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Educators' Perspectives on VM in an Inclulsive Preschool Classroom

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by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Jean, and my daughters Katelyn and Emma, for their support, encouragement, and sacrifice. Thank you for believing in me, I love you.

To my parents for their encouragement and support, thank you. To my friends and family who prayed for me and supported me, thank you.

To my sister Julie, and dear friend and colleague, Danielle, for nudging us all along, sometimes kicking and screaming. Thank you! We did it!

To my advisor Jane, for her guidance through this unknown territory of research and writing, and providing me encouragement along the way, I thank you.

For the verse that I prayed often during this journey, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." Phil. 4:13, all glory to God.

Abstract

The use of video modeling (VM) and video self-modeling (VSM) to increase compliance, improve targeted behaviors, and assist with transitions has been proven successful for children at varying developmental levels. This study's purpose was to identify early childhood staff perspectives on the use of VM as a tool for increasing pro social interactions, compliance, and participation for preschoolers with disabilities in the general education setting. A survey research design was chosen to gather the perceptions and opinions of early childhood team members with varying roles and educational levels and included data collection that was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. This case study explored one school district's inclusive early childhood program where children with special needs participate in the general education setting supported by special education staff. Results of this study indicated that early childhood team members agree that VM is an effective technique for increasing student success with transitions and participation in the early childhood classroom.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Within the majority of inclusive preschool programs in the United States, researchers have demonstrated that as much as 25% of a child's day is spent in transition (Schmit, Alper, Raschke, & Ryndak, 2000). To name a few, these transitions could include anything from arrival to play time, play time to clean up, or music time to gross motor time. Any or all of these transitions could potentially be challenging for young children, especially children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or other disabilities. Within most preschool programs, there are typically just a small number of children with ongoing behaviors related to transitions. Research studies have shown that transition challenges are likely caused by the lack of classroom structure, a consistent daily schedule, a high number and lengthy of transitions, or the child's inability to transition from one activity to the next (Buck, 1999; Kern & Vorndran, 2000). To that end, the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) supports the importance of structured and predictable school day routines that promote positive peer interactions, communication, and learning opportunities (Smith, Hemmeter, & Sandall, 2006).

Interventions for Young Children to Improve Transitions

Transitions within a preschool classroom can be a stressful time for children and staff. Children either spend too much time "waiting" or are uncertain of classroom expectations, which can lead to the occurrence of problem behaviors. Studies have found that there are strategies that can be implemented to help transitions go more smoothly that can often turn transitions into learning opportunities (Buck, 1999). To plan for successful transitions, it can be beneficial to think about what to do before the transition, during the transition, and following the transition.

Planning a daily schedule of activities that minimizes the number of transitions the children need to make, particularly the number of transitions in which all of the children have to do the same thing at the same time, is beneficial for both classroom staff and student success. It is also important to plan ahead so that the adults in the room know their role during the transitions. In addition, grouping children based on their levels of either activity or ability, providing transition warnings, and preparing transition cues are all key components that can help children understand what is expected during classroom transitions (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, Artman, & Kinder, 2008). Lastly, visual cues and video models can supplement or replace spoken directions that often increase children's success while decreasing their frustration with transitions. In fact, research has suggested several tools and strategies that can be used successfully to shape children's behavior toward successful transitions in an inclusive early childhood classroom (Crosser, 1992). Early childhood teachers report transitions within their classrooms as a leading cause of challenging behavior. Challenging behavior has been defined as, "A behavior exhibited by a child that results in self-injury to others, causes damage to the physical environment, interferes with the acquisition of a new skill, and/or socially isolates the child" (Reichle, York, & Sigafoos, 1991, p. 215). These behaviors typically occur when a child is looking to gain a desired object or activity or to avoid a non-preferred task or situation. Teachers may assume that a child is being stubborn, intentionally non-compliant, or just having a bad day when in reality the cause of the challenging behavior is simply because the child does not understand what is expected within the daily classroom routine. To assist with determining the function of challenging behaviors, a functional behavioral assessment can be completed (Nielsen, Olive, Donovan, & McEvoy, 1999) to determine which intervention strategies to implement to decrease the identified challenging behavior.

Observational learning (also known as social learning or modeling) involves observing appropriate behaviors and then exhibiting those desired behaviors (Catania, 1984). Young children with ASD or other disabilities often lack the awareness of social learning skills necessary for them to be successful. Thus, these children need to be taught these skills directly within their daily routine. Without social learning skill training within a consistent daily routine, the likelihood of challenging behaviors increases. Research has shown that using visual cues, and fading those cues over time, is likely to increase a child's social interactions, communication skills, and functional skills (Ganz, Kaylor, Bourgeois, & Hadden, 2008; Krantz & McClannahan 1993; Sarokoff, Taylor, & Poulson 2001). When a child can see in a visual cue what is expected of them prior to being asked to complete the action, there is an increased chance of compliant behavior and therefore success for the child and teacher.

The introduction of technology into the classroom has created many debates across educational settings in regards to the effectiveness of devices used in classrooms. The literature base describes how incorporating technology into the classroom has allowed both students and teachers the ability to easily access the Internet, work collaboratively with one another, and enhance both academic achievement and classroom participation (Haugland, 2000). One of the many benefits of the iPad that researchers focused attention on was the concept of Video Modeling (VM). Cardon and Wilcox (2011) researched the functional correlation between using VM with young children with ASD and improved imitation skills. The concept of VM has been known for over 50 years, although it was not until devices such as the iPad were used for VM and implemented with students on the ASD spectrum. Ayres and Langone (2005) and Charlop-Christy, Le, and Freeman (2000) conducted research studies that looked at whether video self-

modeling (VSM) could improve certain skills in children with ASD. Their results indicated that children exposed to VSM acquired skills faster.

Statement of the Problem

Children with ASD and other disabilities tend to have more difficulties in transitioning from one activity to the next as compared to their same aged typically developing peers. Sadly, these children can be so resistant to complying within transitions that they exhibit non-compliance to requests or aggressive behaviors toward peers or adults. This type of behavior challenges classroom staff that is responsible for the instructional flow for all of the children in an inclusive preschool program.

