

ABSTRACT

ACCEPTABILITY, PERCEIVED USAGE AND PREFERENCE OF DIRECT BEHAVIOR RATINGS (DBR) AMONG SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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July, 2010

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This study was designed to examine the perceived usage of Direct Behavior Rating (DBR) among school psychologists through acceptability, feasibility, understanding and system support. In addition, specific preferences of DBR (e.g. types of behavior to rate, length of observation and appropriate rater) were examined. DBR tools involve rating defined student behaviors following a specified observation period. One critical assumption of the DBR is that school psychologists and teachers view it as acceptable and are oriented towards using it. A review of the literature suggested that acceptability, feasibility, understanding and support from the system should be considered when determining the perceived usage of an intervention. Participants included a sample of 82 members of the National Association of School Psychologists. The participants were mailed a survey packet that included (a) cover letter explaining the study and inviting them to participate in the study, (b) demographic questionnaire, (c) questionnaire about previous DBR experience, (d) a brief description of DBR including a case study, (e) a preference assessment and (f) the Usage Rating Profile for Assessments (URP-A). The preference assessment asked participants to select specific parts and procedures of the DBR that they preferred (e.g. type/severity of problem to rate). Results indicated that participants reported the DBR to be an acceptable and feasible assessment tool. In addition, they reported that they understood the

procedures of DBR and that they would require the support of their system, including co-workers. Scores indicated that the participants perceived DBR as a usable tool for conducting behavior assessments. Results of the preference assessment were analyzed and compared with the previous preference assessment studies. Overall, results were consistent with the previous studies.

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A Thesis

Presented To

the Faculty of the Department of Psychology
East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in School Psychology

by

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July, 2010

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION & REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of the literature review is to review studies concerning both academic and social behavior monitoring techniques and the acceptability of these techniques. This review will include: a) academic monitoring techniques b) social behavior techniques c) an overview of the research conducted on acceptability and the use of interventions and assessments, and d) current research on preferences of Direct Behavior Ratings.

Accountability Background

Legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) stress the importance of accountability within the schools. Schools can no longer use subjective or qualitative data to make educational decisions. NCLB requires that educators now collect and report quantitative data on *all* students to demonstrate academic and behavioral progress. If a child is not making adequate progress, the school must provide the child with supplemental support.

Recently, the use of a multitier prevention system known as Response to Intervention (RTI) has gained federal support as an alternative to traditional methods of identifying learning disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). At the core of RTI, is the use of empirically supported interventions and curriculum, aided by the use of data-collection at both the assessment and intervention stages. Fuchs & Fuchs (2006) present a framework for RTI that presents questions across all three tiers addressing efficiency, integrity and feasibility in both assessment techniques and interventions.

An article by VanDerHeyden & Snyder (2006) emphasizes three benefits to collecting data for all students, specifically in young children: (1) improving children's outcomes more efficiently through quantitative methods of problem solving, (2) data the results from this process

can be used to determine what supports and services are needed to foster early learning, (3) the data can show if the supports and services are meaningful and helpful in accelerating the child's growth. VanDerHayden & Snyder also state the need for assessment tools that possess a higher standard of technical adequacy required for RTI to work effectively. Therefore, in this era of accountability, schools need to access data collection methods for academic and social behavior that are empirically based, technically adequate and practical.

Academic Monitoring Techniques

There is a wide literature base for academic monitoring techniques, which are more often researched and implemented than social behavior monitoring techniques (Riley-Tillman, Kalberer, & Chafouleas, 2005). No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2004) requires all students to be reading on grade level by 3rd grade. Therefore, schools are more motivated to find students early on who may be at risk for not meeting these goals. High-stakes testing is currently the most utilized technique to monitor a student's progress in academic areas (Silbergitt, 2005). Recently, Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) have become viable methods to demonstrate a student's academic progress.

Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM). A CBM is an academic assessment tool comprised of standardized directions, timing procedures, materials such as passages or sheets, scoring rules, standards for determining performance and forms or charts (Hosp, Hosp & Howell, 2007). Hosp and colleagues (2007) further explain CBM as straightforward, quick (usually one or two minutes) and uses materials that are aligned with the curriculums implemented in classrooms.

In the mid 1970s, Deno and colleagues developed CBM at the Minnesota Institute for Research on Learning Disabilities to assess academic growth in basic skills such as reading and

math (Deno, 1985). Deno and his students characterized CBM by several attributes: (1) alignment to the curriculum, (2) technically adequate techniques, (3) using criterion referenced measures, (4) standardized procedures, (5) performance sampling using low-inference measures, (6) standardized decision rules based on performance criteria, (7) repeated measures through progress monitoring, (8) efficient implementation, (9) data summarized efficiently using charts and data management systems that are immediately accessible (Deno, 2003).

Since Deno and colleagues first started working with CBM, an extensive amount of literature has been produced supporting CBM as an important data-collection tool. A study by Fuchs & Fuchs (2007) administered math CBM probes weekly over 27 weeks to 225 first graders. Progress was graphed on a weekly basis and shared with both the students and teachers. The data was used to monitor academic growth, guide and form interventions, progress monitor the student's response to interventions, and predict future difficulties with math curriculum. The researchers followed up with the students when they reached second grade. The early CBM data collected was able to predict learning disabilities in math with 80% accuracy. Another study conducted by Silberglitt (2005) used CBM to predict success on high-stakes assessment. In this study, they recruited two thousand students in first through third grade and examined the relationship between performance on an oral reading fluency CBM and performance on the Minnesota end of grade test. Results of this study indicated that CBM might be useful in predicting success of high stakes standardized reading assessments.

CBM can be used to make a variety of decisions including: screening, progress-monitoring, diagnostic and outcome decisions (Hosp, Hosp & Howell, 2007). In addition, CBM have been created to cover a wide breadth of academic areas such as early reading skills, reading, spelling, writing and math (AIMSWEB, 2010).

Dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills. DIBELS is a form of sixty second CBM probes designed in the mid 1990s for early identification of children with reading problems (Kaminski & Good, 1996). DIBLES probes include: Letter Naming Fluency (LNF), Initial Sound Fluency (ISF), Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF), Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) with a Retell Fluency (RF) contained at the end. DIBELS utilizes five big ideas when assessing early reading skills: (1) phonemic awareness, (2) alphabetic principles, (3) accuracy and fluency, (4) vocabulary, and (5) comprehension (DIBELS, 2010). In the fall of 2010, DIBLES will be adding math probes to their collection for grades K-6 (DIBELS, 2010).

Over the past twenty years, DIBELS has received an extensive amount of attention in research. Kaminsiki & Good (1996) reported that educators view DIBELS as easy to administer, efficient, and provide data useful for making educational decisions. Rouse & Fantuzzo (2006) studied the validity of three subtests of DIBLES with 330 kindergarten children. They investigated LNF, PSF and NWF. Their results indicated significant levels of concurrent and predictive validity when compared to both teacher reports and nationally standardized tests. Another study conducted by Hintze and colleagues (2003) investigated the concurrent validity of DIBLES compared with a well-established standardized test, the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) among eighty-six kindergarteners. The results of their study indicated moderate to strong correlations between the two tests, which suggests that the tests measure similar constructs. In 2006, Coyne & Harne, suggested that DIBELS probes could help promote beginning reading success for all children through informing instruction, aiding in the development of interventions, and providing reliable data to assess early responses to interventions.

