

Social and Emotional Learning Interventions for Students on the Autism Spectrum

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	i
Abstract	ii
I. Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Hypothesis	2
Operational Definitions	3
II. Review of the Literature	4
Overview	4
Introduction to Autism	4
Importance of Social Emotional Learning	5
Social and Emotional Learning Interventions	5
Summary	7
III. Methods	8
Design	8
Participants	8
Instrument	9
Procedures	10
IV. Results	12
V. Discussion	18
Implications	18
Threats to Validity	19

Relationship of Results and the Literature	20
Suggestions for Future Research	21
Conclusion	21
References	22
Appendix A	24

List of Tables

1. Weekly Aggressive Behaviors for Seven Kindergarten Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	12
2. Weekly Aggressive Behaviors for Five Year-Old Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders	14
3. Weekly Aggressive Behaviors for Six Year-Old Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	15
4. Pre Intervention and Post Intervention Mean of Aggressive Behaviors for Seven Kindergarten Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	16
5. Pre Intervention and Post Intervention Mean of Aggressive Behaviors for Five Year-Old Kindergarten Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	17
6. Pre Intervention and Post Intervention Mean of Aggressive Behaviors for Six Year-Old Kindergarten Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder	17

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine which if social and emotional behavior interventions would reduce aggressive behaviors in students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Students with ASD rely on structure and routine as well as direct instruction to be successful. There are many researched methods for intervening and teaching students with ASD how to manage their emotions and behaviors. In this study, the focus was on a social and emotional intervention program called Conscious Discipline. The study was a pre-test/post-test design with data taken on aggressive behaviors for two weeks during the pre-test and three weeks during the post-test. The instrument used to conduct this study was a tally sheet that the teacher used to record varied aggressive behaviors for the selected students. The results of the study show that the aggressive behaviors decreased for students after the intervention was put into place, indicating a positive result from the implementation of the Conscious Discipline program. In the future, various studies should be conducted with a larger number of students and others with varying age differences in the sample, to improve the chance of showing significance.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have varying needs, abilities and behaviors varying from mild to severe. Student behaviors across this spectrum vary from physical aggression, non-compliance, attention seeking, sensory seeking, verbal aggression and everything in between. When the ability to communicate is hindered, students with ASD have difficulty understanding and interpreting others. These behaviors can be addressed over time with different social and emotional learning interventions, depending on the specific needs of each child.

Throughout daily teaching, social and emotional learning needs to be addressed to ensure effective management of emotions, such as aggression. Individuals with autism spectrum disorder thrive with structure and routine. When in school, students are presented with many different situations, sometimes within their routine and other times unexpected and out of their typical routine. These disruptions in their daily routines can lead to adverse behaviors if the student has not been taught how to handle such changes. Social and emotional interventions provide students with ASD the chance to learn about their own feelings as well as the feelings of others. Students are then able to use skills they have learned to adapt and manage their emotions appropriately when new and unfamiliar situations arise. With proper teaching and use of social and emotional interventions, they will be able to self-regulate (Carr, 2016), and manage their emotions and aggression.

It is important for all students to have an understanding of their own emotions as well as those around them. Students who do not develop empathy for others show higher levels of

aggression and undesired behaviors. Social and emotional interventions are used to help students improve their social impairment by receiving direct instruction of social and emotional skills (Gillis & Buttler, 2007). This allows them to participate with typical peers and form more meaningful and safe relationships with those around them.

Statement of the Problem

There are many different forms of social and emotional interventions that can be used to benefit a student with autism spectrum disorder. It is important to examine and assess these different interventions and how students with ASD respond. Since students with ASD can have a significant range in their abilities, it is important to note that not all interventions will work the same for each student. There may be cases where one student responds well to a specific social and emotional intervention when another student does not. There may also be instances where one student stops responding to the intervention and a new approach will be needed. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of social and emotional learning interventions to decrease the aggressive behaviors of kindergarten students with autism spectrum disorder.

Hypothesis

Kindergarten students, with ASD, who receive social and emotional interventions will exhibit no change in the number/amount of aggressive behaviors compared those who do not receive social and emotional interventions.

Operational Definitions

Aggressive behaviors (dependent variable) are categorized as a reaction that delivers harmful stimuli to another individual. This can include actions such as hitting, kicking, biting or throwing items.

