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THE ROLE OF PEER AND FAMILY ENVIRONMENTS IN THE FORMATION OF VERBAL AGGRESSIVENESS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract. Verbal aggression among elementary school students has evolved into a serious indicator of social-emotional deficits, influenced by the child's social ecosystem. This study aims to synthesize current literature to analyze the mechanisms of peer and family environment influences on the formation of such behavior. Method: This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design following the PRISMA protocol. Data were retrieved from Google Scholar, Garuda, and ERIC databases. A total of 20 selected empirical articles, published between 2018–2025 were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Findings: The synthesis revealed three main determinant patterns: (1) The peer environment operates through imitation mechanisms and conformity pressure, where verbal aggression is used by students as a strategy to gain social status or group acceptance; (2) The family environment plays a fundamental role in shaping emotion regulation, where authoritarian parenting and dysfunctional parental communication serve as primary predictors of aggressive behavior; and (3) A moderating interaction exists, where a harmonious family functions as a protective factor mitigating the negative impact of peer pressure. Implication: This study concludes that addressing verbal aggression cannot be done partially. Collaborative interventions integrating parenting programs at home with the development of a positive school climate are recommended.

Keywords; Verbal Aggression; Family Environment; Elementary Students; Peer Group; Systematic Literature Review.

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INTRODUCTION

Basic education is the second fundamental period or golden age that is very decisive for the development of children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. In this phase, children are not only required to master academic skills, but also social skills and mature emotional management as a provision for community life. According to Santrock (2020), middle and late childhood is a time when children begin to expand their social horizons, moving from a limited family environment to a more complex school environment. From the perspective of developmental psychology, language skills play a central role in these social interactions. Language is not just a tool for conveying information, but rather a primary instrument for negotiating social status, expressing feelings, and building friendship alliances (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2016).

However, along with the complexity of these interactions, various behavioral dynamics have emerged that are of serious concern to educators and psychologists, one of which is aggressiveness. Aggressiveness does not always manifest in physical forms such as hitting or kicking, but it often manifests itself in more subtle but deeply impactful verbal forms. Hurlock (2011) emphasized that speech development in elementary school age children is very rapid, but if it is not accompanied by emotional maturity, this speech ability is prone to being misused as a verbal weapon. This is in line with the view of Vygotsky (1978) who stated that language and thought develop separately but then merged; Failure in this positive union can trigger maladaptive behavior in social communication. Therefore, the issue of verbal aggressiveness in elementary school students is a very crucial context to be studied, considering its impact that can damage children's personality structure from an early age.

Ideally, elementary school should be a safe and conducive "second home" for children's growth and development, where positive character values are internalized through daily interactions. The National Education System Law in Indonesia also mandates education as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere that actively develops one's potential, including noble morals. Under these ideal conditions, the peer environment serves as a positive socialization agent that teaches cooperation, empathy, and emotional support (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Interaction between students should be

It is based on the principle of mutual respect, where language is used to motivate and strengthen brotherhood, not to bring down. On the other hand, the family as the smallest social unit has an equally vital role in this ideal condition. The family is expected to function as the primary microsystem environment that lays the moral and ethical foundations of

children's communication. According to Yusuf (2011), the ideal family implements a democratic and warm parenting style, where parents become role models in speaking polite language and managing emotions. Communication between parents and children in ideal conditions must be two-way, open, and empathetic, so that children have a full "emotional tank" and do not need to look for negative vents outside the home (Baumrind, 1991). If these two environments, the school and the family function optimally and synergistically, then verbal aggressiveness should be minimized or even eliminated in the behavior of elementary school students.

