Perceived preschool teacher perceived practices pertaining to aggressive behaviors of Sri Lankan preschool children: Outcomes of teachers' responses to a hypothetical vignette

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Abstract: *Aggressive behaviors have been found to place preschool children at risk for a number of long and short-term psychosocial as well as academic challenges. Therefore, it is important to understand how preschool teachers perceive these behaviors as well as their sense perceived control towards them. Thus, the present study explores the perceived preschool teacher control pertaining to aggressive behaviors of preschool children. The participants were 275 preschool teachers and teacher trainees from 18 districts in Sri Lanka. The participants were given a rating scale based on a hypothetical situation which usually occurs in a Sri Lankan preschool class. Further, they were requested to rate their perceived control to this hypothetical situation on 18 responses. The findings convey that the participants preferred practices such as 'soothing crying children' while not preferring practices such as hitting or scolding children. Findings also convey that participants displayed high knowledge on negative practices while displaying low to moderate knowledge on specific best practices of perceived control when addressing aggressive behaviors within preschool children. However, the study did not display a relationship among teacher experience, educational or professional qualifications and teacher knowledge of effective perceived practices to prevent/ minimize aggressive behaviors within preschool children. The study also provides suggestions and recommendation to future research in the context of teacher perceived practices pertaining to addressing aggressive behaviors of the Sri Lankan preschool children.*

Key Words: *Preschool Teachers, Sri Lanka, teacher practices, challenging behaviors*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Presence of aggressive behaviors in pre-school settings is often associated with negative outcomes for pre-schoolers (Ladd, 1988; Pathirana, 2016). Therefore, aggression within young children is viewed as a multifaceted phenomenon being linked to several harmful impacts such as peer rejection during the preschool years (Ladd, 1988), academic development limiting exposure to prosocial interactions in school years (French & Conrad, 2001; Frick, 1998; Loeber & Farrington, 2000), increased risk of school dropout (DeRosier, Kupersmidt, & Patterson, 1993) and an enduring behavioral pattern remaining consistent from early childhood to-adulthood (Rubin, Burger, Dwyer & Hastings, 2003).

2. ADVANTAGES OF CONSIDERING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS – Early Violence Prevention

Perceived Control - Perceived control can be described as a person's beliefs about the intensity of available control. Hagekull, and Hammarberg (2004) view teachers' perceived control as part of a general feeling of satisfaction with the work situation. In a study aimed at understanding the child-teacher interactions in Sweden, Hagekull and Hammarberg (2004) investigated the role of teachers' perceived control and children's characteristics in interactions between 6-year olds (n =92) and their teachers (n = 36). Results of the study indicated that teachers' perceived control played a significant role in their interactions with 6-year old children.

Bibou-Nankou, Kiosseoglou, and Stogiannidou (2000) recognize several advantages of considering teacher perceptions and beliefs in the school based prevention/ intervention programs of aggression. They are:
1. Beliefs and perceptions influence the discipline related attributions of the teachers
2. Understanding of teacher beliefs and perceptions could be used to plan and develop school based interventions
3. Teacher knowledge and beliefs concerning behavior problems in classroom if effectively used can serve as a vital role in early warning systems for a school based prevention/ intervention programs of aggression

Teacher attitudes and behavior toward aggressive and prosocial behaviors of their students are also expected to affect children's self-perception in relation to these behaviors. However, negative teacher attitudes pertaining to aggression may have a positive effect on aggressive children's self-perceptions. This is said to be due to the extra attention they receive from teachers' intolerance of aggression (Chang, 2000). Moreover, as mentioned before, literature pertaining to preventing/ minimizing aggression also conveys that other children in the class form their attitudes and perceptions based on the behaviors of teachers, which in turn is shaped by the teacher attitudes and perceptions pertaining to aggression (Chang, 2000). Researchers have also come up with relationship between teachers' perceptions about

aggressive behaviours and increases in coercive strategies (Bibou-Nakou et al., 1999; Poulou & Norwich, 2000) towards their students.

