



HOW TO ASSESS SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH DIFFERENT DECISION MAKING METHODS

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Abstract:

Social and emotional development is an important area for children, which includes social-emotional learning skills. It is necessary to know that the development and clarification processes of social-emotional learning require an efficacious assessment process. This study aims to reveal how social emotional learning methods of preschool children are assessed through different decision-making methods. For this purpose, the assessment methods of social-emotional learning skills explained as intervention decisions, progress-monitoring decisions, and intervention outcome decisions were reviewed. In the context of intervention decisions; functional behavior assessment, archival records behavioral rating scales/checklists, and direct observations were used to assess social emotional learning skills of children. In the context of progress-monitoring decisions, systematic direct observations, direct behavior ratings, brief behavior ratings, and office discipline referrals were used for the assessment of social emotional learning skills of children. Additionally, it was possible to use intervention outcome decisions so as to assess social-emotional learning skills of children. The results of the review showed that assessment process of social-emotional learning requires specific practices and strategies to evaluate social-emotional learning skills of children effectively. Based on the results, it is recommended that researchers and practitioners should have the necessary knowledge regarding the assessment process, and incorporate the assessment instruments that serve for the purpose into the process. It should be noted that these tools must be valid and reliable assessment tools.

Keywords: social emotional learning, assessment, intervention decisions, progress-monitoring decisions, intervention outcome decisions

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1. Introduction

Children learn basic skills and behaviors, as well as they acquire some habits and attitudes in preschool years. Through meaningful learning and healthy development in this period, it is probable that children's future life quality will increase. The provision of effective learning in this period means that problems are solved without significant difficulty. To promote this achievement, it is possible to support the developmental areas of preschool children. Developmental areas for the preschoolers are generally explained as cognitive, language, motor, social-emotional and self-care development. These developmental areas can have relationships with each other among themselves. A developmental area influences the others and is influenced by the others. The social-emotional development area also has a critically important role in the development areas. As stated by Jones, Zaslow, Darling-Churchill, & Halle (2016) the greatest progress is possible when evaluations of social-emotional development of young children are subjected to an agreement on a conceptual framework, which differentiates social-emotional development from other areas of development, and contains defined sub-areas of corresponding behaviors.

The first two years of life, also known as infancy, are very important to improve self-confidence and adaptive attachment. At this age, children can express basic emotions and display different reactions to adults' emotions. Children's first communication is to start looking at someone's face by smiling and making eye contact. The toddler period, which includes children from two to three years old, is also critical to try to learn autonomy and further social emotions. In this period, children gradually learn to participate in a group. At ages three to six, also known as the preschool period, children display more prosocial behaviors and can be separated easily from parents in case there are not any disorder problems. Children also learn positive peer interactions and strategies for coping with difficult situations during preschool years. Such developmental characteristics are related to the social-emotional development of preschool children. One of the very fundamental ways to strengthen the social-emotional development area is to improve the social-emotional learning skills and behaviors.

It is necessary to achieve consensus on valid and reliable methodological and conceptual approaches to measure social-emotional development of young children (Darling-Churchill, & Lippman, 2016). Information about children's emotions and behaviors provides more opportunities to make correct decisions about children's daily routines and make an effective plan to develop their social-emotional skills. Only linking intentional teaching, assessment, screening, and intervention will ensure the efforts and outcomes to be useful and meaningful in supporting social-emotional learning skills of children (Yates et al., 2008). All effective social-emotional interventions should be based on psychometrically valid and reliable skill assessment methods and strategies. The main aim of assessing social-emotional learning is to collect information that ensures gathering correct data about targeted individuals (Gresham, 2018). According to Slentz (2008), an assessment process is considered as an essential aspect of

learning and teaching. For the purpose of a better understanding and learning support, an information gathering process is involved in the assessments of early childhood. Although it is never possible to portray all characteristics of children fully by means of assessment, certain details that give information about children's knowledge and capabilities can be described as a result of assessment. A benefit of assessment tools is that they make it possible to obtain a structure that provides access to information and allows organizing such information for the early learning and development of preschool children. A critical aspect at this point is to know which tools are to be chosen for which skills and learning areas. A study on the assessment of social-emotional learning in preschool and later years would help understand the concepts of the social-emotional learning process and show researchers and practitioners how social-emotional learning can be measured.