Social and emotional intervention (independent variable) is a method used to help individuals learn how to manage their emotions and relationships through application and understanding of others attitudes and feelings.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a disorder in which individuals have difficulty understanding abstract concepts and lack the ability to communicate and socially interact with others.

Conscious Discipline is a social-emotional learning program that focuses on emotional and behavior regulation, knowledge and expression.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

This literature review examines the effectiveness of social and emotional learning interventions to decrease the aggressive behaviors of kindergarten students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The first section provides an introduction to autism and its characteristics. The second section examines the importance of social and emotional learning for young children with autism spectrum disorder. The last section introduces various social and emotional learning interventions and the benefits to young students with autism spectrum disorder.

Introduction to Autism

Within the educational setting, students display different disruptive and aggressive behaviors. Children who display these behaviors may show defiance, lack of cooperation, and hostility within their classroom setting. When behaviors escalate and become aggressive, intervention is needed to keep the students and others in the classroom safe. Aggression has been defined as a reaction that delivers harmful stimuli to another (Bronsard, Botbol & Tordjman, 2010), such as hitting, kicking, biting or throwing items. One group of students that often have difficulty with these behaviors are students with autism spectrum disorder.

Students with autism spectrum disorder are characterized by the impairments in their ability to communicate and socially interact with others, as well as their inability to use and understand abstract concepts (Mason, Davis & Andrews, 2016). Individuals with autism spectrum disorder vary from mild to severe in their ability to form relationships, interact appropriately, express and manage emotions, communicate, and live independently.

Communication abilities vary in student understanding and demonstration of both expressive and receptive language skills. This deficit affects students' ability to understand and properly express their feelings and emotions. Children with autism spectrum disorder thrive on consistency and routine in their daily life. When something does not go as expected or becomes more than the individual can handle, students' may show adverse behaviors, or aggression. These adverse behaviors limit the child's successful integration in school and social activities.

Importance of Social and Emotional Learning

Students with autism spectrum disorder do not start their school career equipped with strategies to manage their emotions or behaviors. Many students with ASD have difficulty being able to identify their emotions and how different situations make them feel. These students need direct instruction regarding social skills as well as modeling and reinforcement of appropriate skills (Gillis & Butler, 2007) in order to increase their ability to demonstrate improved social interaction. Through the use of social and emotional intervention, students with autism spectrum disorder can learn how to identify and manage their emotions in a non-violent, prosocial manner. Students can be taught how to appropriately engage in society, develop skills to regulate emotions, and empathize with others, and improve their learning and life success (Caldarella, Page & Gunther, 2012). Social and emotional learning interventions teach students with ASD how to regulate and handle their emotions without displaying aggressive behaviors.

Social and Emotional Learning Interventions

Social and emotional learning interventions can be accomplished through direct instruction of skills, direct modeling of self-regulation, social stories, and visual supports. Social

and emotional learning helps students with autism spectrum disorder to self-regulate their emotions during anger and fear provoking situations (Hirschler-Guttenberg, Feldman, Ostfeld-Etzion, Laor, & Golan, 2015). One form of direct instruction often used for children with ASD is social stories. Through the use of social stories, parents, teachers and caretakers can create a story based on real life situations to assist children with autism spectrum disorder. These stories can address student's feelings and model how to appropriately handle the resulting feeling or emotion. For example, a particular student who did not like whole group learning might become verbally and physically aggressive. When a social story was created to show the student how to interact with peers appropriately and express himself with familiar terms, his instances of aggression decreased from 11 times a day to 3 times a day after consistent daily implementation of his specific social story (Benish, & Bramlett, 2011). Social stories benefit students with ASD by providing them the skills and techniques, catered to their specific social deficit, needed to appropriately react in different social situations (Wright, 2017).

