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The Impact of Behavior Specific Praise on Students with Emotional or Behavior Disorders

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Chapter I: Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that schools provide free and appropriate education for all children with disabilities (Ramirez, 1998). Students who are identified with an Emotional or Behavioral Disorder (EBD) often exhibit adverse behaviors that can be disruptive to the school environment. These behaviors can pose an enormous challenge for classroom management and often lead to lower rates of student engagement during academic instruction. Many students with EBD display both learning and behavioral problems which make providing effective instruction difficult (Sutherland et al., 2008). However, the public school system is responsible for finding and implementing positive supports and strategies to promote the inclusion of these students. Behavior-specific praise (BSP) is an effective approach to managing off-task and disruptive behavior in the classroom by explicitly referencing the desirable behavior. Keeping students engaged and on-task throughout the lesson is an important factor in establishing an inclusive classroom.

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature that examines the efficacy of BSP and the on-task behaviors and engagement of students with emotional or behavioral disorders. I chose this topic because I am currently in my fourth year of teaching students identified with EBD. Due to my experiences working with this population of students, I am interested in investigating the impact of behavior specific praise and how it affects on-task behaviors and student engagement.

Research Question

One research question guides this review of literature:

1. How does behavior-specific praise facilitate the on-task behaviors and engagement of students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders?

Focus of the Paper

The review of literature in Chapter II contains studies including students who are at risk of being or have been identified with an emotional behavioral disorder. The main focus of this paper is to identify the impact that behavior-specific praise has on the on-task behaviors and engagement of students with EBD.

I began looking into research literature on behavior-specific praise to enhance my understanding and background knowledge of the topic. Then I narrowed my focus to the impact of BSP on students with EBD. Keywords that I used in my search included: *Behavior-specific praise (BSP), Emotional or Behavioral Disorders (EBD), behavioral disorders, emotional disorders, general education classroom, regular education classroom.*

Importance of the Topic

Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders are commonly identified as the population of students that struggle the most in school; in fact, they struggle more than any other group (Ryan et al., 2008). They are often viewed as disruptive and difficult to manage which is likely to lead to removal from the classroom or receiving instruction in a more restrictive setting. It is very likely that this is due to the effect their disability has on their ability to manage their behaviors and engagement throughout daily instruction. It is my experience that for the development and growth of students with EBD, it is important to be included as much as possible in the general education classroom with their non-disabled peers. Student engagement is positively correlated with academic success.

Historical Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), previously known as Public Law (PL) 94-142, was enacted in 1975 by the United States Congress. This legislation along with federal laws, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), ensure educational rights for all students with disabilities. There is a provision present in IDEA that calls for students to be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) during the educational day. There have been differing opinions about the definition of LRE, however, most common statutory language calls for general education classroom placement unless, even with supplemental services, special education cannot be effectively provided in that setting. Most states mandate LRE placement with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible ("State Response to the Education...," 1985). It also requires schools to explore possible modifications in the general education classroom before a student with disabilities is moved to a more restrictive placement. Student engagement is dictated by the teacher's ability to address and manage off-task and disruptive behaviors.

Historically, students identified as having disabilities, including those with EBD, have been provided service in specialized and self-contained classrooms and schools. The rates of inclusion for students with EBD have been significantly lower than students with learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities and other high-incidence disabilities (Simpson, 2004). This can be attributed to the difficulty of managing the behaviors presented by students with emotional or behavioral disorders.

Definition of Terms

  Behavior-Specific Praise: providing students with praise statements that explicitly describe the behavior being praised (Sutherland et al., 2000).

  Emotional or Behavioral Disorder: Students who require specialized services due to a pattern of emotional or behavioral responses related to a wide range of complex and challenging conditions. The established pattern of responses must adversely affect educational or developmental performance (Emotional or Behavioral Disorder, 2012).

  General Education Classroom: a term that identifies a classroom that is composed of mostly non-disabled students. Also referred to as "mainstream classroom" (General Education Classroom, 2019).

  Inclusion: typically characterized as the placement of students with disabilities (regardless of disability type) in age-appropriate general education classrooms (Fletcher, 2010).

  Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): a requirement by federal law that students with disabilities receive their education, as much as possible, with their non-disabled peers (Morin, n.d.).