As stated by Gresham (2018), screening decisions, identification and classification decisions, intervention decisions, progress-monitoring decisions, intervention outcome decisions can be used in the assessment process of social-emotional learning skills. The methods focused on screening and identification-classification decisions are more known and especially specific screeners (e.g., The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire-Goodman, 1997; The Devereux Student Strengths Assessment- LeBuffe, Shapiro, & Naglieri, 2009; The Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders-Walker, & Severson, 1992) and rating scales (e.g., The Social Skills Improvement System- Gresham & Elliott, 2008; The Child Behavior Rating Scale- Ladd, & Profilet, 1996; The Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scale- Merrell, 1994; The Walker-McConnell Scales of Social Competence and School Adjustment-Walker, & McConnell, 1995) are commonly used in the field literature. The present study focused on the three different methods explained as *intervention decisions*, *progress-monitoring decisions*, and *intervention outcome decisions* methods. The study is expected to contribute to revealing assessment tools within this framework and to provide a resource for processes based on these assessment methods in addition to screening-identification classification. The purpose of this study was to examine the assessment tools used for *intervention decisions*, *progress-monitoring decisions*, and *intervention outcome decisions* of the social-emotional learning of preschool children. In accordance with this purpose, the following research questions were sought.

RQ1: How is social emotional learning of preschool children assessed through intervention decisions?

RQ2: How is social emotional learning of preschool children assessed through progress-monitoring decisions?

RQ3: How is social emotional learning of preschool children assessed through intervention outcome decisions?

2. Procedures

In the current study, assessment tools used for *intervention decisions*, *progress-monitoring decisions*, and *intervention outcome decisions* of social emotional learning were reviewed. In

this scope, this study is based on a literature review of assessment tools. In this context, field resources including printed/online books and refereed journal articles were examined. The review also includes keyword-based searches such as “assessment of social emotional learning”, “decision making assessment”, “intervention decisions”, “progress-monitoring decisions”, and “intervention outcome decisions”. In this scope, the available assessment tools were examined by the researcher and among them, the tools that are not used in preschool period were not included in the study. Based on the review process, available assessment tools for the aim of making decisions of social emotional learning were revealed. The information obtained from the review process were given within the required titles.

3. Findings of the Literature Review

The findings reached from the literature review were presented within the framework of the objective questions addressed in the study as given below.

RQ: How is social emotional learning of preschool children assessed through intervention decisions?

The assessment methods including behavior rating scales as well as technical and screening tools for sociometric assessment can explain individuals having social skills deficits. However, these assessment methods do not give information about the selection of intervention procedures. The influence of challenging problem behaviors of an individual on the level of social skills is a significant point for conceptualizing the deficits in social skills. The competing problem behaviors can be derived from externalizing behaviors and internalizing behaviors, and they may also prevent the exhibition of social skills. If children have any problem behaviors such as anxiety, shyness and withdrawal, they will probably avoid interaction with peers, and under these conditions, they may have serious difficulties to learn appropriate social behaviors. Replacement behavior rating is an important tool for describing any prosocial behavior to replace the competing problem behavior. Replacement behavior rating depends entirely on the identification of functionally equivalent behaviors (Gresham, 2018; Gresham, Van, & Cook, 2006). Replacement behaviors can be defined as alternative positive behaviors instead of problem behaviors.