Acceptability of CBM. CBM and DIBELS have received a wide research base for academic monitoring and have increasing popularity and acceptability in public schools (Riley-Tillman & Chafouleas, 2003). In a study conducted by Eckert, Shapiro & Lutz (1995), the acceptability of two types of psychoeducational assessments: curriculum based assessments (CBA) and published norm-referenced tests (PNRT) were investigated. 224 teachers in both regular and special education classrooms were examined. Results indicated that CBA was consistently deemed more acceptable than PNRT. Allinder & Oates (1997) investigated acceptability of CBM and the use of CBM among teachers. Twenty-two special education teachers used CBM with two students in grades 3-6 over a four-month period. Results indicated that teachers who reported higher levels of acceptability, were more likely to implement CBM with greater fidelity and more frequently, suggesting that acceptability plays a key role in the use of CBM among teachers. Shapiro & Eckert (1994) suggested that the amount of popularity of CBM might be due to the knowledge, experience and familiarity that teachers have with CBM.

It is clear that academic monitoring techniques have received an extensive amount of research over the past twenty years. Educators have easy access to CBM and DIBELS, but they experience difficulties finding technically adequate, user-friendly technologies for monitoring social behavior. Since schools are held accountable for making educational decisions for both academic and social behavioral issues that are empirically sound, it is imperative that assessment tools for social behavior are also adequately researched and user-friendly.

Social Behavior Monitoring Techniques

A review of the social behavior assessment techniques indicates that the research in this area is much less developed than in academic monitoring techniques. Classroom behavior is shown to affect academic progress and academic progress is linked to behaviors exhibited by

students in the classroom (Long & Edwards, 1994). Because of this, schools need to implement viable methods for monitoring behavior in addition to the academic monitoring already in place. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEIA, 2004) requires educators to implement positive behavioral interventions that are empirically based. In children whose behaviors hinder their ability to learn, or disrupt the learning of other children, schools must conduct behavioral assessments in order to document their current behavior, demonstrate needs and recommend interventions (Jacob & Hartshone, 2003).

Educators need behavior monitoring techniques that are both practical and empirically based to document their student's progress. In addition, the techniques need to be acceptable and feasible in order to assure they are implemented with integrity. The types decisions made with these behavioral monitoring tools can range in type and importance; therefore it is important that we have a number of different techniques in place. The methods currently in place are permanent products, behavior rating scales, systematic direct observation, and direct behavior ratings (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Sugai, 2007). What follows is a brief review of each method.

Permanent Products. The most common way that schools collect data for behavioral assessments is through the use of extant data or permanent products (Engec, 2006). Types of extant data that are available for behavioral assessment include office discipline referrals, attendance records, suspension records, report cards, and token economies or incentive programs. Since permanent products are easily accessible and collected at no additional time or cost, direct involvement from the School Psychologist is not required. Riley-Tillman and Chafouleas (2003) suggest permanent products should be reviewed before implementing more complex assessment measures.

There are a couple of drawbacks when using permanent products. The data obtained from permanent products may be too limited to understand the student's behavior across settings (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Sugai, 2007). In addition, the data obtained from attendance, homework collection and suspension rates is too general to monitor the impacts of behavioral interventions (Riley-Tillman et al., 2005). Another limitation is that permanent products have a low degree of correlation between office referrals and actual diagnosis of behavioral problems (Nelson, Benner, Reid, Epstein & Currin, 2002). Nelson and colleagues (2002) also found office referral data to be the least accurate method when used as a screener for children with internalizing behavior problems. Therefore, permanent products should be used as one of many methods of the assessment process (Chafouleas et al., 2007).

Acceptability of Permanent Products. There is very limited research on the acceptability of permanent products. Riley-Tillman and Chafouleas (2003) suggest that permanent products, especially office discipline referrals, have high levels of acceptability and are more likely to be implemented because of this. Permanent products are also considered to be feasible because the data is already collected and does not require the direct use of a school psychologist (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Sugai, 2007).

Behavior Rating Scales. Behavior rating scales are another tool commonly used in behavioral assessment. Teachers and parents use these scales to rate a recent observation of a student's behavior. In addition, students can rate their own behavior (Chafouleas et al., 2007). Commonly used behavior ratings scales include Behavior Assessment System for Children, second edition (BASC-II; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004), Conners Rating Scales-Revised (CRS-R; Conners, 1997), and Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA;

Achenbach, 2004). Many school psychologists supplement their psychoeducational evaluations with information obtained from behavioral rating scales and checklist (Shapiro & Heick, 2004). One strength of behavior rating scales is that the data obtained from these scales can provide information about the student's behavior across multiple dimensions and settings (Gladman & Lancaster, 2003). However, the information obtained through behavior rating scales is limited due to the fact that the scales are not completed at the time and place that the behavior is occurring. Additionally, this type of rating is not sensitive to change and therefore it is not recommended for short-term progress monitoring (Chafouleas et al., 2007).

The data obtained by behavior rating scales are influenced by the perception of the rater and are not as accurate as measures that use a more direct approach (Chafouleas et al., 2007). These scales have low inter-rater reliability among teachers. Other teachers may rate the same students differently. Goh (1997) hypothesized this phenomenon by explaining that teachers differ their ratings due to subjective and different frames of reference.

A study conducted by Tyron & Pinto (1994) had teachers complete three different behavior rating scales (Conners Teacher Rating Scale, Motor Excess subscale of the Revised Behavior Problem Checklist, and the Nervous-Overactive Subscale of the Child Behavior Checklist-Teacher Rating Form). The scales were completed on the same students, and direct observations of the students were also conducted. The results indicated that the three scales were not significantly correlated with each other, or the direct observations. These results suggest that behavior rating scales should be supplemented with other behavioral assessment methods before making educational decisions.

Acceptability of Behavior Rating Scales. Similar to permanent products, there is limited research concerning the acceptability of behavior rating scales. It does tend to be the preferred

method of behavioral assessment among School Psychologists. Shapiro & Heick (2004) examined 1,000 school psychologists about their assessment methods for students with social, emotional and behavioral concerns. In addition to the commonly used standardized intelligence test, achievement test, and visual-motor test, school psychologists reported using direct observation, structured interviews and behavior rating scales, with behavior rating scales being the preferred method. This indicates, that school psychologists find behavior rating scales to be an acceptable means for collecting behavioral data. One strength of behavior rating scales are that they are feasible when administered infrequently, in that it can be administered by someone without formal training and in a short amount of time (Chafouleas et al., 2007).

Systematic Direct Observation. Systematic Direct Observation (SDO) has historically been considered an essential part of behavior assessments (Hintze, Volpe, & Shapiro, 2002). This method requires a trained observer to use a system of observation to document operationally defined behaviors in a specific time (e.g. ten or twenty minutes) and setting. The observer scores and summarizes the data, following the observation (Volpe, DiPerna, Hintze & Shapiro, 2005). Salvia and Ysseldyke (2004) defined five criteria of SDO that sets it apart from naturalistic observations: (1) the goal is the measure specific behaviors, (2) behaviors are operationally defined a priori, (3) standardized procedures in place that are objective in nature, (4) times and places are specifically selected and specified, (5) scoring and summarizing of data are standardized, and do not vary across observers. There are many positive aspects of using SDO. SDO provides a reliable and accurate measurement of a child's behavior and is useful in identifying and monitoring target behaviors because of its direct approach (Riley-Tillman et al., 2005).