It is critical that a child be taught the necessary skills to use when transitioning during a preschool day. These skills can include finding their name, cleaning up toys, preparing for snack, sitting on a specific spot for group time, or washing their hands. In doing so, children will be able to predict the daily classroom routine to support successful transitioning, and in turn, decrease the possibility of challenging behaviors occurring (Nielsen et al., 1999). One intervention approach that has been used to foster changes in young children's behavior is VM. Currently, there is little to no research describing educators' perceptions of the use of VM with young children who attend preschool in an inclusive setting.

Importance of Study

The need for evidenced-based interventions identifying effective behavioral treatments for neuro-developmental disorders should be based on a strong foundation of scientific evidence. Scientific investigation is critical for identifying evidence-based treatments and has received increased recognition in the field. Identified as a critical part of federal legislation under the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), the field of education requires the

use of "effective interventions" to support learning. These interventions can only be validated through "scientifically-based research," which is defined as "research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In order for a practice to be deemed scientific, it must meet specific standards, show reliability and validity, and undergo a rigorous peer review process (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004). A common barrier to the adoption of evidenced-based practices for ASD is the lack of agreement on how to identify and evaluate scientifically valid and effective interventions. It is imperative that the team consider the pairing of the needs of the individual with ASD and the focus of the intervention. There is no one universally effective intervention for all children with ASD. Many of the best programs incorporate various research-based interventions and prioritize the individual needs of children with ASD and their families (Simpson, 2005). In order to make the best educational decisions regarding effective interventions, it is necessary to first understand the perceptions of those who make these educational decisions.

Purpose of Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to gain preschool staff perspectives on the effectiveness of VM, when used as a strategy to increase student success and participation in daily activities during a preschool day. VM has been used in a number of situations, including multiple desired skills, such as communication, appropriate behavior, introducing new food items, positive social interaction, to name a few. While there have been a number of studies done on VM, there continues to be a need for more studies supporting the use of VM in improving one's behavior in the educational environment (Buggey & Ogle, 2012; Dowrick, Prater, & Hitchcock, 2003). VM has been used with individuals and groups, but there have not been as many group studies as

individual studies. VM has been shown in studies to be an effective tool across a wide range of age groups, children's abilities, and behaviors. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on preschool age children who have special needs, ranging from 3-5 years of age who attend an inclusive preschool classroom. To meet this study purpose, the overall research question is: How are early childhood educators and their staff using video modeling within inclusive preschool classrooms to increase pro social behaviors?

Conceptual Framework

VM is an intervention that involves an individual viewing a video of a desired behavior. It was first introduced in the 1970s when Albert Bandura birthed the concept of observational learning, or modeling (Bellini & Akullian, 2007; Dowrick, Prater & Hitchock, 2003). This concept is part of the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which suggests the idea that an individual can learn new behaviors without experiencing them firsthand. Bandura explained how someone can acquire new patterns of behavior through observation of physical demonstrations of the behavior, through receiving verbal instructions, such as reading a manual, or by viewing video or pictures of the behavior such as in television or films. By highlighting that individuals are able to acquire new behaviors by watching filmed or televised models, Bandura's social learning theory laid the theoretical foundation for using VM interventions as a means of changing behaviors.

Studies have concurred that young children have the ability to learn through observation (Ganz et al., 2008; Krantz & McClannahan 1993; Sarokoff et al., 2001). One of the most influential learning theories, the Social Learning Theory, was developed by Albert Bandura. It incorporated concepts of traditional learning theory and the operant conditioning of B.F. Skinner. The theory specifically implies that there are types of learning in which direct reinforcement is

not the causal mechanism; instead, the social component can explain development of new learning among individuals. Social learning theory has been influential in describing how people can learn new skills and develop appropriate behaviors by observing other people. It can be assumed therefore, that Social Learning Theory is connected to the observational learning process and influences how individuals process and react to change, both planned and unplanned. For these reasons, this conceptual framework serves as the theoretical foundation for my research study that addresses educators' perceptions of VM.

Conclusion

A variety of interventions have been studied to address ways to decrease challenging behaviors in early learning environments. The introduction of technology into classrooms of all age levels has opened up a whole new world of learning for children and educators. Current research has revealed that video-modeling is an effective strategy that can be used to decrease inappropriate behaviors, teach new behaviors and responses, and improve social and functional interactions to increase independence (Bellini & Akullian, 2007; Delano, 2007). Bandura's social learning theory plays a significant role in depicting the importance of modeling to teach appropriate social interactions and behaviors.

In the next chapter I review literature pertaining to transition difficulties in the early childhood setting, challenging behavior, and the use of VM as a tool to meet the educational needs of children in an inclusive early childhood setting.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

There is a growing body of research available that demonstrated the effectiveness of VM in addressing a number of skill areas as well as a variety of age groups and abilities. For young children with ASD, social/communication challenges, attention deficit, or transitions throughout the school day can be difficult and stressful for both students and classroom staff. These challenges can result in an increase in problematic behaviors including aggression toward others and temper tantrums (Sterling-Turner & Jordan, 2007). For the purposes of this literature review, I review research studies on the use of VM to influence a young child's ability to transition within the educational setting, comply with daily expectations and routines, and manage challenging behaviors. Topics that will be covered in this chapter include transition challenges in the early childhood learning environment, the importance of modeling for children of all abilities, and the description and use of VM as a learning tool to meet the needs of children in an educational setting. Several of the research studies included students of varying ages. The majority of the studies demonstrated positive outcomes in using VM to support young children's ability to transition between activities in an inclusive preschool setting.

