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# THE IMPACT OF THE STETY INTERVENTION PROGRAM ON SCHOOL CULTURE

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# The Impact of the STETY Intervention Program on School Culture

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# Abstract

Special education teachers face various difficulties due to the uniqueness of their work, and these can impact their school culture. On the other hand, if given an opportunity or a resolution, like the Sociological Teachers Teaching Yoga (STETY) intervention program, this could increase the staffs' sense of self-efficacy, thus affecting the school culture. This paper presents the findings of a research aiming to characterize teachers' self-efficacy and school culture by participating in a group for a period of a ten-week yoga program. Qualitative research methods have been used for collecting and analyzing the data from 65 participants in total. The findings show that the Sociological Teachers Teaching Yoga (STETY) intervention program has impacted the participants' self-efficacy and, therefore, the school culture.

*Keywords:* Special education teachers, self-efficacy, school culture, yoga group, Sociological Teachers Teaching Yoga (STETY).

### Introduction

This paper discusses the impact of a Sociological Teachers Teaching Yoga (STETY) intervention program focusing on special education teachers. The paper depicts a qualitative study which aims to examine how the STETY program increased self-efficacy and school culture among a group of special education teachers who participated in the program. Additionally, the purpose of the paper is to raise awareness of daily challenges with which special education teachers deal, associated with the nature of their students. This is done by information collected

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from interviews and open-ended questionnaires. The STETY program suggested in this research, offers a solution for the teachers who deal on a daily basis with difficulties during work. The suggested solution aspires to promote self-efficacy, and, thus, impact school culture.

# **Literature Review**

Two relevant theories can enhance the understanding of the impact STETY intervention program has on school culture. The first theory is the Interaction and Organizational Theory, conceived by Taylor (1911; Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2007), and the second theory is the Ecology Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1995). An additional review presents an explanation of the STETY intervention program, which is embedded in the philosophy of Yoga, followed by an explanation of yoga and education. This part sheds light on the strong connection between educational organizations and the philosophy of practicing yoga. Moreover, this part illustrates how these two elements not only balance one another, but also impact school culture.

Researchers argued that the classical Organizational Theory over-focused on structure and economic rewards, while ignoring individual autonomy and the atmosphere at workplaces (Taylor, 1911). Hughes (2004) posits that Taylors' method is targeted to systematize workers as if they are parts of machinery, disregarding social considerations which affect workers' motives. Hughes stresses that scientific management focused on working efficiency instead of on the workers. This point and connects the theory to school culture and to the ability of the STETY intervention program to impact change bottom up through the teachers, rather than through an organization The second point refers to the connection between organizational theory and social management discussed by Derksen (2014). Derksen , like Taylor, maintains that around any system there has to be an ambience of integrity, brotherhood, or mutual assistance among the workers.

These values can be related to modern school curriculums and the sociology of education as the study of ways in which public institutions and individual experiences affect education and its outcomes (Halpin, 1990). Education has often been characterized by objectives as an optimistic human effort designed for progress and betterment (Halpin, 1990). McLeskey *et al.* (2017) argue that in order to demonstrate quality or adaptiveness among special education teachers, it is necessary to use teaching procedures that are accessible for satisfying the unique and diverse needs of the school characteristics. Zhang *et al.* (2020) researched the effects of assets on psychological requirements of special education teachers. The researchers found that the necessity to offer support is by boosting strengths and reducing teaching obstacles.

Another point of view indicates that education can be used as a means of overcoming handicaps, achieving equality, and gaining fortune and social position

(Jones, 2009). Education is perceived as a place where children can develop according to their needs and potential, taking into consideration the "whole child", namely referring to a multi-dimensional approach (Flook, 2019). The "whole child" approach has a similar concept as the Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1995). This theory explains how ecological systems impact individuals' learning and behaviors by acknowledging their characteristics, family, schools in which they learn, and other layers of the environment in which they have grown up, or to which they have been exposed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kohlberg & Mayer, 2006). Another approach which impacts students' behavior and learning is related to the silent revolution in education (Zajonc, 2013). According to Ergaz (2021), the silent revolution began in the early 21st century in kindergartens, schools, and all the way to universities. It includes the teaching of meditation, yoga, contemplative practices, physical-emotional approaches, and relaxation techniques. The reason it is named the silent revolution is due to its nature, making significant changes, almost unnoticed, beginning individually and impacting larger societies in a quite manner (Ergaz, 2021). Tarrasch et al. (2020) explored social and emotional practicing of mindfulness while coping with job-related stress and burnout in a teaching program that revolved around the concept of empathy, mindfulness, and social-emotional skill training. They found that teachers who were trained in the program, increased their self-efficacy and mindfulness, and reduced their stress levels. By improving the school culture, all of the participants benefited, in addition to gaining a wider point of view where school culture would affect educational approaches for the sake of a caring, awareness, and socialminded society (Aloni, 2003). Side-by-side with the practice, there is an increase in documentation and academic research. According to Ergaz (2021), thousands of teachers are attending personal training programs for their own use and those of their students. This is where STETY is implemented as a tailored series of yoga practice exercises intended for groups of teachers in special education or mainstream education frameworks