Although expectations of ideal conditions are so high, the reality on the ground shows a contradictory phenomenon. Various data and empirical observations show that verbal aggressiveness has become a prevalent social pathology in elementary schools. Research by Suryani and Pratama (2019) revealed that the social climate in many elementary schools today is colored by the high frequency of ridicule, bad name-calling, and verbal bullying between students. Verbal aggressiveness is often considered an "ordinary joke" by students, and sometimes even ignored by teachers because it does not leave visible physical scars, even though the impact on the victim's mental health is very destructive (Olweus, 1993). This real condition is exacerbated by the finding that the peer environment is often an incubator for such aggressive behavior. Fatmawati and Maryam (2024) found that peer support is not always positive; In many cases, children engage in verbal aggressiveness precisely to gain recognition or conformity in their peer group acceptance. In the realm of the family, the reality is also often far from ideal. Many parents unknowingly apply aggressive, authoritarian, or neglectful communication patterns, which are then adopted by the child. Barmawi, Julia, and Renika (2022) noted that there was a positive correlation between harsh parenting and children's tendency to engage in verbal aggression at school. These children bring "wounds" from home and vent them to their friends at school, creating an endless cycle of verbal abuse. From the exposure of the ideal conditions and the real conditions above, it is clear that there is a gap. The main gap lies in the unpreparedness of the child's social environment (peers and family) in carrying out their protective and educational functions. Normatively, schools and families are expected to produce a generation of manners and character, but empirically, these two environments are often the source or trigger of verbal aggressive behavior. Desmita (2014) highlights that this gap often occurs due to a lack of understanding of the psychological mechanisms behind children's aggressive behavior. Educators and parents often only focus on handling symptoms (punishing children who speak abusively), without touching the root cause that comes from environmental dynamics. Another significant gap is the perception of the

weight of the problem. Physical aggressiveness (such as hitting) almost always gets a quick and firm response from schools and parents. However, verbal aggressiveness (such as sarcasm, ostracization, or physical insults) is often taken for granted or normalized as part of the "growth and development phase" of both boys and girls (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). In fact, Berkowitz (1993) in his theory of aggression asserts that verbal aggression can trigger psychological pain that is equivalent to physical pain and can be a trigger for an escalation towards physical violence. This neglect of verbal aggressiveness creates a void in character education that is exploited by negative behavior to multiply without meaningful obstacles.

To understand why this gap occurs, we need to use a relevant theoretical lens. The basic assumptions in this paper are built on the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura. Bandura (1977) postulates that most human behavior is studied observationally through modeling. The model learns from observing others, a person forms an idea of how a new behavior is performed, and on the next occasion this information serves as a guide for action. In this context, it is assumed that elementary school students engage in verbal aggression not because of genetic factors alone, but because of the process of imitation of the model around them. The model can come from two main sources, namely peers and family. If in the family environment the child is often exposed to verbal conflicts between parents or accepts spanking as a form of discipline, then the child will internalize the cognitive scheme that "harsh words is an effective way to solve problems" (Skinner, 1953; Goleman, 1995). On the other hand, in the school environment, the assumption of conformity plays a role. Ladd and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2016) explain that children have a need for affiliation; If peer group norms value dominant and aggressive behavior, children will tend to follow them in order to avoid social rejection. Therefore, verbal aggressiveness in elementary school students must be seen as a resultant result of the interaction between modeling at home and reinforcement in the friendship environment.

The issue of aggressiveness in children has actually received a lot of attention from researchers, but there are limitations in the focus of the existing studies. A number of studies, such as those conducted by Prayitno (2010) and Slavin (2011), have more discussed cooperative learning strategies to reduce conflict in the classroom, but less specifically highlighted the verbal aspect. Other more specific studies, such as the study by Fatmawati and Maryam (2024), have successfully captured the relationship between peer support and verbal aggressiveness, but these studies tend to look at the peer factor as a single variable. Similarly, research by Barmawi, et al. (2022) in-depth analyzed the influence of parental parenting on aggressive behavior. While it provides valuable insights into domestic roles, this study has not

comprehensively linked them to the dynamics of the school environment. The majority of previous research has tended to be partial: dissecting family influence separately or peer influence separately. In fact, according to Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecology, children's development is influenced by inter-system interactions (mesosystems), namely the relationship between family and school (peers). There is still little literature that tries to synthesize how these two environments interact with each other, whether mutually reinforcing (negative synergistic) or mutually weakening (protective), especially in the context of the formation of verbal aggressiveness in elementary school students in Indonesia who have a unique collective culture.