Therefore, early violence prevention literature reports that prevention / intervention programs in schools and preschools should pay considerable attention to teachers' perceived practices and control of aggression and prosocial behaviors. Literatures convey that perceptions and attitudes of teachers on the issue may inadvertently influence the children's aggressive behaviors (Chang, 2000).

3. Culture, training and educational back ground of the Sri Lankan preschool teachers:

Sri Lankan preschool teachers' perceived practices and acceptability might be influenced by their culture, experience, and educational background. Sri Lankan culture is diverse in nature, derived from various elements of the Asian, European, and multi religious values. The collective achievement of the family often is indicated as a source of pride and identity in it. Further, pre-colonial as well as colonial Sri Lankan educational traditions support physical punishment as an effective disciplinary strategy, with ancient scripture stating that it is beneficial for academic achievements of young children (De Silva, 2001). Further, proverbs in Sinhala and Tamil literature equal an un-caned child to a unstirred coconut curry, tasteless and thus being devoid of character and discipline due to absence of physical punishment.

The Sri Lankan education system is secular and teachers are trained based on modern educational approaches. However, this privilege of quality trainings is not extended to Sri Lankan preschool teachers. Less than a decade back the training acceptable to be employed as a preschool teacher ranged from one year to one day (Pathirana, 2015). This practice allowed any individual the Carte Blanch to teach in a preschool or be the owner of their preschool/s. Therefore, insights pertaining to effective practices to address aggressive behaviors in the preschool children may not have been within the purview of a preschool teacher curriculum. As a result, there have been several informal and formal records of teachers using physical and verbal punishment to discipline children (Wijetunge, & Wickramarathna, 2003). For example, outcomes of the national study on child care provision in Sri Lanka reports that preschool teachers sometimes beat children with a cane, stick or hand (Wijetunge et al., 2003). Children have also mentioned pulling the ear as one of the most frequent reaction patterns of the teachers (Wijetunge et al., 2003). Thus, it is assumed that Sri Lankan preschool teachers would indefinitely benefit from a training to manage their classes using positive behavioral management strategies (Pathirana, 2016; Pathirana, 2015; Wijetunge et al., 2003).

In this light, it is important to explore the current perceived practices of the Sri Lankan preschool teachers pertaining to aggressive behaviors of the children in their classes.

4. METHOD:

The present paper reports a section of a broad study, which enquired into preventing/ minimizing aggressive behaviors and promoting prosocial behaviors of the Sri Lankan preschool children. Aim of this section is to present the data gathered from the preschool teacher surveys collected from the 275 preschool teachers from 18 districts in Sri Lanka, to a hypothetical situation.

Participants - Participants were preschool teachers or teacher trainees who attended preschool teacher training courses in a national and private teacher training institutes. Majority of the participants were preschool teachers having worked with preschool children. All the participants consented to participate in the study. .

Table 01: Profile of the participants

Type	Gov		NGO		Pvt			T	
f	59		169		47			216	
%	21.5		61.5		17.1				
Educational Qualifications No of Years	Up to G.C.E (O.L)	G.C.E (O.L) Passed	G.C.E (A.L) Passed-	Trained Teacher	Degree	Other		T	
f	43	56	105	51	11	05		272	
%	*15.8*	*20.6*	*38.6*	*18.8*	*4*	*1.8*			
Trained Vs. Not Trained	**Trained**		**Not Trained**					T	
	233	85.3	40	14.7				273	
Duration of Training	**2**	**1 yr.>**	**06Mo**	**<6>,**	**<03**	**02**	**<2**	**NR**	**TR**

	Yrs			3Mo	Mo> 2 wks	Wks	wks	
ƒ	24	98	11	13	26	34	22	22	250
%	**9.6**	*39.2*	*4.4*	*5.2*	*10.4*	*13.6*	*8.8*	*8.8*	*100*
Experience	**No**		**Yes**					***T***	
ƒ	**03**		268					271	
%	**1.1**		98.9						
Experience – No of Yrs	**<01 Yr**	1-3Yrs	3-5	05- 10	<10 yrs	<20 yrs		T	
ƒ	41	58	68	51	36	15		270	
%	*15.2*	*21.5*	*25.2*	*18.9*	*13.3*	*5.6*			