The purpose of the STETY program was to provide a yoga practice in order to raise a sense of one's self-efficacy both as teachers and as individuals during workhours and beyond. This can be accomplished by attending a yoga course during work hours, at school or after it, on a regular basis. The course comprised at least 10 hourly sessions, once or twice a week. There are no requirements for the participants, except for showing up regularly, since it is adapted to a wide range of levels. The program provided exercises that could be practiced. After acquiring an understanding and confidence, they could become part of a teaching program, but definitely part of one's actions to better deal with stress and burnout, as well as increase a sense of self-efficacy and, thus, improve school culture.

The effect of STETY on school culture can be understood by discussing the following four parameters: the relationships among the teachers, the interaction between the teachers and their students, the way STETY affected the atmosphere at school, and the way STETY affected self-management.

# The STETY intervention program

In this study, all the participants came voluntarily. Before the beginning of the program, they received an explanation about the program's objective, which was to increase a sense of self-efficacy and, thus, to improve school culture. The program is based on a series of yoga classes, adapted for special education teachers.

The duration of the program was 10 weeks, depending on the group's motivation to add more sessions. Each session lasted 45-60 minutes. The number of participants varied from twenty-three down to six, amounting to 65 participants in a total of 46 sessions and five groups. Each session was composed of a relaxation, twisting, and stretching and twisting postures followed by breathing exercises, visualizations, meditations, and other postures in order to strengthen and flex the entire physical, mental, and emotional body. Before, during, and after the program, the participants had free access to the researcher, in case they needed to further understand the program, enhance the exercises, or update health concerns.

### Methodology

To understand how the STETY program affects the participants' self-efficacy, we used a qualitative research and action research. According to Beyth-Marom (2014), this approach attempts to discover new understandings of behaviors and the motives which lead to a specific behavior. Qualitative research does not necessitate a large number of materials but does require the data to be accurate (Sarid, 2013). The qualitative approach uses different instruments, as did this research, using interviews as a way of comprehending the procedures, views, and perceptions. Josselson (2013) maintains that qualitative research earns this title when the research question or topic are associated with the way people relate to lifetime experiences.

According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), action research is a method of investigation, performed by participants in a specific social structure in order to improve outcomes of any given occurrence. Action research is an integrative inquiry process that progresses while the participants experience personal reflection, leading to any form of transformation that occurred during a given period.

For examining the effect of the intervention program on the participants' self-efficacy and school culture, we used semi-structured interviews and an openended questionnaire. The interview guide comprised a series of organized, yet flexible questions which were planned to eventually develop as the conversation progressed. During the interview, the participants were given an opportunity to articulate their thoughts, views, emotions, and beliefs, focusing on their self-efficacy (Alpert, 2001). Moreover, the open-ended questionnaire consisted of items that related to the way in which participation in the program affected the school culture (Alpert, 2001).

# Research objectives

- To examine how teachers' sense of self-efficacy is affected by the STETY intervention program.

- To examine how the program affects school culture by the participants' practice of STETY in a group during a given period.

# Research population

All the participants gave their informed consent to participate in the research. The research population comprised a total of 65 educational staff members, teaching in special education schools. The duration and the experience in teaching ranged between three and 31 years.

# Data analysis: Content analysis

Content analysis was used in order to analyze the data collected from the interviews and the open-ended questionnaire, as well as find new meanings relating to their sociological perspective. The unit of analysis was connected to the word, the statement, or sentence that had a connection with the research aims or research questions. Different assertions were compared to identify similarities and differences between the participants. Similar assertions were grouped into categories according to their content (Shkedi, 2011).