Chapter II: Review of Literature

The purpose of this review of literature is to examine the efficacy of behavior-specific praise and the engagement of students with emotional or behavioral disorders. This chapter is organized into two major categories: studies that examine the effectiveness of behavior-specific praise on student engagement and on-task behavior, and studies that assess strategies used to increase rates of BSP delivery by teachers in the classroom such as professional development and training.

The study by Sutherland et al. (2000) examined (a) the effect of an observation-feedback intervention on the rate of a teacher's behavior-specific praise of students with emotional or behavioral disorders, and (b) the effect of increased rates of a teacher's behavior-specific praise on the on-task behavior of a class of students with EBD.

Participants of this study include a special education teacher and nine (two girls and seven boys) fifth-grade students with EBD in a self-contained classroom. The classroom was part of a middle school in a large southeastern city in the United States. A teacher and one teacher assistant were responsible for working within the classroom. Direct observations were conducted to collect data on BSPS, non-BSPS, and on-task behavior of students over a 15-minute period. The intervention phase consisted of the observer providing verbal feedback to the teacher on the observed rate of behavior-specific praise during a social-skills lesson. A criterion level of six BSPS per observation session was agreed upon between the teacher and observer. Following the first intervention phase, a withdrawal phase occurred where the teacher was allowed to return to their baseline rate of BSPS and the feedback provided by the observer after lessons was

withdrawn. The final procedural step was to reintroduce the intervention and provide direct feedback to the teacher.

The average baseline rate for BSPS was 1.3 occurrences per session and the percentage of on-task intervals was 48.7. The behavior-specific praise statements increased to 6.7 per session during the first intervention phase which increased the percentage of on-task intervals to 85.6. The withdrawal phase showed a decrease of BSPS to 1.7 per session and also a decrease in the on-task percentage to 62.2. The reintroduction phase increased the rate of BSPS to 7.8 per session and on-task intervals to 83.3%.

The increased rate of on-task intervals found in this study is consistent with prior research in suggesting that BSP has a positive effect on on-task behaviors of students with EBD in the classroom. Increasing the rate of behavior-specific praise for students who exhibit disruptive and on-task behaviors has a positive correlation to decreasing such occurrences.

There are several limitations evident in this study. First, the rate of non-BSP increased along with BSP which contributed to the overall increase of praise in the classroom. Acknowledging the increase of on-task behaviors due solely to behavior-specific praise would be problematic. Second, there was a low number of observations per session which could bring into question the validity of teacher praise rates. The final limitation of this study was the use of a single self-contained classroom and a specific instructional period for which observations were conducted. This limits the generalization of the study results.

The study by Sutherland, Wehby, and Yoder (2002) examines the effect of teacher praise and opportunities to respond (OTR) on academic outcomes and behavior of students identified as EBD. A relationship between OTR and teacher praise has been suggested although they are often

viewed as independent components of effective instruction. The potential for a relationship between the two provides for the possibility of affecting both by increasing only one. This has implications for the classroom management of students with EBD.

There were 20 self-contained EBD classrooms that were selected for this study with an average of 10.8 students per classroom. All classrooms consisted of a teacher and a paraprofessional. Teachers were recruited for this study through informational mailings, contact by telephone and workshop presentations. All teachers (grades k-8) were located in the same school district in the southeastern United States. Three teachers were male and 17 female. Among the 20 classrooms were 216 students, 112 who were identified as having emotional or behavioral disorders, 48 had a learning disability, 20 were classified as having Intellectual Disabilities (ID) and 36 were otherwise categorized. The classrooms were observed during teacher-led academic instruction across ten, 15-minute sessions. The observers were trained on behavioral coding and reported on teacher and student behaviors. Teacher behaviors were categorized as: other talk, academic talk, and reprimands. Teacher praise was also categorized as: academic behavior-specific, social behavior-specific, and non-behavior specific.

Data collected from this study suggest a nonsequential and sequential relationship between teacher praise and OTR in classrooms of students with EBD. Results indicate that teachers who used higher rates of OTR, praise and academic talk promoted high rates of correct responses by students. Historically, research suggests that increased rates of OTR provide higher rates of engagement by students. Opportunities to respond were positively correlated to teacher praise as they happened frequently within five seconds of the praise being received.