Transition Challenges in Early Childhood Classrooms

For children who have ASD or other emotional behavioral disorders, moving from one activity to another can be challenging for both the student and the teacher. Because transitions, either planned or unplanned, occur multiple times in a given school day, proper planning and strategy implementation can significantly reduce problem behavior and increase student independence (Newman et al., 1995). Transitioning successfully from one activity to another

can be difficult for many children, especially children on the ASD spectrum. Throughout a preschool day, children must change from one activity to another and from one setting to another. These types of transitions can be predictable and therefore anticipated in advance. Yet, whether in the home, school, or community, other transitions frequently occur without warning, requiring individuals to stop an activity, move from one location to another, or begin an entirely new activity. Children with ASD may have greater difficulty than others in shifting attention from one task to another to accommodate changes of routine. This may be due to a greater need for predictability (Brigid Flannery & Horner, 1994), difficulty processing what activity will be coming next (Mesibov & Shea, 2011), or difficulty when a pattern of behavior is disrupted. There are many hypotheses as to why individuals with ASD resist transitions and routine changes, whether planned or unplanned. One frequently referenced explanation is the predictability hypothesis (Brigid Flannery & Horner, 1994). This study suggested that individuals may not show awareness of environmental cues indicating an upcoming change in activity. In turn, this lack of environmental awareness caused greater disruption for the child who then is likely to be resistant to change or displayed restricted interests and behavior patterns. Brigid Flannery and Horner compared the results of two young males with varying disabilities including ASD. For the purposes of the study, both boys were either given cues or signals to indicate an upcoming change in the schedule or the signals were withheld. The outcome of the study showed a decrease in challenging behavior for both participants in the study when signals were given to indicate a schedule change for both routine and novel activities. Results of this study suggested that providing transition cues for upcoming change in routine decreased problem behaviors.

A number of supports to assist individuals with ASD during transitions have been explored in the research on this topic. Transition strategies are techniques used to support individuals with ASD during changes in or disruptions to activities, settings, or routines. These transition strategies are designed to prepare individuals with ASD before the transition will occur and to support the individual during the transition. Visual supports such as social stories, picture cues, and video models are just a few of the strategies recognized in research that have been deemed successful for assisting children with transitions throughout the day (Ostrosky, Jung, Hemmeter, & Thomas, 2002).

In a study by Schmit et al. (2000), visual support cards were used with a 6-year-old child with ASD to indicate an upcoming transition. The student had presented with aggression and tantrums in times of transition throughout the school day. A multiple baseline was initiated to evaluate strategies implemented for transitions throughout the school day (e.g., recess to class, class to library, activity to activity within class). The intervention paired visual cues with verbal cues to assist the child in transitioning. Prior to the intervention, the child required physical guidance to transition and, especially if non-compliance or tantrums occurred during transitions. When the intervention was implemented, physical guidance was provided only when non-compliance or aggression occurred. The strategy was found to be successful during three different transitions throughout the school day. Maintenance of this skill was also obtained. This study suggested that fading picture cues and moving to verbal prompts over time in order to achieve the maximal level of independence.

The intended purpose of visual supports for young children with ASD and other disabilities is to help them process classroom expectations and increase independence with following daily routines (Krantz & McClannahan, 1993). Many preschool classrooms have

printed picture schedules that are posted in classrooms to show the order of daily activities (e.g., group time, snack, bathroom, large motor, and free choice). These schedules are beneficial in helping students transition throughout the day from one activity to another. For children with ASD or other disabilities, an individual picture schedule or picture cues may be necessary to support student learning and help the child understand start and end times to activities or what comes first and next in a sequence of events (Sterling-Turner & Jordan, 2007). Dooley, Wilczenski, and Torem (2001) suggested the use of a picture schedule paired with an edible reinforcer to improve transitions for a 3-year-old child with ASD in a preschool setting. The child exhibited aggressive behavior and tantrums when faced with transitions during the school day. To make requests for change in activity, the child removed pictures from visual schedule. After completing the next activity on the card, an edible reinforcer was provided. Verbal and environmental cues were also provided to indicate one activity ending and another beginning. After six successful intervention sessions, removal of edible reinforcement occurred and intervention was maintained using only the picture schedule.

Non-compliance is a common behavioral issue among children with ASD. Non-compliance is referred to as the inability to follow an instruction within a specific period of time (Fischetti, Wilder, Myers, Leon-Enriquez, Sinn, & Rodriguez, 2012). While it is no longer considered a defining characteristic of ASD, research has suggested that non-compliance continues to be an area of concern for educators and caregivers in their interactions with children with ASD. Using an observational coding system, Bryce and Jahromi (2013) studied 20 children with high functioning ASD and 20 typically developing children by measuring compliant and non-compliant behaviors to parent verbal cueing strategies during clean-up time. A sequential analysis was used to determine if parent commands could predict child compliance or non-

compliance. The study found that those children with high functioning ASD were less compliant than their age typical peers upon receiving parents' indirect request suggesting that children with ASD may require more direct parental support than their age typical peers.

Early childhood educators are struggling and unprepared to meet the needs of children with challenging behaviors (Kaufmann & Wischmann, 1999). Gilliam and Shahar (2006) found that there was a startling increase in the number of preschool children with significant behavioral needs being expelled from community preschool programs and child care facilities of children. Educators reported that challenging behaviors are the largest barrier to effectively meeting the needs of all students in an early childhood classroom. In this study, a sample of 185 preschool classrooms with children 3 to 4 years of age were selected from over 500 community-based preschool programs and licensed child care providers in Massachusetts during the 2001-2002 school year. The research included both public and private preschool programs but no in-home child care providers were included. Surveys were obtained from 119 teachers across six regions in Massachusetts, with a total of 60 different child care facilities. For the purpose of the survey, each teacher was asked four questions regarding preschool expulsion and suspension policies. There was a 64.32% response rate and responses were coded for identification of public or private school, Head Start, for-profit child care center, faith-based program, or other nonprofit child care program. Results from this study suggested that preschoolers had a much higher rate of expulsion and a lower rate of suspension compared to K-12 students. The expulsion rate for Massachusetts' preschoolers (27.42 per 1000 students) was significantly higher compared to K-12 students (.80 expulsions per 1000 students). Descriptive analyses used in this study found that 39.3% of teachers reported student expulsion and 14.7% reported student suspension for at least one child from the program they had taught over the course of a school year. Survey results

incorporated in this study indicated that the expulsion rate is significantly higher than the suspension rate for preschoolers compared to K-12 students.