Departing from the limitations of previous research, this article is here to offer conceptual solutions through a comprehensive and integrative literature review. The novelty offered in this study lies in the focus of its analysis which places the "interaction" between the peer environment and family as the main axis. This article will not only explain that peers and family are influential, but will go further to analyze how family parenting can be a factor protective measures that mitigate the adverse influence of peers, or conversely, how the peer environment can exacerbate the impact of communication dysfunction in the family. The solutions offered are not just a list of causes, but a roadmap for educators and parents to collaborate. This article argues that the handling of verbal aggressiveness cannot be done partially only at school or only at home, but requires a collaborative approach that harmonizes language norms in both environments. Through this in-depth understanding, it is hoped that more effective intervention strategies can be formulated to break the chain of verbal aggressiveness and create a healthier growth and development environment for elementary school students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study builds on the integration of two main theoretical perspectives: the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura and the Ecological Systems Theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner. This conceptual framework was chosen to explain the mechanisms by which the external environment (peers and family) is internalized into the child's individual behavior.

Mechanisms of imitation and conformity in a peer environment

In middle childhood (elementary school age), the child's social focus begins to shift from parents to peers. In the perspective of Social Learning Theory, the peer environment is not just a background, but the main arena of the modeling process. Bandura (1977) describes the mechanism of vicarious reinforcement, in which children tend to imitate verbal aggressive

behavior (such as mocking or cursing) if they see a friend who does so getting a "reward" in the form of social dominance, laughter of approval, or fear from the victim. Recent empirical studies reinforce this mechanism. Nicolay and Huber (2023) found that in elementary school students, there is a strong conformity pressure. Verbal aggressiveness is often normalized as "colloquial language"; Students who do not follow the group's language norms are at risk of experiencing social rejection. Thus, verbal aggressiveness is adopted not only because anger, but rather as a social coping strategy to be accepted in the peer hierarchy (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2016).

Family Parenting and the Formation of Emotional Regulation

If peers influence behavioral expression, the family affects the child's internal capacity to manage aggressive impulses. The literature suggests that the main mechanism of family influence works through the formation of emotion regulation. Baumrind (1991) in his parenting framework asserts that authoritarian parenting styles, which rely on verbal punishment and poor dialogue, inhibit the development of the child's prefrontal cortex that is in charge of controlling impulses. Children who grow up in a family environment with aggressive communication experience failure in learning emotional vocabulary. As a result, when facing conflicts at school, they do not have a cognitive script to negotiate, but instead directly use verbal aggression as an automatic response (Kurniawati & Lestari, 2022). Restika and Meylani (2023) add that parents not only function as supervisors, but also as "emotional mirrors"; Parents' inability to manage anger at home will be transmitted directly (intergenerational transmission) into children's maladaptive behavior at school.

Conceptual Framework: Mesosystem Interactions

The weakness of many previous studies is that they look at peer and family influences in isolation. In fact, according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (1979), child development occurs in the mesosystem, which is the meeting point between microsystems (family and school). The conceptual framework of this study positions that the two environments interact dynamically with each other. Within this framework, the quality of family relationships is positioned as a moderator variable. A harmonious family with a democratic parenting style functions as a protective factor that can mitigate or weaken the bad influence of peers (Santrock, 2020). Conversely, negative reinforcement from peers will have a maximum damaging impact if the child also experiences a void of affection at home. Therefore, the analysis of the verbal aggressiveness of elementary school students should be seen as a resultant of the tug-of-war between family protection and peer pressure.

METHODS

Research Design This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to identify, evaluate, and interpret all relevant research related to the topic of verbal aggressiveness in elementary school students. A systematic approach was chosen to minimize bias in data collection and ensure an objective synthesis of findings (Snyder, 2019). The literature search protocol refers to the 2020 PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency and replicability of the selection process (Page et al., 2021).

Literature searches were carried out on four main databases, namely: Google Scholar, Garuda Portal (Garba Reference Digital), SINTA (Science and Technology Index), and ERIC (Education Resources Information Center). Keywords used in searches using Boolean operators (AND/OR) include: "verbal aggressiveness" AND "elementary school students", "peer environment" OR "peer pressure", "family environment" OR "parenting", as well as their English equivalents ("verbal aggression", "elementary students", "peer environment", "family environment"). The publication time limit is strictly set from 2018 to 2025 to ensure data recency and relevance to the current educational conditions.

