

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS:

A LITERATURE REVIEW

by

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ABSTRACT

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This paper provides a literature review and critical analysis of the research surrounding teachers' perceptions of school psychologists. The purpose of this study is to understand how helpful the school psychologist's current role is to teachers. A clearer understanding of teachers' perceptions of school psychologists may be used to facilitate further development of the school psychologist's role. Continued development of their role ensures that professionals working in the schools are used to their fullest potential. The paper concludes with a proposal for a study to evaluate the differences in teachers' perceptions of school psychologists who have a traditional roles verse a broad role. It is hypothesized that school psychologists providing a broad role will be perceived more positively by teachers than school psychologists functioning in a traditional role.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The education system's primary goal is to educate students to become responsible adults in the future. The challenge lies in creating an educational environment that effectively relates to all students. Often students' academic success is stifled by learning disabilities, family circumstance, and/or emotional bruises. It is the educator's responsibility to tailor education to fit the academic needs of each child in order to give them (and us) a promising future.

School psychologists have the necessary training to understand and implement programs and offer resources to others to encourage all students to succeed regardless of their strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, school psychologists are often not used to their fullest potential for varying reasons: lack of motivation, legislative restraints, and misconceptions of their job description. This literature review will provide a brief history of the development of school psychology, the need for school psychologists to expand their role, and studies that have addressed other educators' attitudes toward school psychologists. The intention of this paper is to encourage an expansion of the school psychologist's role in order to benefit the education system in America.

The concepts surrounding school psychology have been around for over 100 years; however, the actual formation of school psychology as a profession began in the 1920's. In 1923 J.E. Wallace Wallin conducted research which indicated that psychological testing was being administered by untrained amateurs. Wallin suggested that more qualified individuals should replace them (Gutkin & Reynolds, 1982). Concurrently, psychologists in Chicago were assisting the legal system in understanding the needs of delinquent youth. Eventually some of these psychologists left to specialize in academic concerns such as reading strategies and were gradually integrated into the school system. At about the same time, the American Psychological

Association (APA) devised standards to ensure competency of individuals seeking to become school psychologists. Then in the 1960's, when P.L. 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act was developed, the need for school psychologists dramatically increased.

Currently, school psychologists' are primarily employed within school systems. With their training in psychology and education they have the potential to address the needs of the whole-child. Unfortunately, their role has frequently been narrowed to psychological testing for special education placement. Some believe that if the school psychologist role is not expanded there will no longer be a need for them in the education system. Farley (1996) offers suggestions for how school psychologists' can expand their role. He suggests a reduction in the importance of traditional IQ testing and more of an emphasis on general education, child and adolescent health and prevention, counseling, and family psychology. Through these modifications, the role of the school psychologist can be expanded to the entire school instead of just the special education system. School psychologists work with various educational professionals who vary in their perceptions of the usefulness or effectiveness of school psychologists. As school psychologists attempt to expand their role within the school system, they will be met with varied responses from other educational professionals.

Of primary interest in this literature review is teacher perceptions of school psychologists. The majority of student referrals made to school psychologists come from teachers; because of this, it is important for school psychologists to understand how teachers perceive them and their services (Severson, Pickett, & Hetrick, 1985). Research regarding teachers' perceptions of school psychologists suggests that teachers with less experience have a more positive perception of school psychologist than teachers with more experience. In addition, the research suggests that teachers desire school psychologists to be a more active participant in helping students by expanding their role beyond psychological testing.

Statement of the Problem

School psychologists have not been used to their full potential in the education system. Articles and studies conducted on the role of school psychologists and teachers' perceptions of them suggest that the school psychologist role needs to be expanded in order for them to be perceived more positively by teachers. If the school psychologist role does not broaden, school psychologists are at risk of losing their usefulness in the education system.

Purpose of the Study

This paper focuses on a literature review and critical analysis of the research relevant to the role of school psychology and the perceptions teachers have of the school psychologist's role. The goal of the proposed study is to develop a clearer understanding of teachers' current perceptions of school psychologists in order to aid in the further development of the school psychologist's role. The main questions proposed by this study are:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of school psychologists?
2. Is there a difference in teachers' perceptions of school psychologists with a traditional role versus school psychologists who have a broader role?