There are several types of SDO protocols available such as: Behavioral Observation of Students in Schools (B.O.S.S.; Shapiro & Heick, 2004), Classroom Observation Code (COC; Miller, Fee & Jones, 2004), the ADHD School Observation Code (Nolan & Gadow, 1994), and the State-Event Classroom Observation System (SECOS; Saudargas & Lentz, 1986). The SECOS involves time sampling of classroom behaviors that samples behaviors intermittently within a set observation period, instead of observing every single behavior across time. This method requires approximately 12 hours of training time. The COC requires the highest amount of rater training; with over 50 hours of training time in order to adequately conduct the observation. The ADHD School Observation Code requires about 25 hours of training, while the BOSS requires 10-15 hours. It is easy to see why schools cannot dedicate this much time to training users in these methods, and the training aspect is imperative in obtaining an accurate score.

The main drawback in the use of SDO is the amount of training involved. The observer must be trained in the use and interpretation of SDO, therefore because of this requirement; the observer is typically the School Psychologist. There is also limited feasibility due to the time constraints required of the School Psychologist. Even though the observation itself only takes ten to twenty minutes, multiple ratings are obtained and must be entered, analyzed and interpreted each time an observation takes place. This requires a significant amount of time, and is not the most efficient way to collect behavioral data. In addition, the requirement of an outside observer may cause reactivity, where the child knowing that they are being observed changes their behavior (Riley-Tillman et al., 2005). Since the observation takes place during a short period of time, the behaviors observed may not be representative of those that take place throughout the school day and therefore, have low generalizability (Chafouleas et al., 2007). Hintze and

Matthews (2004) found that reliability of SDO ratings across time and setting were not adequate even if there were two observations a day for two weeks. Therefore, the ratings used in SDO are specific only to the time and setting in which the observation occurred. Given these limitations, SDO methods should be reserved for high-stakes situations (Chafouleas et al., 2007).

Acceptability of SDO. To date, there have not been many studies formally examining the acceptability of SDO. One study conducted by Riley-Tillman and colleagues (2008), examined acceptability of both SDO and Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR). Results indicated moderate acceptability of both techniques. Witt and Martens (1983), suggest that feasibility is highly linked to acceptability and Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Sugai (2007), state that feasibility is not considered high in SDO. Therefore, it could be assumed that SDO may not enjoy high acceptability levels. However, further studies would need to examine this occurrence.

Direct Behavior Ratings. Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR) are a behavior monitoring tool that documents specific operationally defined behaviors on a daily or weekly basis and then shares the findings with parents and administrators. DBR combines the strengths of behavior rating scales, such as the efficiency of data recording, with the benefits of SDO, such as recording data at the time and place of the behavior (Chafouleas et al, 2007; Chafouleas, Christ, Riley-Tillman, Briesch, & Chanese, 2007, Christ, Riley-Tillman, & Chafouleas, 2009). DBR are characterized by three components: (a) direct observation; (b) targeting specific behaviors; and (c) and evaluative component of ratings (Christ et al, 2009). These characteristics are described below.

DBR is considered direct because the observation and subsequent rating occur directly at the time and place that the behavior is occurring. Most of the DBR ratings occur directly following the observation. However, the directness can be variable, as some ratings occur with

an observation of 10 minutes, while others can occur with observations of 1 week. It is suggested that the ratings should be more frequent and occur multiple times within and across days, in order to maintain the directness of DBR (Christ et al, 2009).

DBR's behavior component maintains that the target behaviors should be specific and operationalized in a clear manner so that it is understood by all members involved. DBR research has focused mainly on observing motor behaviors (e.g. engagement, verbal disruptions) rather than physiological or cognitive categories (Christ et al, 2009).

The rating component of DBR aims to quantify the rater's perceptions of the target behavior during an observation. This feature of DBR is more like behavior rating scales than SDO because the ratings rely solely on the rater's estimation and perception of the behavior (Christ et al, 2009). Even though this could be considered a negative feature, some have claimed that perception plays a vital role in social validity of an intervention (Elliott, Gresham, Frank & Beddow, 2008).

Another key aspect of DBR is that it is relatively simple to administer. Riley-Tillman and colleagues (2004) identified six procedural steps for using DBR: (a) defining the target behavior; (b) selecting the rating frequency and type of rating scale; (c) designing the card; (d) determining if consequences will be used, and if so, defining the criteria; (e) generating a list of potential consequences; and (f) determining the responsibilities of all parties involved. There are several advantages to using DBR. One advantage of using DBR is that it may have less reactivity than SDO, since it requires a natural observer, the teacher, to conduct the observation (Riley-Tillman et al., 2005). Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman & McDougal (2002) suggested that DBR may be feasible, acceptable, effective in promoting positive student behavior, and provide a way to increase parent-teacher communication. DBR is feasible because of the limited time required

and minimal costs. Additionally, DBR can be used for a variety of situations including assessments, interventions, and progress monitoring (Chafouleas et al., 2007). DBR can also be used as a screening tool to identify potential risk of social-behavioral issues. DBR has been identified as an appropriate, empirically validated tool for student progress monitoring (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman & Christ, in press; Christ, Riley-Tillman, & Chafouleas, in press).

One critical assumption of the DBR is that School Psychologist and teachers view it as acceptable and are oriented towards using it. Research has suggested that DBR has high social acceptability. In a study by Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman & Sassu (2006) 1,000 teachers were surveyed and over 60% of respondents reported using a tool like DBR to some degree. Their results suggested that the DBR is both a used and accepted tool in practice.

Acceptability & Preference Assessment of Direct Behavior Ratings

Chafouleas and colleagues (2006) conducted on a nationwide sample of teachers and addressed questions concerning the reported use and acceptability of DBR. Questions were asked concerning types of behaviors rated, appropriate rater, frequency of rating and types of scales used. The study concluded that teachers found the DBR to be adaptive and able to be used in a variety of situations. Teachers indicated that they preferred to use the DBR as part of an intervention rather than a method of data collection. Additionally, it was reported that a large majority of teachers prefer to use the DBR on one student as opposed to small groups or entire classrooms. Teachers also indicated that they were the most appropriate rater.

Riley-Tillman and colleagues (2008) conducted a study on a nationwide sample of School Psychologists to assess their training, use, and acceptability of DBR as compared to SDO. The majority of School Psychologists indicated that they received a moderate amount of

DBR training. It was noted that the overall reported use of DBR was high. Participants reported similar levels of moderate acceptability and low intrusiveness between both tools.

A study conducted by Riley-Tillman, Chafouleas, Music & Christ (in development) assessed certain preferences of DBR among 104 elementary school teachers. The participants were asked questions concerning length of observation, appropriate rater, type of scale and types of decisions. The participants preferred a daily thirty-minute observation period rating as opposed to a full day observation. Additionally, they preferred to rate two students and one behavior at a time. Consistent with the previous studies, more than half of the respondents ranked “teacher” as the most appropriate rater for completing the DBR form. In addition, participants preferred a 10-point scale worded in a positive manner using a continuous line and descriptive anchors. Participants also indicated that DBR are most effective for medium stake decisions (Music, Riley-Tillman, Chafouleas & Christ, 2009; Riley-Tillman, Chafouleas, Music, & Christ, in development). These results are useful in understanding teachers’ preferences of DBR. However, these studies did not explore in depth the perceived usage of DBR beyond the component of acceptability. Feasibility, understanding and the support received from the system are also important in understanding whether or not DBR is perceived as a usable tool. The current study aims to replicate part of these three studies with school psychologists by reexamining certain components of DBR (e.g. types of behaviors), but taking it a step further by exploring those components that have not been examined before.

Overview of Acceptability and Perceived Usage Research

Several studies have shown that an intervention that is viewed as acceptable is more likely to be used (Kazdin, 1980). Witt and Elliott (1995) suggest a framework for acceptability that was both sequential and reciprocal. They stated that four elements were essential to the

model: (1) acceptability of treatment, (2) use of treatment, (3) integrity of treatment, and (4) effectiveness of treatment. Therefore, for a treatment to be used with integrity and for it to be effective, the treatment must be acceptable.

