

Reducing Social Aggression in Classroom

Prof. Avi Assor, Ben-Gurion University
2024

Executive Summary



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Research Objectives:

- Examine whether changing Class-perception that social aggression enhances Social Status (popularity) would lead to a reduction in aggressive behavior in the classroom.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the "Matzmichim Academy" intervention program in reducing social aggression in classrooms.

Measure outcomes at three time points >>

1. Before the intervention 2. Two weeks after the intervention 3. Four months after the intervention

The Intervention Included >>

- A three-day classroom workshop with the homeroom teacher present and participating.
- Three follow-up meetings for the homeroom teacher over two months after the workshop.

Study Population: Intervention Group & Control Group

	766 students fifth/sixth grade		12 Schools, 36 classes Jewish elementary schools
	Geographic Area Central and coastal Israel		Socioeconomic background middle to upper-middle

Key Findings: 4 month after the intervention



Reducing the Perception that Aggression Enhances Social Status



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Enhancing Teacher's Sense of Competence in Managing Social Climate

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This Executive Summary presents the findings of a comprehensive evaluation study that monitored the implementation of the Matzmichim Academy's intervention program in schools during the 2022-2023 academic year. The study aimed to evaluate program effectiveness by comparing participating students and teachers to a control group of non-participating students matched for age and background characteristics.

The research hypothesis posited that **a reduction in the perception of social aggression as a means of improving social status would lead to decreased social aggression in classrooms.**

Social Aggression among Children:

Social aggression refers to behaviors intended to harm a child's reputation or social status. This can include verbal abuse (such as insults or put-downs), cyberbullying, gossiping, spreading intentional rumors, exclusion, and bullying. Unlike physical aggression, which is often driven by emotional outbursts such as anger or frustration, social aggression is primarily aimed at damaging a child's social relationships and standing within their peer group.

The study focused on examining classroom changes in children's perceptions regarding aggressive behavior's capacity to enhance social status and the corresponding levels of social aggression. Additionally, the study also evaluated changes in teachers' self-efficacy in addressing classroom social climate issues.

Research Population: The study included 766 fifth and sixth-grade students from 12 state Jewish schools in central Israel (Sharon region, central district, and coastal plain). The research was conducted over a 4-5 month period during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Research Design: Data was collected from both intervention and control groups through questionnaires administered at three time points. The intervention group consisted of students and homeroom teachers from 6 schools (18 classrooms), while the control group included an equal number of participants (6 schools, 18 classrooms). Questionnaires were completed at baseline (T1), two weeks post-intervention (T2), and four months post-intervention (T3). This longitudinal design enabled the assessment of the intervention's long-term effects.

Research Variables (see appendix for details):

- Perceptions of classroom aggression as promoting social status
- Classroom aggression levels
- Teachers' sense of competence in dealing with classroom social aggression

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In applying insights from various educational studies, an additional variable was measured: the level of engagement in learning and implementation among intervention subjects (homeroom teachers). The intervention group was divided into two subgroups: those characterized by **low engagement** and those showing **moderate-to-high engagement**.

This differentiation was made based on the following criteria:

1. Attendance/absence and tardiness in workshops and guidance meetings
2. Satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the intervention
3. Motivation/resistance to learning and implementation
4. Implementation/lack of implementation in the classroom after the workshop

Key Findings:

Reducing the Perception that Aggression Enhances Social Status

As shown in Figure 1, while the high-engagement group demonstrates a significant decrease in the perception that aggression improves social status from Time T1 to Time T3, no substantial changes are observed in the other two groups (the control group and the low-engagement group).

There is a significant interaction between the high-engagement intervention group and the control group. Specifically, a significant decrease is found in the perception of aggression as a means of enhancing social status within the high-engagement intervention group.