3.1 Functional Behavior Assessment

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a systematic assessment method to gather information about the events and the consequences of events (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). Another definition of the Functional Behavior Assessment is that it is an assessment process of the relationships between the contextual variables and unique characteristics of the individual, which motivate and strengthen behaviors (Steege, & Watson, 2009). In other words, Functional Behavioral Assessment is a group of methods that are used for obtaining information on antecedents, behaviors, and consequences, for the purpose of determining the functions of the behaviors (Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). Accordingly, functional behavior assessment contains an acquisition of

assessment methods to decide the antecedents, behaviors, and consequents. The functional behavior assessment fundamentally aims to achieve identification of the environmental conditions essential for the occurrence and nonoccurrence of a behavior. The way through which a behavior contributes to the individual in a particular setting or situation is described by the function of behavior. Behaviors serve a positive function in permitting the individual to "get something which is preferred" and behaviors serve a negative function in permitting the individual to "get rid of something which is non-preferred" (Gresham, 2018). For example, if being angry is a usual behavior for a child, the positive function tries to make the child happy with others, and the negative function tries to prevent this child from harming others. Accordingly, the information based on the determination of the function of behavior is useful to support ensuring positive behaviors and decreasing negative behaviors. An example of functional behavior assessment procedures is seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: An Example of Functional Behavior Assessment Procedures for Preschool Children

Displayed time	Antecedent events	Challenging behaviors	Functions of challenging behavior
Story time	Children listen to story read by teacher and follow pictures in the storybook.	Adam plays with the blocks without showing any interest in the story.	Avoids focusing his attention on the necessary activity.
Art time	Children create a puppet with surplus materials.	Adam starts playing in another center without putting the materials in their place.	Escapes from performing the task in the classroom.
Snack time	Children eat their snacks in the classroom.	Adam engages in looking out of the window.	Obtains attention of teacher through inappropriate behavior.

As stated by Witt, Daly, & Noell (2000), Functional Behavior Assessment methods can use both indirect methods (including behavior rating scales/checklists, interviews, and archival records), and direct methods (including direct observations). These are explained as follows:

A functional assessment interview has four main purposes including the following: (1) target behavior identification and definition, (2) identification of the antecedent events related to the target behavior, (3) obtaining the preliminary information on the potential function the target behavior serves, and (4) identification of the appropriate replacement behaviors that will serve the same function as the one served by the target behavior. It is considered that a *functional assessment interview* ensures perception of a problem by only one person, thus presenting merely limited information on the concept of behavioral function (Gresham, Watson, & Skinner, 2001). According to Witt, Daly, & Noell (2000), several questions given below should be evaluated in the functional assessment interview process.

- What are the most important problems?
- How does this child's behavior differ from the other children?

- What does cause to these behaviors?
- What is the response of the child's parents to the problem?
- When is the problem worse?
- When is the problem not displayed?

Archival records are also used for some background inquiries (e.g., When has the problem behavior occurred?, Was there any interference before?). In many cases, there is plenty of information useful for this procedure in the records of the schools, and the first action to take should be to review such records of the schools systematically (Gresham, Watson, & Skinner, 2001; Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). School Archival Records Search (SARS) is an example of this method. The data in the school records related to dimensions such as attendance, demographics, school failure, test achievement information, within-school referrals, placement, disciplinary contacts, and special education eligibility is quantified by the SARS (Walker, Block-Pedego, Todis, & Severson, 1991). Archival records are relatively far less reactive than other recorded assessments. If the detection of behavior problems in early preschool is not possible, school records can provide an additional source of screening information (Sprague, & Walker, 2005). It should be considered that some conditions that prevent school achievement might be due to insufficient social-emotional learning skills. Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley (2015) conducted a study for the aim of examining the relationship between kindergarten children's prosocial skills and their outcomes for young adulthood, including diverse dimensions of education, employment, mental health, substance use, and criminal activity. Their study used School Archival Records data source to show the importance of non-cognitive skills in the development of personal and public health outcomes.