The largest limitation of this study is that teachers volunteered. This may suggest that the participating teachers were the most confident in their ability, thus limiting the generality of the study. Another limitation is that the definition for correct responses of students may have been too broad for observers to accurately code the occurrences.

The purpose of the study conducted by Haydon and Musi-Rao (2011) was to demonstrate that behavior-specific praise could be effective with older students. It examined the effectiveness of BSP on the rates of teacher reprimands and student disruptive behavior in the classroom.

The study included two teacher participants, both of which were males working with eighth-grade students. The school served 700 students with 92% receiving free or reduced lunch and had class sizes ranging between 20 and 22 students. Pre-baseline observations were conducted to confirm whether the teachers were experiencing significant issues in classroom management. The informal observations indicated high rates of student disruptions, low rates of teacher praise and high rates of teacher reprimand. Following the pre-baseline observations, the teachers participated in training sessions in the use of BSPS. Teachers were shown how to operate a MotivAider device which gives a vibratory cue on a fixed-time schedule. It is designed to provide subtle, covert cues to individuals as a prompt to engage in a given behavior.

The teachers were given scripts of behavior-specific praise statements (BSPS) for an easy view and visual reminder, as well as the MotivAider device. The device was programmed to cue the teacher every four minutes to provide a BSPS to a student. Previous research and findings of the positive results of behavior-specific praise were used in determining the 4-minute time frame.

Baseline data showed that neither teacher had any levels of BSP while teacher one was experiencing an average of 2.1 disruptive behaviors per minute. Teacher one also had a

reprimand rate of 1.28 instances per minute. During the intervention phase, he experienced a drop of disruptive behaviors down to .49 instances per minute while increasing the behavior-specific praise to 2.1 per minute and decreasing reprimands to .25 per minute. Teacher two had similar results beginning with a baseline of 1.6 disruptive behaviors per minute and .86 reprimands. During the intervention, those levels reduced to .24 disruptive behaviors and .21 reprimands per minute, respectively. Teacher two increased his behavior-specific praise to 1.6 instances per minute.

These numbers indicate a fairly significant reduction in the rates of disruptive behavior experienced in the classroom. On average, both teachers were experiencing anywhere from 34-40 fewer disruptive incidents during a 25-minute instructional activity. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research detailing the positive effect BSP on classroom behavior. The reduced rate of disruptive behavior has a positive effect on classroom engagement, which is essential to academic success.

One of the major limitations of this study is the inclusion of both general and behavior-specific praise in the data, thus making it difficult to determine the amount and type of praise necessary in producing positive results. Other limitations include: no data on academic measures collected, and the study was limited to eight weeks with no maintenance data.

The meta-analysis by Ennis et al. (2018) explored the literature on behavior-specific praise and its effectiveness in pre-k-12 settings. The 57 studies (from 52 articles) which span 50 years were featured in this review to better understand under what conditions and for whom BSP was effective.

Two authors independently reviewed article titles and abstracts of 647 unique results from a four-step search process which included: electronic search, ancestral search, hand search, and, editor and author contact. To be included in the review, studies needed to (a) explicitly state that praise was used to label specific student behavior as well as verifying examples, (b) use BSP as an independent or dependent variable, (c) occur in a Pre-k-12 traditional school setting and (d) be published in a peer-reviewed journal. A total of 1,946 student participants were included in the studies. However, 16 studies reported praise being provided to the entire classroom without including the number of students. There were 28 studies which included students in general education only (1,635) while 11 included students (78) who were described as at risk (e.g., high off-task or disruptive behaviors).

Coding was performed by all four authors which included (a) strategy for delivering/increasing BSP (e.g., coaching, self-monitoring, teacher training), (b) delivery method of BSP (e.g., peer, verbal, written), (c) methodology used to assess outcomes, (d) praise recipients, (e) grade level, (f) special education categorization, (g) generalization (whether assessed and outcomes), (h) maintenance, (i) social validity, (j) independent variable (IV), (k) intervention agent, (l) dependent variable (DV), and (m) outcomes.

Overall, the findings of this analysis were consistent with prior research which shows that behavior-specific praise provided generally positive outcomes for both students and teachers. The diversity among students and teachers who participated in the BSP interventions, suggests that behavior-specific praise can be an effective strategy for a wide range of students and settings. Therefore, using BSP as a low-intensity strategy is an effective and efficient practice for classroom management. Students saw improved behavioral outcomes including increased

engagement and decreased disruptive behaviors. Researchers from numerous studies have suggested BSP as an intervention before other strategies due to its high probability for success.