Definition of Terms

School Psychologist: Educators who have academic training in education and psychology, they have an understanding of optimal teaching and learning as well as an understanding of school systems. They work in a team with parents and other educators to create an optimal environment for every child to learn in (NASP, 2004).

Perceptions: As it relates to this literature review it is a teacher's attitude or beliefs of how useful school psychologists are in the education system.

Broad Role: The school psychologists' time is spent doing a variety of activities in order to aid students, their families, and other educators. These activities include: individual and group counseling, consultation and collaboration, implementing behavior change and prevention programs, leading workshops, and administering psychological assessments.

Traditional Role: The vast majority of the school psychologists' time is spent testing, writing reports, and making referrals for special education eligibility.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Learning is the greatest investment we have to offer our children. Schools have the privilege and enormous responsibility to instill in children the tools to learn in order to secure the future. Like anything in life, the more efficient a school is the more learning can be done and the more successful children will be when they become adults. Schools can increase their efficiency in a number of areas; of particular interest to this literature review is that of school personnel, specifically school psychologists.

School psychologists have the potential to fine tune the minds of students, leading them to achieve higher than originally planned. With a broad understanding of psychology and education, school psychologists are in the ideal position to offer unique services in the school setting. With over fifty years in the academic setting, school psychologists have been continually redefining their role in the school system. Currently, the field of school psychology is under going a dramatic change. The traditional role of the school psychologist results from federal special education mandates and has as its primary focus psychological testing and related activities. Recently however, educators and school psychologists have come to realize the importance of broadening their role to be more efficient in the school setting.

Given recent changes and financial constraints within the field of education, school psychology needs to change in order to remain a key player in the education system. The traditional role as the gate keeper into special education is no longer seen as useful. School psychologists today need to develop a broader role where they not only contribute to special education but also to regular education. A broader role requires school psychologists to do counseling, psychological testing, behavior plans, in-depth observations, parent and teacher

workshops, and become a more effective consultant for parents and educators.

Research completed on the role of the school psychologist suggests that although traditional roles will continue, broader roles will increasingly emerge in schools (Reschly, 2000). Although, more than half of school psychologists' time will continue to be spent with students who have disabilities or at-risk characteristics, the approach to these areas will change. For example, less time will be spent administering psychological evaluations and more energy will be put towards problem-solving consultation, intervention-oriented assessments and direct interventions. In addition, it has been noted that criteria for ability and achievement classification are likely to change within the next decade as well. Once this occurs traditional intelligence testing will change, in its place, comprehensive health services will bloom.

The future of school psychology can not be fully appreciated unless one looks at its past. The following section will briefly describe where school psychology has been. Afterwards, the importance of changing the school psychologist's role will be addressed, followed by studies looking at teachers' perceptions of school psychologists. A proposed study will be introduced that investigates teachers' perceptions of school psychologists in a broad role verses those in a more traditional role. Teachers' perceptions are important to understand when modifying the role of school psychologists because of the close relationship these educators have to the students with which they both work.

A Brief History of School Psychology

The first inclinations of school psychology began in 1896 when a teacher, Margaret T. Maguire, brought a 14-year-old boy to the University of Pennsylvania to see Lightener Witmer who investigated the boy's spelling difficulties. Following this experience Witmer assisted many other students with slower than expected progress (Gutkin & Reynolds, 1982). Witmer

described his work to the American Psychological Association (APA) in December of 1896 as follows:

1. The investigation of the phenomena of mental development in school children, as manifested more particularly in mental and moral retardation, by means of the statistical and clinical methods.
2. A psychological clinic, supplemented by a training school in the nature of a hospital school, for the treatment of all classes of children suffering from retardation or physical defects interfering with school progress.
3. The offering of practical work to those engaged in the professions of teaching and medicine, and to those interested in social work, in the observation and training of normal and retarded children.
4. The training of students for a new profession—that of psychological expert, who would find his career in connection with the school system, through the examination and treatment of mentally and morally retarded children or in connection with the practice of medicine (as cited in Gutkin & Reynolds, 1982 p.4-5).