Other studies, however, have argued that acceptability alone will not determine the use of an intervention and that other factors should be considered (Sterling-Turner & Watson, 2002). Reimers, Wacker, & Koepl (1987) suggested that the user's knowledge of the intervention would provide a better understanding of whether an intervention would be used. Just understanding an intervention, however, will not increase the use of the intervention if interest and motivation are not present (Becker, 1985). Witt and Martens (1983) suggested that feasibility also played an important role in determining the usage of an intervention. They concluded that individuals would use interventions that require minimal amount of time and effort. While it is commonly agreed upon that an intervention will not be used unless it is viewed as acceptable, exploring other factors extending beyond acceptability is key to determining the usage of the intervention. Factors such as feasibility and time constraints, the user's knowledge of the intervention, and the level of support received should be considered. With these factors in mind, Chafouleas, Briesch, Riley-Tillman & McCoach (2009) designed "The Usage Rating Profile-Intervention" (URP-I) to measure perceived usage of an intervention through four distinct constructs: Acceptability, Feasibility, Understanding, and Systems support. These four factors combined give a greater understanding of the perceived usage of an intervention above and beyond acceptability.

Usage Rating Profile-Intervention (URP-I). Chafouleas and colleagues (2009) developed the URP-I as a self-report measure to measure the perceived use of an intervention. They initially constructed 55 items, and through a factor analysis determined 35 items that were

relevant and four factors that were useful in determining perceived usage. All factors have frequently been cited in relevant literature as related to the use of an intervention: (1) acceptability, (2) feasibility, (3) understanding, and (4) system support. All four subscales reported acceptable levels of internal consistency reliability. Acceptability portrayed high level of reliability of .96. High levels of acceptability indicate that the participant believed the intervention was appropriate given the problem behavior or that they would be excited about implementing the intervention. The Understanding subscale received a high level of reliability of .90. High levels on this scale indicate that the participant believed they could confidently implement the intervention after reading the description. The Feasibility subscale received a reliability of .85, indicating high levels. High scores on this subscale indicate the participants felt that they could implement the intervention with integrity given the demands required. The final subscale, System Support, also received a high reliability score of .84. High scores on this scale indicate that the participant could not implement the intervention without external support; therefore, lower scores on this scale are more desirable. To obtain an overall perceived usage score, the examiner would need to reverse code this subscale.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the current study is to further examine perceived usage of DBR by School Psychologists by focusing on the four constructs used in the URP-I. This study will adapt the URP-I to measure the perceived usage of an assessment tool, such as DBR. In addition, the current study will further examine instrumentation and procedure of the DBR and the strengths and weaknesses by systematically replicating the previous preference assessment studies done with teachers and school psychologists by Chafouleas and colleagues (2006), Riley-Tillman and colleagues (2008) and Riley-Tillman and colleagues (in development).

The primary goal of this study is to investigate whether or not practicing School Psychologist perceive DBR as a usable tool. By adapting and using the URP-I, this study will address issues of acceptability, feasibility, understanding and systems support. In addition, a short section of examining the nuances of DBR and the preference of School Psychologist will be explored.

Research Questions

The current study will address six questions: (1) do practicing School Psychologist like using DBR?, (2) Are they oriented towards using it?, (3) do they find DBR feasible?, (4) do they require support form their system to use it?, (5) do they perceive DBR as a usable tool?, and (6) are there specific parts of the DBR that they prefer?

Definitions

The following operational definitions will be used in this study:

1. Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR): A behavior monitoring tool that documents specific operationally defined behaviors on a daily or weekly basis and shares the findings with parents and administrators.
2. Acceptability: The degree to which people view the treatment as fair, reasonable and appropriate.
3. Feasibility: This refers to the measured time, resources and effort requirements to perform the assessment.
4. Understanding: This refers to the knowledge of what the assessment tool is, how to carry it out, and why it is being implemented.
5. Systems Support: The amount of support from administration and colleagues that individuals receive for implementing the assessment.

6. Usage: The degree to which people view the assessment tool as useable, based on four constructs: acceptability, feasibility, understanding and systems support.

Significance of Study

The information received about the perceived usage of the DBR by School Psychologists will provide a better understanding of acceptability, feasibility, understanding and systems support of the DBR. Information concerning the different facets of acceptability continues to aid in understanding how to better implement DBR in the field as well as provide directions for future research. In addition, by gaining further knowledge of preferences in respect to instrumentation and procedure of the DBR, this study will reveal which aspects of the instrument are liked and disliked by professionals in the field. This knowledge will allow users of the DBR to understand what modifications are needed to make the instrument more usable.

CHAPTER II: METHODS

Participants

Participants included a sample of 58 members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) whose names were randomly selected from a national database. In total, 500 surveys were mailed with 82 responses. Of the 82 responses, only 58 (12%) surveys were complete. Those who did not complete the survey stated that they were not practicing or did not believe they were familiar enough with Direct Behavior Ratings to complete the survey.

Participants represented 26 states in varying geographic regions (30% Northeast, 33% Midwest, 23% South, 14% West) and population areas (36% suburban, 40% urban, 19% rural, 5% mixed).

Of the participants, 90% reported their current job title as School Psychologist. Other titles reported included administrators, university professors and directors of special education programs. The majority of participants held a specialist degree (60%), worked full time (84%), worked in public school settings (91%), served elementary school students (79%), worked in both regular and special education settings (76%) and had 11 or more years of experience (52%). Of the participants, 80% were female and 93% were Caucasian. The majority of participants (54%) reported utilizing a Cognitive/Behavioral theoretical approach.

The participant demographic information for this study were similar to the 2004-2005 NASP membership participant information reported by Riley-Tillman and colleagues (2008), in which the majority of participants were females (75% and 76%), trained at the specialist level (49% and 41%), served elementary school students (70% and 77%) and public schools (84% and 89%). A summary of demographic information pertaining to the participants in the current study is provided in Table 1.

Materials

Participants were mailed a survey packet containing two questionnaires, a brief description of Direct Behavior Rating including a case study, a brief preference assessment and the URP-A. The survey packets were mailed to participants along with a pre-paid return envelope.

Demographic Questionnaire. (see Appendix C) This twelve question questionnaire addressed demographic questions about the participants such as race, gender, education and location. Also included were additional questions regarding the populations worked with, theoretical orientation and education levels.

Direct Behavior Rating (DBR) Experience Questionnaire. (see Appendix D) This questionnaire contained three questions that were aimed at gathering information regarding the participant's experience with DBR.

Brief Overview and Case Study. (see Appendix E) This overview included a succinct description of what DBR is and the potential uses. This, along with the case study, was aimed at providing the participants a basic understanding of DBR and how it can be used within the schools.

Preference Assessment. (see Appendix F) This sixteen-question assessment asked the participants to select their preference of a variety of aspects of DBR regarding instrumentation and procedures. They were also asked to rate the importance of three common behaviors included on DBR on a six point Likert type scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). In addition, they were asked to provide any additional behaviors they thought would be important or relevant to include on the DBR.

URP-A. The “Usage Rating Profile- Assessment (URP-A)” questionnaire (see Appendix G) was adapted from the original “Usage Rating Profile- Interventions (URP-I)” so that it would measure perceived usage of an assessment tool rather than an intervention. This questionnaire was thirty-six questions and used a six point Likert type scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to measure the overall perceived usage of the DBR and four cluster scores of: acceptability, feasibility, understanding and systems support.