Instrument – The instrument comprised of a hypothetical vignette describing an aggressive incident which usually take place in a Sri Lankan class room with 18 alternative practices of teacher responses to it. The participants were requested to rate their perceived practices of the situation to a four point rating scale from 'Never' to 'Always'. The preschool teachers were requested to rate their perceived class room management practices to this hypothetical situation which usually takes place in a Sri Lankan preschool class. In addition, the preschool teachers were requested to list, out of a total number of 18 responses, three behaviors which they most preferred.

Procedure – The questionnaires were reviewed by early childhood educators, a lecturer in psychology, a professional conducting training of trainers programs in Sri Lanka, a Social Psychologist and several preschool teachers with over ten years of experience in working with preschool children. Accordingly, some elements to this rating scale were added and changed. Next this questionnaire was piloted with 10 preschool teachers followed by a session to procure their feedback on it.

In order to collect information from a representative sample of the preschool teacher population in Sri Lanka, several techniques were used. First, the researcher attended several teacher-training programs in different parts of Sri Lanka and gave the questionnaires to preschool teachers who attended these courses. These questionnaires were distributed with a self-addressed stamped envelope. The preschool teachers were requested to post the completed questionnaire back to the author. Second, in certain places, preschool teachers attending residential training programs were given the questionnaire at the beginning of the program and collected at the end of the training program.

5. RESULTS:
Aim of the present study was to explore perceived teacher practices pertaining to Sri Lankan children's aggressive behaviors using a hypothetical vignette ('A group of preschool children were building a tower started a fight by throwing blocks at each other. If you are their preschool teacher list the likelihood that you would give the following responses').

Table 02: Perceived preschool teacher practices pertaining to challenging behaviors of preschool children

		Never		Some Times		Very Often		Always	
		ƒ	*%*	*ƒ*	*%*	*ƒ*	*%*	*ƒ*	*%*
Q1	Give clear warning such as 'No throwing is allowed'	99	*36*	74	*27*	36	*13*	26	*10*
Q2	Take away the blocks from children who threw them	96	*34.9*	90	*32.7*	40	*14.5*	08	*2.9*
Q3	Physically separate the children who are fighting +	57	*20.7*	90	*32.7*	60	*21.8*	31	*11.3*
Q4	Ignore the fighting/ hitting of children-	199	*72.4*	30	*10.9*	02	*0.7*	05	*1.8*
Q5	Encourage children who get hit to hit back	237	*86.2*	01	*0.4*	-	**-**	-	**-**
Q6	Sooth crying children who get hit	06	*2.2*	10	*3.6*	50	*18.2*	177	*64.4*
Q7	Scold the children who are fighting	182	**66.2**	40	**14.5**	07	**2.6**	03	**1.1**
Q8	Remind the children to vent anger in other ways (e.g. by punching a	146	*53.1*	58	*21.1*	21	**7.6**	12	**4.4**

	pillow/cushions/dolls, thumping desks)							
Q9	Separate children from the activity for a brief period of time	27	*9.8*	123	*44.7*	64	*23.3*	28	*10.2*
Q10	Send children to sit and watch games instead	28	*10.2*	142	*51.6*	49	*17.8*	17	*6.2*
Q11	Hit the children who are fighting.	224	*81.5*	10	*3.6*	01	*0.4*	-	*-*
Q12	Say 'No' firmly and explain why such behaviors are not appropriate.	21	*7.6*	62	*22.5*	90	*32.7*	61	*22.2*
Q13	Encourage children who get hit to say things e.g. 'No that hurts!'	38	*13.8*	50	*18.2*	70	*25.5*	80	*29.1*
Q14	Encourage bystanders to leave the place or stand up for children who get hit.	102	*37.1*	54	*19.6*	44	*16*	23	*8*
Q15	Gather the blocks they threw and say nothing	107	*38.9*	87	*31.6*	26	*9.5*	18	*6.5*
Q16	Address the aggressive behavior at a separate time e.g. during story hour or role-play situation.	34	*12.4*	43	*15.6*	105	*38.2*	62	*22.5*
Q17	Encourage the children to repair the damage they caused.	08	*2.9*	11	*4*	68	*24.7*	161	*58.5*
Q18	Prepare children for such incidents beforehand	55	*20*	30	*10.9*	56	*20.4*	87	*31.6*