Witmer's clinical practice continued to expand throughout the next 30 years. In addition, he published the journal, *The Psychological Clinic* to provide information and results about this new domain of psychological services.

Two years later, in 1898 the Chicago school board developed a survey about the mental and physical characteristics of children (Gutkin & Reynolds, 1982). The results of this survey indicated a need to continue investigating the mental and physical characteristics of children so in 1899 the Child Study and Pedagogic Investigation was developed and led by Fred Smedley.

With the help of his two assistants, Smedley opened a 'Psycho-physical laboratory' in April of 1900. When this laboratory first opened, children's intelligence was assessed using anthropological measurements. For example, brighter children were thought to be heavier and taller than dull children. Lung capacity endurance, strength, and visual and auditory acuity were also considered to be measures of a child's intelligence. Then in 1902, Daniel P. MacMillan became the director of the Child Study Bureau and anthropological measurements were replaced by psychological tests. MacMillan was considered by some to be the first school psychologist (Gutkin & Reynolds, 1982). After MacMillan, Grace Munson became the director in 1935 followed by Frances Mullen in 1949; all three contributed greatly to the expansion of school psychology.

As school psychology continued to be refined, an extensive survey by J.E. Wallace Wallin took place in 1923. The survey concluded that psychological testing was done by amateurs who only had taken general courses in psychology and education, a course in testing, and took a course or read literature about feeble minded children (Gutkin & Reynolds, 1982). Dissatisfied with his findings, Wallin stated psycho-educational diagnosticians should have three to four years of extensive clinical experience and training. Wallin listed schools he felt had more extensive training programs and concluded that it would not be long until the students from these schools would replace the amateurs.

Between 1850 and 1930, the majority of delinquent children were dropouts by the time they were adolescents (Gutkin & Reynolds, 1982). Psychologists were often used to recommend a suitable foster home for these students as well as assist the court in understanding the cause of the delinquency and to offer ways to improve their behavior. The Juvenile Psychopathic Institute in Chicago offered their psychologists to help the courts understand delinquent children. These psychologists contributed immensely to the development of school psychology. For

example, Grace Fernald was a psychologist at this institute who eventually left to specialize in reading strategies for poor readers. August Bronner, a director of the institute, was an initial advocate for the importance of rapport when assessing a child; she also wrote about students with average and above average intelligence who were thought to be retarded because they could not read.

The qualifications of school psychologists were determined in 1917 during an American Psychological Association (APA) meeting of 10 professionals who gathered together and concluded that a certifying committee for school psychologists should be established (Gutkin & Reynolds, 1982). This committee was later formed in 1921 and was called the Committee on Certification of Consulting Psychologists. Professionals that were accepted by this committee were able to make mental diagnoses and were given a certificate that they could hang in their office and be show to the court, giving them credibility. In the 1930's the majority of services provided to children were done in clinics outside of the school setting, although there were a few professionals working in the schools. By the 1960's opportunities for psychologists to work in the schools dramatically increased when P.L. 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act was established. In response, training programs educating school psychologists more than tripled and journals about school psychology began to be published.

Currently, school psychologists are encouraged by teachers, parents, and other educators to take on responsibilities in addition to psychological testing in order to be a more valued asset to the school. This is a dramatic change from the past. Historically, the role of school psychologist was influenced by individuals connected to psychological testing. For example, Daniel P. MacMillan was considered the first school psychologist after he became the director of the Child Study Bureau and replaced anthropological measurements with psychological testing (Gutkin & Reynolds, 1982). Additionally, Wallin's 1923 survey suggested that although

psychological testing was done by amateurs, soon it would be done by professional diagnosticians. Both of these examples suggest that the school psychologist's purpose was to understand and administer psychological tests.

