

Comparing parent-only and parent-child group programs to reduce aggression in Hong Kong schoolchildren

Submission date 30/01/2026	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	☐ Prospectively registered
		☐ Protocol
Registration date 02/02/2026	Overall study status Completed	☐ Statistical analysis plan
		☐ Results
Last Edited 02/02/2026	Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders	☐ Individual participant data
		☒ Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Aggressive behaviour and bullying are serious problems for some schoolchildren. This research study tested two different types of group programs designed to help parents manage their child's aggression. We wanted to see if a program involving both parents and children together was more effective than a program for parents only.

Who can participate?

We invited children aged 5-12 years from Hong Kong primary schools who showed higher levels of aggressive behaviour, along with one of their parents.

What does the study involve?

Families were randomly placed into one of three groups: 1) Parent-only group (7 weekly sessions), 2) Parent-child group (7 weekly sessions together), or 3) A waiting list group (no immediate sessions). The sessions taught parents about different types of aggression and skills to improve parenting and the parent-child relationship. Families filled out questionnaires before, immediately after, and 6 months after the program.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Potential benefits included learning new parenting skills and possibly reducing child aggression. A potential risk was the time commitment required. All information was kept confidential.

Where is the study run from?

Sessions were held at participating schools in Hong Kong.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

The study recruited families between July and December 2022. The intervention lasted 7 weeks, with follow-up 6 months later.

Who is funding the study?

The Research Grants Council of Hong Kong (General Research Fund, project number 11600020).

Who is the main contact?

Dr Annis Lai Chu Fung (annis.fung@cityu.edu.hk)

Contact information

Type(s)

Principal investigator, Public, Scientific

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Study information

Scientific Title

A randomized controlled trial on the effectiveness of parent-only and parent-child conjoint group interventions in reducing reactive and proactive aggression among schoolchildren in Hong Kong

Study objectives

This randomized controlled trial (RCT) aimed to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of social learning theory-based group interventions designed to reduce reactive and proactive aggression in schoolchildren by enhancing parental efficacy and improving parenting styles.

Primary Objective:

To compare the effectiveness of a parent-only intervention, a parent-child conjoint intervention, and a waitlist control group in reducing children's reactive aggression, proactive aggression, and general aggression over time (baseline, post-intervention, and 6-month follow-up).

Secondary Objective:

To examine the impact of both interventions on key parenting constructs, including parenting practices (positive parenting, inconsistent discipline, poor supervision) and parenting styles (warmth, control, guan).

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 27/03/2020, Human Subjects Ethics Sub-Committee (Research Grants & Contracts Office, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 000, Hong Kong; +852 34426856; roger@cityu.edu.hk), ref: 3-12-202003-02

Primary study design

Interventional

Allocation

Randomized controlled trial

Masking

Open (masking not used)

Control

Active

Assignment

Parallel

Purpose

Treatment

Study type(s)**Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Childhood aggression; Reactive aggression; Proactive aggression; Behavioral problems

Interventions

This is a three-arm, parallel-group, randomized controlled trial with a waitlist control condition.

Shortlisted families who meet the inclusion criteria are enrolled and randomly assigned to one of three conditions using a random number sequence:

1. Parent-Only Intervention Group
2. Parent-Child Conjoint Intervention Group
3. Waitlist Control Group

Both active interventions consist of seven weekly sessions, each lasting two hours, held on Saturdays at the participants' schools. Sessions are led by two registered social workers with specific training and experience. The intervention is based on Social Learning Theory and targets the distinct features of reactive aggression (e.g., hostile attribution bias, poor anger control) and proactive aggression (e.g., lack of empathy, reward-driven behavior).

Parent-Only Group: One parent from each family attends the sessions. Content focuses on psychoeducation about aggression subtypes, enhancing awareness of parenting style impacts, and training in skills to manage child aggression (e.g., reducing hostile attribution, facilitating emotion regulation, enhancing empathy and perspective-taking). Techniques include role-play, group discussion, and reflective feedback. Parents are assigned weekly behavioral tasks to practice at home.

Parent-Child Conjoint Group: One parent and their child attend the sessions together. The content mirrors the parent-only curriculum but is delivered interactively, with joint activities, role-plays, and real-time coaching of parenting skills within the parent-child dyad. This allows for direct modeling, immediate feedback, and practice of new relational dynamics.

Waitlist Control Group: Families in this group receive no intervention during the study period but complete all assessments. They are offered the opportunity to join the parent-only group in the following semester.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

1. Child-reported Aggression Score measured using Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPQ) at Baseline (T0), Post-treatment (T1), and 6-month follow-up (T2)

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date

31/08/2023

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Child enrolled in grades 1-6 at a participating Hong Kong elementary school
2. Child scored above the school median on the Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPQ)
3. At least one parent willing to attend a weekly 2-hour group session for 7 weeks
4. Family is local Hong Kong Cantonese-speaking

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Child

Lower age limit

5 Years

Upper age limit

12 Years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

166

Key exclusion criteria

Formal diagnosis of intellectual disability, dyslexia, or autism spectrum disorder

Date of first enrolment

01/07/2022

Date of final enrolment

31/12/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment

Hong Kong

Sponsor information

Organisation

City University of Hong Kong

ROR

<https://ror.org/03q8dnn23>

Funder(s)

Funder type**Funder Name**

Research Grants Council, University Grants Committee

Alternative Name(s)

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Funding Body Type

Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Universities (academic only)

Location

Hong Kong

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available