N = 275; Minimum = 00; Maximum = 63; Mean = 42.3 Median = 47; Mode = 51; S.D = 14.87

6. Practices preferred by the preschool teachers:

Perceived practices and control as rated by the preschool teachers were divided into three categories (low, moderate and high) based on the frequencies.

Least Preferred Practices (Q5>Q11 >Q4> Q7> Q8)

Findings convey that the participants least preferred the practices Q4 ('Ignore the fighting/ hitting of children), Q5 ('Encourage children who get hit to hit back'), Q7 ('Scold the children who are fighting'), Q8 (reminding children to vent anger by punching pillow/ cushion/ doll or a desk), and Q11. ('Hit the children who are fighting'). Over fifty percent of the participants who responded to these questions have reported that they never use these practices while few or none of the participants have reported that they sometimes, very often or always use it.

In response to Q5 majority of the participants have reported that they 'Never' (n = 237; 86.2%) do it while only one had mentioned she does it only sometimes. None have mentioned that they very often or always do it.

Participants' responses to Q11 provide an answer to a significant research question in the study (Do preschool teachers perceive hitting as an effective strategy of controlling preschool chidlren) Majority have reported that they never do it (n = 224; 81.5%) while 3.6% of the participants reported that they sometimes do it and one (.4%) reported they do it very often. Again, none have mentioned that they always do it.

Participants also did not seem to perceive Q4 ('Ignore the fighting/ hitting of children) as an effective practice to manage the challenging behaviors of preschool children. Again majority did not perceive engaging in in it ('Never' = 199, 72.4%) while very few preferred to use it sometimes (n = 30, 10.9%). On the contrary two (.7%) participants reported that they use it very often while 05 (1.8%) reported that they always use it.

Similarly, in response to Q7 (scold children who are fighting), a large majority of the participants have perceived not to engage in this practice (Never = 182; 66.2%) while a significant number of participants have reported that they do it sometimes (n = 40; 14.5%). In contrast, few have mentioned that they do it very often (n = 07, 2.6%) or always (n = 03, 1.1%).

Participant responses also conveyed that Q8 (reminding children to vent anger by punching pillow/ cushion/ doll or a desk) is also not a favorable practice among the participants. For instance, 53% participants said that they 'never' encourage it while 21%, reported that they 'sometimes' did. Less than 12% of the sample of teachers said they do it 'very often' or 'always'.

Moderately Preferred (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q9, Q14, Q15)
Table 02 depicts that Q1 ('Give clear warning such as 'No throwing is allowed'), Q2 ('Take away the blocks from children who threw them'), Q3 ('Physically separate the children who are fighting'), Q9 ('Separate children from the activity for a brief period of time') Q14 ('Encourage bystanders to leave the place or stand up for children who get hit') and Q15 ('Gather the blocks they threw and say nothing') were moderately preferred by the participants.

In response to Q1 ('Give clear warning such as 'No throwing is allowed'), majority of the participants have reported that they never do it (n = 99, 36%) while an equally significant number have mentioned that they do it sometimes (n = 74, 27%). Comparatively few have mentioned that they do it very often (n = 36, 13%) and always (n = 26, 10%).

Similarly, Q2 also generated moderate usage as majority of the participants reported that they Never (n = 96, 34.9%) or sometimes (n = 90, 32.7%) use it. Comparatively, few have reported that they very often (n = 40, 14.5%) and Always (n = 08, 2.9%) use it.

Further, Q3 also did not seem to generate favorable responses from the participants as significant percentage of the participants have reported that they 'Never' (n = 57, 20.7%) and 'Sometimes' (n = 90, 32.7%) use it.

