Statistical Summary Report from A Published Doctoral Thesis That Supports the Efficacy of the Tough Choices Cognitive-Emotive-Behavioral Management Intervention Program

Title:
Decreasing the Percentage of Discipline Referrals Received by Special Education and Regular Education Students at the High School Level through the Implementation of a Cognitive-Emotive-Behavioral Anger Management Program
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Abstract:

Data from disciplinary records at the participating high school over a 3-year period (2001-2004) indicated that the percentage of regular education students who received discipline referrals increased from 24.43% to 44.41% and the percentage of special education students who received discipline referrals increased from 46.87% to 50.28%. Planned methods included a random selection of approximately 30 participants at the high school level. The T-1 group consisted of 15 students (6 general education, 3 emotional behavior disorder (EBD), 3 specific learning disabled (SLD), and 3 mildly intellectually disabled (Mild) students). The T-2 *group (the control group which did not receive the program interventions)* consisted of 15 students (6 general education, 3 emotional behavior disorder (EBD), 3 specific learning disabled (SLD), and 3 mildly intellectually disabled (Mild) students). To choose a target group, the researcher assigned numbers to students who had 4 or more disciplinary offenses in the top 5 offense categories and had been identified as being chronic offenders over a 3-year period. The researcher placed each number in a box, and then randomly drew a number. The participants in the T-1 group participated in a character education program, Tough Choices beyond Anger Management that taught coping and anger-management skills with a cognitive-emotive-behavioral therapy approach. This approach helped to identify distorted or negative self-verbalizations of students that were preventing change from taking place in their lives. Nonviolent response modeling was taught so that students were able to practice how to respond appropriately in stressful situations. The researcher involved parents by informing them of their child's behavioral progress through positive home contacts. The T-2 group, the control group, did not receive any of the interventions in this study.

Introduction:

The increasing number of students making inappropriate behavioral choices in schools was the reason for the researcher's interest in reducing the number of student disciplinary offenses. Because of the importance of students remaining in class so that school success may be obtained, it was vital that the disciplinary problems students experience were addressed immediately by teachers and administration. It was hypothesized that anger, aggression, and discipline referrals could be significantly reduced in the student population through the implementation of a cognitive-emotive behavioral training sequence.

Possible causes for the increase in student discipline referrals during the research period were thought to be the lack of appropriate character education training programs, the absence of parental involvement at school, aggression, and the absence of appropriate non-violent response modeling behaviors for students to observe. Character building and social skills programs that do not address the cause of students' violence (Ford 1993) or other inappropriate behaviors may not allow students to pinpoint events in their lives that have contributed to problems they currently experience which prevent permanent behavioral changes to take place.

Social skills training curricula that take cognitive-emotive behavioral mediating variables into account can be especially helpful based on research that illustrates the importance of such mediation in reducing and controlling the anger response (Goldstein 1999). Anger management programs have focused primarily on skill acquisition training alone (Coates 1979) resulting in poor generalizability and ineffectiveness in chronically angry or emotionally constricted subjects (Urbain & Kendall 1981). Approximately 40 out of 100 children identified as aggressive in early elementary grades exhibit serious behavior problems in adolescents. Early anti social behavior, if not addressed properly through social emotional skill training, is a powerful predictor of problem behavior when it occurs with isolation, withdrawal, or hyperactivity later on.

Method:

The purpose of this research intervention was to implement an emotional/anger management program that taught new coping skills, anger management skills, and appropriate response modeling skills. The primary goal was to teach skills for stress and anger comprehensively through the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components of recognizing and restructuring the negative autonomic self verbalization that maintained anger (Bandura 1974) in provocation situations (Novaco 1975) prior to delivering the cognitive-behavioral training sequence based on the original research of Arnold Goldstein, Prepare Curriculum (1988).

The applied dissertation used a pretest and posttest design (see Appendix B). The researcher administered the pretest at the beginning of a 17-week semester to determine the students' personal feelings (power levels) about their ability to make behavioral changes in their lives prior to the intervention. The intervention integrated Ford's (2003) Tough Choices program that teaches students coping and anger-management skills through the use of videos, role-playing exercises, and worksheets, along with the researcher increasing parental involvement, demonstrating nonviolent response modeling, and using additional activities to decrease their number of disciplinary offenses.

Disciplinary referral reports were used to determine if student discipline had decreased as a result from program implementation. The pretest and posttest results which showed a significant increase in cognitive-emotional-behavioral skill acquisition, along with the disciplinary referral reports indicated there is a correlation between interventions and decreased disciplinary offenses. Data from Tables 8 and 9 in the T-1 special and regular education groups indicated a decrease in discipline referrals, and data from Table 10 indicated an increase in discipline referrals in the control group T-2 *(who did not receive the intervention program)* special and regular education groups.