There are a variety of factors that contribute to school psychologists choosing a traditional role over a broader one. One primary factor is the federal regulation of prescribed activities which emphasizes the school psychologist role in psychological testing. Consequently, school psychologists have decided they will not take on additional responsibilities if they are not required to. A second factor is the current shortage within the field of school psychology. The number of school psychologists rose from 9,950 in 1977/78 school year to 23,806 in the 1996/97 school year (Reschly, 2000). But there were 495 vacant positions in the 1996/97 school year and each year many positions remain unfilled. Because of this extreme need and shortage, school psychologists are often spread among many schools to do the psychological testing of students, reinforcing the traditional role as the "tester" and making it more difficult for school psychologists to take on a broader role. As a result of all of these factors, psychological testing has become the traditional role of school psychologists.

The Need for a Changing Role

The school psychologist's role has largely been influenced by federal legislation for handicapped students (Talley & Short, 1995). Although legislation has provided school psychologists with jobs through federal mandates, it has also limited their potential in the schools. Because of federal mandates the school psychologist's role has centered on psychological assessment, thus excluding other services they may be qualified to provide. Recently, school psychologists have been urged to expand their role and provide a larger array of services. Research on the influence health has on learning and an emphasis on early intervention in the schools has resulted in opportunities for school psychologists to expand their roles. The

training school psychologists have in behavioral health, child development, program evaluation, service integration, knowledge acquisition, and systems research can help schools to integrate education with healthcare. In addition, the 21st century brings with it a clearer understanding of the mind as it relates to education and learning. With a background in psychology, school psychologists have an extensive amount of knowledge pertaining to the mind that would aid schools in improving education and learning. As stated by Farley (1996):

“Given the current and coming changes in education and health care, the two areas of greatest relevance to school psychology, I propose that school psychology reinvent itself as a broader discipline, formally encompassing the full range of psychological issues in education including the health care of students as well as the psychology of learning and teaching and the social life of schools (p.32).”

In addition, Farley (1996) believes the term school psychology limits psychologists to the school building. He suggests that school psychology's name be changed to educate psychology in order to reflect their broader role as the care giver for both the education as well as the health of each student. He suggests specific modifications in the educate psychologist's job description in order to raise the position's credibility. He suggests a reduction in the importance of traditional IQ testing because of its lack of helpfulness, he also questions the validity and reliability of projective techniques and psychodynamic psychology and therefore wants their use reduced or diminished. Farley believes educate psychology should place more of an emphasis on general education, counseling and family psychology, and child and adolescent health and prevention.

Farley is not the only one who feels that the role of the school psychologist should change. Richard Abidin (1996) is concerned that without a broader role school psychologists may not have a meaningful place in the education system. Currently, the primary role of school psychologists is IQ testing; with this information they place students into various special education classes. It has been suggested by influential people in education that IQ testing should no longer be used, due to the fact that there is no documentation of enhanced learning by students who undergo these measures, and because IQ testing has discriminated against minority students. Abidin suggests that school psychologists need to find an indispensable role in order to be useful to the education system. An indispensable role requires school psychologists to be cost effective as well as provide schools with evidence that their role does produce a beneficial outcome. Abidin provided five factors that would make school psychologists indispensable.

First, the school psychologists' role should be broadened to support the educational and health needs of all students and teachers, not just students in special education or those with extreme behavior problems (Abidin, 1996). If school psychology became more of a developmental profession they could play a pivotal role in the development of preventative programs in schools such as pregnancy, drug/alcohol abuse, and/or suicide prevention. An increase in school psychologists' involvement in consultation and education programs would provide teachers and parents with needed support when they are struggling with a student's behavior and/or academic success. This in turn may prevent a student's minor problem from becoming more severe. In addition, psychological consultation with school administrators who do not feel comfortable addressing behavioral and mental health issues would influence administrators need for school psychologists.

Second, systems-oriented problem solving should replace IQ testing (Abidin, 1996). Traditional intelligence testing sorts children by giving them labels, where as a systems-oriented

model investigates all the factors that contribute to a student's success, such as: family/community influences, their current instructional program, and how the student is presently coping. This approach addresses the various influences affecting the student's performance instead of using the same intervention on students with various success barriers, which is typical of the labeling approach.