Other social and emotional learning interventions include forms of direct instruction, such as the instruction provided through Conscious Discipline that provides students with ASD with concrete examples of different social situations and appropriate ways to handle these situations. In this form of intervention, students are taught about their feelings, such as joy, anger and sorrow. Situations that depict different feelings are presented to the student and thoroughly described. Students are then directly instructed on ways they can help themselves calm down or feel better when feeling an undesirable way. When they feel angry, they are provided instruction to go to a "safe place" or engage in particular breathing techniques (Caldarella et al., 2012). Students who resort to aggression to express themselves will be directly taught how to "stop, take a deep breath, and relax" instead of displaying aggression. Through direct instruction,

teachers and caregivers can prepare students for upcoming situations that may evoke fear or anger and how to properly handle the situations without the student resorting to aggression (Radley, O’Handley, Battaglia, Lum, Dadakhodjaeva, Ford, & McHugh, 2017).

Since students with autism spectrum disorder often learn through direct, concrete and visual strategies, they need to be directly taught social and emotional skills. Through the use of direct teaching, repetition of skills and the use of visual supports (i.e. cue cards, social stories), students are able to learn how to curb their aggression and turn their response into positive expression. When pictures of the student and people the student knows (teachers, peers, family) are used, they are able to more accurately relate to the social intervention and take their place in the learning situation (Wright, 2017). When concrete social and emotional learning is provided, students with ASD can learn how to problem solve and regulate their emotions instead of resorting to aggression and violence to express their feelings. Once properly taught, self-regulation is an effective way for students with ASD to decrease their aggressive or challenging behaviors (Carr, 2016).

Summary

Students who are provided foundational social and emotional skills are given the ability to meet their fullest potential. Through social and emotional learning, students with ASD are able to learn appropriate ways to socially engage, manage their emotions and express themselves in a non-adverse manner. Providing young students on the autism spectrum with these skills will provide them the ability to reach their fullest potential in their social, personal and school environments without displaying aggressive or violent behaviors. This can be done through direct instruction, direct modeling self-regulation, social stories and visual supports.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of using social and emotional intervention, specifically the Conscious Discipline program, to decrease negative behaviors in kindergarten students with autism spectrum disorder.

Design

In this study, the experiment was conducted using a quasi-experimental design, using the same group of students for a pre-and-post test. The independent variable is the use of a social and emotional intervention, specifically Conscious Discipline. The dependent variable is the student's aggressive behaviors and if those behaviors will change due to the implementation of Conscious Discipline. The aggressive behaviors (hitting, yelling, throwing...) of seven kindergarten students with autism spectrum disorder were observed and recorded on a tally sheet daily by the researcher. The data were collected for two weeks prior to the intervention as well as three consecutive weeks after the intervention had been in place. The data were then compared to assess if there was a relationship between the number of aggressive behaviors and the implementation of the social and emotional intervention.

Participants

The students who participated in this study attended a Baltimore County Public Elementary School with 731 enrolled students from preschool to fifth grade. Within the school, 64% of students were Caucasian, 21% were African American, 6% were Hispanic, 4% were Asian, 4% were mixed races and 1% were American Indian. There were 32% of students who received free meals, 5% received reduced meals and 63% did not qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. The free and reduced meal rates are a proxy for poverty rates and provide insight

to the socioeconomic composition of the school. The students selected for this study were in a self-contained kindergarten classroom and vary from five to six years old. Of the seven students, all have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to address their specific needs. Within their self-contained classroom there was one special education teacher, one instructional assistant and one additional adult assistant. Each student in the study had a diagnosis of autism and displayed varying degrees of aggressive behaviors.

Student A was a Hispanic male who was six years of age. In addition to his academic and social goals on his IEP, he also received English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services, occupational therapy, and speech therapy and qualifies for free meals. Student B was a Hispanic male who was five years of age. He received speech therapy and ESOL services in addition to his academic and social goals on his IEP. The third subject, Student C, was a Caucasian male and was five years old. He also received speech service in addition to his academic and social goals on his IEP. Student D was an African American six-year old male. He received ESOL services, speech therapy and qualifies for free meals, as well as his IEP needs addressed within the self-contained classroom. The fifth subject is a five-year old African American male who qualifies for free meals, received speech therapy in addition to his academic and social goals. Student F, was a Hispanic female who was six years old. In addition to social and academic goals, she received speech therapy and attended an outside feeding clinic. The last subject, Student G, was a Caucasian male who was six years old who received speech therapy in addition to academic services.