Results:

The Character Education/Tough Choices Survey (see Appendix A) conducted at the end of the programs' implementation period indicated that the Tough Choices program was effective in helping deal with anger and stress. Information gathered from the survey can be used to promote awareness of the T-1 and T-2 group students' perspective of the school's current character education program as opposed to a program that teaches coping and anger-management skills with a cognitive-emotive-behavioral approach. The study can be used as a program option by school officials to consider as they attempt to address the discipline concerns on their campuses.

The Tough Choices program pretest and posttest (see Appendix B) which are designed to determine the students' personal feelings (power levels) about their ability to make behavioral changes in their lives prior to and after the intervention program. The results showed a significant increase in perceived power levels and cognitive-emotional-behavioral skill acquisition.

Results from the applied dissertation included a decrease in the percentage of discipline referrals received by special education from 28 to 11 (60.7%, P< .05)) referrals and by general education students from 47 to 27 (42.6% P< .05)) referrals. (b) Participants' learned nonviolent responses through nonviolent response modeling, and (c) increased parent involvement through monthly positive home contact.

Results from Tables 8 and 9 indicated that there was a decrease of 37 discipline referrals received by T-1 special and regular education students. There was a decrease of 24 discipline referrals received for disobedience, a decrease of 7 discipline referrals for skipping, a decrease of 8 discipline referrals received for disrespect, an increase of 3 discipline referrals received for disruptiveness, an increase of 1 for inappropriate language, and a decrease of 1 discipline referral for refusing detention.

Results from Table 10 *(T-2 students did not receive the intervention program)* indicated that there was an increase of 13 discipline referrals received by the T-2 *(control group)* special and regular education groups. There was an increase of 4 discipline referrals received for disobedience, an increase of 2 discipline referrals received for disruptiveness, an increase of 3 discipline referrals received for disrespect, no change in discipline referrals received for skipping, an increase of 3 discipline referrals received for inappropriate language, and an increase of 1 discipline referral received for refusing detention. T-1 group program participants showed a decrease in discipline referrals received, while T-2 group *(control group)* participants showed an increase in discipline referrals received.

Discussion:

One of the positive aspects of the study was students' reactions to the researcher's home contacts with parents. Parental contact was performed in a variety of methods, such as: telephone calls, notes, letters, and cards. The researcher felt it was important to advise parents of their child's strengths and accomplishments throughout the implementation of the program.

In addition to parental involvement, the researcher demonstrated nonviolent response modeling for

students, group discussions were conducted, and common everyday scenarios that are typically faced by students were presented to group participants. The importance of these scripted scenarios was to allow students to recall familiar responses at a later time when faced with stressful situations.

In addition to the nonviolent response modeling, students were counseled using a cognitive-emotive-behavioral approach throughout the study. This approach addressed the negative self-verbalizations of students that prevented change from taking place. Once this area was addressed, behavioral training began to take place.

The Character Education/Tough Choices Survey (see Appendix B) conducted at the end of the programs' implementation period indicated that the Tough Choices program was effective in helping deal with anger and stress. Information gathered from the survey can be used to promote awareness of the T-1 and T-2 group students' perspective of the school's current character education program as opposed to a program that teaches coping and anger-management skills with a cognitive-emotive-behavioral approach. The study can be used as a program option by school officials to consider as they attempt to address the discipline concerns on their campuses.

Teachers and administrators are constantly striving to decrease the number of discipline referrals received from year to year. The researcher concluded that parental involvement, nonviolent response modeling, and using a cognitive-emotive-behavioral counseling approach can decrease the percentage of discipline referrals received by special and regular education students and possibly lessen frustrations of teachers and administrators who are involved with discipline issues in schools.

Meetings with administrators at administrative counsel meetings are an excellent starting point for the researcher to share findings from this study. With specific results from this study which indicated a decline in discipline referrals during the 2004-2005, first semester school year, administrators and guidance counselors may be more likely to welcome an added program option (*Tough Choices* 2004) at their school that teaches coping and anger-management skills.

Table 8   Students Receiving the Intervention

Number and Percentage of T-1 Special Education Students Receiving Disciplinary Referrals in the Top Five Referral Categories during the First Semester of the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 School Years

| | T-1 SE group referrals by offense | | | |
| | 2003-2004 | | 2004-2005 | |
Disciplinary offense	No.	%	No.	%
Disobedience	26	55.31	11	40.74
Disrespect	10	21.27	6	22.22
Disruptiveness	5	10.63	5	18.51
Skipping	4	8.51	2	7.40
Inappropriate language	2	4.25	3	11.11

Note. T-1 SE = Target 1 special education group.