# Results

# Findings concerning two categories Self-Efficacy and Self-Management within the educational staff's yoga group during the program

Table 1. Two categories obtained from the content analysis

Categories	Self-Efficacy	Self-Management
	I know that this can be helpful in all schools, and it cannot ever hurt to try, as it can never be damaging only beneficial all around. It is the connecting of the body and the soul which is always the perfect connection (1)	once I practice yoga, I actually become self- sufficientI am more efficient, and it gets a lot more stuff out of me (8).

The content analysis performed on the data that was collected by the interviews revealed that STETY had an impact on teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Evidence for this category can be found in interview 1, saying that:

"I know that this can be helpful in all schools, and it cannot ever hurt to try, as it can never be damaging only beneficial all around. It is the connecting of the body and the soul which is always the perfect connection" (S1, 41, 15 years of experience).

### And:

"Self-efficacy, there was one thing that really surprised me and then I said that the body is capable of everything and that is to heal. Even if I had a challenging time with some yoga exercise, it is going to pass" (S7, 43, 8 years of experience).

The following statement expresses the impact of STETY on a sense of selfefficacy:

"Self-Efficacy, I have always wanted this!" (S5, 64, 30 years of experience).

The content analysis presented on the information gathered by the interviews revealed that STETY had an impact on Self-management. Evidence for this category can be found in interview, saying that:

"I first of all to breathe. It was a very great gift you gave us there. It is first to connect with myself, also to connect to the existence of one's breath" (S2, 52, 25 years of experience).

### And:

"Once I practice yoga, I actually become self-sufficient...I am more efficient, and it gets a lot more stuff out of me" (S8, 64, 31 years of experience).

### And:

"Self-management – it is important to make time and be here and now. I wondered about myself for participating and also not been stressed out" (S10, 62, 24 years of experience).

# Findings concerning the relationships within the educational staff's yoga group during the program

The content analysis of the data collected from the interviews demonstrated that STETY had an impact on school culture through the relationships within the educational staff's yoga group. Evidence for this is showed in the following data:

"Yoga feels so right in so many ways. It is important to be consistent and to be aware of the depth of it" (S2, 52, 25 years of experience).

Another finding strengthening this point is in the following statement:

"If all the teachers can undergo this process, then they would be aware of its the benefits" (S3, 45, 25 years of experience).

And:

"I would connect yoga and breathing to positive communication and then it could really improve the school climate" (S1, 41, 15 years of experience).

The following statement expresses other means and topics of communication within the educational staff's yoga group:

"It is very individual because I don't know how everyone gets connected. But it could open up another channel of communication between the team practicing together" (S9, 32, 4 years of experience).

Findings concerning the interactions between the special education teachers and students with special needs during the program

The content analysis of the data collected from the *interviews* illustrated that STETY had an impact on school culture through the interactions between special education teachers and students with special needs. Evidence for this can be found in the following data:

"I can say that yoga affects my class, with the exercise that I make, positively" (S7, 43, 8 years of experience).

#### Or:

"I had a student who was anxious about having to stay at home and she burst into tears when she saw me, and we breathed together in order to calm down" (S8, 64, 31 years of experience).

### And:

"It teaches the students to conduct themselves in a calmer manner and, really, we can help them use more positive language and behave less aggressively. It helps them with their schoolwork, attitudes and over an extended period of time like two, three years it helps them overall" (S1, 41, 15 years of experience).

#### And:

"I am all for Yoga and the sense of being within yourself and I do believe it can benefit the students" (S6, 50, 12 years of experience).

# Findings concerning self-management within the educational staff's yoga group during the program

The content analysis of the data collected from the *interviews* demonstrated that STETY had an impact on school culture by increasing a sense of self-management during the program. Evidence for this can be found in the following data:

"Yoga brings the awareness of the body, and trying to calm the body, helps me to be a different person. Self -Management – I do not think there was any effect on it" (S9, 32, 4 years of experience).

### Or:

"So, it is letting me be more organized and focused on a day-to-day level" (S12, 27, 3 years of experience).

# And:

"In time management I am pretty good. I do not think it affects time management" (S11, 29, 5 years of experience).

This is the only field where some of the participants did not feel an increase in self-management after participating in the intervention STETY program.