One limitation of this review is the potential for risk of missing relevant studies. The other limitation of this analysis is that treatment integrity was not a focus and therefore was not measured.

The study by Caldarella et al. (2019) was conducted to examine the relationship between the praise-to-reprimand ratio (PRR) and the behaviors exhibited by students who were and were not at risk for EBD at the elementary school level. The authors investigated if there was an optimal PRR for students at risk for EBD as compared to students who were not at risk. The praise-to-reprimand ratio examines the amount of praise, both general and behavior-specific, given to a class in relation to the number of reprimands.

The study was conducted over a 3-year period and included a total of 149 teachers who selected 540 students. There were 311 students who were identified as at risk for EBD and 229 were not at risk. The students came from 19 elementary schools across Missouri, Tennessee, and Utah. For a student to be considered at risk for EBD, researchers used a multistep process that included the Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) followed by the Problem Behavior scale of the Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS). Once students were selected, researchers observed the classrooms using the Multi-Option Observational System for Experimental Studies (MOOSES). They used MOOSES to record behavior using frequency and duration.

Results indicate that there was no significant effect of PRR on engagement for students not at risk for EBD. The at-risk students showed more sensitivity to teacher PRR than their peers.

There was a linear relationship between PRR and engagement which indicates that increased PRR also increases engagement. With a low PRR of 1:19, students' at-risk engagement was 58.69% compared to their non-risk peers at 73.41%. With the implementation of a 9:1 PRR, the at-risk students' engagement increased to 73.58% compared to peers at 75.77%. In short, any type of praise given to students at-risk for EBD will positively affect their engagement in the classroom. By teachers increasing the PRR in their classrooms, students in EBD will exhibit fewer disruptive and on-task behaviors which will positively influence the classroom environment as a whole.

One of the limitations of this study was the inclusion criteria used for participants. There was a diverse sample of students identified as at risk for EBD, however, few of them were classified by their school as having EBD. A second limitation is that the types of teacher praise were not defined. This study included general praise and behavior specific.

Table 1

Inclusion Criteria Used for Participants

Authors	Study Design	Participants	Procedure	Findings
Sutherland, K. S., Wehby, J. H., & Copeland, S. R. (2000) BSP 5	Quantitative	EBD teacher (male) 5th grade self-contained...2 girls, 7 boys 10-11 years old	Direct observations 3x a week with phases that include: baseline, intervention, withdrawal, re-introduction of intervention	48-85 on task during 1st intervention phase, 83.3 in re-intro phase. NBSPS also increased so there are limitations to this study.
Sutherland, K. S., Wehby, J. H., & Yoder, P.J. (2002) BSP 7	Quantitative	20 EBD self-contained classrooms (k-8) with average of 10.8 students (216) 112 ED, 48 LD, 20 with MR, 36 other	15- minute observation at start of academic instruction	A summary-level relationship represented by a significant positive correlation and a significant sequential association exist between teacher praise and OTR

Table 1 (continued)

Hadyon, T., & Musti-Rao, S. (2011) BSP 2	Quantitative	2 8th grade gen ed classrooms. 20-22 students	Observations of classrooms to determine disruptions. Teachers received training on BSPS	Fairly significant reduction in the rates of classroom disruptive behavior. 34-40 fewer disruptive incidents during 25 minute instructional activity. 2.1/min- .49/min 1.61/min- .24/min Rate of reprimand decreased
Ennis, R., Royer, D., Lane, K., & Dunlap, K. (2020) BSP 11	Meta-analysis	52 articles containing 57 studies 1946 students	Reviewed articles that (a) explicitly state that praise was used to label specific student behavior as well as verifying examples, (b) use BSP as an independent or dependent variable, (c) occur in a Pre-k-12 traditional school setting and (d) be published in a peer-reviewed journal	Results indicate that BSP is an efficient and effective strategy for positive classroom management for both teachers and students. There was an increase of engagement and on-task behaviors of students, as well as a decrease in disruptive behaviors at all levels.
Caldarella, P., Larsen, R. A., Williams, L., Wills, H. P., & Wehby, J. H. (2019)	Quantitative	540 students (311 at risk for EBD 229 peers for comparison) and 149 teachers	15-minute observations recording behaviors 4 CW-FIT components: (a) direct social skills instruction, (b) interdependent group contingency, (c) positive reinforcement for use of expected social skills, and (d) a secondary tier of support	PRR of 9:1 was needed PRR and praise rate were positively correlated with engagement, reprimand rate and engagement were negatively associated. Teacher reprimand rate was associated with disruptions and PRR was negatively associated with student disruptions.