Procedures

Participants were mailed a survey packet with the above components. A cover letter (see Appendix B) providing a brief overview of the study and contact information was included with the packet. A pre-paid response envelope was also included in the packet. The materials and procedures were conducted under the approval of the university Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as exempt research due to the anonymous nature of the research. Informed consent was assumed if the participants mailed the survey packet back. Response envelopes were coded, and the examiner deleted the names of the respondents off the master list as the surveys were received. Approximately one month after the initial mailing, 250 randomly selected participants, who had not responded, were mailed an additional packet providing them another opportunity to respond.

Data Analysis

Preference Assessment & DBR Questionnaire. The data collected from the preference assessment and DBR Questionnaires were summarized using percentages, means and standard deviations. Common behaviors listed as relevant to incorporate on the DBR were also included. In addition, the data were compared with the past studies on preference of DBR.

URP-A. Questions on the URP-A were scored, and reverse coded as needed. Means and standard deviations were reported for each of the four cluster scores as well as the overall perceived usage score. These scores were also compared to past studies on acceptability of DBR.

Table 1

Participant demographic information

Category	Subcategory	Percentage
Gender	Male	31%
	Female	69%
Ethnicity	Asian/Pacific Islander	3%
	Caucasian	93%
	African-American	2%
	Hispanic	2%
Geographic Region	Northeast	30%
	Midwest	33%
	South	23%
	West	14%
Population Area	Urban	40%
	Suburban	36%
	Rural	19%
Job Title	Mixed	5%
	School Psychologist	85%
Years Employed	Other	10%
	Both	5%
	0-5	21%
	6-10	27%
Employment Status	11-15	7%
	16 or more	45%
	Full-time	84%
	Part-time	14%
Setting	Not Working	2%
	Public	86%
	Private	4%
Age Group ^a	Other	5%
	Mixed	5%
	Preschool	47%
	Elementary School	79%
	Middle School	62%
Type of Student	High School	59%
	Other	3%
	Regular Education Only	2%
	Special Education Only	19%
	Both	76%
Education	Other	3%
	Masters	12%
	Masters/Specialist	60%
	PhD, PsyD, EdD	26%
Approach	Other	2%
	Psychodynamic	2%
	Cognitive/Behavioral	54%
	Behavioral/Analytical	18%
	Eclectic/Integrative	21%
	Family Systems	3%
	Other	2%

^a Participants were permitted to select all applicable choices when responding to this question, which resulted in percentages of this category exceeding 100%.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS

Direct Behavior Rating (DBR) Experience Questionnaire Responses

A one-page questionnaire (see Appendix D) contained three questions that were aimed at gathering information regarding the participant's experience with DBR. A summary of the results is presented in Table 2. Participants who reported using a tool like DBR were asked if they used another term for DBR. In addition to the terms provided in the survey, participants indicated other terms, which included: behavior chart, progress report, homework sheet, behavior checklist, daily chart, point chart, and behavior log. Participants ($N=54$) also indicated their typical reason for using DBR. In addition to the choices provided, participants provided other reasons. Common other reasons reported included: data to write IEP reports and positive notes to student.

Preference Assessment

Part I. The first twelve questions on the preference assessment (see Appendix F) asked the participants to select their preference of a variety of aspects of DBR regarding instrumentation and procedures. Results of this section were analyzed using percentages. Results are displayed in Table 3. The majority of participants indicated that they preferred to rate a student once a day (44%), with observations of 30 minutes (72%). They also reported that they preferred to rate two behaviors at a time (45%). The majority of participants indicated teacher as an appropriate rater (96%), followed by School Psychologist (74%), an Assistant (60%), the student (58%), the parent (44%) and the administrator (28%).

Part II. On the next three questions, participants were asked to rate the importance of three common behaviors included on DBR (academic engagement, disruptive behavior and respectfulness). Items were scored on a six point Likert type scale (1= strongly disagree to 6=

strongly agree). Results are shown in Table 4. Overall, participants agreed that Academic Engagement and Disruptive Behavior are relevant behaviors to include on the DBR, but are not in agreement about the relevance of Respectfulness. In addition, the final question asked participants to provide any additional behaviors they thought would be important or relevant to include on the DBR. Some common behaviors suggested included: any behaviors with clear operational definition, self-injurious behaviors, and social interactions.

Usage Rating Profile-Assessment

The thirty-six question assessment (see Appendix G) used a six point Likert type scale (1= strongly disagree to 6= strongly agree) to measure the overall perceived usage of the DBR and four cluster scores of: acceptability, feasibility, understanding and systems support. The scores were reverse coded as needed. High scores on acceptability indicate that participants feel the DBR is fair, reasonable and appropriate. High scores on understanding imply that the participants feel that they have adequate knowledge of the tool, how it is used, and why it is being implemented. High scores on feasibility indicate that the participants feel the assessment can be carried out with minimal time, resources and effort. High scores on system support indicate that the participant feels the assessment can be implemented independently with minimal assistance from parents, coworkers and administrators. A high overall perceived usage score indicates that the participants perceive DBR as a usable tool for assessment purposes.

As indicated in Table 5, participants rated Acceptability ($M=4.68$, $SD=.89$), Understanding ($M=4.79$, $SD= 1.08$) and Feasibility ($M=4.55$, $SD=.88$) in the somewhat agree to agree range. They rated System Support ($M=3.31$, $SD=1.64$) in the somewhat disagree range, with more variability in the scores than in the other clusters. The participants indicated their overall perceived usage as in the somewhat agree to agree range ($M=4.44$, $SD=1.21$). Overall,

participants indicated that they found the DBR acceptable, feasible and they understood the tool for assessment purposes. They also indicated that they perceived DBR as a usable tool. With regards to system support, they indicated that they require the support of the system in order to implement the DBR.

Tables 6-9 show the scores for the individual questions of the URP-A. On the acceptability questions (Table 6), all the scores ranged from somewhat agree to agree, with little variability between the scores. On the understanding questions (Table 7), the scores ranged from somewhat agree to agree with some variance in the scores. On the feasibility questions (Table 8), the scores also ranged from somewhat agree to agree, with little distribution between the scores. On the system support questions (Table 9), scores ranged from disagree to somewhat agree, with considerable variability between the scores. Two questions were noteworthy: the questions asking if coworkers were needed to implement this intervention score was in the disagree range ($M= 2.05, SD= 1.36$), and the question regarding parental contribution fell in the disagree to somewhat disagree range ($M= 2.86, SD= 1.43$).

Table 2

Results from DBR Experience Questionnaire

Question	Answers	Percentage
Have you ever used a tool like the DBR?	Yes	93%
	No	7%
If they reported yes: Do you use another term for DBR? ^A	Home Note	20%
	Daily Report Card	20%
	Daily Behavior Report Card	47%
	Home-School note	29%
	Good behavior note	12%
	Other	31%
What is your typical reason for using the DBR? ^A	To monitor or observe student behavior	65%
	To change student behavior	65%
	To communicate with others about behavior	69%
	All three	41%
	Other	7%

^A Participants were permitted to select all applicable choices when responding to this question, which resulted in percentages of this category exceeding 100%.

