Comparison of Functional Assessment and Analysis Procedures for Students with Challenging Behaviors

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Background

- Functional behavior assessment (FBA) is an empirically validated strategy using direct and indirect methods to identify function of behavior and design behavior support plans based on identified function³.
- There is not one single method for conducting functional behavior assessments⁴.
- There is a need for an efficient method of conducting functional behavior assessments within schools has been well documented in research⁵.

Purpose

Two methods of FBAs were used to establish function. In the first method, direct observations, indirect assessments and experimental analysis were used to determine function. In the second method, only direct observation and experimental analysis were used. This study began the process of looking at the necessary components of a functional behavior assessment and resulting behavior interventions.

Participants and Setting

- All observations, assessments, and interventions were conducted in the special education classroom for three of the four participants. For Dylan, the functional behavior process was conducted in the general education setting.

Experiment One

- **Maddox**: 7-year-old boy diagnosed with a language impairment with an IQ of 77. He displayed off-task behavior defined as looking away from the teacher, out of seat, talking about subjects unrelated to task, sleeping, eating or playing with objects, throwing materials from work space, verbal outburst, facing away from task, slapping staff, and removing clothing.
- **Dylan**: 10-year-old boy diagnosed with a language impairment with an IQ of 85. He displayed off-task behavior defined as out of seat, vocalizations, pushing or throwing materials from work space, verbal outburst, facing away from task, slapping staff, and removing clothing.
- **Abby**: 7-year-old female diagnosed with autism, epilepsy, and chromosomal abnormality with an IQ of 52. She displayed off-task behavior defined as out of seat, slapping staff or peers, kicking staff or peers, verbal outburst, pushing or throwing materials, using materials off-task, eating lunch at desk, and self-stimulating behaviors.

Experiment Two

- **Daxter**: 12-year-old male diagnosed with emotional disturbance and PDD-NOS with an IQ of 65. He displayed off-task behavior defined as looking away from the teacher, out of seat, talking about subjects unrelated to task, placing head on desk, punching staff or peers, overturning furniture, verbalizations, breaking materials, eating, sleeping, playing with objects, and dropping or spilling objects.
- **Dylan**: 7-year-old male diagnosed with autism, epilepsy, and chromosomal abnormality with an IQ of 52. He displayed off-task behavior defined as out of seat, slapping staff or peers, kicking staff or peers, verbal outburst, pushing or throwing materials, using materials off-task, eating lunch at desk, and self-stimulating behaviors.

Function-Based Interventions

**Experiment One**

- **Maddox**: Teach the use of a break card to request a break from tasks. Provide 2 minute breaks following the use of a break card. Violent behaviors are blocked and task continued. Prompt for use of the break card.
- **Dylan**: Teach the use of a gesture for help to obtain attention during tasks. Implement a visual schedule and provide modeling and prompting of tasks. Utilize a token economy for completed tasks paired with adult praise for completed work and requests for help. Block violent behaviors, ignore all others.
- **Abby**: Utilize a token system allowing praise paired with each token. Following receipt of the predetermined number of tokens, provide a choice activity with a preferred adult. Block violent behaviors – ignore all others.

**Experiment Two**

- **Daxter**: Teach the use of a break card and allow for 5 per each half of the day. Provide 5 minute breaks in the sensory room following use of a break card paired with adult praise. Block violent behaviors and continue task – prompt for use of a break card.
- **Abby**: Use a token system allowing praise paired with each token. Following receipt of the predetermined number of tokens, provide a choice activity with a preferred adult. Block violent behaviors – ignore all others.

Results

**Experiment One**

- Results of Functional Intervention: Maddox

- Results of Functional Intervention: Dylan

- Results of Functional Intervention: Daxter & Abby

Discussion

- In each experiment, functional interventions designed based on two methods of functional behavior assessment were effective in decreasing off-task behavior.
- Greater decreases in off-task behavior were seen in experiment one, in which indirect methods were used in addition to direct observation. This observation supports the use of teacher input in the FBA process.
- In addition to a decrease in off-task behavior, each participant’s teacher reported they saw an increase in academic engagement and achievement in addition to positive social interactions.
- None of the participants were involved in physical restraints, as they were previously, following intervention implementation.