Behavioral rating scales/checklists are used to define the temporality and frequency of the problem behavior. Behavior rating scales are not sufficient to obtain information regarding the antecedents and consequences of target behaviors. Nevertheless, it is possible to adapt this method to include the definition of contexts and antecedents. This method can be used as an additional method to the other functional behavioral methods that play a role of brief inceptive method serving to identify target behaviors for a further wide-ranging direct functional assessment and intervention (Gresham, Watson, & Skinner, 2001; Witt, Daly, & Noell, 2000). For example, the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991) is commonly used to evaluate children's behavior. Some of the syndrome scales (Internalizing Problems and Externalizing Problems) and eight sub-scales (Thought Problems, Anxious/Depression, Rule-Breaking Behavior, Somatic Complaints, Aggressive Behavior, Withdrawn/Depressed, Attention Problems, and Social Problems) are combined under two scales. The preschool checklist version (CBCL/1½-5) contains 100 problem behavior items rated on a 3-point Likert-type scale (0=not true, 1=somewhat or sometimes true, and 2=very true or often true) (Achenbach, 1991). Additionally, Kohn, & Rosman (1972) developed the teacher rating instruments known as the Symptom Checklist and the Social Competence Scale in order to evaluate the level of social-emotional performance of preschool children. The Social Competence Scale has factor-I including Interest-Participation (such as keeps to himself, fails to

participate in activities unless being urged, and fails to play with other children) and factor-II including Apathy-Withdrawal and Cooperation-Compliance (such as fails to follow instructions, treats other children cruelly on purpose, gets angry when interrupted by adult at play).

Direct observations are also performed in the environment where problem behavior is observed, and used to reinforce the information collected by indirect methods, as well. An Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence analysis accompanied by an A-B-C recording form, as given the example in Figure 2, is an effective method for performing a descriptive direct observation. It is considered that this **A-B-C procedure** leads to determine the reasonable function of behavior (Gresham, Watson, & Skinner, 2001).

Figure 2: Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (A-B-C) Recording Form for Direct Observation

Date and time	A (What happened before)	B	C (What happened after)
12/09/2017 10:30am	Teacher delivers worksheets to children and wants them to match animals with their living space.	Adam is not seat in his chair and is not interested in his worksheet.	Teacher tells Adam to sit in his chair and work on his worksheet.

RQ2: How is social emotional learning of preschool children assessed through progress-monitoring decisions?

Progress monitoring necessitates frequent and repeated data collection, using evaluations that are sensitive to change. Progress-monitoring tools also must have technical adequacy standards in terms of reliability and validity. In a sense, it is recommended that this kind of tool must be sensitive to changes in behavior and be time-efficient. When these processes are carried out correctly, progress monitoring will contribute to achieving the desired results. In this way, progress in children’s social behaviors, greater accountability of the children’s progress, data-based decision making, and efficient communication among teacher, children, and parents will be possible (Gresham, 2018). As noted by Gresham (2018), four methods have been typically used to follow children’s social emotional learning skills. These are:

- 1) Systematic direct observations;
- 2) Direct behavior ratings;
- 3) Brief behavior ratings;
- 4) Office discipline referrals.

3.2 Systematic Direct Observation

Systematic direct observations (SDSs) of children’s skills and behaviors indicate children’s learning process. A reliable recording of children’s interactions and behaviors can show their thoughts, feelings and behavior repertoires. Children’s systematic behaviors can be evaluated by observing and recording. In the early childhood period, children’s behavioral changes can especially be gathered through event sampling and time sampling. In *event sampling*, observations are focused on the frequency with which

any specific behavior appears. For instance, in assessing the degree of aggressive behavior displayed by children, each time aggressive behavior is displayed, a marker is added next to the child's name. At the end of the sessions, all the markers are evaluated to identify children's aggressive behaviors. In *time sampling*, observations focus on specific behaviors, recording their events at even time intervals. These times can occur at various intervals, such as 5-minutes of partial recording, 10-minutes of partial recording or longer (Saracho, 2015). For example, measurement of prosocial behaviors displayed by children includes observing prosocial behaviors for a period of time and scoring an occurrence of prosocial behavior by using a partial interval recording procedure. If prosocial behavior is measured by using a recording procedure with 15-second partial intervals, it is scored as having prosocial behavior when any prosocial behavior occurs in this interval (Gresham, 2018).