Importance of Modeling for Children

Learning through observation and imitation is a critical part of skill development in young children with and without disabilities. Even in the early weeks and months of an infant's life, observational learning is taking place and begins the shaping of a young child's mind. According to Carroll and Bandura (1987), a child's ability to retain information is supported by visual observation, cognitive repetition, and the act of carrying out the observed behavior. Bandura (1986) suggested that children are more likely to learn through modeling and observation than they are through experience. Bandura went on to explain that when children observe behaviors or actions of others and the potential consequences, it can promote or discourage a child's own behavior. In addition, Bandura (1997) noted that the most effective models tend to be those that are closest to the observer's age and display traits or characteristics similar to the observer. Further, a child's attention and motivation toward the video, retention and memory, and imitation of the target behavior are essential to learning a new behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Benefits of Video Modeling

VM is an intervention technique that has been developed to facilitate observational learning. VM teaches a desired or target behavior through the use of a model or demonstration of the behavior through video footage for the child to observe (Bellini, Akullian, & Hopf, 2007; McCoy & Hermarisen, 2007). By using this technique, the child's attention is focused on one activity and provides the observer an opportunity to imitate, adapt, or generalize their behaviors

to parallel the observed target behaviors. Research supports the use of VM with peers, adults, or oneself as the model (Bellini et al., 2007; Corbett, 2003; Wert & Neisworth, 2003).

Bellini et al. (2007) evaluated VSM in a preschool class to determine its effectiveness as a tool to improve social interactions for two preschool age children with ASD. The emphasis of this study was to teach social skills using peers rather than adults and in a natural setting rather than a clinical setting. The two young boys in the study were prompted by their teacher using a specific phrase such as "my turn" in order to engage a typical peer. Video clips of various play requests and other spontaneous play interactions were spliced together to create a video that showed the children interacting with their peers in play. The video was then shown to the young boys with ASD. The results of this study depicted gains in social interactions for the boys in both the classroom and on the play ground. The study also showed continued gain in social interactions over time without the use of videos.

In another study, Corbett (2003) used a single case study design to assess the effectiveness of VM as a tool to improve the perception of emotion in a young child with ASD and cognitive delays. The child was shown several video tapes of a typically developing child in social interactions that depicted four specific emotions: happy, scared, mad, and sad. The results of this study indicated that the use of VM was an effective tool to teach emotional response and understanding. In addition, the skill was both maintained and generalized when using behavioral programming.

VM can be used within the classroom, home, and other environments to support children in obtaining skills that they are unable to obtain or develop independently. In a third study, Wert and Neisworth (2003) identified VSM as a promising strategy to expand existing skills as well as teach new skills to young children with ASD. A multiple base line design was used across

participants consisting of four young boys with ASD who ranged from ages 3 to 6 years old. This quasi-experimental design was used to test the effectiveness of VSM in teaching the children to make spontaneous requests in the school setting. Results of the study indicated that VSM led to a significant increase in requesting behavior for all four children. Some things to note in this study were that the targeted behavior was not a brand new skill for these participants. However, it was a skill that was not observed frequently. Also, three of the four students had a strong interest in watching the videos, whereas the fourth student was not interested and showed slower progress than his peers.

In a more recent study, Cihak, Wright, and Ayres (2010) used VM to improve independent transitions for students with ASD. Participants in the study consisted of four elementary school children, all of whom had difficulty transitioning throughout the school day. Ten transitions per day were selected (e.g., classroom to outdoor recess) for each participant, and then assessed using an event recording to document the percentage of independent transitions. Videos were developed using participants as the model of the desired behaviors and shown to the students right before the transition was to occur. Using an ABAB withdrawal multiple baseline, the researchers found that participants successfully transitioned independently following the implementation of VM. In addition, the study found that independent transitioning behaviors were maintained at follow-up. Lastly, VM was perceived as an acceptable intervention by teachers and students. One limitation of this study was that VM was used in combination with least-to-most prompting so that drawing conclusions as to the effectiveness of VM by itself were impossible.

Further research suggested that VM can be used to increase target behaviors and teach daily living skills, thereby increasing success in the general education environment (Shipley-

Benamou, Lutzker, & Tabuman, 2002). Shipley-Benamou et al. used a multiple probe quasi-research design implementing the same tasks across the participants, two boys with ASD and one girl with ASD, all 5 years of age. Research was conducted in the home of each of the children. For each child, baseline data were collected over a 2 week period. A total of five tasks were selected and taught through VM. These tasks included making orange juice, pet care, cleaning a fish bowl, mailing a letter, and setting the table. Each child was reinforced and modifications were made as necessary. Sessions for each phase of data collection included baseline, VM intervention, replication probes, non-video use, and follow up. A task analysis was created and used to evaluate each study. The results of the study indicated that for each of the participants VM was an effective strategy in that the children acquired new skills quickly and maintained the skills learned over time.

