# Handbook of Research in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Robert B. Rutherford, Mary M. Quinn, and Sarup R. Mathur (Eds.), Guilford Publishers, New Tork, 2004
Review by Aydin Bal, M.A.

*The Handbook of Research in Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* brings together 70 top researchers and scholars in the field to address the major foundational, assessment, characteristics, intervention, and methodological issues facing the field of emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) of children and adolescents. With the breadth and depth of the topics addressed in the 30 chapters, the editors of the *Handbook* aimed to reach practitioners (e.g., psychiatrists, psychologists, educators, counselors, and other mental health professionals), researchers, and graduate students from a variety of the fields concerned with the treatment and education of children and youth with EBD. Because of the range and diversity the topics, the 30 chapters of the *Handbook* are divided into five parts (i.e., foundations of research, assessment and evaluation, characteristics of emotional and behavioral disorders, intervention and treatment research, and research methodology). Each chapter in these five parts provides a compilation of current information and evidence on topics to which the authors have made major contributions.

The first part, foundations of research, reviews the foundational knowledge and current perspectives in the field of EBD for the research discussed in the other four parts. Following a summary of historical roots of research and contemporary perspectives on the inquiry into EBD in children and youth, the authors attest to the critical role that positivism continues to play in producing reliable knowledge and evaluating interventions. The first part also makes the case that definition and classification of EBD is significant in research and administration as well as in philosophy. A well-developed analysis is provided of the two primary EBD classification systems—the disease perspective, exemplified by DSM-IV, and the dimensional perspective, exemplified by the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA). The most important shortcoming of both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) definition of *emotional disturbance* and the definition of *emotional or behavioral disorder* proposed by the National Mental Health and Special Education Coalition is the lack of sufficient attention to measurement. Classification is crucial to identifying regularities and diversities in each group member's behaviors in society. The disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in EBD programs is also analyzed. By using empirical methods, researchers attempt to understand the causes of this disproportionality and respond with evidence-based and culturally competent methods.

Research shows that youth with EBD have a higher incidence of mental health problems and substance abuse, school failure and drop out, involvement in the juvenile justice system, and that the human and financial costs of the failure to prevent EBD are enormous. Findings from cost-benefit analysis research demonstrate that money spent early on mental health and education services for children and adolescents can prevent higher and often more serious human and financial costs in the future. Cost analyses of EBD show that funding for identification and implementation of prevention and early intervention can save fiscal resources in the long run.

Finally, the first part addresses how research informs practice in policy making, teacher training, and classroom instruction. In the last century, researchers generated scientific knowledge sufficient for improving effective behavioral and educational treatments for children and adolescents with EBD. Now, both researchers and practitioners need to ensure that this empirical knowledge is used for determining policy making, personal training, and student instruction and treatment.

In the second part, assessment and evaluation, six chapters describe the complex assessment factors that influence the identification of students with EBD and the factors that lead to the evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions. A chapter in the section concerns the utility of rating-scale methods and describes several frequently used behavior-rating scales. While behavioral rating scales are imperfect measures of human behaviors and attitudes, well-constructed rating scales can be valuable for both the identification of children and adolescents' behaviors and measuring the effects of interventions for EBD. Functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a relatively new screening and intervention process for addressing problem behaviors. Although there has been limited empirical study of the reliability and validity of FBA assessment tools (interview protocols, behavior situation rating scales, scatter plots, and direct observation procedures) with students with EBD, researchers have recently aimed to fill the empirical holes in FBA knowledge by pursuing an extensive research agenda.

This second part also makes the case that, in school systems, the classification of students as emotionally disturbed under the IDEA definition should include both psychiatric and psychological assessments through mental health



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consultation and that the teachers of students with EBD should have a sufficient knowledge of the characteristics and treatments of the DSM psychiatric disorders that occur for these students. Successful collaboration between EBD teachers and mental health professionals and complementing the noneducational treatments of childhood psychopathologies requires that teachers of students with EBD implement these mental health treatment protocols into their educational practices. In the areas of special education, child psychiatry, and psychology, researchers are often working with the same student population. A higher level of communication and collaboration among the researchers in these areas may improve outcomes of both educational and noneducational treatments for children with EBD. Curriculum-based evaluation (CBE) and measurement (CBM) for students with EBD is a viable, instructionally relevant assessment alternative to the use of commercially prepared norm-referenced tests. CBM processes are sensitive to the changes in students' behaviors and academic performance.