Third, restructuring special education programs to eliminate the necessity of labeling students and to reduce special education's cost would offer more flexibility in order to help students with academic challenges (Abidin, 1996). Abidin states that most special education students (except students with severe handicaps) are offered the same educational approach regardless of their label. In lieu of this, Abidin suggests, we open the doors of special education so that students can easily enter and exit its services, making it available to all students, thus making it a support for the entire school. Consequently, this approach would eliminate the need for labels and it would not discriminate against students. The school psychologist's new role would be to help create and facilitate programs focused on individualized problem solving.

Fourth, school psychologists need to include parents in their students' academic lives (Abidin, 1996). The vast majority of parents (80-90%) do not have their children in special education; therefore it is unlikely that they will come in contact with a school psychologist. It is essential for this to change because parents are a major component of what is considered indispensable in education; because of this the school psychologist's role should be expanded so that all parents can benefit from resources provided by their school psychologist. Furthermore, parents who do meet the school psychologist often do not develop a relationship with the psychologist because of the environment in which they meet. Parents whose children are eligible for special education typically meet the school psychologist during the Individual Education Plan

(IEP) meeting when the school psychologist reports the results of the IQ test. Often, no further contact with the school psychologists occurs. As Abidin states:

“In this process, the psychologist’s role is likely to be seen by the parent, at best as mysterious, and at worst as a collaborator in a *railroad job*. This team approach is a costly, time consuming procedure whose validity has never been demonstrated in terms of enhanced education outcomes.” (Abidin, 1996, p.47)

In order to successfully help students, school psychologists need to directly interact with parents to create interventions that link the student’s home life to their academic life. Fostering this kind of relationship will enable parents to see the school psychologists as valuable contributor to their childrens’ educational success.

Lastly, school psychologists need to evaluate psychological interventions as well as the educational process (Abidin, 1996). Empirical investigations are linked to the psychology profession, thus school psychologists are in a position to deliver these services. Research on the effectiveness of services students are given is essential in order to understand which programs are effective and which programs require modification in order to see success in student learning.

Traditionally, school psychologists have been limited to psychological assessments that restrict them to special education categorization. The education system needs school psychologists to expand their role in order to make the education of all students more successful. Through expanding their role school psychologists would become a valuable resource to special and general education parents, teachers and students. To better understand where the school psychologist’s role expansion should begin teachers’ perceptions have been investigated because

they have been identified as the key component in influencing the school psychologist's role expansion (Peterson, Waldron & Paulson, 1998). The following section reviews studies focused on teachers' perceptions of school psychologists in order to understand where role expansion is most critical.

Teacher Perceptions of School Psychologists

The perception of school psychologists by other education professionals has been suggested to impact the role of school psychologists (Gilmore & Chandy, 1973). Specifically, it affects school psychologists' training and qualifications, the organization of psychological services, to whom and the type of referrals made, and the procedures used in diagnosis and treatment. Several studies (Gilmore & Chandy, 1973; Severson, Pickett, & Hetrick, 1985; Ford & Migles, 1979) looked at the perception of school psychologists by other school personnel. Historically, principals' views on the role of school psychologists has often been one of the most influential factors in deciding what role school psychologists play in schools. One study in particular surveyed 203 principals' perceptions of school psychologists in the North Central Association of Secondary Schools (Hartshorne, & Johnson, 1985). The study required the principals to rank school psychologists' responsibilities in ten areas. The ten areas were ranked twice, once for the time ideally spent and once for the time that was actually spent by the school psychologist. Principals' ranked the ten ideal items in the following order (from most time ideally spent to least): psychological testing, counseling, consultation with staff, consultation with parents, staffing, consultation with administrators, case follow-up, program development, in-service training, and lastly research. The actual time spent in each of these ten items was ranked as follows (from most time to least time): psychological testing, staffings, consultation with staff, consultation with parents, counseling, consultation with administrators, case follow-up, program development, in-service training, and lastly research. The results of the study indicated that