Instrument

The instrument used to gather data was a basic tally chart; a copy is attached as Appendix A. Each aggressive behavior was listed across the top of the chart in columns and the students

listed down the side in rows. When an aggressive behavior was observed throughout the day, a tally mark was placed in the appropriate column and row for the student and the behavior displayed. The aggressive behaviors being tallied included throwing items, yelling at others, kicking others/items and hitting others.

Procedures

During a span of two weeks, pre-intervention data was collected using tally marks on a daily chart. Daily data was collected by the researcher, whenever an incident of aggression was witnessed, by marking a tally under the corresponding behavior in the row for the corresponding student. Students were then introduced to Conscious Discipline through the use of stories, visuals, songs and movement activities. Once the social and emotional intervention, Conscious Discipline, was implemented, data collection continued to occur daily, as incidents arised, for three weeks. A chart was completed each day over the five-week span to tally the total incidents of the indicated forms of aggression for each student.

During the course of the three-week implementation phase, students were gradually introduced to different social and emotional techniques through the use of Conscious Discipline lessons. The first aspect they were introduced to was to unite and connect with each other. This is done through morning greetings such as songs and handshakes. After students became familiar with their morning connections, they were taught about different strategies to disengage stress. Adults modeled these breathing strategies, such as “the drain” and “the balloon” to use when students became upset, stressed or angry. There was also a “Safe Place” in the classroom where children could go when they felt they needed time alone to disengage their stressors. This helped to prevent students from becoming aggressive in reaction to stressors.

When stressors did arise and students would resort to aggression, social stories and modeling was used to teach students the missing skills needed to cope with behaviors. The teacher used picture symbols or verbal and physical prompting to help students access the stories and social and emotional skills. Students were encouraged to help each other when they saw a classmate becoming upset. Before the upset student became aggressive, a classmate would suggest a breathing technique. This helps students to continue their relationship building and to build empathy. As students' social and emotional skills increased, they were able to begin making commitments each day. Through adult modeling and stories, the teacher showed students the importance of making a commitment each day. The commitments included being safe throughout the school day, being kind to peers and/or being helpful to others. As students made commitments each morning, it helped them to have personal awareness. Student's social and emotional skills were continually worked on through the activities to build relationships, disengage stress, commit to each other, and learn missing skills.

After the five-week timeframe, pre-and post-intervention data were compared. They were compared with the goal of identifying the effectiveness of using social and emotional intervention, specifically the Conscious Discipline program, to decrease negative behaviors in kindergarten students with autism spectrum disorder.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of social and emotional learning interventions to decrease the aggressive behaviors of kindergarten students with autism spectrum disorder.

Frequency of aggressive behaviors were observed and recorded for seven kindergarten students with autism spectrum disorder. Pre and post intervention data on aggressive behaviors were collected and compared through the 5-week study for each student. Students were observed throughout all aspects of their school day and the frequencies of aggressive behaviors were recorded. The results are reported for each student in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Weekly Aggressive Behaviors for Seven Kindergarten Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Student A		Aggressive Behavior			
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	7	12	9	5	33
2	8	10	6	4	28
3	5	10	8	4	27
4	4	8	7	3	22
5	3	9	5	3	20
Student B		Aggressive Behavior			
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	5	10	5	1	21

2	4	9	4	2	19
3	3	9	4	0	16
4	4	8	3	1	16
5	2	7	3	0	12
Student C Aggressive Behavior					
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	2	8	3	0	13
2	3	9	5	1	18
3	1	7	3	1	12
4	2	6	3	1	12
5	1	5	2	0	8
Student D Aggressive Behavior					
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	4	15	1	4	24
2	4	12	2	4	22
3	2	11	1	3	17
4	2	10	2	3	17
5	4	8	2	1	15
Student E Aggressive Behavior					
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	1	6	5	1	13
2	2	8	6	2	18
3	1	6	4	1	12
4	1	7	3	1	12
5	3	6	2	0	11
Student F Aggressive Behavior					
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	6	11	4	3	24
2	6	10	5	4	25
3	4	10	3	3	20
4	5	9	1	2	17
5	3	7	2	2	14
Student G Aggressive Behavior					

Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	2	8	2	4	16
2	2	7	3	4	16
3	2	7	2	2	13
4	3	7	1	1	12
5	1	5	1	1	8

The frequency of aggressive behaviors were organized to display the pre-intervention and post-intervention behaviors for students of five years and students of six years of age. These occurrences can be found below in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2