To guarantee the quality of the articles analyzed, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria are established:

1. Inclusion Criteria: (a) The article is the result of empirical research (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method) and not just an opinion or conceptual paper; (b) Specific research subjects in elementary school students (ages 6–12 years); (c) The article discusses the variable of verbal aggressiveness in relation to peers or family.
2. Exclusion Criteria: (a) Articles that only discuss physical aggressiveness without mentioning the verbal aspect; (b) Seminar proceedings articles that do not go through a rigorous peer-review process; (c) Thesis, thesis, or dissertation that is not published in the form of a journal.

The selection process is carried out in three stages. The first stage, the initial search results in a total 145 articles. After a duplicate check using Mendeley's software, there were 110 articles left. The second stage was screened based on titles and abstracts for topic relevance, which eliminated 65 articles that did not match context (e.g. teen subjects or focus on purely physical aggressiveness). In the third stage, a full text reading (eligibility) was carried out for the remaining 45 articles to assess the quality of the methodology and the suitability of the results. Based on the quality assessment which refers to the clarity of the method and

the validity of the data (Xiao & Watson, 2019), as many as 25 articles were excluded due to unclear methods or insignificant results. As a result, 20 final articles (14 national and 6 international) were obtained that were eligible for analysis in this study.

Data from 20 selected articles were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. This process involves identifying patterns, themes, and categories that emerge from the literature data (Newman & Gough, 2020). The data were grouped into a synthesis matrix based on: (1) the form of verbal aggressiveness, (2) the peer influence mechanism, and (3) the family influence mechanism. This synthesis aims to find a common thread of interaction between the two environments in shaping student behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on a systematic selection process using the PRISMA protocol, this study analyzed a total of 20 articles that met the inclusion criteria (14 national articles and 6 international articles). An in-depth analysis of these articles reveals a comprehensive mapping of verbal aggressiveness in elementary school students, which can be categorized into three main themes: the form of behavior manifestation, the determinants of the peer environment, and the determinants of the family environment.

Literature findings suggest that verbal aggressiveness at the elementary school level has unique and often disguised characteristics. Rahayu and Fitriyah (2020) identified that the most dominant form of verbal aggressiveness emerged was the giving of negative nicknames (name-calling) which led to physical humiliation (body shaming) and socioeconomic status. In addition, Lestari (2023) found the phenomenon of "aggression under the guise of humor", where about 60% of students make rude ridicule but label it as a joke to avoid punishment for teachers. Another form identified was verbal exclusion or threats not to accompany (Nicolay & Huber, 2023) is more often carried out by female students as a form of relational aggression to manipulate friendships.

The results of the analysis showed that peers served as the main catalyst for aggressive behavior. Fatmawati and Maryam (2024) in their research found a significant positive correlation between peer support and verbal aggressiveness; This means that students who are in a circle of friends who are tolerant of harsh words tend to have higher levels of aggressiveness. The mechanism that occurs is conformity pressure. Nicolay & Huber (2023) highlight that elementary school students have a high need for affiliation, so they mimic their group's aggressive verbal behavior as a condition of membership. Prasetya et al. (2019) added that a competitive social environment also triggers the use of aggressive language as a self-

defense mechanism and affirmation of dominance among peers.

The literature consistently places the family as the foundation of behavior. Barmawi, Julia, and Renika (2022) found that authoritarian and permissive parenting contributed 42% to variants of verbal aggressive behavior in children. Parents who apply harsh discipline with bullying (authoritarian) or who are too liberating without control (permissive) are equally at risk of producing aggressive children. These findings are reinforced by a study by Siahaan et al. (2020) that focused on the quality of interpersonal communication. It was found that children who had low communication intensity or were often exposed to verbal conflicts between parents at home experienced deficits in emotional regulation, thus venting their frustration at school through harsh words. Restika & Meylani (2023) refer to this phenomenon as intergenerational transmission, in which the child adopts an aggressive conflict resolution model from his or her parents and practices it in the school environment.