Four studies in this section examined not only the effectiveness of BSP on students, but also the impact training and other professional development strategies can have on increasing its use within the classroom.

Duchaine et al. (2011) conducted a study to extend the research regarding teacher coaching and behavior-specific praise statements to the high school level. The study analyzed

(a) the effect teacher coaching with written performance feedback had on the frequency of teachers' BSPS with high school students, and (b) the effect of BSPS on student on-task behavior.

A general education inclusive math classroom that included 62 total students and 16 that were identified as having a disability were used for this study. Participants consisted of three inclusion classrooms in the metropolitan area of a southeastern city. There were two female teachers and one male, one of which was a special education teacher. All classes were co-taught math for ninth-grade students as a repeat due to failing the previous year. Event recording was used to report the number of BSPS that occurred during the session and the on-task behavior was measured using momentary time sampling in one-minute intervals that were reported as a percentage. Baseline data was collected during 15-minute instructional sessions where there was no evidence of BSPS. Teachers were then trained in the intervention of teacher coaching which included a power-point, examples, rationale and benefits of BSPS, feedback and discussion, and also, opportunity for questions. Once the training was completed, the teachers received a 5-minute teacher coaching conference prior to every third intervention. After every intervention session, written performance feedback was left on the teacher's desk. The feedback consisted of the first two BSPS that were recorded, and the total BSPS observed. This study also included a maintenance stage where teachers were observed two and three weeks after the removal of the intervention.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research that indicates teacher coaching with performance feedback can have an immediate impact on the use of BSPS. The results for the effectiveness of BSPS on the on-task behavior of students were inconclusive.

There was no consistent data to reflect the intervention that took place as the percentages of on-task behavior were sporadic as they decreased for two teachers during the intervention phase but increased during the maintenance stage when the BSPS rates remained similar.

Limitations of this study include scheduling conflicts which caused some sessions to be canceled as well as the lack of sensitivity in data collection. The on-task behavior was measured for a random sample of 15 students per session and there were also no data-specific records on how BSPS were distributed.

The purpose of the study by Allday et al. (2012) was to increase the use of behavior-specific praise in the classroom and determine its effectiveness on students with or at risk of having EBD. Three specific research questions which guided this study were: (a) can simple training on the function and purpose of BSP with limited feedback lead to increased use of the intervention? (b) will increases in BSP to all students increase the on-task behavior of students with or at risk for EBD? and (c) will increases in BSP decrease the rate of corrective statements to all students as a whole?

There were four groups that participated in this study. One teacher-student dyad (i.e., one student and one teacher) and three teacher-student triads (i.e., two students and one teacher). Data were collected and recorded in two general education classrooms in two elementary schools in southwestern United States, and one middle school in the midwestern United States. There were a variety of grade levels represented in this study; kindergarten, first, second and sixth grade. None of the teachers held a certification in special education and the classes ranged from 18-21 students, respectively.

Student measures included on-task behaviors which were operationally defined as actively listening to instructions while oriented toward the task or teacher; responding verbally (e.g., asking questions) or nonverbally (e.g., head nodding) to teacher requests; following teacher instructions; being in appropriate geographical location (e.g., sitting at assigned seat during circle time); or seeking help in the proper manner (e.g., raising hand). Off-task behavior was defined as any behavior other than on-task. Verbal interactions with the class were included as teacher measures. During observation intervals, students were determined to be on or off task and the result was coded and recording using an iPod touch. The teacher's verbal interactions were recorded using an audio device and later listened to and coded for data based on frequency counts. The data were converted into a rate-per-minute model due to the varying duration of observation sessions. Following the baseline data that was collected, teachers were given 30- to 40-minute training on behavior-specific praise. Teachers were not prompted to provide more or less BSP as the researchers wanted to determine the natural occurrence following training. Every third day, teachers were provided with performance feedback via email that included their performance, goal achievement or underachievement, and student task engagement data.