Weekly Aggressive Behaviors for Five Year-Old Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Student B		Aggressive Behavior			
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	5	10	5	1	21
2	4	9	4	2	19
3	3	9	4	0	16
4	4	8	3	1	16
5	2	7	3	0	12
Student C		Aggressive Behavior			
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	2	8	3	0	13
2	3	9	5	1	18
3	1	7	3	1	12
4	2	6	3	1	12
5	1	5	2	0	8
Student E		Aggressive Behavior			
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total

1	1	6	5	1	13
2	2	8	6	2	18
3	1	6	4	1	12
4	1	7	3	1	12
5	3	6	2	0	11

Table 3

Weekly Aggressive Behaviors for Six Year-Old Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Student A					
Aggressive Behavior					
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	7	12	9	5	33
2	8	10	6	4	28
3	5	10	8	4	27
4	4	8	7	3	22
5	3	9	5	3	20
Student D					
Aggressive Behavior					
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	4	15	1	4	24
2	4	12	2	4	22
3	2	11	1	3	17
4	2	10	2	3	17
5	4	8	2	1	15
Student F					
Aggressive Behavior					
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total
1	6	11	4	3	24
2	6	10	5	4	25
3	4	10	3	3	20
4	5	9	1	2	17
5	3	7	2	2	14
Student G					
Aggressive Behavior					
Week	Throwing items	Yelling	Hitting	Kicking	Total

1	2	8	2	4	16
2	2	7	3	4	16
3	2	7	2	2	13
4	3	7	1	1	12
5	1	5	1	1	8

The mean of each student's pre-intervention data was calculated by adding each student's total aggressive behaviors for the two-week period before intervention and dividing the total by two. The post-intervention behaviors were calculated by adding the total of the aggressive behaviors for each student over the three-week period after the implementation of the intervention and dividing the total by three. The difference between the means was then calculated. The data is presented below in Table 4.

Table 4

Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Mean of Aggressive Behaviors for Seven Kindergarten Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Student	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention	Difference	Percent Difference
A	30.5	23	6.5	21% reduction
B	20	14.7	5.3	26% reduction
C	15.5	10.7	4.8	31% reduction
D	23	16.3	6.7	29% reduction
E	15.5	11.7	3.8	25% reduction
F	24.5	17	7.5	31% reduction
G	16	11	5	31% reduction

These means were then organized by age to determine the effectiveness of the interventions for students of five years and students of six years of age. These differences can be found below in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5

Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Mean of Aggressive Behaviors for Five Year-Old Kindergarten Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Student	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention	Difference	Percent Difference
B	20	14.7	5.3	26% reduction
C	15.5	10.7	4.8	31% reduction
E	15.5	11.7	3.8	25% reduction

Table 6

Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention Mean of Aggressive Behaviors for Six Year-Old with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Student	Pre Intervention	Post Intervention	Difference	Percent Difference
A	30.5	23	6.5	21% reduction
D	23	16.3	6.7	29% reduction
F	24.5	17	7.5	31% reduction
G	16	11	5	31% reduction

Each student showed a decrease in aggressive behaviors over the implementation of the social and emotional intervention. Further discussion of the observations during the study is presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of social and emotional interventions in reducing the number of aggressive behaviors in kindergarten students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The results of the study show that aggressive behaviors decreased over the course of five weeks for kindergarten students with ASD. The study shows us that students did respond to the implementation of social and emotional intervention, through the Conscious Discipline program, in a positive manner. Overall, the amount of aggressive behaviors decreased for each student from their pre-intervention and post-intervention data.

Implications

After completing the study and analyzing the data, all students decreased their use of aggressive behaviors. Student A decreased aggressive behaviors from 30.5 instances pre-intervention to 23 instances post-intervention. Student B showed a decrease from 20 to 14.7 instances and student C showed a decrease from 15.5 to 10.7 aggressive behaviors. When comparing the mean of pre-and post-intervention data, student D decreased behaviors from 23 to 16.3, student E went from 15.5 to 11.7. Student F went from 24.5 to 17 instances and student G from 16 aggressive behaviors to 11. When the data was compared by student age, it showed an average of a 27 percent reduction in aggressive behaviors for students that were five years old. Students that were six years old showed a reduction of aggressive behaviors by 28 percent. This implies there is not a significant difference in the success rate of the social and emotional intervention for students who are five years old vs. students who are six years old.