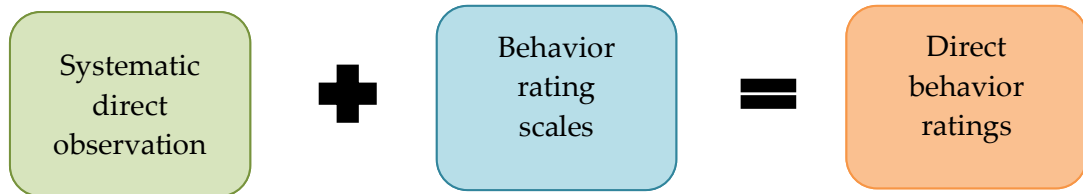
Pellegrini et al. (2007) used scan and event sampling procedures of direct observation and examined preschool children's aggressive behaviors and social dominance in their classroom. In another study by Williford, Whittaker, Vitiello, & Downer (2013), direct observation was used to select participants to analyze the association between the engagement of preschool children with their teachers, peers, and tasks and the gains in self-regulation. The researchers who participated in the observation watched everyone in the group of children in the event, in the cycles of 15-minute series alternately, which resulted in four cycles of observation in average. Another study by Felver (2013) used direct observation (during 20-minute periods) and evaluated the impact of a social-emotional learning intervention program called the Strong Start on social-emotional learning knowledge and skills of the preschool children. The results of the mentioned study indicated the trends of increase in prosocial behavior and the trends of decrease in disruptive behavior. In many studies, other data collection tools (e.g., behavior rating scale) were used in addition to direct observation.

There are some basic assumptions, strengths and weaknesses of systematic direct observations. Direct observations are measured as the samples the behaviors of a child displayed in specific settings. Through direct observations, children's idiographic data, rather than groups of children's information, can be collected. Direct observations involve repeated measurement of behavior over time to establish intra-individual variability that can be used to evaluate an individual before, during, and after social-emotional learning intervention. The features of repeatability and flexibility are the source for some strengths of systematic direct observations. These characteristics are required; however, systematic direct observation is lack of procedural efficiency, which is an important limitation for this method of assessment. Meanwhile, systematic direct observations are expensive assessment tools, which require the use of highly trained observers. There is little empirical guidance concerning the amount of observation sessions required to secure a representative sample of behavior. Systematic direct observations can also be effected by the reactivity of children who realize they are being observed (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Christ, 2009; Gresham, 2018).

3.3 Direct Behavior Ratings

Since the direct behavior ratings integrate the efficiency of behavior rating scales and the strengths of systematic direct observations, they are known as hybrid assessment method. In other words, direct behavior ratings comprise the observation of specific behaviors, directness of observation, and evaluative component of ratings (Chafouleas, 2011). Characteristics of direct behavior ratings are shown in Figure 3.

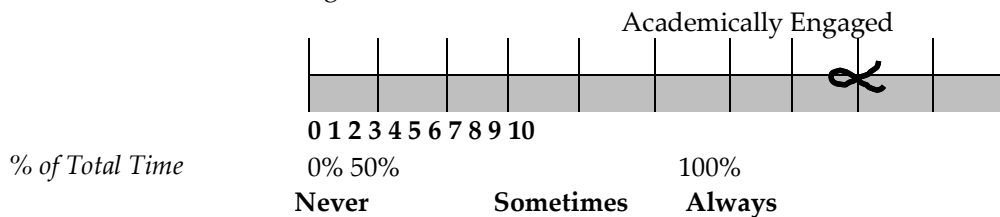
Figure 3: Characteristics of Direct Behavior Ratings



Direct behavior ratings include a period of observation arranged in advance, followed by rating of specific target behaviors briefly. Flexibility, efficiency, and defensibility are some of the potentials of this assessment method. There are various forms of direct behavior ratings, including single-item scales and multiple-item scales, which have so far been developed. An individual general target behavior, e.g. academic engagement, is rated by the single-item scales. Meanwhile, multiple-item scales rate multiple discrete behaviors such as waiting in a line, raising a hand, and performing assigned tasks (Miller, & Fabiano, 2017). Examples of single-item and multi-item direct behavior ratings are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: An Example of Direct Behavior Ratings: Single-Item and Multi-Item

Direction: Review all of the behaviors one by one by given below. Please check the degree related to the behaviors of children to make an assessment.



Interpretation: During the 80% of the observation period, Adam exhibited academically engaged behavior.