The assessment and evaluation part of the book demonstrates how CBE and CBM can provide a data-based decision-making process for teachers of students with EBD. It also provides a synthesis of key aspects of the early identification, prevention, and intervention literature pertaining to EBD in young children. The literature indicates that significant behavioral problems in early childhood are more likely to persist over time, into adolescence and adulthood, and put children with these behavior problems at risk of school failure and EBD. Preventative interventions for young children at risk and with EBD result in positive outcomes in both the short term and the long term. The second part reviews direct, indirect, and multimodal approaches to early detection and research-based intervention programs for young children with or at risk for EBD (i.e., *Regional Intervention Program*, *Incredible Years*, *First Step to Success*, and *First Track Project*). The last chapter in the assessment part points out that youth with EBD are ill-equipped to participate in high-stakes assessments. Students with EBD are less likely to meet general academic standards because of their behavioral problems, a lack of empirically valid instruction, and the poor preparation of teachers in the area of academics for these students. Unless these issues are addressed, the growing body of work on accountability and assessment will have limited impact.

The third part of the book, characteristics of EBD, focuses on research issues related to the characteristics of EBD in children and youth, and covers four major types of disorders (externalizing behaviors of aggression and violence, internalizing behavior problems, youth delinquency, and autism spectrum disorders) that have traditionally been studied in special education. The first chapter of the third part provides an overview of aggressive diagnostic patterns as embodied in the DSM-IV and in IDEA, discusses research-derived models of how externalizing disorders involving aggressive behavior emerge from the developmental process, and focuses on the context of the school as an exacerbating, buffering, and protective factor as it relates to youth aggression and violence.

Unlike externalizing behavior problems, internalizing behavior problems occur as an over-controlled and inner-directed pattern of behaviors. Through a critical review, the authors make the case that using DSM's *medical model* in school systems has major difficulties. The DSM model of psychopathologies does not include a functional approach, which addresses *why* a person feels or behaves rather that *what* a person feels or behaves. Moreover, reliability issues of this model and lack of treatment validity are additional concerns when using the DSM system for qualification of children and adolescents for EBD services. With this review, the authors suggest that because of the use of objective criteria, empirical classification systems, employing more objective statistical procedures (i.e., factor analyses of teacher and parent rating scales and a representative normative sample comparison) can be useful for valid identification procedures for children with internalizing behavior difficulties. Following a critical review of the assessment systems, the authors review characteristics of major childhood internalizing disorders and evidence-based intervention approaches for internalizing behavior problems.

Youth EBD are significantly overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. The authors analyze the risk and resiliency factors of juvenile delinquents and effective prevention and intervention practices for this population. The characteristics of EBD are discussed. The authors emphasize that education programs can help students with EBD develop resilience and avoid involvement in the justice system by providing positive and safe learning environments and setting high, yet achievable, academic and social expectations. Incarcerated youth are entitled to the same rights and developmental needs as their peers. Intensive and highly structured academic programs can provide intellectual challenges.

The final chapter of the third part deals with the research issues in autism spectrum disorders, the incidence of which has increased dramatically in recent years. Based on the National Research Council's best-practice recommendations for research design and methodology and the American Psychological Association guidelines for the determination of treatment efficacy, the authors offer an ecological/family context model for autism program evaluation and research.

Intervention and treatment research is the fourth part of the



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*Handbook.* It focuses on intervention and treatment research with children and youth with EBD from the last century to the present. In the first chapter of the fourth part, "Early Intervention For EBD," the authors point out that, despite the need for culturally competent research that is more inclusive of families, both research and practice in early intervention is well developed. The chapter identifies the major areas that have been underdeveloped in this relatively rich area, including early intervention for internalizing problems, gender differences in early intervention, how to disseminate effective early interventions, and economic analysis of early interventions.

Psychopharmacological treatments have been used with increasing frequency over the past decade-and-a-half for students with various types of EBD. This chapter analyzes the literature regarding the study of prevalence and patterns in using psychoactive medication with preschoolers and school-age children and reviews various categories of available medications for children with EBD. The authors point out that advances in psychopharmacology have led to the recognition that medication plays an increasingly important role in the treatment of EBD in children and youth.

In the school-to-community transition, youth with EBD face educational, social, and psychological issues, such as high drop-out and low employment rates; difficulties with enduring, supportive interpersonal relationships; mental health issues; and involvement in the justice system. Research studies on assessment procedures and four transition programs are described. Authors of the next chapter, "Teaching Alternative Behaviors To Students With EBD," aimed to identify socially appropriate behaviors and to attempt to teach those behaviors to children and adolescents with challenging/maladaptive behaviors. This chapter provides an extensive review in the historical trajectory of the area and addresses issues of generalization and social validity of teaching alternative behaviors. Self-control is crucial for children and youth with EBD in terms of dealing with complex social situations, effectively controlling their emotional reactions, and self-determinism. The following chapter, dealing with evidence-based practices for teaching self-control to students with EBD, reviews both the behavioral self-control processes (i.e., self-monitoring, goal setting, strategy selection and implementation, and self-evaluation and self-reinforcement) and cognitive self-control literature.