Table 9   Students Receiving the Intervention

Number and Percentage of T-1 Regular Education Students Receiving Disciplinary Referrals in the Top Five Referral Categories during the First Semester of the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 School Years

_____

| | T-1 RE group referrals by offense | | | |
| | 2003-2004 | | 2004-2005 | |
Disciplinary offense	No.	%	No.	%
Disobedience	12	42.85	3	27.27
Skipping	6	21.42	1	9.09
Disrespect	5	17.85	1	9.09
Refuse detention	3	10.71	1	7.09
Disruptiveness	2	7.14	5	45.45

Note. T-1 RE = Target 1 regular education student group.

Table 10   Control Group – These Students did NOT receive the Intervention

Number and Percentage of T-2 Special and Regular Education Group Participants Receiving Disciplinary Referrals in the Top Six Offense Categories During the First Semester of the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 School Years

_____

| | T-2 RE and SE group referrals by offense | | | | |
| | 2003-2004 | | 2004-2005 | | |
Disciplinary offense	No.	%	No.	%	% difference
Disobedience	38	34.86	42	34.42	10.52
Disruptive	27	24.77	29	23.77	7.40
Disrespect	21	19.26	24	19.67	14.28
Skipping	11	10.09	11	9.01	0.00
Inappropriate language	7	6.42	10	8.19	42.85
Refuse detention	5	4.58	6	4.91	2.00

Note. T-2 = target group(control group) 2; RE = regular education; SE = special education.

Appendix A

Character Education Program (I Can) versus
The Tough Choices Program
Survey

How Helpful Was the Tough Choices Program?

Circle T (true) or F (false)

1. Tough Choices helped me deal with anger and stress.	T	F
2. I learned how my life was not working.	T	F
3. I learned to take responsibility for my part of the problem.	T	F
4. I learned that I must be committed to make changes.	T	F
5. I learned a lot about medications and addictions.	T	F
6. I recognized things I was telling myself that hurt me.	T	F
7. I learned how to control myself from the inside.	T	F
8. I feel better about myself.	T	F
9. Relationships with friends at school improved.	T	F
10. Relationships at home improved.	T	F
11. Relationships with teachers improved.	T	F
12. I got in trouble less because of Tough Choices.	T	F
13. I cope with anger and stress differently now.	T	F
14. I am glad I went through Tough Choices.	T	F
15. I believe in myself now.	T	F

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate having a teacher mentor you? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate having individual counseling?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Comments:

How Helpful Was the I Can Program?

1. I Can helped me deal with anger and stress.	T	F
2. I learned how my life was not working.	T	F
3. I learned to take responsibility for my part of the problem.	T	F
4. I learned that I must be committed to make changes.	T	F
5. I learned a lot about medications and addictions.	T	F
6. I recognized things I was telling myself that hurt me.	T	F
7. I learned how to control myself from the inside.	T	F
8. I feel better about myself.	T	F
9. Relationships with friends at school improved.	T	F
10. Relationships at home improved.	T	F
11. Relationships with teachers improved.	T	F
12. I got in trouble less because of I Can.	T	F
13. I cope with anger and stress differently now.	T	F
14. I am glad I went through I Can.	T	F
15. I believe in myself now.	T	F

How would you feel about having a teacher giving you encouragement with notes or tokens, recognizing when you do positive things, and making you feel like someone cares about you and that you are special?
Y   N

If you would have had a family counselor to talk to with at school (confidentially) about things that may have been bothering you, is it possible that you could have been able to make better behavioral choices certain times this past year?
Y   N

Comments:

Appendix B

TOUGH CHOICES^{TM} Pre-Test

Group Skill Acquisition Checklist   **Date:**_____

Evaluator_____

Please evaluate your group of students by circling numbers 1 through 5 indicating the perceived level of skill proficiency for each of the following skills:

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1) Awareness Level - How often do your students show an awareness of how their bodies, minds, and emotions are interacting?	1	2	3	4	5
2) Willingness to Change - How often do your students display a willingness to try new ideas for personal improvement?	1	2	3	4	5
3) Honesty - How often are your students honest about the areas of their lives that are causing them problems?	1	2	3	4	5
4) Using Self-Control - How often do your students show control over their thoughts and feelings when confronted with frustrations/conflicts?	1	2	3	4	5
5) Assertiveness - How often do your students assert their rights in an appropriately assertive manner?	1	2	3	4	5
6) Responding to Bullying - How often do your students handle verbal put-downs appropriately?	1	2	3	4	5
7) Aggression - How often do your students use acceptable ways to handle confrontations?	1	2	3	4	5
8) Resiliency - How often do your students demonstrate effective ways to gain composure and think through consequences before acting?	1	2	3	4	5
9) Moderating Emotions - How often do your students exhibit the ability to turn down the volume on their emotions?	1	2	3	4	5

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