

# Changes in the situation of peer rejected children after a two-year intervention in early primary education



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**Rejected children** are those who are disliked by many of their peers and liked by few. Because being left out can be so painful for children, and the negative consequences of peer rejection can last over years (Bierman, 2004), early interventions are necessary.

**The present study** analyzes the impact of a multicomponent intervention applied during first and second grades in four Spanish primary schools to diminish peer rejection. The intervention itself is described elsewhere (García Bacete et al., 2014).

**The participants** were a comparison group (N=243; 10 classrooms, 49.8% female) and an intervention group (N= 233; 9 classrooms, 45.5% female).

**A longitudinal study.** The participants were assessed on two occasions, at the beginning of the first grade (T1) and at the end of the second grade (T2).

**Measures.** A number of self-reported and other-reported measures were used to assess the sociometric types the social expectations and behavior of the children, and the children's perceptions of the influence of the teacher on the classroom climate.

#### Instruments

**Sociometric questionnaire** (SOCIOMET, González & García Bacete, 2010). Variables: Sociometric type, Negative nominations received (NNR), Negative nominations expected (NNE).

**The Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance for Young Children** (Harter & Pike, 1984). Variable: Perceived peer acceptance (PPA).

**Rating items** (García Bacete et al., 2014). Variables: Rating Aggression and Rating Shyness.

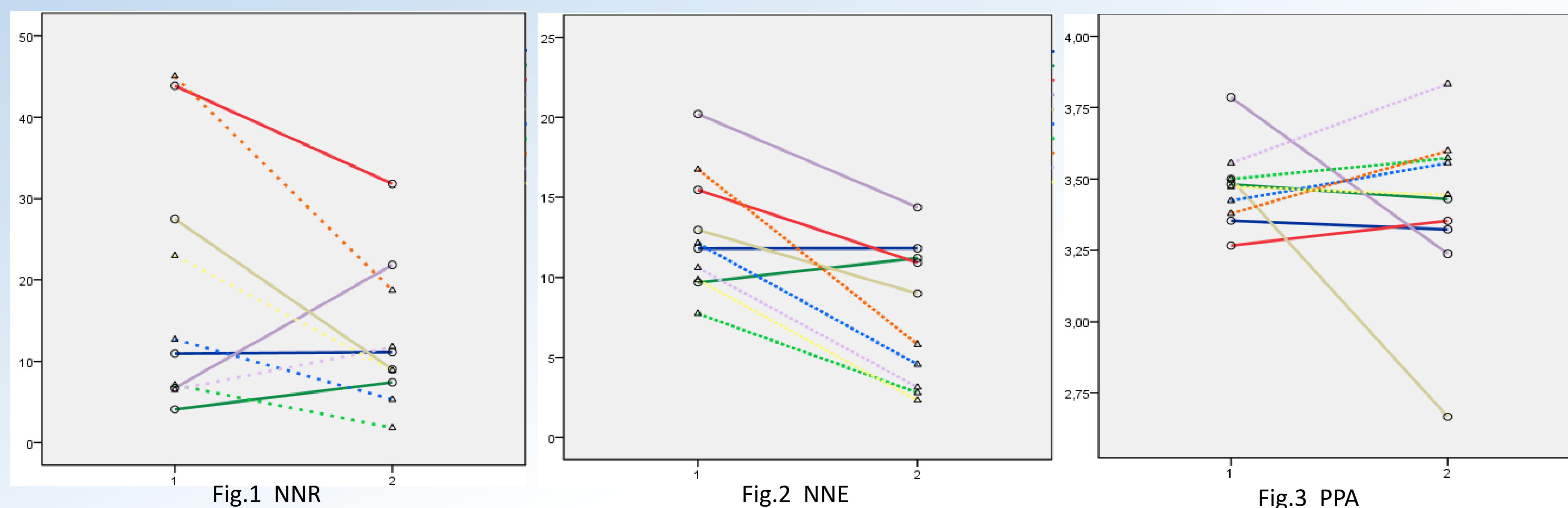
**Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction-Early Primary** (QTI-EP). (García Bacete, Ferrá, Monjas & Marande, 2014). Variables: Teacher Proximity and Teacher Influence.

**Analytic strategy.** Through a quasi-experimental design, the differences in the evolution of the five sociometric types of both groups were explored by analyzing pre-post data with repeated measures ANCOVA (IBM SPSS statistics 19.0). Within-subject factor: difference between T1 and T2 in the variable. Between-subject factor: differences between the 10 sociometric groups.



