School-Based Speech-Language Pathologists’ Familiarity with Intelligence Testing

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Introduction

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that school professionals collaborate on multi-disciplinary teams.
- Research finds that language is a mitigating factor in intelligence testing, even for domains not associated with verbal expression.
- During diagnostic evaluations, the language findings of the SLP overlap with the intelligence findings of the school psychologist.
- To advocate effectively for the children on their caseload, SLPs must understand the diagnostic information presented by school psychologists.

Research Questions

How much intelligence testing training do SLPs receive in graduate school?
How familiar are SLPs with the leading intelligence test for children, the WISC-IV?
Do SLPs believe that language is a mitigating factor in intelligence testing?
Do SLPs believe that their opinions about language and cognition are valued by school psychologists?

Method

Participants

- 750 school-based SLPs in Massachusetts were sent surveys using mailing list procured from and used with the permission of ASHA.
- 278 surveys returned. (37% participation rate)

Results

Profile of Participants

Figure 1 - Graduate school attended (N= 278)

Figure 2 - Years experience as school-based SLP (M=14.92, N=277)

Figure 3 - Amount of intelligence testing training received in graduate school (N=275)

Figure 4 - Familiarity with WISC-IV (N = 276)
Results (Continued)

Effect of Language on WISC-IV Domains

Verbal Comprehension (N=274)
Perceptual Reasoning (N=256)
Working Memory (N=265)
Processing Speed (N=261)

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%
% Participants
No Effect Weak Effect Moderate Effect Strong Effect Very Strong Effect

Figure 5 – The degree to which SLPs believe that language ability has an effect on the domains of the WISC-IV (N=256)

SLPs’ Perceptions of their Value to School Psychologists

Language (N=276)
Cognition (N=276)

0% 5% 3% 46% 95%
% Participants
Not at all Somewhat Definitely

Figure 6 - The degree to which SLPs believe that school psychologists value their expertise with regards to language and cognition (N=276)

Conclusion

Intelligence test training improves less experienced SLPs’ ability to work on IDEA mandated teams and advocate for children on caseload.

More intelligence test training is needed in SLP graduate programs.

Discussion

Findings

- Majority of SLPs receive little or no intelligence test training in graduate school.
- Majority of SLPs are familiar with domains of WISC-IV.
  - Familiarity increases with experience.
  - Familiarity increases with intelligence training (particularly for less experienced SLPs.)
- Majority of SLPs recognize the influence of language on the verbal comprehension domain of the WISC-IV; they are less aware of the influence of language on the remaining three WISC-IV domains.
  - SLPs with less intelligence test training are less likely to be aware of effect of language on nonverbal domains.
- Majority of SLPs believe that school psychologists definitely value their experience with regard to language.
  - Less likely to believe expertise is valued with regard to cognition.
  - For less experienced SLPs, more likely to believe expertise is valued if more intelligence test training was received.

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