Effectiveness of a Classroom-based Anger Management Program for Elementary School Children in Japan

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Introduction
• Authors previously developed a classroom-based anger management program for Japanese elementary school children, “Ikari Yawaraka Lesson” (lessons to soften anger) with a workbook and an instruction manual (Inada et al., 2018).
• The program was found effective to decrease aggression in children when implemented in small groups.
• This study aimed to evaluate effectiveness of the program implemented in regular classrooms as a 1st tier support.

Methods
Participants 210 children in 4-5 grades and their 6 classroom teachers at one elementary school.

Measurement
• Data were collected before and one month after the program implementation.
• Children completed Japanese short form of Multidimensional Anger Inventory (JS-MSAI: Shimoda & Terasaka, 2012) and “assertive assertion” subscale from Assertion Scale for Children (Handa, 2017).
• Classroom teachers nominated three children who exhibited difficulties in controlling anger (n=32) and another three children who didn’t (n=32), and rate Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman et al., 1998) for both children.

Program The program comprises five 45 mins lessons (see Table 1). Lessons were implemented weekly by one of our authors who worked in the school.

Analytic Plan
• ANOVA (time*grade*sex) was used for JS-MSAI subscales (anger experience, hostility, destructive expression and positive coping) and Assertion Scale (aggressive assertion).
• ANOVA (time*group) was used for SDQ subscales (emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity-inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviors).

Table 1 Program Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Keyword</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Understanding Emotions</td>
<td>Tree of Emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Understanding and Monitoring Anger</td>
<td>Anger Thermometer</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Controlling Anger</td>
<td>Strategy to soften anger</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Correction of Hostile Attribution</td>
<td>“Is that really so?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assertive Communication</td>
<td>Sawayakana’s way of expression</td>
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</tbody>
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Results

Children’s Self Report
• Over 80% children responded “very well understood” or “well understood” in 5 point-scale to the comprehension check of the five lessons.
• A significant overall score increase in “positive coping” subscale of JS-MSAI ($F_{(1,187)}$=9.25, $p=.003$, $\eta^2=.047$) was found.
• Time*sex interaction was found in “anger experience” ($F_{(1,187)}$=13.30, $p=.003$, $\eta^2=.177$; $F_{(1,187)}$=8.55, $p=.005$, $\eta^2=.121$): scores significantly decreased for girls.
• No significant score change in “hostility” and “aggressive assertion”.

Teacher Report
• “Prosocial behavior” score increased for nominated children with and without difficulties ($F_{(1,62)}$=10.68, $p=.002$, $\eta^2=.147$).
• Time*group interaction was found in “conduct problems” and “hyperactive-inattention” ($F_{(1,62)}$=13.30, $p=.001$, $\eta^2=.177$; $F_{(1,62)}$=8.55, $p=.005$, $\eta^2=.121$): scores significantly decreased for children who previously exhibited difficulties.

Conclusion
• The program was found effective to increase children’s positive behaviors when implemented in regular classrooms.
• Effectiveness in terms of decreasing anger problems was, however, partial or limited to children with high needs.
• Conditions related to program implementation (e.g., timing, which differed between grades in this study) may have influence on the effectiveness.