Similar responses were also generated for **Q9** ('Never'= 27, 9.8%; 'Sometime' = 123, 44.7%; 'Always' = 64, 23.3%**),** Q14 ('Never' = 102, 37.1%; 'Sometimes' = 54, 19.6%; 'Always' = 44, 16%), Q15 ('Never' = 107, 38.9%; 'Sometime' = 87, 31.6%; 'Very Often' = 26, 9.5%; 'Alway' = 18, 6.5%.

Highly Preferred (Q6, Q12, Q16, Q17, Q18)
Table 02 depicts that the most preferred practices of the participants were Q6 ('Sooth crying children who get hit'), Q12 ('Say 'No' firmly and explain why such behaviors are not appropriate'), Q13 ('Encourage children who get hit to say things e.g. 'No that hurts!'), Q16 ('Address the aggressive behavior at a separate time e.g. during story hour or role-play situation'), Q17 ('Encourage the children to repair the damage they caused') and Q18 ('Prepare children for such incidents beforehand'). From high to moderately preferred they rank in the descending order of Q6, 17, 18, 13, 16 and 12.

The most favored strategy of the participants appears to be sooth crying children (Q6). One hundred and seventy seven (64%) respondents have stated that they 'Always' use it while 50 (18.2%) have reported that they use it very often.

Next favorable perceived strategy of control appeared to be encouraging the preschool children to repair the damage they caused (Q17; 'Always' = 161, 58.5%; 'Very Often' = 68, 24.7%).

Next in line is Q18, preparing children for anticipated aggressive incidents beforehand ('Never' = 87, 31.6%; 'Very Often' = 56, 20.4%). Next comes Q13 (Encouraging the victim to stand up and be assertive; 'Always' = 80, 29.1%; 'Very Often' = 70, 25.5%) followed by Q16 (Addressing the aggressive behavior at a separate time; 'Always' = 62, 22.5%; 'Very Often' = 105, 38.2%) and Q12 (Explain firmly why such behaviors are not allowed; 'Always' = 61, 22.2%; 'Very Often' = 90, 32.7%).

7. WHAT DO PRESCHOOL TEACHERS PREFER?

Table 03: Frequencies indicating preschool teachers' preference

S. No	Responses	01st Pref.	02nd Pref.	03rd Pref.	TOTAL
Q 17	Encourage the children to repair the damage they caused.	19	51	78	148
Q06	Sooth crying children who get hit	81	31	11	123
Q 16	Address the aggressive behavior at a separate time eg: during story hour or role-play situation.	19	49	47	115
Q 13	Encourage children who get hit to say things eg: 'No that hurts!'	16	34	21	71
Q 09	Separate children from the activity for a brief period of time	18	27	15	60
Q 18	Prepare children for such incidents beforehand	13	03	41	57
Q 03	Physically separate the children who are fighting	35	07	10	52
Q 12	Say 'No' firmly and explain why such behaviors are not appropriate.	17	26	07	50

Q 08	Remind the children to vent anger in other ways (eg: by punching a pillow/cushions/dolls, thumping desks)	11	08	05	24
Q 10	Send children to sit and watch games instead	04	08	07	19
Q 01	Give clear warning such as 'No throwing is allowed'	16	01	00	17
Q 15	Gather the blocks they threw and say nothing	02	05	03	10
Q 14	Encourage bystander to leave the place or stand up for children who get hit.	01	02	03	06
Q 02	Take away the blocks from children who threw them	02	00	03	05
Q 04	Ignore the fighting/ hitting of children	00	01	01	02
Q 05	Encourage children who get hit to hit back	00	01	00	01
Q 07	Scold the children who are fighting	01	00	00	01
Q 11	Hit the children who are fighting.	01	00	00	01

Respondents were requested to list three practices that they most preferred. The majority opted to choose reparation as their most preferred practice (Q 17; n = 148). Second in order of preference came 'soothing crying children' (Q6; n = 123) and the third, addressing aggressive behavior at a separate time (Q16; n = 115).