All three research questions were answered following the conclusion of this study. The four teacher participants experienced increased rates of BSP following the training. Correlation analyses suggest that there is a positive relationship between increased BSP and increased on-task behavior, with a moderate to strong relationship for the majority of students. Overall, the targeted students did not receive an unreasonably high amount of direct praise. Three of the students, in fact, received less direct praise after the teachers participated in the training. Their on-task behavior, however, still increased. This suggests that increased rates of BSP provided to

the entire classroom can positively affect the behavior of students with or at risk of EBD. The

final research question regarding corrective statements was also answered through the study.

Increased rates of BSP would lead to a decrease in corrective statements provided to the entire

classroom. Observational evidence of this reduction was evident in all four classrooms as

teachers provided BSP to on-task students in an effort to correct the behavior of off-task

students.

This study may have been impacted by several limitations. First, social facilitation could

possibly have affected the results. This suggests that the research participant's behavior could be

enhanced due to the presence of an observer. Another limitation to this study is that two of the

students displayed a high level of overlap between baseline and post-training rates. The mean

rate of on-task behavior increased for both, however, the effect of the training on the behaviors is

inconclusive. The final limitation is the activities for which the students were observed were not

consistent. Preferred activities could have led to increased rates of on-task behaviors and affect

opportunities to generate praise and/or corrections.

The study by Gage et al. (2018) was a replication of a previous study (Gage et al., 2017)

using the same procedures in a different school with four teachers who had requested

professional development in classroom management. The research questions that guided the

study were: (a) is there a functional relationship between brief one-on-one didactic training

followed by visual performance feedback (VPF), and (b) does increasing teacher use of BSP

increase student on-task behavior and provide a reduction of disruptive behaviors?

Baseline rates of behavior-specific praise were collected for a minimum of seven

observations prior to intervention. The intervention was then introduced once the teacher

implemented BSP at the criterion level for at least two observations. Four early-career teachers were recruited to participate in this study. All teachers were female general education teachers including three in their first year and one that was in their second year of teaching. There were three first-grade teachers and one second-grade teacher. Direct observations were conducted to collect data on teachers' use of behavior-specific praise which was defined as: the teacher gives an individual student or whole class BSP as a contingent verbal statement which communicates positive feedback to a student and explicitly was the student did right. It included behavioral and academic praise.

Operational definitions included: (a) a student is academically engaged if he/she is actively or passively participating in the classroom activity (i.e., answering questions, listening to the teacher, looking at instructional materials, raising hand, reading silently, talking about a lesson or writing), and (b) a student is disruptive if he/she is displaying behaviors that does or potentially could interfere with the lesson in a way that distracts the teacher or peers (i.e., acting aggressively, fidgeting, talking/yelling about content unrelated to the lesson).

Teachers were observed for baseline observations on average 10.8 times. Each classroom was observed approximately three times per week, not including Wednesdays or Fridays due to schedule changes. After the baseline observations took place with stable BSP rates, the teacher participated in a 20-minute one-on-one training led by the first or second author. The training included an overview of BSP as well as a review of baseline data. From that point, each teacher received VPF in an email after every two observations. The VPF included positive reinforcement and specific suggestions for the increase of BSP.

As a result, this study suggests that targeted professional development which includes a brief one-on-one session focused on increasing BSP can be an effective approach to effective classroom management strategies. A functional relationship was determined by visual analysis between the targeted professional development and the teachers' use of BSP.

Some limitations have been identified for this study. All four teacher participants were in their first or second year of teaching; therefore, results may not generalize to veteran teachers. This was a replication of a previous study, but it was conducted in the same school district. Another limitation of this study is that data was not collected on the consistency or frequency of the teachers' review of the feedback emails.