Data collected from past VSM studies suggested that VSM has high rates of maintenance and generalization of the desired behavior or task (Buggey & Ogle, 2012). There have been a number studies done on the effects of both VM and VSM (Buggey & Ogle, 2012). The results have been universally positive for both methods. In comparing research findings, VSM has had better or equal results compared to peer-modeling, suggesting that VSM might be a slightly more effective method. In addition, studies on VSM also reported solid generalization among participants as well as successful maintenance of the acquired skill. Most studies indicated that VSM yields positive results, with the exception of some preschool studies (Buggey & Ogle, 2013). For example, Buggey and Ogle evaluated the effectiveness of VSM to improve social interactions among very young typically-developing children and children with ASD during classroom and playground activities. The children's ages in this study ranged between 2 years, 6 months, and 3 years of age. An important factor in this study is that it was the first project to

evaluate the results of VSM with children who did not have a diagnosed disability. Videos were created to include examples of physical approach to another child, parallel play, and interactive play. While it appeared in the study that all of the children were attending to the video being played, there were no changes in social interactions observed following the intervention. These findings could pose additional questions about the effectiveness of VSM for very young children, especially in the area of social skills training. One factor that may have affected the results of this study could have been the history these children had together in the same preschool setting for longer than 6 months. The typically developing children may have possibly experienced "rejections" from their peers with ASD in social situations so that the intervention setting was previously biased. It is believed that in order for children to gain self-efficacy from a video self-modeling, they need to have the ability to attend to the video and recognize themselves in the video. Because younger children may not have this ability, VSM may not always be an effective technique for younger children. Of the more than 40 studies reported in Buggey and Ogle (2012), only three studies indicated no change in performance of skills while the remainder of the studies reported improvement in targeted skills. Two of the three studies that showed no improvement were studies using preschoolers as participants.

Conclusion

Overall, there is sufficient research to indicate that VM is a successful intervention for improving compliance, decreasing challenging behaviors, and teaching functional skills to increase student success in the early childhood inclusive classroom (Bellini & Akullian, 2007; Bandura, Prochaska, & Velicer, 1997; Buggey, 2005; Delano, 2007; Dowrick, 1999; Newman, 1995; Smith et al., 2013). While many of the reviewed studies focus on the implications of VM for children with ASD, the use of VM as a strategy has been suggested for children with various

disabilities. Research also concluded that the success of VM as an intervention is not limited to the participants' age or gender. In the following chapter, I detail the research study that proposes to extend our understanding of using VM as an intervention for young children who attend an inclusive preschool program.

Chapter 3: Method

Purpose of the Study

Learning through imitation is a key component of skill development for all young children. For many years, parents, teachers, and other professionals have researched a variety of approaches to instruct children with ASD and other disabilities. Many strategies have been explored to increase independence for children with disabilities, particularly in the areas of language, social interactions, and functional skills. VM is one strategy that has been shown to be effective for students with ASD in particular. Thus, the purpose of my study was to gain teacher perspectives on the use of VM as an effective tool for increasing pro social interactions, compliance and participation for preschoolers with disabilities in the general education setting.

Research Question

To address the purpose of my study, I posed the following research question:

How are early childhood educators and their staff using visual modeling within inclusive preschool classrooms to increase pro social behaviors?

Research Design

A survey research design was chosen using electronic distribution methods to gather the perceptions and opinions of licensed teacher staff as well as non-licensed educational team members. This case study explored one school district's inclusive early childhood program where children with special needs participated in the general education setting supported by special education staff. The survey instrument used open and closed survey items so that information gathered included data that are both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

Setting

The research was being conducted in an early childhood center in a rural locale of a Midwestern state. The lifelong learning center is a building that houses programs for all age levels. The Early Childhood programs include Preschool, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). All preschool programs are fully inclusive and special education services are provided to children with special needs within the classroom.

Participants

The participants in this study included preschool teachers, early intervention teachers, speech clinicians, occupational therapists, adapted physical education teachers, school psychologists, educational assistants, and Autism spectrum disorder consultants.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection method that I used is Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is an online tool developed by researchers for creating and delivering surveys, obtaining responses, and analyzing results. Using a researcher-developed survey, I pilot tested my survey with an individual who had a comparable educational background, training, and experience to the participants in my study. Once revised by any suggestions that emerged from the pilot test, I distributed the survey via email to the chosen participants using the link provided in Survey Monkey. Follow-up emails were sent 1 and 3 weeks after the original surveys were sent to increase my survey project response rate.

Data Analysis

The numeric data collected in the survey was tabulated electronically and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data collected from open ended questions in the survey were examined for specific patterns and themes that will help form the conclusions of my survey research project.

Chapter 4: Results

Overview

The purpose of my survey was to obtain educators' perceptions on the use of VM to increase pro social behaviors in the inclusive preschool classroom. Results of the research obtained through my survey are described below and demonstrated in Table 1.

Demographic Results

The participants in my survey research study served a variety of educational roles. These roles included: early childhood special education teachers (n=7), speech language pathologists (n=2), preschool teachers (n=4), educational assistants (n=5), and a few other educational service providers (n=4) also participated in this survey. The participants surveyed had experience in early childhood education ranging from 1 to 5 years of experience (n=7), 5 to 10 years of experience (n=3), and 11 or more years of experience (n=12). In addition, the educational level of the survey participants included those having some college (n=4), a Bachelor's Degree (n=10), or a Master's Degree (n=8).

Numeric Results

Table 1. Visual Modeling (VM) Results by Participant Perceptions and Percentages

Survey Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. VM Understanding	--	--	50% (n=11)	50% (n=11)
2. VM Implementing	--	40.09% (n=9)	40.9% (n=9)	18.2% (n=4)
3. VM Training	--	50% (n=11)	40.9% (n=9)	9.1% (n=2)
4. VM for Behaviors	--	--	50% (n=11)	50% (n=11)
5. VM for Transitions	--	4.5% (n=1)	45.5% (n=10)	50% (=11)
6. VM Benefits	--	--	40.9% (n=9)	59.1% (n=13)
7. VM Use	45.5% (n=10)	40.9% (n=9)	13.6% (n=3)	--

When participants were asked if they understood the concept of VM, 50% (n=11) agreed and the other 50% (n=11) strongly agreed. When asked about their confidence with

implementing and creating video models, 40.9% (n=9) of participants disagree, while another 40.9% (n=11) agreed, and 18.2% (n=4) strongly agreed. In regard to adequate training, half of the participants 50% (n=11), strongly disagreed that they have received adequate training on the use of VM, while 40.9% (n=9) agreed, and 9.1% (n=2) strongly agreed. Survey participants were also asked if they felt that VM was an acceptable way of managing behaviors in an inclusive preschool classroom. Responses indicated that 50% (n=11) either strongly agreed or agreed that VM supports behavior management. In regard to VM supporting transitions in the classroom, 4.5% (n=1) disagreed, 45.5% (n=10) agreed, and 50% (n=11) strongly agreed that transitions are supported with this tool. When participants were asked if VM could benefit children with and without disabilities, 40.9% (n=9) agreed and the other 59.1% (n=13) strongly agreed. Lastly, survey participants were asked if they had heard of VM, but are not using it in the classroom. Responses include 45.5% (n=10) strongly disagreed, 40.9% (n=9) disagreed, and 13.6% (n=3) agreed.

