacher training, establish formal structures, and model thoughtful and sensitive communication with parents demonstrate the critical role that school leadership plays in creating a culture of safety and respect. Research has consistently shown that leadership commitment is a key factor in the success of violence prevention interventions and that principals who prioritize safety and well-being are more likely to create schools where violence is not tolerated (Reswita & Bernadet Buulolo, 2023). The principal's recognition that "school is only for a short time" and that parents must be partners in violence prevention reflects an understanding of the limits of school-based interventions and the importance of engaging families. This perspective is consistent with ecological models of child development, which emphasize that children's behavior is shaped by the interaction of multiple systems, including family, school, and community (Sari & Mukhlis, 2024). The study's findings therefore support the importance of multi-level, multi-sectoral approaches to violence prevention that engage families and communities alongside schools.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of strategies for preventing verbal violence in early childhood education, as implemented at TK Negeri 2 Banda Aceh and analyzed through the adapted RESPECT framework. The findings reveal that teachers demonstrate a strong

understanding of verbal violence and implement a range of effective strategies, including educational storytelling, visual media, habituation of polite language, restorative interventions, and attention to gender norms. The principal supports these efforts through teacher training, the establishment of formal administrative structures, thoughtful communication with parents, and creative campaigns extending prevention messages to families. However, significant gaps remain, including the absence of formal collaborations with external institutions, the lack of structured and systematic anti-violence campaigns, and the need for more proactive parental involvement. These findings suggest that the school is in the early to middle stages of developing a comprehensive approach to violence prevention and that further progress could be achieved through strengthening institutional partnerships, systematizing prevention efforts, and enhancing parental engagement. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on violence prevention in educational settings and provides practical insights for educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to create safer, more respectful learning environments for young children.

Suggestions

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it is recommended that the school establish formal partnerships with external institutions, such as local health agencies and child protection services, to ensure that children and families have access to specialized support when needed, thereby addressing the current gap in the "Services ensured" pillar. The principal should consider expanding the existing teacher training seminar into a sustained professional development program that provides ongoing capacity-building for educators on violence prevention, restorative practices, and gender-sensitive education. The school should develop structured and systematic anti-violence campaigns that are integrated into the annual curriculum, rather than relying on informal and spontaneous initiatives, ensuring that all students, teachers, and staff are consistently engaged in prevention efforts. Proactive parental involvement programs should be established, including scheduled parenting workshops and regular communication about positive discipline and respectful communication, moving beyond reactive contact only when incidents occur. Teachers should consider integrating gender equality education more systematically into the curriculum, rather than only responding to incidents as they arise, to proactively challenge stereotypical norms that can lead to verbal violence. The school should develop a systematic approach to documenting incidents of verbal violence, including the nature of the incident, actions taken, and outcomes, to enable better tracking of patterns and evaluation of intervention effectiveness. For educational authorities, it is recommended that district education offices provide resources and guidance to facilitate connections between schools and relevant institutions, while also developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the implementation of violence prevention policies in schools. Finally, future research should employ longitudinal designs to assess the long-term impact of RESPECT-informed strategies, include children's perspectives through child-friendly methods, and expand the sample to include multiple schools across different contexts to enable comparative analysis. By implementing these recommendations, early childhood education institutions can strengthen their approaches to preventing verbal violence, ensuring that all children can learn and develop in safe, respectful, and nurturing environments.

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