

Project VIABLE: Acceptability, Perceived Usage & Preference of DBR

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Project VIABLE

This study represents one of several investigations initiated under Project VIABLE. Through Project VIABLE, empirical attention is being directed toward the development and evaluation of formative measures of social behavior involving a direct behavior rating (DBR). The goal of Project VIABLE is to examine the DBR through 3 phases of investigation including (1) foundations of measurement, (2) decision making and validity, and (3) feasibility.

Introduction

This study was designed to examine the perceived usage of 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. DBR tools have been used to measure behavior in response to an intervention, serve as an intervention tool, and to facilitate parent-teacher communication (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman & Sugai, 2007; Christ, Riley-Tillman, & Chafouleas, 2009). One critical assumption of the DBR is that School Psychologists and teachers view it as acceptable and are oriented towards using it.

Research has suggested that DBR has high social acceptability (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman & Sassu, 2006). A review of the literature on acceptability in related fields has implied that it is directly related to the use as well as the fidelity of implementation (Kazdin, 1980). In addition, it has been suggested that other components beyond acceptability may affect the use of an intervention or assessment tool (Sterling-Turner & Watson, 2002). Specifically, the review suggested that feasibility, understanding and support from the system should be considered when determining perceived usage (Reimers, Wacker, & Koeppel 1987; Becker, 1985; Witt and Martens, 1983). 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.

The purpose of the current study was 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 its strengths and weaknesses by systematically replicating the previous preference assessment studies done with teachers and school psychologists by Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman & Sassu (2006), Riley-Tillman, Chafouleas & Eckert (2008) and Riley-Tillman, Chafouleas, Music & Christ (in development).

Materials and Methods

Participants included a sample of 58 members of the National Association of School Psychologists who responded to survey. 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

Preference Assessment

The first twelve questions on the preference assessment 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. 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%). They indicated that they preferred the scale to have three points (44%). The majority of participants indicated teacher as an appropriate rater (96%). For severity of social and academic problems, they indicated that moderate social problems were the best to rate (96%).

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 1

Usage Rating Profile-Assessment

The thirty-six question assessment 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. Results for the four cluster scores are shown in Table 2.

As indicated in Table 2, 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.

The Systems Support cluster had considerable variability between responses. 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.

Table 1. Results of Common Behaviors Preferred on DBR

Behavior	Mean	SD
Academic Engagement	5.23	.87
Disruptive Behavior	5.21	1.05
Respectfulness	3.75	1.49

Table 2. Results for Cluster Scores on URP-A.

Cluster	Mean	SD
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

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 of behavior, outside of schools.

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