	Never	Always	
Did Adam follow class rules?	0	1 2	
Did Adam follow teacher directions?	0	1 2	
Did Adam do his/her best work?	0	1 2	
Total number of points obtained:			

Interpretation: During the 84% of the observation period, Adam obtained academically engaged behavior.

*Edited from Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Christ (2009).

Single-item direct behavior rating scales towards academic engagement and disruptive behavior for kindergarten children were developed by Chafouleas, Kilgus, & Hernandez (2009). Each of the direct behavior ratings is divided into 10-equal-grades including the following scores on the line: 0% (never), 50% (sometimes), and 100% (always). Using this scale, teachers performed ratings associated with the proportion of time (from 0% to 100%) when all children were observed to examine whether they would exhibit target behaviors or not. Academically engagement was defined as participation of a child passively and actively in classroom activities such as answering a question, raising a hand, looking at the instructional materials, listening to the teacher, and talking about a lesson. On the other hand, Disruptive Behavior was defined as any behavior exhibited by children, which interrupted normal classroom activities such as acting aggressively, fidgeting, and talking/yelling about things not related to classroom instruction. The form of Social Skills rating System (SSRS) filled in by the teacher was chosen as a criterion similar to the direct behavior ratings, in the study by Chafouleas, Kilgus, & Hernandez (2009). According to the complete results, a correlation between the methods from moderate to strong was supported. The results of the study showed that disruptive behavior was associated negatively with academic competence, and significantly and negatively associated with social skills, and significantly and positively associated with problem behaviors. Meanwhile, it was found that academic engagement was associated positively and significantly with social skills and academic competence, while it was associated with problem behaviors negatively and significantly.

Direct behavior rating (DBR) is among the assessment methods in an emerging trend and it is *flexible, defensible, repeatable, and efficient*. The characteristic of *flexible* means that the assessment continues its development for an extensive range of aims, behaviors, and contexts. The characteristic of *defensible* means that the assessment establishes adequate standardization and verifiable technical adequacy such as validity, reliability, and accuracy. The definition of the method is not generated by specific behaviors; however, it is possible to adapt and use it for the assessment of various target behaviors. Furthermore, outcomes of direct behavior rating provide unique information contribution to diagnostic and classification decisions within a multi-method approach. Additionally, the characteristic of *efficient* means that the persons who naturally are in the context of interest in brief periods of time make the assessments. In addition, the characteristic of *repeatable* means that the assessment facilitates collecting data that still continues within and across occasions (Christ, Riley-Tillman, & Chafouleas, 2009). It can be stated that the direct behavior ratings, which are defensible, feasible, reproducible and effective, are useful for gathering information from children's social-emotional behavior.

3.4 Brief Behavior Ratings

A disadvantage of using the social skills behavior-rating scales exclusively is that these methodologies may not be particularly sensitive in detecting short-term proceeding effects. An approach in hindering this restriction is to use change-sensitive Brief Behavior Ratings to follow-up how individuals respond to intervention (Gresham, 2018). A study conducted by Gresham et. al. (2010) revealed the developing process of the Brief Behavior Rating. Development and evaluation of the technical sufficiency of a brief behavior rating scale, which included change-sensitive rating items, were the purposes of the study. The specific dataset analyzed in this study was created from a randomized control trial of the early intervention program named First Step to Success. The study was conducted on children ranging from the age of six to ten. The 12 items were identified from Social Skills Rating System-Teacher Rating Form (SSRS-TRF). Values of the 12-item set including internal consistency ($\alpha = .70$) and test-retest reliability ($r = .71$) were adequate levels. The 12 most potent change-sensitive items (out of a total of 56 items) included the following: *“Responds appropriately when hit/pushed”*, *“Follows your directions”*, *“Ignores peer distractions”*, *“Cooperates with peers”*, *“Gives compliments to peers”*, *“Disturbs ongoing activities”*, *“Overall classroom behavior”*, *“Is easily distracted”*, *“Argues with others”*, *“Joins ongoing activity or group”*, *“Volunteers to help peers”*, and *“Accepts peer idea”*. These 12 items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = never, 1 = seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = almost always). As a result, this Brief Behavior Rating was stated as an effectual General Outcome Measure (GOM) for assessing the effects of social behaviors of children. It was underlined that the Brief Behavior Rating Scale (BBRS) was useful for monitoring interventions that target a broad range of behaviors related to one’s social behavior (Gresham et. al., 2010).