Category			
Relationships among the educational staff's yoga group during the program:	Interactions between the special education teachers and students with special needs during the program:	Self-management within the educational staff's yoga group during the program:	
I would link yoga and breathing with positive communication and then it could really improve the school climate.	It teaches the students to conduct themselves in a calmer manner and it can really help them in using more positive language and behave less aggressively. It helps them with their schoolwork, attitudes and, over a long period of time like two, three years, it helps them overall.	Yoga brings the awareness of the body and trying to calm the body, helps me in being a different person. Self -Management – I do not think there was any effect on it.	

Table 2. Findings obtained from the interviews conducted during the program

# Findings concerning the relationships within the educational staff's yoga group after the program

The content analysis of the data collected from the *open-ended questionnaire* demonstrated that STETY had an impact on school culture through the interactions between special education teachers and students with special needs. Evidence for this can be found in the following data:

"When staff practices yoga together, it affects the environment and the atmosphere. I would want more staff members and students to practice" (S8, 64, 31 years of experience).

### And:

"It established new partnerships and developed teamwork" (S9, 32, 4 years of experience).

### Or:

"I think the program strengthened relationships among the participants and created a common dialog" (S3, 45, 25 years of experience).

### Findings concerning the interactions between the special education teachers and students with special needs after the program

The content analysis of the data collected from the open-ended questionnaire illustrated that STETY had an impact on school culture through the interactions between special education teachers and students with special needs. Evidence for this can be found in the following data:

"When I am calm, serene, and connected to my body, it projects on to my work area and mainly on the students" (S6, 50, 12 years of experience).

### And:

"Our students often experience sensory or mental unrest. The program provides lots of quiet and can contribute and teach us different tools for coping and creating a sense of serenity among the students" (S1, 41, 15 years of experience).

#### Or:

"I feel the tools I got from the program, as a teacher, connected me to the students in a deeper way. The program brought values which are not usually manifested, like, observing, calmness and withdrawal inwards" (S8, 64, 31 years of experience).

# Findings concerning self-management within the educational staff's yoga group after the program

The content analysis of the data collected from the open-ended questionnaire indicated that STETY had an impact on school culture by increasing selfmanagement within the educational staff's yoga group. Evidence for this can be found in the following data:

"So, it's letting me be more organized and focused on a day-to-day level. Or: Developing a belief that skills are acquired over time" (S10, 62, 24 years of experience).

### And:

"The program integrates many elements like breathing, delaying gratification, and being present, contributing to my educational work" (S10, 62, 24 years of experience).

### In addition:

"The program helped take a breath when needed. The physical flexibility allows to open up to mental flexibility" (S7, 43, 8 years of experience).

### And:

"Generally, yoga helped me cope with uncertainty during lessons. I simply stood and practiced breathing, and everything seemed better" (S7, 43, 8 years of experience).

### And:

"The program helped me practice at home before work, and then I came calm and concentrated. This is a huge contribution to my work with the students" (S5, 64, 30 years of experience).

### Or:

"The program helped me for the better. I am more peaceful and relaxed, and it is more pleasant" (S4, 40, 10 years of experience).

Category				
Relationships within the educational staff's yoga group after the program: open-ended questionnaire.	Interactions between the special education teachers and students with special needs after the program: open-ended questionnaire	Findings concerning self- management within the educational staff's yoga group after the program: open-ended questionnaire.		
When staff members practice yoga together, it affects the environment and the atmosphere. I would want more staff members and students to practice.	Our students often experience sensory or mental unrest. The program provides lots of quiet and can contribute and teach us different tools for coping and creating a sense of serenity among the students.	Generally, yoga helped me cope with uncertainty during lessons. I simply stood and practiced breathing, and everything seemed better.		

*Table 3.* Findings obtained from the open-ended questionnaire related to three categories after the program

# Discussion

This study focused on the effect of the TETY program on special education teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy. The findings strengthen literature about self-efficacy as an essence for special education teachers. McLeskey et al., (2017), notes that teachers working in special education, often deal with a reality of educating students with multiply diagnosis that affect their learning and behavioral patterns. In addition to this condition, Hoy (2004,) claims that teachers who have high levels of self-efficacy deal better with their students' challenges, solve situations, and tend to have novel methodologies in education (Kirk, 2013). Based on the social cognitive theory by Bandura (1986) and on Katan et al. (2018) study, in addition to Cherian and Jacobs (2013) study, which all claim that people, or special education teachers, as in this study, holding high levels of self-efficacy tend to target ambitious goals and endeavor to achieve them. (Bandura & Locke, 2003).

