

# Special Section Editorial: Bringing Communities of Practice Together and the Workshop on Aggression 2024

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The recently proposed whole education approach to school bullying advocates the need for a wider community involvement in the prevention and intervention of bullying extending beyond individual schools as suggested by the whole school approach (O'Higgins Norman et al., 2022). This holistic approach to addressing school bullying highlights the complex interactions across interpersonal relationships, social structures, and organisations in the prevention and intervention of bullying. Given the complexity O'Higgins Norman advocates, it seems even more timely that researchers and practitioners combine forces to explore aggression and bullying across contexts to ensure that multi-stakeholder perspectives can be captured through collaborative research programmes.

Working with multiple stakeholders in the field of bullying and aggression is crucial to ensure that interventions and research are comprehensive and reflect multiple perspectives and contexts (Waseem & Nickerson, 2024). For school bullying, these stakeholders include those who have direct (e.g., school staff, peers, parents) and indirect (e.g., bullying educators and researchers) contact with children and adolescents (Hendry et al., 2023). While researchers have considered multi-stakeholder perspectives for decades, considering how researchers can collaborate with bullying educators, practitioners, charities, and organisations seems a logical next step to ensure the relevance, suitability, and applicability of research findings and conclusions. This may go some way to address the “*conceptual disjunct*” between academics and other stakeholders highlighted by Skrzypiec et al. (2023, p2). Therefore, we considered it important to bring together different communities spanning research and practice as part of the 28<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Aggression.

One of major the challenges in engaging in collaborative research programmes is the need to ensure that all stakeholders have a common definition of the phenomena of interest. This need for a common definition provides a particular challenge as Badger et al. (2025) note “*there is no standardised or universally accepted definition of school bullying*” (p1) and many definitions fail to capture the realities of childhood (O'Higgins Norman, 2020). Reflecting

the whole educational approach to preventing and intervening in school bullying, O'Higgins Norman et al. (2024) proposed an inclusive definition of school bullying that emphasises that school bullying “*occurs within a social network of school and community relationships*” (p5). The lack of a shared and common definition of bullying, also likely impacts how we assess and understand experiences of bullying. In this special section, Shan Hu, Dagmar Strohmeier, Takuya Yanagida, and Simona Caravita highlight the inconsistencies of within country prevalence rates of (cyber)bullying and (cyber)victimisation in large scale cross-national datasets and explores the role of different bullying definitions. Although there was no evidence of systematic differences in the prevalence rates within countries, there was evidence of unsystematic variation leading the authors to conclude that the sampling method can influence participants' reports and how they interpret questions.

As organisers of the 28<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Aggression hosted by NTU Psychology in Nottingham during 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024, we were delighted to bring together many of these communities of practice. As part of the workshop, we welcomed practitioners and academics from over 11 countries who joined together to discuss cutting-edge insights into the field of bullying and aggression. The theme for the workshop was aggression and bullying across contexts with a focus on: (a) in person and online forms of aggression; (b) personal, contextual and situational factors associated with aggression; and (c) prevention and intervention programmes of aggression. Across two days, delegates shared research and practice on: (a) emotional competencies, attribution and school experience, (b) trajectories of aggression, psychopathy, and sexual consent, (c) school bullying, (d) bystander and school interventions, (e) classroom

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climate and teachers' influences, (f) addressing bullying, violence and aggression, (g) defining online aggression and trolling, (h) offline and online bullying: Overlap and school and teacher level factors, (i) research and reality: The power of engaged scholarship, and (j) understanding and managing banter in educational settings.

We would like to thank all of those who attended the Workshop on Aggression 2024 and who made it such an engaging and intellectually stimulating event. We are also grateful to Claire Monks and James O'Higgins Norman who gave keynotes on contemporary issues within the field of aggression. Claire provided a fascinating insight into her work on peer-aggression in early childhood while James highlighted the complexity of banning smartphones in education settings through providing a qualitative analysis of adolescent viewpoints on smartphone bans in schools. We would also like to thank Herbert Scheithauer, editor-in-chief of the International Journal of Developmental Science for continuing to support the Workshop through their annual special section. Finally, we wish to thank the organizers of the 29<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Aggression at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic for hosting the next workshop. We look forward to a stimulating and friendly meeting focused on aggression, media, and digital technologies.

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