Moreover, Cressey (2010) developed a brief rating scale to assess the positive behaviors of children formatively. A pool of items consisting of a rating scale with 93 positive words was created by means of drawing/adaptation from the rating scales existing in the literature. The teachers used a pilot scale to rate children’s behaviors in K-8 classrooms. Based on this survey, 30 positively worded items of the rating scale items emerged as the most important and most appropriate items to include in the pilot rating scale. The scale included items such as *“Follows school and classroom rules”*, *“Stays in control when angry”*, *“Pays attention”*, *“Thinks before she/he acts”*, *“Is accepting of other students”*, *“Completes tasks without bothering others”*, *“Resolves disagreements calmly”*, *“Likes to be successful in school”*, *“Cares what happens to other people”*. The rating of the items was performed on a 4-point Likert scale (Almost Never, Sometimes, Often, and Almost Always). Strong results were found for the internal consistency ($\alpha = .98$) and for the split-half reliability ($r = .94$) of the pilot scale. As a result of the one-dimensional factor structure of the rating scale, a useful General Outcome Measure (GOM) was achieved in order to evaluate the range of social-emotional and behavioral competencies.

3.5 Office Discipline Referrals

Office disciplinary referrals (ODRs) include a child's behaviors towards classroom rules or social norms, an observation of the school members for these behaviors, and conclusions given by the staff to these behaviors (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). ODRs has the capability to observe difficult behaviors directly. The use of ODRs can provide an opportunity to obtain information on the behaviors of low frequency and high intensity, which are more realistic in school settings (McIntosh, Campbell, Carter, & Zumbo, 2009). A standardized form is used to record the office referrals and they are filled in when a discipline problem of a student is identified by a school staff member. The form contains the children's name, the date of the behavior displayed, the time when the problem behavior occurs, and the information related to the member of school staff who makes the referral. An input is entered in the form to show if the children exhibit the behavior (such as aggression, disruption, disrespect, or noncompliance) or not. In addition, notes such as short description of the problem behavior, the disciplinary action taken, and the people who are involved, are also added to the form. In the end, the place where the behavior occurs (such as classroom, lunchroom, or restroom) is indicated in the form. For each incidence, the member of school stuff fills in an office discipline referral, and then delivers it to the officer. The person responsible for the disciplinary actions can contact a parent for notification via a telephone call during the in-school period or after a child suspends the school (Putnam, Luiselli, Handler, & Jefferson, 2003). An example for the office disciplinary referral form is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: An Example of Office Discipline Referral Forms

Children:	Age:	
Date:	Time:	Referring Staff.....
 Location		
Classroom () Lunchroom () Restroom () Playground () Other ()		
 <u>Minor Problem Behavior</u>		
Inappropriate language	<u>Major Problem Behavior</u>	<u>Possible Motivation</u>
Physical contact	Abusive language	Obtain peer attention
Defiance	Fighting/physical aggression	Obtain adult attention
Compliance	Over defiance	Avoid peers
Property misuse	Harassment/bullying	Avoid adult
Violation	Tardy	Avoid task/activity
Other	Lying/cheating	Don't know
	Other	Other
	<u>Administrative Decision</u>	
Loss of privilege	Individualized instruction	
Time in office	In-school suspension hours/days	
Conference with child	Out-of-school suspension hours/days	
Parental contact	Other	
 Others Involved in Incident:		
	Teacher() Staff() Peers() Substitute() Other() None()	

Other Comments:

*Edited from Gresham (2018)