Narrative Responses

Survey Questions 4, 5, and 6 requested examples to better clarify participants' perceptions of the use and/or understanding of VM. These responses were either directly related to the survey item content or personal experience comments specific to each question. For a complete record of the raw narrative data, please refer to Appendix A. Selected survey narrative responses are included in Chapter 5 to further explain participants' perceptions.

Conclusion

VM to increase pro social interactions in an inclusive preschool classroom is viewed by educational staff as a tool that can be used successfully as an intervention for children with and without disabilities. Yet, information received through this survey indicated that nearly half of

these educators represented in this study perceived a need for further VM training to increase their confidence in its use. Results of this study will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview

The purpose of my study was to gain educators' perspectives on the use of VM to improve pro social behaviors for preschool age children in an inclusive preschool classroom. In summary, the findings in this study indicated that early childhood educators agree that VM is an effective tool that can be used to improve behaviors and transitions for students in the inclusive preschool setting, however the need for staff training in the design and implementation of VM is lacking.

Discussion of Quantitative Findings

More specifically, the of understanding the concept of VM and the impact it could have on decreasing challenging behaviors and supporting transitions was high for my survey participants as indicated by an equal number of participants that agree (n=11) or strongly agree (n=11). With that being said, the findings of my survey indicated that educators do not feel that they are have adequate training (50%) and are not confident in their ability to implement VM (40.09%) as an educational strategy for children in their classroom. These findings in some ways compare to what was reported by Boudreau and Harvey (2013) when they suggested that social skills training is a missing component from academic programs that incorporate students with ASD. It is important for school administration to be aware of training needed for staff and how to stay current with evidenced-based practices to promote positive social outcomes specifically for students with ASD or students with challenging behaviors.

Discussion of Qualitative Findings

Based on the collection of qualitative data, I found several responses that supported the use of VM to increase participation in the inclusive classroom. One participant stated, "A child was hesitant to participate in activities due to some anxiety, but when shown the video of others completing the activity, he typically will participate." Another educator stated, " A child who would become agitated at clean up time and throw toys was able to successfully end his play time and help clean up after watching a VM of children cleaning up." One participant indicated that she had not actually observed VM being used but could understand how it could be effective based on the idea of modeling and visually seeing something take place rather than only receiving the spoken direction by teacher.

These narrative responses from my research study are similar to results found in an experimental study by Cihak et al. (2010) looking at the use of VM to promote independent transitions. When VM was implemented for children who had difficulty with transitions, there was an increase in independence with transitions and the behaviors were maintained over time. Participants in this study reported that they have observed VM improve children's understanding of routine and decrease behaviors during transitions while limiting disruption in routines.

The responses of my study are similar to what other literature have reported in a second way. For example, Buggey and Ogle (2012) reported solid generalization and maintenance of skills learned through VM among its participants as well as increases in positive social interactions over time when VM was implemented in the preschool setting during classroom activities. Qualitative responses in my study indicated that early childhood staff made observations that indicated VM techniques have been used successfully to increase compliance and independence with self-help, social skills, academic tasks, and task completion. One

participant described how she used VM with a student to break down academic tasks so that the student moved from needing hand over hand support to completing academic tasks with only occasional verbal prompting. Another staff member stated, "We have used VM to show children how to properly line up and walk quietly down the hall. After watching the video the class appeared to use the skills learned in the video from watching it." A finding that I find particularly affirming in this survey is that 100% of my participants either agreed (40.9%) or strongly agreed (59.1%) that VM could benefit children with and without disabilities.

Study Limitations

I have identified three limitations to my research study. First, I had a small number of survey participants. Overall, the response rate was adequate but because of the small number of participants (n =22) the response rate was 76%. I chose to give my survey participants 10 days to respond to my survey. Perhaps if I had allowed more time, the number of participants may have been greater. The second limitation to my study is that all my survey participants were from one school district, therefore survey results cannot be compared or generalized to other school districts. Furthermore, due to the relatively small number of participants and the fact that they were all from the same program in one school district, I was unable to report specific findings according to educator roles in order to maintain confidentiality. The third limitation is due to the cross-sectional study design. The survey data were collected during one single point of time, which makes it challenging to determine if over time, the opinions of the participants might have changed. Collecting data at a different point in time or over time could have yielded a different set of findings.

Next Steps in Research

VM and behavioral change for students with ASD is an important research focus for enhancing inclusive instructional practices in early childhood. While the predictability hypothesis proposed in Brigid Flannery and Horner (1994) could be a possible rationale for transition challenges for students with ASD, there are still unanswered questions as to why some students with ASD continue to struggle with changes in routine that are familiar and consistent. Better success in changing transitional behavior for students with ASD when intervening with VM could lead to a better understanding of these students' specific transition needs. Further, there are only a few research examples of studies using functional analyses during transitions, particularly involving students with ASD. This too could be an area where additional research is warranted. Especially important to the use of VM might be studying interventions where VM is integrated into the behavioral change program to address a specific function of behavior. Another study by Gilliam and Shahar (2006) suggested that further research is warranted to investigate expulsion and suspension practices as well as the development of program policies. Again, studying the use of VM to change preschoolers' challenging behavior to see if expulsion and suspension rates can be improved could produce beneficial information. This type of research could lead to more availability of early education services for those children who could benefit the most from preschool programs.