The results indicated clear differences between the intervention group and the comparison group in the evolution of the rejected children.

### Received rejection, perceived rejection and perceived acceptance



There were differences in the level of rejection received from peers measured by the percentage of negative nominations received (NNR, fig.1), which significantly decreased in RejectedIntervention in comparison to RejectedComparison, what matched with differences in the social expectations of the rejected students as the percentage of negative perceptions significantly decreased (NNE, fig.2), while the perceived peer acceptance increased (PPA, fig.3).

### Social behavior

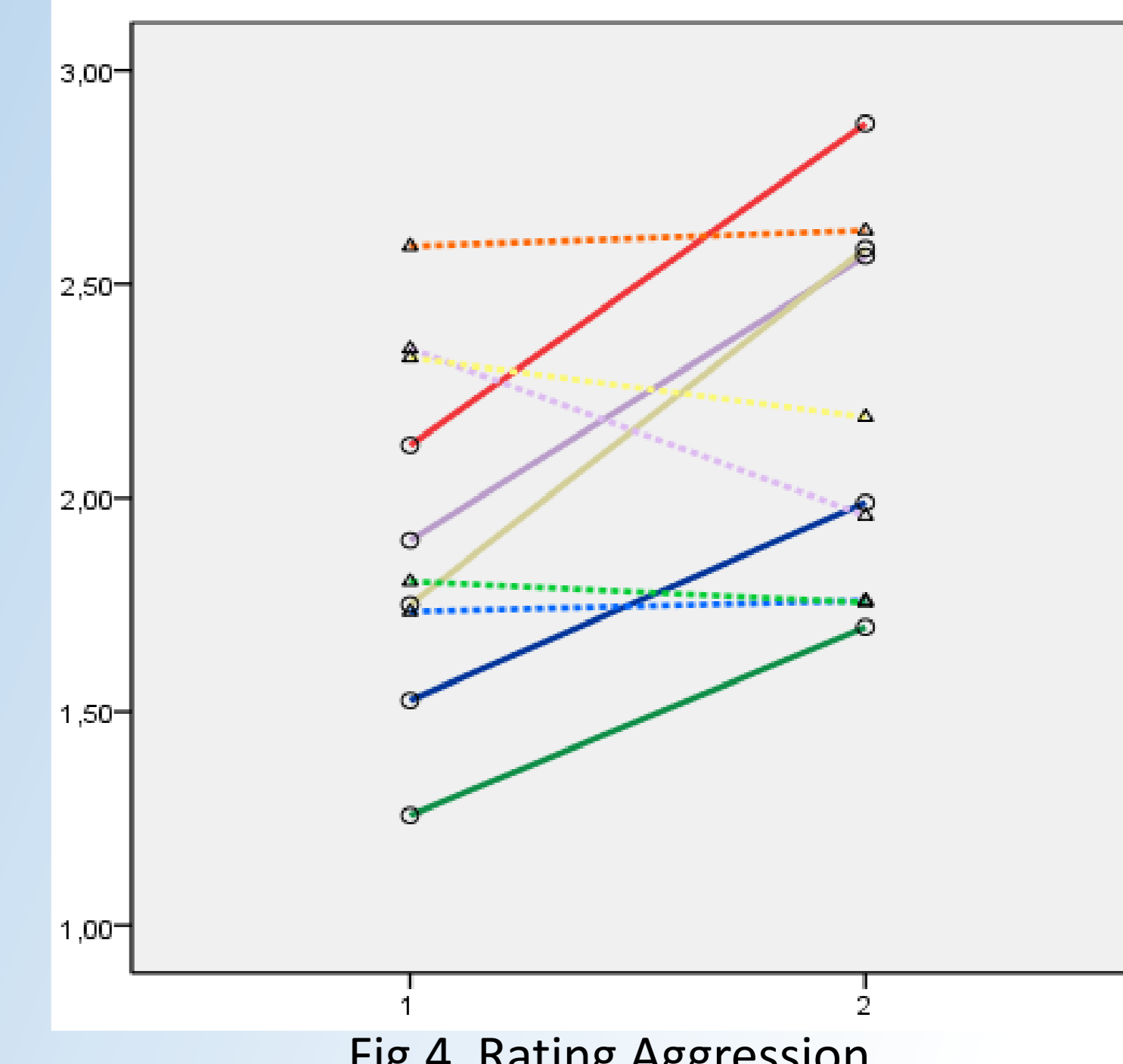


Fig.4 Rating Aggression