The main findings of this literature review confirm that verbal aggressiveness in elementary school students is not an isolated emergent behavior, but rather the result of a complex social learning process. Referring to Social Learning Theory, verbal aggressive behavior such as mocking or threatening is obtained through observational learning mechanisms or model impersonation. Bandura (1977) emphasized that children learn to behave aggressively by observing others who benefit or reinforce the behavior. In the context of elementary school, Hurlock (2011) explained that children's verbal skills develop rapidly often without emotional maturity, so words become the main weapon in conflict. This is exacerbated by the findings of Berkowitz (1993) who stated that verbal aggression is often a gateway to physical aggression if not intervened immediately, because desensitization to verbal violence lowers the threshold of a child's tolerance for hurtful behavior of others.

An in-depth analysis of the peer environment shows that the peer group serves as a "training ground" for aggressive behavior. Fatmawati and Maryam (2024) found that peer support had a strong positive correlation with the frequency of verbal aggressiveness. This means that when a peer group tolerates or even laughs at ridicule as a joke, the behavior gets reinforcement. Ladd and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2016) add that at primary school age, the need for social affiliation is very high; Children are willing to engage in verbal aggression in order to maintain their status in the social hierarchy of the class. This phenomenon is in line with a study by Nicolay & Huber (2023) which revealed that popular students often use verbal aggression ("cool aggression") to dominate weaker students, and this behavior is then imitated by other students who want to social climb.

In addition to status factors, peer pressure plays a crucial role in the normalization of

verbal violence. Prasetya et al. (2019) note that in many cases, students do name-calling not because of personal hatred, but because of fear of being ostracized if they do not participate in group norms. This dynamic creates what Olweus (1993) calls "social contagion", in which verbal aggressiveness spreads like a virus in a class. Rahayu and Fitriyah (2020) strengthen this argument with the finding that low tolerance in peer groups accelerates the escalation of verbal conflict. When collective empathy is dull, students lose the ability to sense the victim's heartache, so abusive ridicule is considered a normal part of everyday interactions at school.

Although peers are external triggers, the literature consistently points to the family environment as the internal root of the formation of aggressive cognitive schemes. Barmawi, Julia, and Renika (2022) found a significant relationship between authoritarian parenting and high verbal aggressiveness of children. Parents who apply harsh discipline, often yell, and are poor in dialogue, unconsciously teach children that verbal violence is an effective way to impose will. Baumrind (1991) in his parenting theory explained that children of authoritarian parents tend to have poor emotional regulation and high levels of frustration, which are then dislocated aggression to weaker friends at school. On the other hand, Siahaan et al. (2020) highlight that parenting that is too permissive is also dangerous, because children never learn the limits of communication ethics, so they feel entitled to say anything without thinking about the feelings of others. Furthermore, the quality of interpersonal communication at home is the main predictor of children's social competence. Restika & Meylani (2023) in their study describe the phenomenon of "intergenerational transmission of verbal violence", in which children record parental arguments or abusive words they receive, then replay them in social interactions outside the home. This is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) view that language is a tool of thinking; If the language that the child hears at home is full of aggressive content, then the child's thinking structure will also be formed aggressively. Yusuf (2011) added that families that fail to function as a "secure base" make children seek emotional validation outside in maladaptive ways, including through aggressive behavior to attract the attention of teachers or friends.

The novelty of this discussion lies in the synthesis of the interaction between the family environment and peers, which in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of ecology is referred to as the mesosystem. Herawati & Deharnita (2019) found that peer influence is not absolute, but is moderated by the quality of children's relationships with parents. Children who have a secure attachment to their parents tend to have better resistance or resilience to negative peer pressure. In this context, Santrock (2020) affirms that the family functions as a protective factor; Strong moral values from home can be a filter for children when dealing with bullying

culture at school. However, the opposite condition occurs when these two environments interact negatively. Lestari (2023) identified a pattern of "double jeopardy", in which children who experience verbal violence at home tend to choose to be affiliated with peers who are also aggressive at school. This creates a vicious circle that is difficult to break. According to Desmita (2014), when schools fail to provide a conducive environment and families ignore children's emotional development, verbal aggressive behavior will be internalized into a permanent character. Putri and Santoso (2021) added that this negative interaction is often exacerbated by a lack of communication between the school and parents, so that the handling of problematic students is often out of sync and ineffective.