Conclusion

The results of the current study suggested that early childhood educators are aware of VM as a tool and agree that it is an effective means to change children's behavior and support their transitions in the early childhood classroom. Yet, the information gathered in this survey research indicated that adequate training and practice in implementing VM is a need for this

particular early childhood program. Based on the findings of this study, it will be important for administrators to understand the need for further trainings in the area of VM, evaluate the programs current technology needs to support the use of VM, and provide resources that will build staff confidence and knowledge when using this technique to support children in the early childhood setting. Given the results of my thesis research study, this early childhood staff is eager to best meet the needs of young children by using the strategy of visual modeling to change behavior and improve daily transitions at school for children with and without disabilities in an inclusive preschool classroom.

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Appendix A: Raw Survey Data

Question 4: I believe VM to be an acceptable way of managing a child's problem behavior in an inclusive preschool classroom. Please give examples to support your answer.
A child was hesitant to participate in activities due to some anxiety, but when shown others completing the activity, he typically would comply.
A child who hits frequently
A child who would become agitated at clean up time and throw toys was able to successfully wend his play time and help clean up after watch a video model
Clean up
Demonstrating expected vs unexpected behaviors and how it affects others
Engaging at group time
Help the child engage in the activity they are asked to perform
I believe the challenging behavior stems from not knowing what to do, the video model helps that.
I had a kid be able to sit and accomplish a patterning activity instead of throwing the materials
I have never actually experienced VM, but I can see how it would work just like modeling
I have observed the effects of VM on a child in our program who struggled with transitions and had many problem behaviors during those transition times. VM had a huge impact on this child, and he has been doing awesome with following the routine and his behavior improved.
I have observed VM improve a student's understanding and behaviors in a difficult transition/disruption in routine.
Movement is important part of learning.
Physical movement activities help children learn how to move in their environment. Not only do they learn motor skills, they learn body and spatial awareness, and movement concepts (force, pathways, shapes, levels...). So when asked to: sit next to; walk backwards; reach over; touch softly, children will have a better understanding of what is asked of them.
Research shows a link between movement and learning
Young children learn best when they are engaged.
Young children learn by doing. They are not wired to sit still and absorb information through listening. In addition, today's culture has contributed to short attention spans. Physical activity helps children re-focus and maintain interest

Question 6: I have observed students' participation in physical movement activities improve: communication skills.
Being active increases communication among peers since they are being active. Activities that promote learning actively encourage communication and working together.
Children will sing along with movement songs even if they have difficulty with articulation or a tendency to be less verbal.
I had a student with ASD who had limited communication to others. Very disjointed speech and talked to self and not others. He was given a trike to ride. He rode the trike like he talked. He went too fast, not aware of his surroundings, and crashed into things. When he improved his control of the trike, it was noted that he was able to communicate better his needs. It started while he was riding the trike. During a simple game (McDonald's) answering simple question with on topic answers of 2-5 words. He continued to make improvements with other motor skills and his ability to communicate his needs.
I have incorporated movement during counting of my calendar and now i have many more kids count with me. the song choices that we have actions for more kids sing too
I have observed an introverted child become much more willing to interact with adults and peers during physical activities than while sitting in a group.
I have observed preschool-aged children improve their communication skills while participating in physical movement activities such as in music time. While using their whole bodies, they are learning new words and different ways to express themselves.
I have seen increases in expressive language when children are engaged in movement activities such as pushing down on a toy or throwing a ball.
I think movement makes kids vocalize more, especially in young children.
Location gestures during songs like the bear hunt teach concept words while moving.
More focused and able to participate during large group activities. Raised hand to volunteer information.
Some teachers use motor movement to teach patterns, syllables, and rhyming words. Some children seems to catch on more quickly when the task is paired with an action or movement pattern.
When paired with music, there are opportunities to sing along with movement, and this promotes communication.

Question 6: I have observed students' participation in physical movement activities improve: cognitive skills.
A 20 month old student with Down Syndrome that quickly learned to identify body parts with Head Shoulders Knees & Toes song and action.
A child who struggles to sit still is better able to focus his attention and stay engaged in learning when physical activity is incorporated into learning
Counting skills improved because counting was often used as the child jumped, hopped, etc. Attended better to academic tasks because able to get wiggle outs.
Counting, patterns, syllables of words paired with a movement activity is motivating for the children and gives practice opportunities for skills
During some movement activities, kids learn new rules and how to follow directions.
I have observed children begin to understand positional concepts, colors and counting, and direction following while participating in movement activities. Children seem more motivated to participate in these academic tasks when they are able to get up and move.
I have observed teachers using movement to teacher colors, shapes, patterns, and numbers and feel that attending and comprehension is improved through repetition and movement.
I have seen children's attention to a task and retention of information improve when they add movement to a learning activity.
I observed kids retain information when it was set to music and movement.
In the area of mat, I do movements where students have to count. They learn numbers are concrete. Example would be, jumping forward 5 times, or catching a ball 5 times. First we count together and then we progress through time were they count on their own.
last year I did me moves (they watch/copy somebody doing different movements with their arms) before small groups and their bodies were much calmer and ready to attend the task
Using balls at desks or standing improves attention in the classroom.
When students are working together and being active they are more likely to remember what they learned or are learning.

Question 6: I have observed students' participation in physical movement activities improve: motor skills.
A child who is not exposed to physical movement activities has a harder time successfully participating in movement activities. A child who was not exposed to movement activities and learned to jump with two feet together, will tend to jump with feet apart and move forward in a gallop pattern.
Both fine and gross motor skills can be improved through movement. Some children are better able to cut when standing vs. sitting. Kids practice balance, attending, and coordination by participating in Red/light/green light for example.
Gross and fine motor skills are improved during movement activities that incorporate many muscles and work on coordination.
I have observed children in physical movement activities improve their strength and coordination, and hand and eye coordination.
I have seen coordination and retention of directions improve with movement. This seems like an area of strong correlation!
Movement on a daily basis improved motor skills.
Not sure if I have a specific example but the more they use their muscles the better they get. writing and drawing activities increase their fine motor skills to better write their name and draw things with more details
Physical activity helps strengthen muscles and improve motor skills
Physical movement activities promote practice & improvement in motor skills.
The best way to improve motor skills is through using movement.
The more opportunities they have to practice the skill the more it helps.
The more you move your body in directed ways the more you become aware of your body and what is does or can do.
You cannot gain motor skills by sitting and discussing them. Kids need to be active to gain motor skills.