Though not remarkably high in preference, encouraging children who get hit to make statements such as 'no that hurts' (Q13 = 71), separating the children from an activity for a brief period of time (Q9 = 60), and saying 'no' firmly, explaining why such behaviors are not appropriate (Q 12 = 50) and, prepare the children for incidents which instigate aggression (Q18 = 57) were also perceived to be preferred strategies of the Sri Lankan preschool teachers.

Preferences for Q8 (n = 24), Q10 (n = 19), Q15 (n = 10), Q14 (n = 06), Q2 (n = 05) were low, conveying that preschool teachers may not use these practices even in actual settings.

The preschool teacher preference for practices Q4, Q5, Q7, and Q11 was remarkably low (≤ 2).

Table 04: Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Preschool Teacher Perceived Effective Practices

		B	SEB	β
	Years of Training	-.703	.458	-.102
	Education	-1.430	.854*	-.111
	Years of Experience	-1.368	.682**	-.128
	R^2		.032	
	F		2.647	

*$p < .1$; **$p < .05$.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test if the preschool teachers' prior competencies significantly predicted their ability to recognize effective practices pertaining to aggression of preschool children in their classes. The findings indicated the three predictors explained only 2% of the variance (R^2=.032, F(3,241)=2.647, p<.1). It was also found that years of training did not significantly predicted participants effective practices (β = - .102, n.s.). However, their education (β =.111, <.1) as well as years of experience (β = -.128, p<.05) somewhat predicted it.

8. DISCUSSION:
The aim of the present study was to explore the perceived practices of the Sri Lankan preschool teachers pertaining to aggressive behaviors of the preschool children in their class rooms; using a hypothetical situation which usually occurs in a Sri Lankan preschool class. Findings convey that participants did not perceive engaging in practices such as hitting or scolding children, moderately preferred practices such as reparations and often preferred practices such as sooth crying children.

The findings also report that certain practices used by the preschool teachers in the sample were consistent with the tried-out best practices advocated in the prevention/ intervention literature (Slaby et al., 1995; Cowley, 2001) while others, though not detrimentally negative were not in line with them (Slaby et al., 1995; Cowley, 2001) to address aggressive behaviors of the preschool children.

Findings also convey that participants displayed high knowledge and attitudes on harmful practices when addressing aggressive behaviors of young children while displaying low to moderate knowledge on specific best practices to address them. However, regression analysis conveyed that only 2% of the model accounted for the variance in the

preschool teacher effective practices in addressing aggression of the preschool children. The years of training was not significant while education (<.1) and years of experience (<.05) came out as significant predictor variables.

Findings came up with positive and negative trends when compared with the previous literature and research. The most profound positive trends which emerged from the findings were the teachers' identification of the adverse effects of physical punishment as a harmful strategy by not preferring it. Majority of the participants did not perceive using corporal punishment or scolding during the hypothetical situation. Since global (Gershoff, 2002; Robinson, Funk, Beth, & Bush, 2005; Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller, & Silve, 1962) as well as local (de Silva, 2004; De Soyza, Newcomb & Rajapakse, 2008) research studies repeatedly convey the negative impact of physical and psychological abuse, the paper believes that this should be viewed as an extremely positive phenomenon.

However, above mentioned practices are contrary to the embedded beliefs of discipline within the Sri Lankan culture which favors corporal punishment. Therefore, preschool teachers' dislike of these strategies may be due to several reasons in the continuum of teacher insights (i.e. these strategies have adverse effects on young children) to making socially acceptable responses (i.e. corporal punishment is not an acceptable to be used in the preschool class, even if favored by the teachers). Thus, some preschool teachers may also have provided socially and legally acceptable responses rather than truthfully divulging actual practices due to national media and literally campaigns carried out by the of the child welfare agencies (De Silva, De Soyza, & Kannangara, 2001).