Another interesting aspect to discuss is the difference in the manifestation of verbal aggressiveness by gender, which is influenced by the socialization of roles in family and peers. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) in their classic study that is still relevant today, found that verbal aggressiveness in female students was more relational and covert (such as spreading rumors or inciting), while in male students it was more direct and confrontational. Papalia et al. (2009) explained that this difference is not solely biological, but the result of environmental formation; Boys are often "allowed" by peer culture to be rude as a sign of masculinity. On the other hand, Suryani and Pratama (2019) found that in the context of primary schools in Indonesia today, this gender gap is starting to thin, where female students are also increasingly open to direct verbal aggression, which indicates a shift in social norms in today's children's associations.

Based on the above synthesis, it is clear that the approach to handling verbal aggressiveness must be holistic and collaborative. Goleman (1995) emphasized the importance of learning emotional intelligence that is integrated into the school curriculum, not just moral lectures. Schools need to implement cooperative learning strategies as suggested by Slavin (2011), which forces students to interact positively and build interdependence between friends, thereby reducing prejudice and hostility. Prayitno (2010) also suggested optimizing group guidance and counseling services to train students' assertiveness skills, so that they are able to resist peer pressure without having to be aggressive. On the other hand, school intervention will be useless without changes at home. Skinner (1953) in the principle of behavior modification suggests that parents need to be trained to provide positive reinforcement to children's polite behavior, not just to punish their bad behavior. School-facilitated parenting programs must focus on improving family communication patterns. By harmonizing the values taught in school and practiced at home, it is hoped that a consistent educational ecosystem will be created. As concluded by

Fatmawati (2024) and Barmawi, et al. (2022), breaking the chain of verbal aggressiveness requires "one village" to educate children: a supportive peer environment and a loving family environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on a systematic literature synthesis of 20 selected articles, it can be concluded that verbal aggressiveness in elementary school students is formed through dynamic interactions between family and peer microsystems. The family environment plays a role as the primary foundation, where authoritarian parenting and lack of dialogical communication are the main predictors of children's emotional regulation deficits. Meanwhile, the peer environment functions as an external reinforcer, where the mechanism of imitation and conformity pressure encourages students to use verbal aggression as a strategy to gain social status or survive in society. These findings confirm that students' resilience to negative peer influences is highly dependent on the quality of attachment and moral values built in the family. Although it provides comprehensive insights, this study has methodological limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, this study is based entirely on secondary data (literature review), so it cannot verify the cause-and-effect relationship directly in the field or capture the specific contextual nuances in each school. Second, the literature search process is limited to open databases (Google Scholar, Garuda, ERIC) and the 2018–2025 time frame, which has the potential to exclude relevant studies in certain paid journals or classic longitudinal studies that are still valid. Third, this study generalizes the context of elementary school in general without specifically distinguishing between the lower classes (grades 1-3) and the higher grades (grades 4-6), even though the psychological dynamics of the two age groups may be different. Practically, these findings imply the need to shift the school's approach from punitive to collaborative. Schools are obliged to facilitate parenting programs to harmonize parenting at home with school discipline, develop an integrated social-emotional skills curriculum, and create constructive supervision mechanisms to prevent and deal with aggression in the peer environment. For the future development of science, the researcher recommends two specific empirical research designs. First, a Longitudinal Study that follows the development of students from grade 1 to grade 6 is needed to see exactly how parenting in childhood affects children's vulnerability to peer pressure in pre-adolescence. Second, Quasi-Experimental Studies are recommended to test the effectiveness of specific interventions, such as "Assertive Communication" or "Anger Management" training, by comparing experimental groups (trainee students) and control groups, in order to find the

most effective methods in reducing verbal aggressiveness.

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