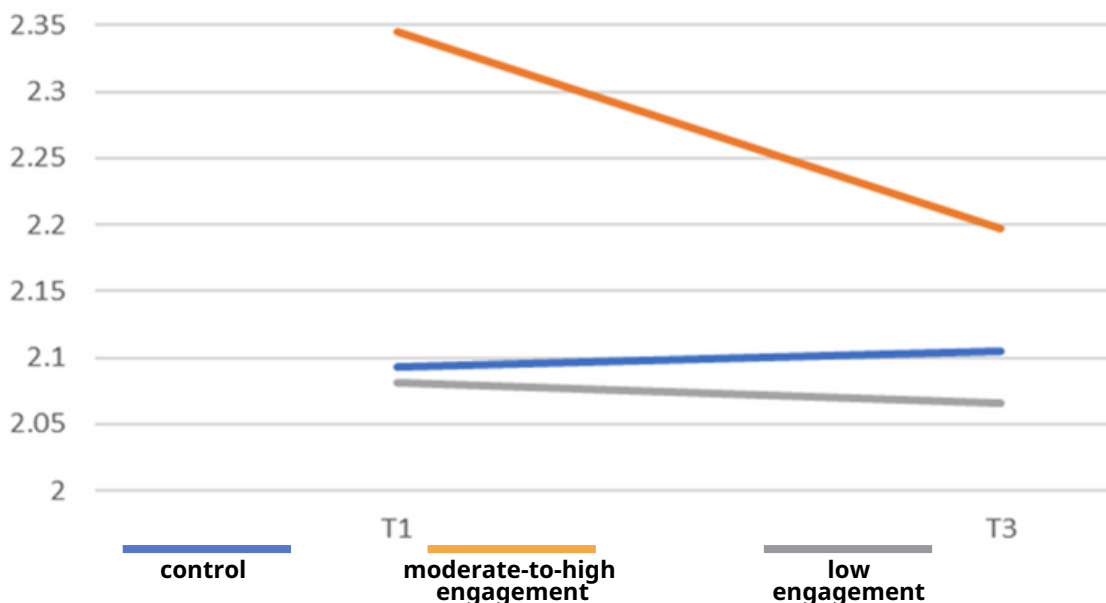


Figure 1. Interaction effects of intervention and time on student-reported perceptions of classroom aggression as promoting social status

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As shown in Figure 2, a comparison between Time 1 (T1, pre-intervention) and Time 3 (T3, four months post-intervention) indicates a reduction in classroom aggression within the high-engagement intervention group. In contrast, classroom aggression increased in both the control group and the low-engagement intervention group over the same period. Consequently, the initial gap in aggression levels between the high-engagement group and the other groups observed before the intervention is notably reduced following the program.

A statistically significant interaction was found between the high-engagement intervention group and the control group.

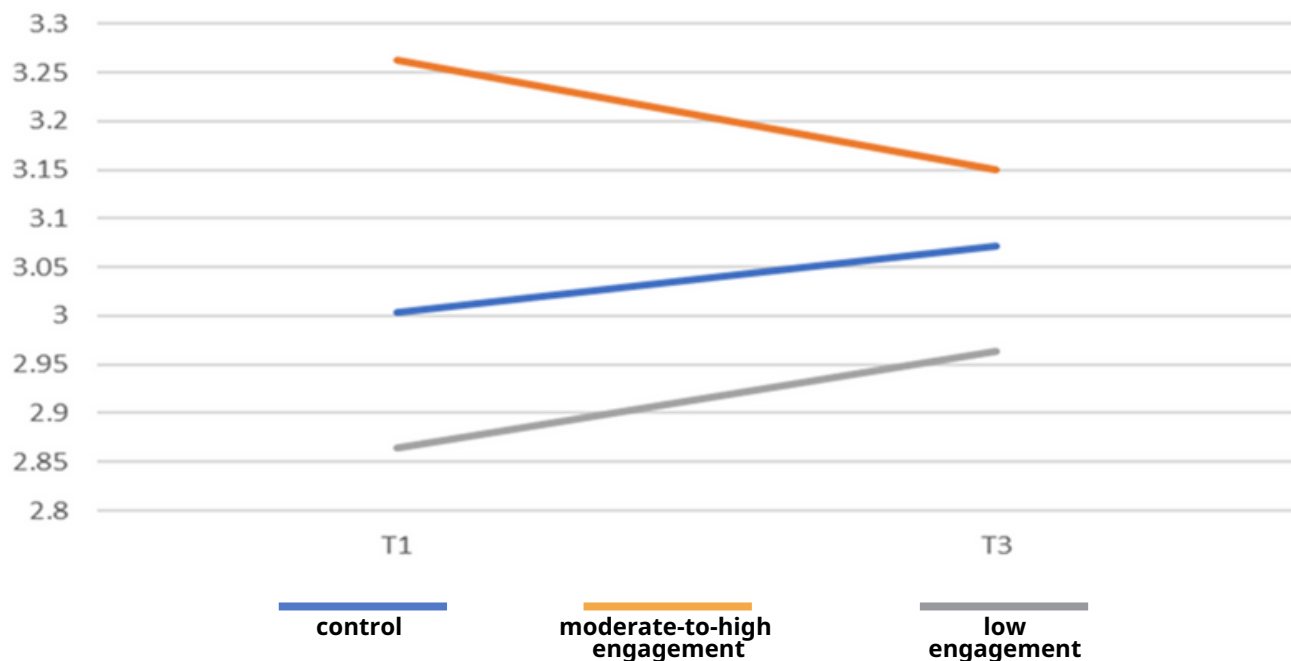


Figure 2. Interaction effects of intervention and time on student-reported classroom aggression levels.