Through the use of social and emotional interventions from the teacher, findings suggest each student learned how to better express their emotions without showing aggression. They were also taught how aggressive behaviors make others feel, to teach them empathy with hope that will decrease their impulse to become aggressive. It is important for teachers to adapt lessons, as needed, to address the specific situations and aggressive behaviors being exhibited by their specific students. In this study, all students decreased the targeted aggressive behaviors over the course of the 3-week implementation of social and emotional intervention. Implications for other students would vary depending on the individual student, their understanding of emotions and their specific needs. Students with autism spectrum disorder fall on a large spectrum of social and emotional, as well as cognitive, strengths and weaknesses. Incorporating and adapting social and emotional interventions to specific student or class needs, would be helpful for all students. Incorporating social and emotional interventions into everyday classrooms are becoming more common as they help all students regulate their behaviors and respond to situations in an appropriate manner. It is important to ensure teachers are provided appropriate training and continuing education and professional development opportunities to better understand and implement the interventions.

Threats to Validity

There were multiple constraints in this study. Students had varying needs and varying levels of severity in their needs and disabilities. This affects their ability to understand and apply the knowledge of the intervention. Some students will require repeat instruction of the same social/emotional skill while others will understand and adapt their behavior after less instruction. There were also a limited number of students who met the criteria needed for this study as well

as variability in their presence at school. At times, other adults in the classroom would record data when the teacher was out of the room or unable to record data. This could have resulted in differences in the data due to different interpretations of the aggressive behaviors. There is no way to show if aggressive behaviors decreased in other settings such as the students homes. There may also have been other interventions put in place by student parents, caretakers or other service providers that were not shared with the teacher during this study.

Relationship of Results to the Literature

It was found in other research, that social and emotional learning interventions, such as Conscious Discipline, helped to provide students with a “safe place” or engaging in breathing techniques (Caldarella et al., 2012) to help decrease aggressive behaviors. This correlates with the current study that social and emotional learning decreases aggressive behaviors in young students with ASD. It was found that these techniques teach students how to “stop, take a deep breath, and relax” instead of displaying aggression. Teachers and caregivers prepare students for social situations that may evoke fear or anger and how to properly handle the situations without the student resorting to aggression (Radley et al., 2017).

In another study, the researcher focused on the effectiveness of social stories to address students’ aggressive behaviors. Through that study, social stories were created to show the student how to interact with peers appropriately and express himself with familiar terms. The students’ instances of aggression decreased from 11 times a day to 3 times a day after consistent daily implementation of his specific social story (Benish, & Bramlett, 2011). This study shows that social stories can also be a positive intervention to students with ASD by providing them the skills and techniques for different social situations. Social stories can provide social learning and

cater to the student's specific needs, just as Conscious Discipline can provide social learning and help students with specific social needs.

Since students with autism spectrum disorder often learn through direct, concrete and visual strategies, they need to be directly taught social and emotional skills. When these techniques are put in place to teach social and emotional learning, students with ASD can learn how to problem solve, regulate their emotions and, overall, decrease their aggressive behaviors.

Suggestions for Future Research

For future studies, a larger sample of students should be used to increase the chance of showing significance. If possible, one observer (teacher or one consistent aid) should record the data for all students. This will reduce errors due to different observers interpreting behaviors and recording the data. Further research is also needed to see if the decrease in aggressive behaviors is maintained over an extended period of time after the social and emotional interventions have been stopped. Conducting a study of students with different ages, or in different grade levels, will provide insight to the optimal age to implement these interventions.

Conclusion

Social and emotional learning is an effective intervention to reduce aggressive behaviors for kindergarten students with autism spectrum disorder. Kindergarten students displayed a decrease in aggressive behaviors after the social and emotional intervention, Conscious Discipline, was put in place. This intervention was successful for students that were five-and six-years-old. Further research is needed to determine the success of social emotional learning for students of other ages.

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Appendix A

Date:	Throwing items	Yelling	Kicking (items or people)	Hitting (items or people)	Total
Student A					
Student B					
Student C					
Student D					
Student E					
Student F					
Student G					