The study conducted by Randolph et al. (2020) examined the efficacy of iCoaching to increase the use of BSP in the classroom. Previous research studies have demonstrated that there is a gap between professional development and strategy implementation. The purpose of iCoaching is to address the implementation gap with the provision of short, professional development on evidence-based practice (EBP) and provides the teacher with live coaching while they implement the practice within their classroom. Participants in this study delivered consistently low levels of BSP and were selected by the principal. One teacher and two paraprofessionals in an early elementary school for students with EBD participated. Students ranged from 6-8 years of age in the first and second grades. The idea behind this study was to use non-intrusive technology in order to deliver immediate coaching to the participants. The researcher worked remotely from home and connected with the teacher and paraprofessionals via a Swivl© device with video and audio markers, Bluetooth© earpiece, and Zoom©.

The intervention started with the teacher, who would then facilitate the connection between the paraprofessionals and the researcher. Sessions were conducted at the same time and duration every day. Baseline sessions were completed and the number of BSP statements was recorded. At the conclusion of the baseline data collection, a pretest was administered to ensure the participant was naive to the purpose of the study. Once all requirements were met for the first intervention to start, the teachers received professional development. The second intervention included the iCoaching delivery in which the participants were given behavior-specific praise statements through the technology pieces and were expected to deliver the BSPS within 3-5 seconds of receiving them. The iCoaching was removed once a participant achieved an increased rate in BSP delivery with at least 50% improvement over their baseline.

With the initiation of iCoaching during the second intervention phase, all three participants experienced immediate and dramatic increased rates of BSP delivery. The participants' rates of BSP regressed during the maintenance phase; however, the rates remained higher than the baseline data. The teacher's rate of BSP increased from the baseline of .15 instances per min (.15 per minute) to .66 per min during the maintenance phase. Para one increased from .09 per minute baseline to roughly .5 per minute during the maintenance phase and para two started with a rate of zero BSP to .29 per minute. Based on the results, this study suggests there is a positive correlation between the combination of professional development with iCoaching and BSP delivery rates in the classroom.

This study combined professional development with the implementation of iCoaching to bridge the gap between professional development and strategy implementation. Using an effective tool such as iCoaching to help support staff members in their implementation of

classroom management strategies such as BSP is a great resource. There were some limitations to this study which include the use of a single classroom in a small center-based school as well as the intervention package of professional development and iCoaching being used. The increase in BSP delivery cannot be contributed to one component or the other.

Table 2

Studies Using Professional Development and iCoaching

Authors	Study Design	Participants	Procedure	Findings
Duchaine, E., Jolivette, K., & Fredrick, L. (2011) BSP 1	Quantitative	3 inclusion suburban high school classrooms 2 female and one male teacher (2 general education, 1 special education)	15-minute observations looking at BSPS and on-task behavior.	Inconclusive results as the teachers are varied with results. The teachers were in their first or second year of teaching, which may have had an impact on the efficacy of the training.
Allday, R., Hinkson-Lee, K., Hudson, T., Neilsen-Gatti, S., Kleinke, A., & Russel, C. (2012) (1)	Quantitative	One teacher-student dyad Three teacher-student triads	Student measures include: a) Actively listening to teacher instructions by being oriented toward the teacher or task b) Responding verbally or nonverbally to teacher requests c) Following teacher instructions d) Being in appropriate geographical location e) Seeking help in an appropriate manner	Correlation analyses suggest that there is a positive relationship between increased BSP and increased on-task behavior, with a moderate to strong relationship for majority of students. Even with students receiving less direct praise after the training, their engagement increased, which suggests that class-wide praise can have a positive effect on student engagement as well.
Gage, N., Grasley-Boy, N., & MacSuga-Gage A. (2018) BSP 14	Quantitative	4 gen ed teachers	Disruptive and on-task behaviors were monitored and feedback was given on BSPS.	Average engagement increased slightly during the intervention phase from 76.9-79%
Randolph, K., Chubb, C., Hott, B., & Cruz-Torres, E. (2020) BSP 8	Quantitative	1 teacher, 2 paraprofessionals.	Participants were observed for rates of BSPS in the classroom. Brief PD along with technology (iCoaching) were used during the intervention phase to guide participants in the delivery of BSPS.	During the intervention phase, all three participants experienced immediate and dramatic increase of BSPS. During the maintenance phase the rates decreased, but remained higher than baseline data. The intervention package of both PD and iCoaching makes it hard to discern which was the effective piece of increased rates of BSPS.