ideally “counseling with students” would switch with “staffing for special education” ranking “counseling with students” as number two instead of number five in actual time spent (Hartshorne & Johnson, 1985, p.243). This study also found that non- assessment activities such as counseling, development of mental health programs, in-service training, and consultation with parents received higher ideal ranking than actual rankings. The opposite was true with assessment practices such as staffing, case follow-up and testing. In addition to ranking the ten areas, principals were asked to report the four main factors that influenced how they ranked the ten areas. The factors were: training, personality, circumstances, and special education regulations. Training most affected the rankings of psychological testing, program development, and research. Personality influenced the rankings of counseling, consultation with parents, staff and administrators and in-service training. Circumstances most influenced the rankings of counseling, consultation with administration, program development, and research. Lastly, special education regulations most influenced the rankings of psychological testing, staffings, and follow-up. In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that on average principals are satisfied with the role of the school psychologist in the schools with the exception of the amount of time devoted to counseling. Possible explanations for school psychologists’ lack of time devoted to counseling may be their lack of training in counseling and/or the amount of time school psychologists must spend with special education because of mandated laws.

Of particular interest to this study are teachers’ perceptions of school psychologists. The majority of student referrals made to school psychologists come from teachers; because of this it is important for school psychologists to understand how teachers perceive them and their services (Severson, Pickett, & Hetrick, 1985). The view of school psychologists by teachers has been studied in a variety of ways, these include: a) role function, b) helpfulness, and c) competency and education of school psychologists (Gilmore & Chandy, 1973).

Styles' 1965 study was one of the first to examine of teachers' perceptions of the role of school psychologists. In 1963 Styles created and mailed a questionnaire to twenty-eight schools in the Ohio school system. The questionnaire had five parts: (1) teachers' knowledge of school psychologists' training (2) school psychologists' training relative to training in other areas of psychology and education (3) teachers' perception of how competent school psychologists' were to assist in specific areas (4) school psychologists' competency with various childhood problems (5) teachers' perception of what personality attributes were needed as a school psychologist. The return rate of this questionnaire was 52.3 percent, with a participation total of 459 teachers. One interesting outcome of this study suggested that teachers' perceived school psychologists to be more competent in aiding students with emotional difficulties than what their training suggested they were prepared for. When teachers were asked about school psychologists' competency in specific areas the following resulted; (1) 68% of teachers believed school psychologists were fully qualified to explain to parents their child's abilities; (2) 67% of teachers believed school psychologists were qualified to hold training workshops for teachers about group intelligence tests; (3) 68% of teachers believed that only in some cases were school psychologists qualified to instruct teachers on how to manage their classroom; (4) teachers' opinions were divided evenly among school psychologists ability to "serve on curriculum-planning committees," "determine whether a particular child could be labeled 'psychotic'," and their ability to "lead extended psycho-therapy with students" (Styles, 1965 p.26). In addition the questionnaire asked teachers to explain the qualities an individual should have if pursuing a career as a school psychologist. The results indicated that individuals interested in school psychology should have a love for students/people, objectivity and fairness, sensitivity when talking with others, a reassuring/pleasing manner, self-composure, and a consistent or even temperament. Overall, the outcome of this study suggests that teachers had a fairly accurate perception of school

psychologists for the time frame in which this study was given. However, this study lacked information separating teachers based on years of experience and it is a rather outdated study to use today.

Gilmore and Chandy (1973) studied teachers' perceptions of school psychologists and broke down these perceptions based on teachers' years of experience. The main variable separating experienced teachers from less experienced teachers was the amount of contact with school psychologists. Teachers with the most experience expected school psychologists to work with them to create and implement treatments; experienced teachers also expected school psychologists to conduct treatments independently. In addition, teachers who worked with school psychologists credit them less with reviewing cumulative records, doing classroom observations and consulting with teachers and parents than teachers who have had no contact with school psychologists. As a whole, teachers with no experience working with school psychologists had a more positive view of school psychologists than those who had interacted with school psychologists. In addition, there were a number of student concerns that teachers desired school psychologists to become more involved in, these included: low achieving students, students with behavioral and emotional concerns and students with cognitive disabilities. Interestingly, teachers believed that before seeking assistance from a school psychologist the student's problem(s) should be moderately severe. When asked about the school psychologist's role, teachers indicated that the school psychologist's primary role was to administer psychological tests. In addition, teachers stated a variety of areas in which school psychologists could improve, these included: a faster referral response and practical recommendations that were implemented by the psychologist. With regards to children, school psychologists were believed to better understand children's abilities and emotional development than the "average teacher", however, they knew less about teaching in general and about