Question 6: I have observed students' participation in physical movement activities improve: social skills.
Children connect more on the playground using their large motor more than in the classroom where the activities are more structured.
During some movement activities, kids need to gain the attention of a peer. They also practice taking turns.
Games such as ring around the rosie, parachute games, red rover, etc. are all movement activities that can improve social interactions. In the classroom, using a welcome song paired with movement/gestures can be used to work on peers names, and building confidence.
I have observed children becoming more confident in their ability to interact with others, more aware of others children while participating in physical movements activities.
I have observed many children who are extremely shy and sometimes do not even respond to peers while sitting in groups or even playing quietly engage in play with peers during physical activities and large motor play.
Kids are more engaged when movement is incorporated into a learning/social opportunity, which means they are having more fun and bonding with each other. I have seen kids watch each other, smile, and laugh when adding movement to songs.
Many motor activities include the opportunity to interact with others, whether it is by having to take turns on a piece of equipment or shake a friend's hand during a movement song, children have opportunities for increased socialization.
Moving and being active increases the opportunity to talk with one another
Often when moving, it allows kids to have fun and be silly and tune into one another.
Some movement activities involved doing movement with a partner and this helped improve interaction skills.
To be able to move in a developmental appropriate way, is detrimental to a child learning in their environment and their self-esteem. Children are aware when their motor skills are not as ""good"" as a peer. A child with poor coordination, during free time in the gym, would just walk around or play catch with an adult. The child's peers were actively participating in motor skills and enjoying playing with their peers. When this child got support and improved his motor skills, he started joining in with his peers during physical activities. He was no longer a ""perimeter"" kid or ""likes"" adults more than peers.
Turn-taking movement games increased the child's ability to participate in social exchanges with a peer.

Appendix B: Survey Items

Staff perspectives on VM in an inclusive preschool classroom
Question 1: I understand the concept of VM Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree
Question 2: I feel confident in my ability to create and implement a video model. Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree
Question 3: I have received adequate training in the use of VM. Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Question 4:

I believe VM to be an acceptable way of managing a child's problem behavior in an inclusive preschool classroom.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

**If you answered agree or strongly agree, give an example of how you've observed VM improve problem behaviors. If you answered disagree or strongly disagree, please explain or give examples.

Question 5:

I believe VM to be an effective approach for managing difficult transitions in an inclusive preschool classroom.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly agree
**If you answered agree or strongly agree, give an example of how VM has improved transitions. If you answered disagree or strongly disagree, please explain or give examples.

Question 6

I believe VM could benefit children with and without disabilities.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

Question 7: I have heard of VM but do not use it in my early childhood program.

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly agree

Question 8: Number of years working in early childhood program:

1-5
5-10
11+

Question 9: Role in Early Childhood:

Early Childhood Special Education Teacher

Preschool Teacher

Educational Assistant

Speech Language Pathologist

Occupational Therapist

Parent Educator

Adapted Physical Education Teacher

Physical Therapist

ASD Specialist

School Psychologist

Question 10: Education background (Check highest level obtained):

high school diploma
some college
bachelors degree
masters degree

Appendix C: Implied Consent Form

Use of VM in the Preschool Setting
Implied Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study that looks at the use of VM in preschool programs. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently working in the early childhood program at ISD 15. This research project is being conducted by Jen Polzin to satisfy the requirements of a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education at St. Cloud State University.

Background Information and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain preschool staff perspectives on the effectiveness of VM, when used as a strategy to increase student success and participation in daily activities during a preschool day.

Procedures
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete the online survey, which is completely anonymous so no one will be able to identify a specific individual's form. It is important that we have as many people as possible complete and turn in this survey to compile an accurate representation for this research study.

Risks
There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

Benefits
There are no benefits to the survey participants.

Confidentiality
Information obtained in connection with this study is confidential and will be reported as aggregated (group) results. To prevent identification of research subjects, data will be presented in aggregate form or with no more than 1–2 descriptors presented together. Although the names of individual subjects will not be used, there is a possibility that you may be identifiable by your comments in the published research. You will have an opportunity to review the text and withdraw comments prior to publication.

Research Results
At your request, I am happy to provide a summary of the research results when the study is completed. Upon completion, my thesis will be placed on file at St. Cloud State University's Learning Resources Center.

Contact Information
If you have any additional questions please contact me, at 763.286.8334 or poje1301@stcloudstate.edu, or my advisor, Jane Minnema, at jeminnema@stcloudstate.edu

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future position with the district or the relationship with the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Acceptance to Participate

Your completion of the survey indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, you have read the information provided above, and you consent to participation in the study. If you are interested in learning the results of the survey; feel free to contact me at 763.286.8334 or poje1301@stcloudstate.edu. Thank you.

Appendix D: Email Cover Letter

Dear Survey Participants,

I am in the process of completing my Master's degree at St. Cloud State University. As a part of my thesis, I am conducting a research study on VM. I would like your input on this topic to assist me in conducting my research. I'll be sending a survey out to you via email using Survey Monkey that you complete online. Your answers will not be associated with your name, so that I guarantee your confidentiality in complete my survey. I would appreciate your willingness to assist me by completing this survey. Please complete this survey no later than September 30, 2016. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Jen Polzin

Follow-up Email

Dear Survey Participants,

This is a follow up email regarding the survey that was sent to you via Survey Monkey. If you have already completed the survey I thank you. If you have not yet completed the survey, would you please take a few minutes to do so by September 30, 2016. Thank you.