Chapter III: Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations

The purpose of this literature review was to examine the efficacy of behavior-specific praise on the on-task behavior and engagement of students identified with emotional or behavioral disorders. Chapter I consisted of an introduction to the topic that included historical background, the importance of the topic and the focus of the review. Chapter II was a presentation of the review of the literature. In this final chapter, I will provide conclusions, recommendations for future research and implications for current practice.

Conclusion

I reviewed nine total studies that examined either the impact of behavior-specific praise on EBD students, the implementation of BSP in the classroom, or a combination of both. Eight studies were quantitative while the other was a meta-analysis.

Of the nine studies, five focused on the impact of behavior-specific praise on students with, or at risk of having emotional or behavioral disorders. The findings of these studies were consistent with prior research, suggesting that BSP has a positive effect on the on-task behaviors and engagement of students with EBD. Studies conducted by Caldarella et al. (2019), and Haydon and Musi-Rao (2011) also included information regarding reprimands and how they are also correlated with engagement and behaviors in the classroom. A praise-to-reprimand ratio of 3:1 or 4:1 is commonly referenced as desirable, although students with EBD may require higher ratios (Caldarella et al., 2019). Both studies suggest a positive relationship between classroom praise and a decrease in disruptive behaviors. This suggests that an increase of praise can also lead to a decrease in reprimands given to students (Haydon and Musi-Rao, 2011).

The remaining studies examined the interventions and strategies used to increase teacher use of BSP in the classroom. The results of these studies indicate that direct feedback on the implementation of behavior-specific praise in the classroom provides a necessary component to successful implementation. Participants who received adequate training and follow-up observational feedback or support, were much more likely to continue delivering BSP at a higher rate once the intervention was removed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Each study reviewed presented limitations. The most common limitation was the use of both general praise and behavior-specific praise. It is hard to determine the efficacy of BSP when general praise statements are being increased as well as praise that is behavior specific. Further research should target behavior-specific praise in order to establish focused data results.

Another limitation experienced in multiple studies was the limited number of observations and even scheduling conflicts. Some studies had missing observations during intervention and maintenance stages, while one participant in a study missed the entire maintenance stage due to summer break. The results of a research study can be greatly impacted when participants experience non-consistent variables. Further research conducted should focus on providing consistency and a longer period of time.

One last recommendation for future research would be to target the use of BSP across additional settings. The majority of classrooms and participants were in self-contained settings. Although the results still indicate the positive outcomes of using BSP to manage student behavior in more restrictive settings, further research should target more of the general education setting as a focus to increase inclusion of students with EBD.

Implications for Practice

Knowing the positive correlation between behavior-specific praise and the increase of on-task behavior and engagement of students with EBD, I am better able to incorporate the strategy into my daily classroom to increase classroom management. As a special education teacher working with students with EBD, I am now more knowledgeable about behavior-specific praise and the positive impact it can have on students. This knowledge will not only allow me to have more success in managing behaviors in my classroom, but also in supporting the carry-over into general education classrooms. I often go into classrooms to provide services, and this will be a great tool for me to demonstrate to general education staff.

Currently, as part of my professional duty, I am staffing a school resource room used as a behavior de-escalation destination as well as an academic resource space. I also provide general education teachers with strategies and tools when working with students who exhibit behaviors in the classroom and can share my knowledge of BSP with them to help students achieve in a more inclusive environment. As a relatively new teacher with the following licenses: Academic and Behavioral Strategist (ABS), Developmental Disabilities (DD), and Emotional or Behavioral Disorders (EBD), I found this literature review to be extremely beneficial. Even with the research and studies involving positive behavior support and their direct impact on students in the classroom, I never realized the importance of providing consistent behavior-specific praise. I need to continue developing my classroom management to reflect the benefit of providing BSPS throughout a lesson.

Summary

The findings of these studies reflect the importance of providing behavior-specific praise to students with EBD to increase on-task behavior and engagement in the classroom. This has a direct impact on the classroom environment, and with the increase of engagement and on-task behavior comes a decrease in disruptive behaviors and reprimands. Students with EBD who are able to remain engaged and display on-task behavior will more likely be allowed to continue working in the general education classroom with their peers where they will have access to the curriculum as well as important social interactions with peers. Students with disabilities often gain a sense of self-worth and pride when they are able to work with their non-disabled peers. I hope that more professionals will utilize this intervention to support the inclusion of students with EBD in their classrooms.

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