Table 3

Preference Assessment Results part I.^A

Question	Responses	Percentages
I prefer to rate a student with a DBR: ^B	Once a Day	44%
	Twice a Day	33%
	Once a Week	16%
	Twice a Week	9%
	Bi-monthly	2%
I prefer to rate a student on a DBR: ^C	With a Continuous Line	75%
	Without one	25%
Do you I prefer to rate students on a scale with: ^C	3 points	44%
	6 points	31%
	10 points	23%
	20 points	2%
	100 points	0%
I prefer to rate students on a DBR where the behavior is worded in a: ^B	Positive Manner	96%
	Negative Manner	4%
I prefer to use a DBR that uses: ^D	Percents as Anchors	30%
	Real Numbers	70%
I prefer to rate this many behaviors at a time with DBR: ^E	1	27%
	2	45%
	3	15%
	5	2%
	10	3%
Who do you believe is an appropriate rater for DBR : ^B	Teacher	96%
	Parent	44%
	Student	58%
	Assistant	60%
	School Psychologist	74%
	Administrator	28%
What type/severity of <i>social</i> problem is best to rate using a DBR: ^B	Minor	26%
	Moderate	96%
	Serious	19%
What type/severity of <i>academic</i> problem is best to rate using a DBR? ^F	Minor	29%
	Moderate	73%
	Major	22%

Question	Responses	Percentages
When is DBR information is the most effective for special education decisions: ^E	Low Stakes	29%
	Medium Stakes	66%
	High Stakes	21%
How long of an observation do you prefer when using DBR: ^B	30 minutes	72%
	60 minutes	16%
	90 minutes	2%
	Half-day	5%
	Full Day	7%
I prefer to use DBR to rate: ^F	Event Behaviors	51%
	State Behaviors	33%
	Both	16%

Notes: ^A Participants were permitted to select all applicable choices when responding to several of these questions, which resulted in percentages of some of these category exceeding 100%.

^B N= 57

^C N=52

^D N=53

^E N=56

^F N=55

Table 4

Preference Results II.

Behavior	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic Engagement ^A	5.23	.87
Disruptive Behavior ^A	5.21	1.05
Respectfulness ^B	3.75	1.49

Notes: ^A *N*= 57, ^B *N*= 56

Table 5

URP-A Cluster Results

Cluster	Mean	Standard Deviation
Acceptability	4.68	.89
Understanding	4.79	1.08
Feasibility	4.55	.88
System Support	3.31	1.64
Overall Perceived Usage	4.44	1.21

Notes: *N*=57

Table 6

URP-A Acceptability Results by Question

Acceptability Questions	Means	SD
I would implement this assessment with a good deal of enthusiasm.	4.75	.76
I am motivated to try this assessment.	4.75	.79
I would have positive attitudes about implementing this assessment.	4.82	.74
Overall, the assessment is beneficial for the child.	4.95	.79
I would not be interested in implementing this assessment. ^A	4.77	1.01
This assessment is a good way to handle the child's behavior problem	4.25	1.04
The assessment is a fair way to handle the child's behavior problem.	4.49	1.00
This assessment is reasonable for the problem behavior described.	4.60	.82
I would be resistant to use this assessment. ^A	5.14	.85
This is an acceptable assessment strategy for the child's problem behavior.	4.72	.84
I would be excited to use this assessment. ^B	4.23	1.00
This assessment is an effective choice for addressing a variety of problems	4.70	.76
Use of this assessment would save time spent on classroom management.	4.26	.94
I liked the procedures used in this assessment.	4.61	.82

Note. Judgments were made on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

N = 57

^A These items were reverse coded during scoring.

^B This item was not included in computing Acceptability cluster, as later version of the URP-I determined the question irrelevant and unreliable in determining scores.

Table 7

URP-A Understanding Results by Question

Understanding Questions	Means	SD
I understand the procedures of this assessment.	4.86	.95
I would know what to do if I was asked to implement this assessment.	4.81	1.03
The requirements for implementing this assessment are unclear. [^]	4.33	1.33
I am knowledgeable about the assessment procedures.	4.88	.93
I have the skills needed to implement this assessment.	5.14	.81
I understand how to use this assessment	4.74	1.08
I would have no idea how to implement this assessment. [^]	5.07	.92
The directions for using this assessment are clear to me.	4.56	1.34

Note. Judgments were made on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

N= 57

[^] These items were reverse coded during scoring.

Table 8

URP-A Feasibility Results by Question

Feasibility Questions	Means	SD
The amount of time required to use this assessment is reasonable.	4.70	.87
The assessment could be implemented for the duration of time as prescribed.	4.84	.65
The amount of time required for record keeping with this assessment is reasonable.	4.79	.75
All pieces of this assessment could be implemented precisely.	4.28	.73
The assessment could be implemented with the intensity as prescribed.	4.47	.73
This assessment could be implemented exactly as described.	4.18	1.00
This assessment could be implemented as frequently as described.	4.58	.82
This assessment would not be disruptive to other students.	4.53	1.20

Note. Judgments were made on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).
N= 57

Table 9

URP-A System Support Results by Question

System Support Questions	Means	SD
I would need consultative support to implement this assessment. ^A	4.12	1.45
Implementation of this assessment would require support from my co-workers. ^A	2.05	1.36
Parental collaboration is required in order to use this assessment. ^A	2.86	1.43
I could only implement this assessment with assistance from other adults. ^A	3.11	1.63
I could implement this assessment by myself.	3.70	1.48
I would need support from my administrator to implement this assessment. ^A	4.02	1.51

Note. Judgments were made on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

N = 57

^A These items were reverse coded during scoring.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

The present study addressed questions about Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR) concerning acceptability, the different facets of acceptability (feasibility, understanding, and system support) and perceived usage among School Psychologists. In addition, preferences in regards to instrumentation and procedure were examined.

On the URP-A, participants reported that they found DBR to be an acceptable tool for behavior assessments. Participants reported that they would be motivated to use DBR and would implement it with enthusiasm. In addition, scores indicated that participants felt that DBR assessment would be beneficial for the child. Participants also indicated that they could use DBR for a variety of problems. Past research indicates that acceptability is an important component in determining whether or not an assessment will be used, be effective, and used with integrity (Kazdin, 1980; Witt & Elliott, 1995). Therefore, these findings suggesting that School Psychologists find DBR acceptable imply that they perceive it as usable. This is consistent with past studies conducted on both teachers and schools psychologists by Chafouleas and colleagues (2006), Riley-Tillman and colleagues (2008) and Riley-Tillman and colleagues (in development) which suggested that DBR has moderate to high levels of acceptability.

On the Understanding cluster of the URP-A, participants indicated that they have knowledge of the assessment and are, therefore, oriented towards using it. Participants indicated that they understand the procedures and that the requirements and directions for using DBR are clear. They also indicate that they are knowledgeable about DBR and have the skills for implementing it. A study conducted by Reimers, Wacker, & Koepl (1987), suggested that a understanding and knowledge is important in determining usage. Thus, the current study's

findings on School Psychologists' understanding of DBR insinuate that they perceive it as usable.

The Feasibility cluster of the URP-A suggests that participants found the DBR to be a feasible tool. Participants indicated that they found the time required was reasonable and that it could be implemented in the duration of time prescribed. They also indicated that DBR could be implemented with intensity and frequency described in the directions. In addition, they indicated that implementing DBR would not be disruptive to other students. Witt and Martens (1983) suggested that feasibility plays an important role in determining usage. Therefore, these results, indicating that School Psychologists view DBR as feasible imply that they also perceive it as usable.

The Systems Support cluster had considerable variability between answers. Overall, participants indicated that they would require the support of their system, including co-workers, to implement the assessment. This is understandable, since 96% of participants rated the teacher as an appropriate rater. Naturally, they would need the support of their coworkers to implement the assessment. Participants indicated that they would require parental collaboration, assistance from other adults and support from their coworkers in order to implement DBR. They also specify that they could not implement DBR by themselves. However, they did indicate that they would not need consultative support or support from their administrators.