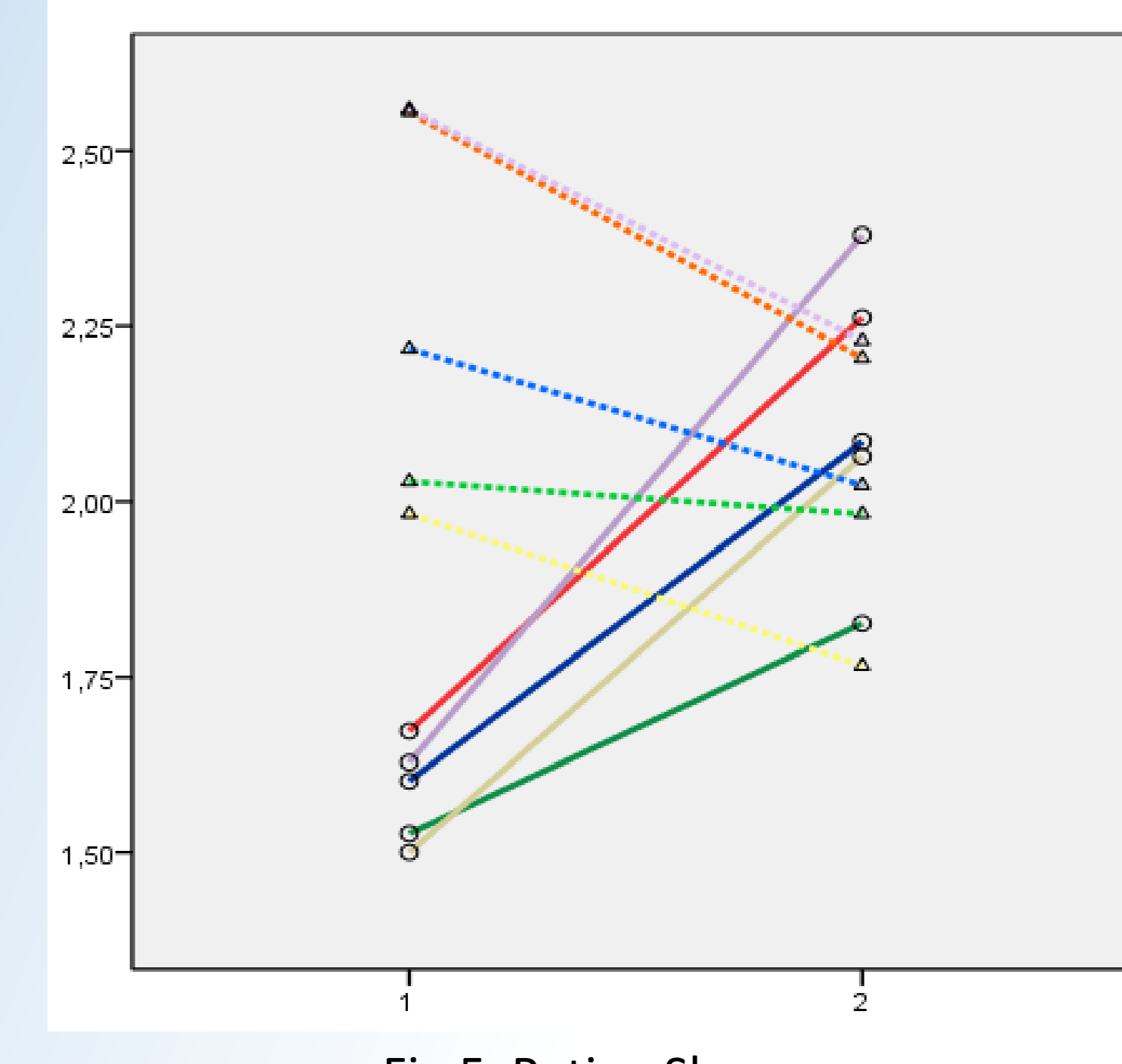
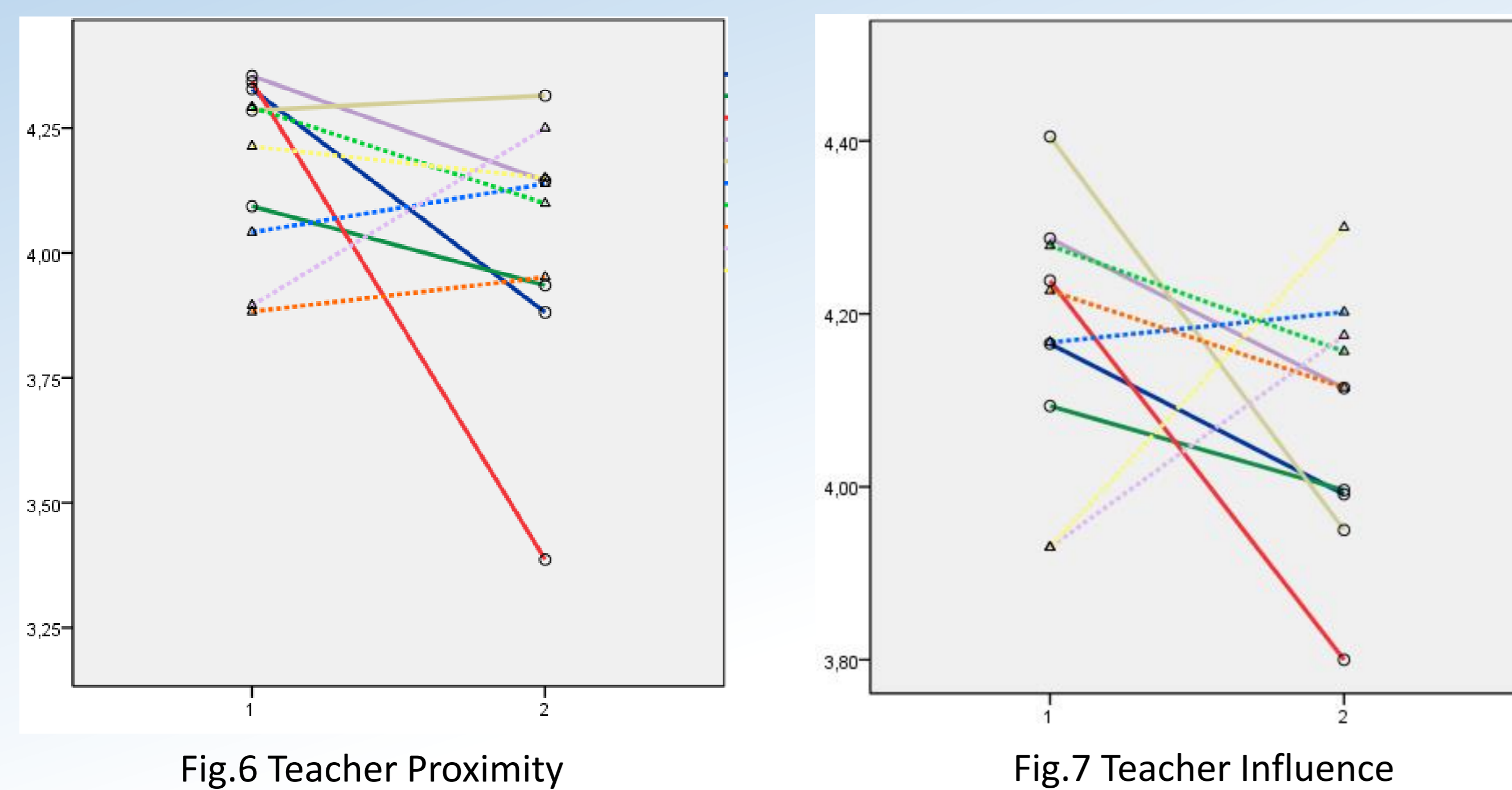


Fig.5 Rating Shyness

### Teacher influence on classroom climate

Significant differences were also found regarding the proximity (Teacher Proximity, fig.6) and influence (Teacher Influence, fig.7) exercised by the teacher as perceived by the students, which both decreased in the group of RejectedComparison while they remained stable in the group of RejectedIntervention.



The situation of the rejected children in the intervention group evolved more favorably than the situation of those in the comparison group. The intervention had positive outcomes for the rejected students.

As a conclusion, the study highlight the importance of implementing universal and multicomponent social interventions conducted by teachers (Durlak & Dupre, 2008; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011), which promote the rejected children's positive social reputation, peer acceptance and a decrease of rejection received and expected, and help teachers maintain their influence on the classroom climate.

The reputation of aggression (Rating Aggression, fig.4) and of shyness (Rating Shyness, fig.5) of the rejected children had a better evolution in the intervention group than in the comparison group. The group of RejectedComparison was rated significantly more aggressive at T2 while the RejectedIntervention remain stable. Inversely, shyness increased in RejectedComparison while it decreased in RejectedIntervention.

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