classroom management. Employment issues were also a concern by teachers. Teachers desired a full-time school psychologist at their school who showed long-term and consistent involvement. Twenty-five percent of teachers wanted an increase in contact with a school psychologist and eighteen percent of teachers wanted parent/psychologist contact to increase. However, the results of the Gilmore and Chandy (1973) study need to be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size of 33 teachers taken from two schools. Caution is warranted in generalizing the results of the study to all teachers based on such a small sample. Additionally, the results were gathered through structured interviews by the lead researcher and this form of data collection is subject to extraneous variables that may have affected the teachers' responses. Finally, the study was conducted in 1973 when the role of most school psychologists was almost exclusively testing oriented.

Ford and Migles (1979) investigated teachers' perceptions of school psychologists based on years of experience, grade and subject taught, gender, and "open education" methods. Teachers surveyed were from low SES, mainly minority schools. Overall, the teachers in this study found screening students to be placed into special education as the most important role of the school psychologist. Psychodiagnostic testing, counseling students and remedial case consultation were also important duties of the school psychologist in the eyes of the teachers surveyed. In contrast, serving as a group facilitator, in-service trainer for teachers, consultant for parent conferences and parent counselor was seen to be less important. In addition, it was found that high school teachers rated counseling students, teacher consultation on parent conferences, and remedial case consultation by school psychologists as less important. Also, teachers who used "open education" methods wanted school psychologists to take a more broad or active role in the schools compared to teachers who did not use an "open education" approach. Gender, years of experience, and teaching specialty had no significance on the teachers' perceptions of

school psychologists. In conclusion, the outcome of this study suggests two important implications for school psychologists to consider: 1) services (such as diagnostic testing and screenings) offered by school psychologists that directly relieve problematic circumstances are highly valued by teachers; 2) teachers do not want school psychologists frequently involved in educational programming, parent consultation, training and other areas considered by the teacher to be in "his/her domain". In closing, school psychologists should be able to carry out a variety of different role functions and tailor their services to each teacher's teaching style. Similar to the limitations of the other studies, Ford and Migles study may have a biased sample considering the low response rate. In addition, this study only included one school district; therefore it should only be generalized to school districts with similar demographics.

Severson, Pickett, and Hetrick's 1985 study split teachers into experienced and preservice groups with a survey instrument adapted from Styles' 1965 study. The survey included the following categories (a) effectiveness (b) level of training (c) qualifications for tasks, and (d) usefulness in specific duties. The results of this study indicated that 84% of experienced teachers likened school psychologists to clinical psychologists. When preservice and experienced teachers were compared, experienced teachers found school psychologists more effective with culturally deprived and physically handicapped students. In addition, experienced teachers believed school psychologists were more "qualified" to train teachers in administration of group intelligence tests, consult with teachers about difficulties in their classroom, refer them to others for further help, facilitate conferences to interpret a student's ability, and recommend specific school programming for students. Only 22% of teachers felt school psychologists were completely competent to advise teachers on matters of discipline. Severson, Pickett, and Hetrick (1985) were concerned about the low percentage of teachers who perceived school psychologists as competent to assist with discipline issues because discipline is a common reason for students

to be referred. In contrast, the preservice group believed school psychologists were more qualified to advise teachers on discipline problems in the classroom and on school psychologists' ability to serve on curriculum committees. When teachers were asked to rate school psychologists' usefulness they perceived school psychologists to be most helpful in consultation with teachers about students and least useful in individual and group counseling. This study found that an important factor motivating teachers' perceptions of school psychologists was the amount of contact teachers had with school psychologists. However, the study had several limitations which should be considered when evaluating the study's results. First, the questionnaire was brief, with only a few specific questions, therefore the findings were limited and cannot be generalized beyond the questions that were asked. Secondly, some of the questionnaires were not completely filled out, suggesting that the respondents may have needed clarification on some of the questions. Lastly, the limited sample (teachers from only one school district) limits the generalizability of the results.