Overall, the combined scores on the URP-A indicated that the participants perceived DBR as a usable tool for conducting behavior assessments. This is significant because perceived usage may lead to actual usage that is effective and conducted with integrity. Further research would be needed to confirm this.

The preference assessment results were compared with the previous preference assessment studies conducted on both teachers and schools psychologists by Chafouleas and colleagues (2006), Riley-Tillman and colleagues (2008) and Riley-Tillman and colleagues (in development). Overall, results were consistent with the previous studies. Specifically, teachers were reported as the most appropriate rater, they preferred behaviors worded in a positive manner, they preferred to rate one or two behaviors at a time once a day during thirty minute observation periods. In addition, past studies and the current study report that moderate behaviors are the most appropriate to rate for both academic and social problems, and medium stake educational decisions were the most suitable. The consistency of these results further strengthen that both teachers and School Psychologists find these facets important and should be taken into consideration when reviewing the instrumentation and procedures of DBR and when revising and further developing the tool.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the response rate received. 82 (16%) responses were received from the 500 surveys sent out. Only 58 (12%) of the responses were usable data. In addition, several participants who responded indicated they were not familiar with DBR, and did not feel they would be able to complete the survey. In future studies, it should be made clear up front, that knowledge of DBR is not a pre-requisite to complete the survey.

Another limitation was that 10% of the respondents did not identify themselves as School Psychologists. While it is interesting to see the views of other individuals close to the field, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceived use of DBR by School Psychologists. However, since all respondents were members of NASP, it can be assumed that

they have knowledge of school psychology, and therefore their results were included in the study.

Although 93% of respondents indicated using a tool like DBR in the past, it is not known if the people who participated were interested in DBR or if the majority of school psychologists in general are using DBR in the field. Therefore, we cannot confidently generalize the results across all school psychologists.

Conclusions

This present study's findings suggest that School Psychologists find DBR as an acceptable and feasible tool to use for behavioral assessment purposes. Participants indicated an adequate amount of understanding and knowledge of the procedures and instrumentation of DBR. Due to the large majority of participants indicating teachers as appropriate raters (96%), future studies should continue to assess teacher's views of acceptability across the additional constructs. Several studies have been conducted to improve training of DBR for teachers, and with this training, understanding and knowledge of DBR should improve. Studies should further investigate teacher's perceived feasibility and the support that would be required from their system to implement the assessment. These four facets should be examined to determine the perceived use of DBR among teachers. In addition, several other individuals were noted as being appropriate raters (60% assistants, 58% students, 44% parents, and 28% administrators). To date, only school psychologists and teachers perspectives have been examined. Future studies could focus on these diverse individuals and their preferences and acceptability to the use of DBR. Particularly students and parents, as they serve as a vital part in the changing and monitoring behavior, outside of schools.

Implications

In this era of emphasis on collecting and reporting data on all students (not just special education students), it is imperative that tools are used with integrity and are considered acceptable and feasible. Users of the tools should have a firm understanding of how these tools are implemented, and should be able to use the tools independently. All of these factors relate directly to the perceived usage of the tool by the individual. Results of this study, in addition to past research on DBR, indicate that school psychologists perceive it to be a usable and useful tool in behavioral assessment. School psychologists have found the DBR to be both acceptable, feasible and they have a firm understanding for the tool. The fact that 96% of respondents believe a teacher or coworker is the appropriate rater indicates that system support for implementing the tool is required. With these findings, it is likely that DBR will be implemented with integrity, and is a viable alternative to other behavioral assessment techniques that are not as feasible, understood or acceptable.

In addition to the results found on perceived usage and acceptability, the different aspects of the preference assessment gives insight to the further development of DBR instrumentation and procedures. This information, as well as the information provided in past studies, is essential for developing recommendations regarding DBR use and application across assessment settings.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

East Carolina University



December 8, 2009

Jessica Amon, Graduate Student
Psychology Department
104 Rawl Bldg.

RE: **Exempt Certification** for UMCIRB #: 09-0845
Funding Source: Project VIABLE

Title of Research: Acceptability, Perceived Usage, and Preference of Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR) among School Psychologists

Dear Ms. Amon:

On 12/8/09, the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) determined that your research meets ECU requirements and federal exemption criterion #2 which includes research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects and any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your Internal Processing Form and Protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

The UMCIRB Office will hold your exemption application for a period of five years from the date of this letter. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit an Exemption Certification Request at least 30 days before the end of the five year period.

Sincerely,

Chairperson, University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board

Attachments: None

APPENDIX B: COVER LETTER

Principal Investigator: Jessica Amon, MA/CAS student

Advisor: Timothy C. Riley-Tillman, Ph.D.

Study Title: Acceptability, Perceived Usage and Preference of Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR) among School Psychologists

You are invited to participate in a survey about acceptability and perceived usage of a behavior assessment method, Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR). Although various behavior assessment tools are commonly used to monitor the effects of an intervention, limited investigations have specifically examined perceptions of the tool from the perspective of the intended user. In addition, limited information regarding the preferences related to DBR instrumentation and procedures is available. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the acceptability, use, and related perceptions of this behavior monitoring technique in a sample of school psychologists. Participation in this study will involve 4 parts. First, you will complete a brief demographic survey and answer short questions about your experience with Direct Behavior Rating (DBR). Next, you will read a description of DBR and a case study involving use of DBR to monitor student behavior in response to an intervention. Third, you will complete a brief rating of your preferences related to instrumentation and procedures for DBR. Finally, you will complete a questionnaire about your perceived usage of DBR. We believe there are no significant risks associated with participation in this study. One slight inconvenience may be the time it will take you to complete the survey – approximately 15-20 minutes. Your participation will be anonymous and you may only be contacted again as part of establishing reliability of the survey. You will not be paid for being in this study. Although there are no direct individual benefits to participation, results of this study will benefit the field of education and School Psychology by providing information about the acceptability, preference and perceived usage of this behavior monitoring technique. In addition, we would be happy to share the results of this project with you if you indicate that you would be interested in receiving a copy.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. We will be happy to answer any questions you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact me, Jessica Amon at 919-738-0757 or jga1006@ecu.edu, or my advisor, Dr. T. Chris Riley-Tillman at 252-328-1371. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Chair of the University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board at phone number 252-744-2914.

Sincerely,

Jessica Amon
East Carolina University

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questionnaire

Please complete the following items:

1. *Gender:* Male Female

2. *Racial/Ethnic Background:* American Indian or Alaska Native Asian or Pacific Islander Caucasian Black, African American Spanish/Hispanic Other _____

3. *State in which you are currently employed:* _____

4. *Job title:* _____

5. *Years employed as a school psychologist:*
 0 – 5 6– 10 11 – 15 16 or more

6. *Employment status:* Full time Part Time Not Currently Working

7. *Type of setting in which you work:*
 Public school Private school Other _____

8. *Population area in which you work (check the best description):*
 Urban Suburban Rural Other _____

9. *Age group with which you work (check all that apply):*
 Preschool Elementary School Middle School
 High School Other

10. *Type of students with which you work (check all that apply):*
 Regular ed. Special ed. Other _____

11. *What is your highest level of education*
 Masters Masters/Specialist PhD, EdD, PsyD Other _____

12. *Which of the categories below BEST describes the approach you use in your practice as a school psychologist? (Please pick only one)*
 Ecological Psychodynamic Cognitive/Behavioral
 Behavioral/analytical Eclectic/integrative Family Systems
 Other: _____

APPENDIX D: DBR EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Direct Behavior Ratings (DBR) Experience Questionnaire

Please consider your **Typical** use of the DBR when answering the following:

Brief Description:

A direct behavior rating scale (DBR) involves brief ratings of student behavior, and then the sharing of that information with another person. The DBR can be used as a tool to monitor student behavior and/or used as an intervention to change student behavior.