Responses to Q14 indicate that a significant number of preschool teachers recognize the important role played by bystanders. Research studies and the literature (Staub, 1989) also support the role of the bystanders (i.e. individuals who watch disputes act as a powerful source, to reinforce aggression) in instigating and escalating aggressive episodes in ECCD settings. Therefore, along with early violence prevention literature the present study recommends activities in the preschool/school setting to empower bystanders (e.g. bystanders moving away from the scene after stating their displeasure or using words to support the victim/s (Slaby, Roedell, Arezzo & Hendrix, 1995).

Negative trends depicted in the findings were teachers' failure to be perceptive of effective practices identified by the global research. For example, the participants seem to have perceived soothing crying children as frequent practice. The global early violence prevention literature claims that soothing crying children is not always effective because it would make children dependent on the teacher (Slaby et al., 1995; Phelps, 2001) argues that highly targeted children use internalized coping strategies such as crying when victimized. Therefore, literature convey that by soothing children who cry when victimized; teachers may inadvertently be reinforcing the victimization, depriving the children with opportunities to be assertive or learn other social problem solving skills.

Furthermore, literature states that related to corrective consequences such as having toys/privileges removed or not being allowed to participate in a game for a brief period of time or 'Time-out' is an effective strategy (Slaby et al., 1995; Turner & Watson, 1999). Similarly, removal of reinforcing stimuli from the immediate environment for specific periods of time is also considered an effective practice. For example, if a child repeatedly kicks with his shoe she/he may be required to remove his/her shoes (Slaby et al., 1995). The literature further points out that this measure should be used immediately. As a result, the child is able to associate those related consequences with his/her actions. However, Turner et al. (1999) also report that such strategies in the broad category of 'Time-out' should be used with caution. However, findings convey that significant percentage of the participants did not recognize 'Time-out' as an effective practice.

Further, research states that one clear reminder/ warning helps the child to avoid the problem behavior and its consequences such as saying 'Remember crashing is not allowed, if you crash you would have to get off the toy car' (Slaby et al., 1995; Cowley, 2001). Again, participants did not seem to consider this an effective practice.

The findings also indicated that a significant percentage of preschool teachers favored reparation (i.e. encouraging children to repair the damage they caused) as a regular practice.

While early violence prevention literatures indicate it to be an effective strategy (Slaby et al., 1995); it cautions against its frequent usage. Further, literature (Slaby et al., 1995) recommends using reparation sparingly, using it only on occasions when maximum impact needs to be created. Thus, early violence prevention literature repeatedly conveys that it is not practical to use reparation for minor or low intense incidents of aggression, but for intense, escalating problem patterns (Slaby et al., 1995). Similarly, preschool teachers do not seem to favor the practices stated in Q9 and 10, although the literature espouses these as effective (Turner et al., 1999).

The findings indicate that preschool teachers in the sample have recognized addressing aggressive behavior at a separate time an effective strategy. The research literature on early violence prevention also advocates this as a positive strategy to allow children comprehend the negative consequences (Slaby et al., 1995).

Thus, the present study conveys that prior profession training on ECCD acquired by the preschool teachers did not assist them in identifying effective positive practices stipulated in the global early violence prevention/ intervention literature. However, this seems to hardly surprising as preschool teacher training programs in Sri Lanka do not have specific subjects, themes or application to teach prevent/minimize aggression within preschool children to the teachers.

The literature review pertaining to the Sri Lankan milieu did not identify any existing continuous and inbuilt programs to prevent/ minimize aggressive behaviors within the preschool children or a preschool teacher training component for same. However, this need has been stressed by several studies and policy papers (Pathirana, 2016; Pathirana, 2015; MoE, 2008; Wijetunge et al., 2003; Arnold, McWilliams, & Arnold, 1998; Raver, & Knitzer, 2002). The paper opinions the absolute necessity for such trainings; based on the outcomes of the present study.