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Enhancing Teacher's Sense of Competence in Managing Social Climate

As shown in Figure 3, a comparison between Time 1 (T1, pre-intervention) and Time 3 (T3, four months post-intervention) reveals a significant increase in teachers' sense of competence within the high-engagement intervention group. In contrast, a decline was observed in the other groups over the same period.

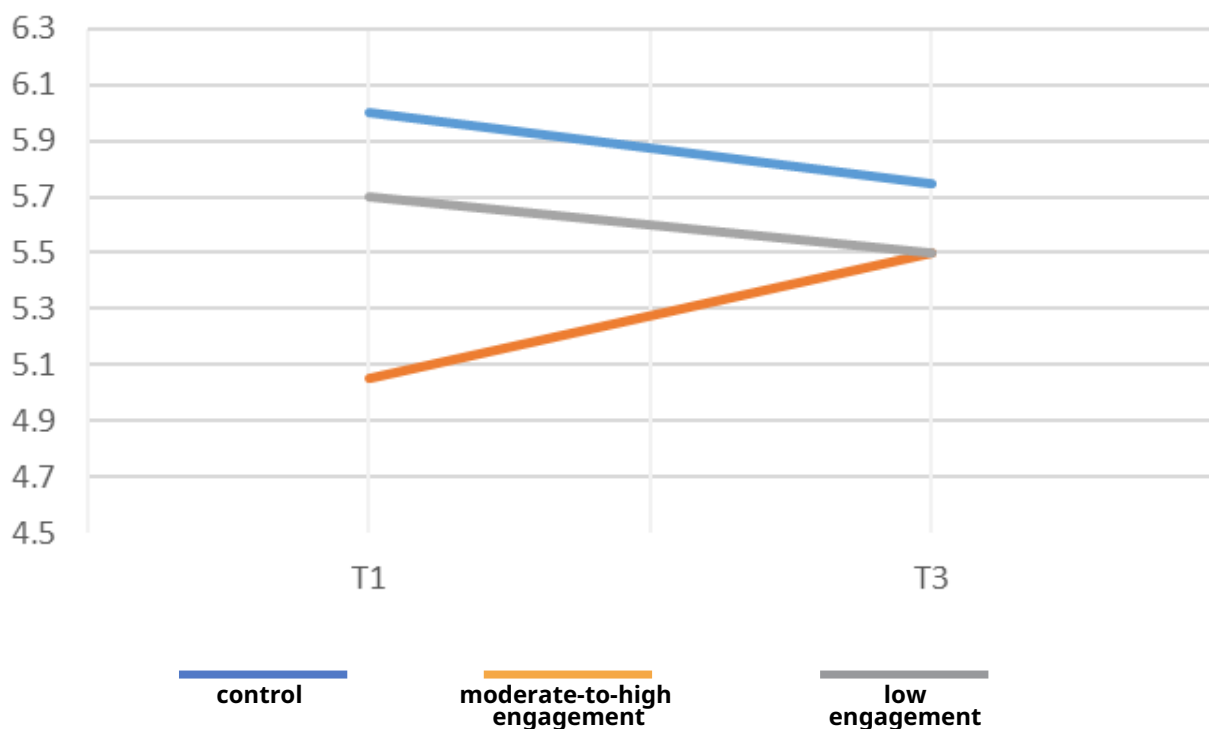


Figure 3. Interaction effects of intervention and time on teacher-reported sense of competence

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Summary of Key Findings:

The findings indicate a significant decrease in the perception that social aggression enhances status within the high-engagement intervention group, as opposed to the control group and the low-engagement intervention group, where no significant change was observed. Additionally, a significant increase in teachers' sense of competence in managing social aggression was found in the high-engagement intervention group, in contrast to the other two groups, where a decline in perceived competence was observed.

Classrooms in the high-engagement intervention group showed a decrease in levels of aggression, while the other two groups exhibited an opposite trend, with classroom aggression increasing over time.

[Click here to open the attached appendices](#)

- [Details of the study variables](#)
- [Detailed research results](#)

The study was led by Prof. Avi Assor (School of Education, Ben-Gurion University), in collaboration with Dr. Michal Kant-Maymon (Baruch Ivcher School of Psychology, Reichman University), Yoni Tsouna, CEO of Matzmichim Academy, and Adi Dror, Pedagogy and Research Coordinator at the Matzmichim Academy. The research is currently under peer review in international journals, with the aim of publishing the intervention program and findings for the global scientific community.