Additionally, the findings emerging from this study show the impact of raising special education teachers' self-efficacy and school culture. The literature supporting this finding can be found in Aldridge and Frasers's (2016) study, who claim that teachers' self-efficacy is linked to school culture and that a connection between teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction exists. They also stated that educational organizations with high levels of efficacy were helpful for teachers' psychological strength and inspiration (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016).

In another study by Hosford & O'Sullivan (2016), they note that teachers' opinions of a supportive school climate are associated entirely to their teaching

efficacy and impacted evaluations of their confidence in management and challenging behaviors in inclusion classrooms (Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016). The importance of this research resides in its ability to address an unattained core group in society, namely special education teachers. The teachers address their students with special needs in countless ways, by learning new pedagogies, innovative methods of thinking and suitable practices for meeting the needs of each student, as well as exhaust their personal abilities. These requirements are demanding, and the teachers are expected to work under challenging conditions and many hours a week. In Israel, unlike teachers in mainstream education schools, members of the special education staff are expected to work most days including holidays, in order to meet the requirements of the students and their families. This situation leaves special education teachers with very little time to recharge, vent, and take care of their own needs and stresses that come with the workplace and characteristics of the profession (McLeskey et al., 2017). The ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kohlberg & Mayer, 2006) discusses different impacts on each individuals' needs. Conversely, this study puts teachers at the center, rather than the children, enabling a wider understanding of what affects and strengthens them from a professional aspect. This point of view can help decision makers, e.g., school principals or other bodies in charge, comprehend the benefits of increasing sense of self-efficacy and, thus, improving school culture. This shows a solution that can be taken into consideration within the framework of the STETY program. This point is in line with the study conducted by Zhang, Bai & Li (2020) who investigated support for teachers, in order to increase points of personal and professional abilities and reduce work related hardships.

According to the Classic Organizational Theory (Taylor, 1911), there is a chance that school culture as a core mechanism for the empowerment of the school staff, is not getting enough attention regarding teacher's needs. The STETY intervention program managed to increase the participants' sense of self-efficacy, as shown by their statements, claiming that this issue had indeed improved. In order to enhance other behaviors, Aloni (2003) suggests adopting an integrative view of humanistic education. This refers to teachers' feeling of obligation to humanity, teaching their students how to live a respectful life. This approach resides in the way by which the program addressed the participants. The program encouraged awareness and new relationships within the educational staff's yoga group, new communication options, and further areas of discovery, as far as teamwork is concerned. Teachers should take into consideration other coworkers' needs, be attentive to the variety of processes, and respect this aspect. Hence, Ergaz (2018) suggests that educational organizations adopt innovative training and original curricular spheres for improving special education teachers' working conditions and school environment. Education is also perceived as one of the best means of achieving greater social equality (Jones, 2009).

# Conclusion

To sum up, this paper illustrates a need for a novel intervention program, such as STETY to raise special education teachers' sense of self-efficacy that can promote school culture by using sociological yoga intervention programs in schools during work hours. By combining the program during school hours, the teachers will have access and there will be higher levels of experiencing the benefits, as a group and as individuals. The group advantages consist of an additional communication channel among the staff, creating a calmer atmosphere between staff members and being able to share and support each other. The individual advantages consist of higher levels of self-efficacy, better abilities in self-management and provides practical means that can easily be taught to the students. Most of the participants that had previous experience with yoga, introduced yoga exercises into the classroom, and practiced when needed with their students. According to the results and the statements, an additional personal advantage is incorporating healthy and useful habits into one's life by undertaking yoga practice in addition to the group sessions and developing an awareness as to the advantages. This was common to participants that had previous experience and others that practiced for the first time. Another point was that the participants mentioned they were more aware of how they felt or reacted to situations at school with their students and colleagues or after work hours. This was common among all the participants, regardless their age or seniority. These habits raised a sense of self-efficacy and self-management as well as improving relationships within the yoga program group. The means the staff needed to better cope with job demands were naturally part of the program and as said, they made use of them when a need arose. Some participants practiced with their students and provided an additional point of view to deal with daily challenges. Better relationships and additional communication channels served as an advantage to younger participants with less years of experience. All this has a direct impact on creating a calmer and positive environment, as the STETY intervention program serves as a good example for enhancing self-efficacy and, hence, promoting school culture.

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