**The breadth and depth of the topics addressed by the authors, who are leading researchers and scholars, make the *Handbook* a great resource.**

The "Instruction And Classroom Management" chapter of part four introduces the foundational research and some important recent developments in student classroom behavior and classroom instruction and management. The authors propose a problem-solving model of assessment of classroom behavior that includes integrated hierarchical standards, effective methods of delivering instruction, teaching and reinforcing behavioral expectations, effective responses to inappropriate student behavior and implementing small-group or individual interventions based on functional behavioral assessment. With an analysis of the social-skills training literature, the intervention and treatment part of the *Handbook* reports on the results of meta-analyses of the group and single-subject research literature on social-skills training interventions with students with EBD and concludes that social-skills training for these students has not produced large treatment effects. Thus, social-skills training interventions must be viewed as experimental interventions that require further specification to answer theoretical, psychometric, and design questions.

Students with EBD perform below their peers without EBD in multiple academic areas, such as reading, math, written expression, and science. The "Academic Instruction And Tutoring Interventions For Students With EBD" chapter reviews the academic intervention studies for students with EBD published between 1990 and 2003. The authors conclude that the recent academic intervention literature is characterized by key design limitations. The next chapter indicates that existing and emerging schoolwide systems of behavior support that focus on problematic areas (e.g., student behavior and achievement, staff roles and responsibilities, and academic and social programs) have been found to be effective in developing safe and orderly educational environments. Future research should concentrate on its effects on the larger community. The last chapter in the intervention part, "Collaboration With Other Agencies," focuses on an interagency systems-of-care wraparound approach that utilizes widely used tools for building constructive relationships and support among



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children and adolescents with EBD and their families, teachers, and other caregivers. This chapter describes emerging interagency school-based models and community based models that connect effective learning and behavior change with the systems of care principles.

The final part of the *Handbook* focuses on methodological issues related to research with children and adolescents with EBD. Principles and practices of applied behavior analysis (ABA) are discussed first. ABA is a process that helps practitioners understand current patterns of problem behaviors and apply interventions that are based on the principles of behavioral theory in order to improve appropriate behaviors to a meaningful degree. The first chapter of part five, "Applied Behavioral Analysis And The Education, and the Treatment Of Students With EBD," highlights the important contribution ABA has made in the field of EBD and the larger field of addressing problem behaviors within educational settings. The "Experimental Research Designs In The Study Of Children And Youth With EBD" chapter discusses experimental research design and its application to the study of children and adolescents with EBD. The authors provide an overview of two experimental research designs (i.e., "true" experimental design and quasi-experimental design) and review how such designs have been applied to the scientific study of children and programs for children with EBD. The next chapter, "Qualitative Research and Its Contributions to the Knowledge Of EBD," focuses on qualitative or interpretative research and its contributions to the knowledge base of EBD. Following a general overview of some forms of qualitative research methods (e.g., grounded theory, ethnographic research, and case study), the author reviews qualitative research studies found in the EBD literature. The author concludes that, with quantitative inquiries, interpretative studies can expand our understanding of EBD-related social phenomena. The last chapter of the methodology section, "Data Collection in Research and Applications Involving Students With EBD," deals with data collection in empirical investigations and application involving children and adolescents with EBD. The authors make a compelling case for the continued use of formative evaluation research in EBD and address the importance of increasing use of formative assessment procedures (i.e., frequent and repeated measurement) and application of technology in data-collection research procedures. Researchers in the areas of child psychiatry, child psychology, educational psychology, and special education work with the same children and youth without sufficient collaboration and awareness of how relevant their research findings are for one another.

This comprehensive *Handbook* endeavors to reach professionals and graduate students who work with children and adolescents with EBD by addressing the major foundational, assessment, characteristics, intervention, and methodological issues facing the field of EBD. The breadth and depth of the topics addressed by the authors, who are leading researchers and scholars, make the *Handbook* a great resource. It is a worthwhile collection of what is known about EBD among children and adolescents and the treatment of EBD at the beginning of the 21st century.

Aydin Bal, M.A.
Doctoral Student
in Special Education
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona
Aydin.Bal@asu.edu



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