General Information

1. *Have you ever used a tool like the DBR?*

- Yes No

If no-stop here.

2. *Do you use another term for the DBR?*

- Home note
 Daily report card
 Daily behavior report card
 Home-school note
 Good behavior note
 Other: _____

3. *What is your typical reason for using the DBR?*

- To monitor or observe student behavior
 To change student behavior
 To communicate with others about behavior
 Other: _____

APPENDIX E: BRIEF OVERVIEW AND CASE STUDY

Brief Overview and Case Study

DIRECT BEHAVIOR RATING (DBR) refers to a unique behavior assessment method that combines characteristics of direct observation methods and behavior rating scales. Within this type of method, DBRs have been called Home-School Note, Behavior Report Card, Daily Progress Report, Good Behavior Note, etc. These tools are designed to be used in a formative (repeated) fashion to represent behavior that occurs over a particular period of time (e.g., 4 weeks) and under specific and similar conditions (e.g., 45 min. morning seat work). Using these tools requires rating target behavior on a scale (e.g., rating the degree to which Johnny was actively engaged.)

DBR demonstrates the following four characteristics:

- I. The behavior of interest must be specifically defined.
- II. The observations should be made under the same conditions.
- III. The DBR should be used in a specific time, place, and at fixed frequency.
- IV. The data must be scored and summarized in a consistent manner.

As an intervention monitoring tool DBR has been used to rate social behaviors ranging from inappropriate verbalizations as to aggression as well as academic behaviors from work completion to task accuracy.

Many potential uses for the DBR:

- ❖ Increase communication (teacher-student, home-school)
- ❖ As a part of an intervention package, particularly in self-management
- ❖ Provide “quick” assessment of behaviors, especially those not easily captured by other means
- ❖ Monitor student behavior over time

DBR Case Example

Mr. Cohen is the sole school psychologist in Sunnyvale, a small, rural district. One of the teachers in the elementary school, Ms. Yoon, recently implemented a token economy in her classroom in an effort to increase pro-social behaviors among a small group of her students during cooperative learning activities. Although Ms. Yoon *thinks* that the intervention has been successful (she told Mr. Cohen that “the classroom environment feels more positive”), she would like to know for sure and asks Mr. Cohen to help her collect data to support this belief. Mr. Cohen is pleased that Ms. Yoon has sought him out and certainly wants to help, but his schedule is barely manageable over the next few weeks given other commitments. Thus, Ms. Yoon and Mr. Cohen agree to have Ms. Yoon collect data using a DBR, with Mr. Cohen coming in periodically (i.e., once per week) to supplement the DBR data with systematic direct observations.

Adapted from Chafouleas, S.M., Riley-Tillman, T.C., & Sugai, G. (2007)

APPENDIX F: PREFERENCE ASSESSMENT

Preference Assessment

Directions: For each question below please indicate your choice.

1. I prefer to rate a student with a DBR:
 Once a day Twice a day Once a week Twice a week Bi-monthly
2. I prefer to rate a student on a DBR:
 With a Continuous Line Without a Continuous Line
3. I prefer to rate students on a scale with:
 3 points 6 points 10 points 20 points 100 points
4. I prefer to rate students on a DBR where the behavior is worded in a:
 Positive Manner (i.e. Chris remained on task for 30 minutes)
 Negative Manner (i.e. Chris called out 3 or more times in a 30 minute period)
5. I prefer to use a DBR that uses:
 Percents as Anchors Real Numbers as Anchors (i.e. 10 minutes)
6. I prefer to rate this many behaviors at a time with DBR:
1 2 3 5 10
7. Who do you believe is an appropriate rater for DBR (check all that apply):
 Teacher Parent Student Assistant School Psychologist
 Administrator
8. What type/severity of **social** problem is best to rate using a DBR:
 Minor Moderate Serious
9. What type/severity of **academic** problem is best to rate using a DBR?
 Minor Moderate Major
10. When do you believe DBR information is the most effective for special education decisions:
 Low Stakes Medium Stakes High Stakes
11. How long of an observation do you prefer when using DBR:
 30 minute 60 minute 90 minute Half-day Full-day
12. I prefer to use DBR to rate:
 Event behaviors (i.e. kicking/calling out) State Behaviors (i.e. time on task)

Rate on a Scale of 1-6:

1: Strongly Disagree, 2:Disagree, 3:Somewhat Disagree, 4:Somewhat Agree, 5: Agree, 6:Strongly Agree

13. I think that Academic Engagement is an important behavior to rate:

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. I think that Disruptive Behavior is an important behavior to rate:

1 2 3 4 5 6

15. I think that Respectfulness is an important behavior to rate:

1 2 3 4 5 6

16. Please identify any other behaviors you think would be important or relevant to include on DBR:

APPENDIX G: USAGE RATING PROFILE-ASSESSMENT

Usage Rating Profile- Assessment (URP-A)

Directions: For each item, respond according to the strength of your agreement, scoring the item on a scale of 1 through 6.

1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Somewhat Disagree 4: Somewhat Agree 5: Agree 6: Strongly Agree

1. The amount of time required to use this assessment is reasonable.

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. I would implement this assessment with a good deal of enthusiasm.

1 2 3 4 5 6

3. The assessment could be implemented for the duration of time as prescribed.

1 2 3 4 5 6

4. The amount of time required for record keeping with this assessment is reasonable.

1 2 3 4 5 6

5. I am motivated to try this assessment.

1 2 3 4 5 6

6. I would need consultative support to implement this assessment.

1 2 3 4 5 6

7. All pieces of this assessment could be implemented precisely.

1 2 3 4 5 6

8. The assessment could be implemented with the intensity as prescribed.

1 2 3 4 5 6

9. I would have positive attitudes about implementing this assessment.

1 2 3 4 5 6

10. I understand the procedures of this assessment.

1 2 3 4 5 6

11. I would know what to do if I was asked to implement this assessment.

1 2 3 4 5 6

12. Overall, the assessment is beneficial for the child.

1 2 3 4 5 6

13. Implementation of this assessment would require support from my co-workers.

1 2 3 4 5 6

14. Parental collaboration is required in order to use this assessment.

1 2 3 4 5 6

15. The requirements for implementing this assessment are unclear.

1 2 3 4 5 6

16. I would not be interested in implementing this assessment.

1 2 3 4 5 6

17. This assessment could be implemented exactly as described.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. This assessment is a good way to handle the child's behavior problem.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
19. I could only implement this assessment with assistance from other adults.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. The assessment is a fair way to handle the child's behavior problem.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
21. This assessment is reasonable for the problem behavior described.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
22. I could implement this assessment by myself.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
23. I would need support from my administrator to implement this assessment.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
24. I would be resistant to use this assessment.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
25. This assessment could be implemented as frequently as described.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
26. This is an acceptable assessment strategy for the child's problem behavior.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
27. I would be excited to use this assessment.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
28. This assessment is an effective choice for addressing a variety of problems.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
29. This assessment would not be disruptive to other students.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
30. I have the skills needed to implement this assessment.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
31. Use of this assessment would save time spent on classroom management.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
32. I understand how to use this assessment.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
33. I am knowledgeable about the assessment procedures.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6
34. I liked the procedures used in this assessment.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6

35. I would have no idea how to implement this assessment.

1 2 3 4 5 6

36. The directions for using this assessment are clear to me.

1 2 3 4 5 6