Incorporating Student Self-Reports in Functional Assessment

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Certification of Sources

This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfilment of the requirement is for the Degree of Master of...Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Legal Science.

This thesis represents my own work and contains no material which has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at this University or any other institution, except where due acknowledgement is made.

Signature:................................................................. Date: ..................................................
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Mom and Dad, thank you for always helping me get through, even though you think what I’m doing is ridiculous. It was ridiculous, but it was worth it.

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Abstract

Interventions created to alter challenging behaviour should be preceded by a thorough investigation into the purpose of the behaviour. Functional Assessment is a framework created to investigate the purpose, or function, of behaviour viewed as a problem. Careful analysis of the behaviour through interviews, questionnaires, rating scales and direct observations, are combined to form hypotheses pertaining to the reasons why a particular behaviour might be of value to the individual. Functional Assessment has a history of being implemented for cases of extreme behaviour often exhibited by individuals with severe disabilities. Its success in these cases has allowed for branching out to new populations of individuals with verbal ability and average intelligence. For these latter populations, current literature recommends for inclusion of the target individual during the Functional Assessment – especially during the collection of data via interview. The current study uses an $n = 1$ paradigm to compare the contribution of information from 10 student-parent-teacher triads on rating scales, Functional Assessment interviews and direct observations. The study aims to investigate whether inclusion of students in the Functional Assessment process (i.e., Student-Assisted Functional Assessment) is superior to traditional Functional Assessment frameworks that do not include the individual with challenging behaviour as an informant.
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