The paper also notes that the National Plan of Action for 2004-2008 (MoE, 2008) has not recognized the need for teacher training to promote values, social problem solving or preventing/ minimizing aggressive behaviors within preschool children. However, advocates for several good practices such as review of curriculum and teacher hand books to improve communication among intercultural groups through the media and school activities. Further, it has also not recognized the importance or the sustainability of teacher training in promoting values or early violence prevention in the preschool or school context though research widely acclaims the effectiveness of teacher training pertaining to value education, social problem solving, preventing/ minimizing aggressive behaviors and promoting prosocial behaviors (Flannery, Liau, Powell, Vesterdal, Vazsonyi, Guo, Atha, & Embry, 2003; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2004; Hawkins, Von Cleve, & Catalano, 1991).

However, considering the effectiveness of preschool teacher training to prevent/ minimize aggressive behaviors (Pathirana, 2016; Pathirana, 2015) to Sri Lankan preschool teachers the paper recommends to include specific, child and culture sensitive and practices based teacher training component and a curriculum of pre-service as well as in-service preschool teachers.

This study also suggests the need to further develop and compare culture sensitive and child friendly methods of preschool teacher training and technical assistance when addressing aggressive behaviors of Sri Lankan preschool children. They paper also highlights the importance of developing a preschool teacher training component when addressing challenging behaviors Sri Lankan preschool children. Currently, in the Sri Lankan milieu such trainings are almost non-existent (Pathirana, 2016; Pathirana, 2015). Thus, the study suggests that future research should consider many and different facets of training programs (including both curriculum content and training methods) to address them.

Literature also conveys that classroom-based programs are highly dependent on the skill and comfort level of the teacher (Alvarez, 2007) as well as the time available to implement aggression preventions/ interventions. Therefore, future studies should also look into relationship between Sri Lankan preschool teacher characteristics and the extent of intervention delivery of the preschool teachers to prevent/minimize aggressive behaviors of the children in their preschool classes.

Studies which address teacher practices on children's aggressive behaviors are almost non-existent in the Sri Lankan milieu. Thus, the present study contributes to the literature by filling a much required research gap in this area. Thus, the findings of this study contribute to an understanding of how preschool teachers view aggressive behaviors in pre-school children. The strengths of the present study also lies in its diversity of participants (e.g. preschool teachers from varied ethnic, geographical, socio-economical) back grounds and varied teacher qualification and experiences; with data collected from 18 districts in Sri Lanka out of 25.

However, there are some limitations. First, the study relied on preschool teachers self-reports and asked participants to respond to hypothetical vignette and gave alternative practices for the participants to rate. Although the use of a survey was time-efficient and allowed for standardisation of measurement (e.g. all participants responding to the same hypothetical situation), it is possible that self-reports may not accurately reflect what they would do in an actual situation when aggression occurs. As preschool teachers were requested to rate the strategies which they use to respond to specific incidents of children's aggressive behaviors, it is not known the degree to which their strategies may differ depending on the severity or chronicity of it. Therefore, given the nature of exclusive self-reported measures, the outcomes of the study have to be cautiously interpreted. However, as Stipek, & Byler (1997) report

what preschool and kindergarten teachers advocate about appropriate and effective practices for young children correlate significantly with what they actually practice in their classrooms.

Second, the study focused exclusively on predominantly female pre-school teachers. Thus, even though preschool teacher population in Sri Lanka maybe predominantly female, future research requires surveying both females as well as male preschool teachers perceived sense of control pertaining to aggressive behaviors of the preschool children. Further, respondents were directed to complete the survey items in relation to a group of preschool children (without reference to the child's gender). Thus, gender differences were also not specifically addressed in this study. Therefore, it is not known whether pre-school teachers responded to items with respect to one gender or another.

Further, there are several issues which were not addressed on this research. Thus, the study makes following recommendations to the future research. First, it reconnoitre whether training on specific tried out best practices in the western world could change the teacher knowledge and attitudes on addressing preschool children's aggressive behaviors, Second, it recommends to explore whether such changes would impact a decrease in children's aggressive behaviors, Third, it highlight the importance and the need to investigate training provided to both in-service and pre-service preschool teachers pertaining to preventing and minimizing aggressive behaviors within preschool children. Fourth, it recommends to identify a combined training approach which is more specific, child and culture sensitive.

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