Summary

The results of these studies suggest that school psychologists would be more helpful if they spent more time in a consultation role, if they implemented and monitored the interventions they developed, and if school psychologists provided referrals that were more teacher friendly. Most of the literature concerning teachers' perceptions of school psychologists is from the 1970's and 1980's. Current follow-up studies would be useful to monitor if teachers' perceptions have changed as the role of school psychologists has changed. Such studies would serve as a catalyst for future improvements in school psychology, enabling the education system to be better equipped for the 21st century. In addition, research design factors also need to be considered when reviewing these studies. As discussed prior, variable response rates in the studies may have increased response bias of the teachers surveyed; therefore, caution is

warranted when generalizing the results of these studies (Ford & Migles, 1979). In addition, external variables such as the amount of contact teachers had with school psychologists was not monitored on most of the studies (Abel & Burke, 1985), but as seen in the study done by Severson, Pickett, and Hetrick (1985) the teachers amount of contact with school psychologists significantly impacted teachers' perceptions of school psychologists.

Future Research

Given the limited amount and nature of the current research, further research in this topic is warranted. Such research could address several areas. First, it might be interesting to investigate teachers' job satisfaction and its relation to their perceptions of school psychologists. Perhaps teachers who are less satisfied with their job roles perceive others, such as school psychologists, more negatively as well. Another area for potential study is to follow-up on teachers' perceptions of school psychologists to see how current teachers perceive school psychologists. The purpose of the proposed study contained within this literature review is to compare teachers' perceptions of school psychologists with a broad role to those with a more traditional role. It is hypothesized that information gathered from this potential study could aid school psychologists in further improving there role in order to benefit the educational system.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will discuss a proposed study that compares teachers' perceptions of school psychologists with a broad role to those with a traditional role. Currently, no study has compared teachers' perceptions of school psychologists' in this way. Through the proposed study we hope to update the information on teachers' perceptions of school psychologists and provide school psychologists with information about the perceived useful or effectiveness of their services by one of the main consumers of their services, teachers.

Proposed Research Questions

1. What are teachers' perceptions of school psychologists?
2. Is there a difference in teachers' perceptions of school psychologists with a traditional role versus school psychologists who have a broader role?

Proposed Subjects

The Eau Claire School District employs school psychologists who perform various roles, some more traditional than others. Schools will be identified based on the school psychologist's role and teachers within these schools will be surveyed.

Proposed Instrumentation

A twenty-five-item questionnaire will be designed by the researcher based on the literature review of previous studies. Questions will be modified from Styles, 1965 study and the research of Severson, Pickett, and Hetrick (1985). Additional questions will be created based on

the papers of Farley (1996) and Abidin (1996). The questionnaire will require teachers to provide demographic information and respond to questions based on a Likert scale.

Proposed Procedures

A brief questionnaire with a cover letter introducing the study and the importance of their input on the questionnaire will be mailed to selected teachers. Each teacher will be assigned a numeric code, only the researcher will have access to this list which will only be used to follow-up on non-responders of the survey. Once all data has been collected, only the numeric coding will be utilized, thus ensuring confidentiality for all respondents.

Proposed Analysis

Data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, means and percentages. Correlation analyses and tests of significance will also be completed.

Limitations of the proposed study

Potential limitations of the proposed study are: (1) the possibility of a poor response rate which may create a biased sample; (2) limited generalizability of the study's results to other school districts the limited sample that will be utilized; (3) it is possible that the validity of the survey may be affected because the questionnaire has not been measured to ensure that it measures what it was created to measure; (4) it is possible that the reliability of the survey may be affected because the questionnaire has not been studied to ensure consistent teacher responses; (5) lastly, the researcher is not able to control for the failure that the school psychologists' roles are not likely to be completely pure (e.g. purely traditional), but are more likely to encompass aspects of both roles (e.g. traditional and broad).

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