Practices of student discipline by means of behavior assessment with office referrals were investigated in the study by Putnam, Luiselli, Handler, & Jefferson (2003). The result of this study supported the use of office discipline referrals as an easily accessible indicator for identification of school discipline problems, designing interventions, and evaluation of outcomes. It showed that the prevalent discipline problems mostly included fighting and inappropriate language, defiant, harassment, and disruptive behaviors. Another finding of the study was that office discipline referrals tended to vary from kindergarten to the grade of six. Additionally, McIntosh, Horner, Chard, Boland, & Good (2006) carried out a longitudinal analysis on children who started kindergarten, about their academic skills and problem behaviors through the elementary school. Office discipline referrals (ODRs) were used to measure the problem behaviors of students. Each of the ODR documents included observation of a violation in behaviors, preparing a document for a referral to the occasion, forwarding the child to the office for administrative action, and deciding actions. Results showed that variables of reading and behaviors (including variables of reading for kindergarten) anticipated the amount of discipline referrals occurred in fifth grade significantly.

RQ3: How is social emotional learning of preschool children assessed through intervention outcome decisions?

Another assessment process of social-emotional learning is to determine the intervention outcomes. Making decisions whether social-emotional learning interventions produce the desired outcomes can be possible by using various assessment methods. The best way to identify the consequences of these interventions may be to use social skills of children to measure these outcomes (Gresham, 2018). Intervention outcome decisions show the impact of the intervention program and the change in children's social-emotional learning skills. In other words, interventions outcome decisions are not only important in achieving the results based on the intervention processes, but also important in determination of the children's social-emotional learning skills levels. Consequently, the assessment tools used for the aim of making interventions outcome decisions are also critically important.

When the studies carried out for this purpose were reviewed, it was seen that few assessment tools are widely used. As it is explained in the section of the identification and classification decisions, the Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS) (Gresham, & Elliott, 2008) is also commonly utilized for examining the impacts of the intervention on social-emotional learning skills. This behavior rating scale measures social skills and problem behaviors. As such, the scale is well suited to recording observable and specific behaviors and skills. It is considered that behavior rating scales are more objective, reliable, and valid information than assessments based on high-inference projective techniques. Moreover, the behavior rating scales are less costly than systematic direct observations and other test techniques (Gresham, 2018).

The SSIS-RS by Gresham, & Elliott (2008) were well designed with the knowledge that social behavior is manipulated by the specific settings. This rating scale with Teacher Form, Parent Form and Student Form, offers a wide-ranging picture of a behavior of a child in different settings and from different perspectives. As emphasized by Frey, Elliott, & Gresham (2011), SSIS-RS is an advanced instrument for assessment towards intervention over the preschool. It should be considered that social behaviors of children at various ages, from different backgrounds, and with disabilities can be evaluated using the SSIS-RS. As such, the SSIS-RS generate information for the use of practitioners and researchers on the social behaviors of children in the school, community, and at home, in addition, on the values of teachers and parents regarding the social skills or behaviors for the development of children.

4. Summary and Future Directions

The assessment of social-emotional learning of preschool children is possible through different methods. The most important point is to decide and why assessment processes are needed and what the main purpose of the assessment process is. Accordingly, there are several methods and strategies of the assessment of social-emotional learning that serve for different purposes in the literature. *Intervention decisions, progress-monitoring decisions, and intervention outcome decisions*, which are reviewed in this study, are the methods available for the assessment of social emotional learning. It is important to know that the selected methods must be useful for the target group, as well as they must be appropriate for the purpose. Consequently, validity and reliability of the assessment instruments should be examined. The assessment instruments not only should be valid and reliable, but also should be used in accordance with the guide for use. For example, it is needed to be sure that students are literate for using the social-emotional learning skills rating scale-student form. Additionally, assessment of children's social-emotional learning skills in different settings such as school and home can present powerful findings regarding their social-emotional learning skills and behaviors. The combined use of some assessment methods also contributes to the reinforcement of the findings. That is, the peers/friends of the children can use sociometric methods to show classmate's social status; meanwhile teacher can assess children's social status by direct observations. It should be noted that assessment process of the social-emotional learning requires specific practices and strategies to measure children's social-emotional learning skills effectively. Practitioners and researchers should have the necessary knowledge regarding the assessment process, and incorporate the assessment instruments that serve for the purpose into the process. It should also be well known that the necessary steps should be taken on the basis of assessment of the social-emotional learning process after the assessment process.

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