**Programs and Services Designed for the Betterment of Education for Troubled Youth without Special Education**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to propose research into the topic of programs and services offered to troubled youth; specifically, troubled youth that are not qualified for special education. To understand why special education is beneficial, but not possible for these youth, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and the qualification standards for special education is reviewed. Along with this, six scholarly articles are reviewed on different options and complications associated with developing and maintaining the education of troubled youth. A proposal of methods to be used is also included. This includes discussing a qualitative research design; choosing which youth, educators, and program operators to request as participants in the research; and conducting personality/behavior tests in the form of a bilingual, group questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured observations. The data will be analyzed through both interpretive and statistical means so as to have accurate conclusions. Researching this topic has the implication of changing the way schools are required to handle troubled youth and improving the programs and services that already exist. Future research that may result from this proposal include how students qualify for special education with the new standards in the DSM-V and how educators would prefer to handle approaching troubled youth.

*Keywords*: Diagnostic and Statistical manual of Mental Disorders, special education, qualitative research design, personality/behavior tests, semi-structured interviews, unstructured observations, interpretive and statistical.

**Introduction**

A new edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) will be released soon. As it did in the past, the new diagnostic standards for mental health will change (Hopwood, C. J., Thomas, K. M., Markon, K. E., Wright, A. C., & Krueger, R. F., 2012). [Do not include author initials in in-text citations.] This change both helps and hurts the eligibility of certain individuals seeking specialized care. Special education is a form of specialized care. [Cite source for all statements of fact.] This style of education offers structuralized individual attention to a student’s many needs. However, as Aron, L., & Loprest, P. (????) stated, only students with learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders or disturbances, physical impairments and those with intellectual disorders are eligible. Regardless of any individual’s likely needs, there are many processes involved in qualifying for special education. First, you must qualify under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA states that a child must have at least one of intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, speech and language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, or specific learning disabilities. Along with this, the child must need special education and related services *because* of the specific impairment(s). Unfortunately, though the list of eligible impairments seems extensive, there are many other disabilities and disorders not included in IDEA. If that isn’t enough, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a another option to qualify. The ADA is a federal law that gives people with disabilities, including students, protections like those provided to people on the basis of race, sex and national origin. All public schools must comply with the ADA, which bans discrimination based on disability in the areas of public accommodations, state and local government services, employment, transportation, and telecommunications. The last possibility is to qualify through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 protects individuals with a physical or mental impairments which substantially limit one or more major life activities (Aron et al., 2012). [Use et al. when citing three, four, or five authors. When citing two authors – cite both names with each citation.]

One group that may or may not be seeking (but would benefit from) specialized care, is troubled youth (Fredericks, 1994). Many of these individuals are behind in math and reading, so they are able to qualify for special education based on learning disabilities (Kohler & Reese, 2008). However, only a small number of troubled youth qualify for help in the area of emotional and behavioral disorders (Van Acker, 2007). The DSM prevents troubled youth without disorders or disabilities from receiving special education of that kind, but I believe to some extent the unqualified youth would benefit from it. [Cite source for all statements of fact.] My ultimate goal is to create and maintain specialized and effective programs for the youth unqualified for special education services in relation to their emotional and behavioral needs. Programs such as this already exist, but are they effective enough? That is the answer being sought. How effective are the programs and services designed for youth identified as having emotional and behavioral problems—troubled youth—but do not qualify for special education services? This topic is very important. What is being discussed is our society’s future. Believe it or not, troubled youth are a part of that equation. If we want to help these youth overcome their personal demons and other life obstacles, we need to find the best practice that will allow us to go about doing that. That is the ultimate purpose behind this research and I will not stop until I have found my answer.

**Review of Literature**

According to Baltodano, Platt, & [Use the ampersand for end of sentence citations that are within parentheses only. In this case, use the word ‘and.’] Roberts (2005), of the 2.8 million youth arrested each year, and around 90,000 are incarcerated in institutions throughout the United States. On average, 60% are detained for outstanding warrants (i.e., failing to test for drug use, testing positive to drugs, or missing school) and 40% are detained for delinquent or incorrigible acts. Many of the youth arrested—around 34.4%—were found to have disabilities. Thus special education programs and services were designed to help rehabilitate these youth. However, that leaves around 65.6% troubled youth not receiving specialized care (Baltodano et al., 2005). Black (2005) mentions a saying about the centers having a “revolving door”. Many youth who’ve left the centers will return a few to multiple times in their lifetime. That puts pressure on the education resources to be consistent and able to work with different histories of different youth so that they can find success and not find themselves back in the center (Black, 2005). In order to receive this coveted level of help, many youth are sent to alternative education programs. Unfortunately, as Van Acker (2007) found, even with alternative style help, youth in these environments have been shown to exhibit more sexual and physical abuse, as well as delinquent behavior than their public and private school peers (Van Acker, 2007). No need to cite the same sentence twice. ☺

According to Nelson, C., Jolivette, K., Leone, P. E., & Mathur, S. R. (2010), because of their delinquent behavior, instead of helping the youth improve their lifestyles at home or in the comfort of their local communities, many programs and services find helping to be too strenuous and send the youth to juvenile detention centers instead. The removal of troubled youth into juvenile detention centers have become a “cop-out” for programs and services overwhelmed by the needs of the youth they serve. These centers began in the United States to refocus youth who do not behave appropriately in society. Today, they are used as a prison and a mental hospital for abandoned (the program or service gave up on them) youth. Sending all troubled youth to centers does not necessarily mean that those centers will do a better job than the last organization (Nelson et al., 2010). In fact, as Kohler and Reese (2008) have stated, education in detention centers are found to be lacking. In the state of Arkansas, 80% of the students serving time were three to five years behind in math and reading. A program known as JEdI (Juvenile Education Initiative) was developed to gather appropriate data about the educational needs of youth inmates and develop curricula based on the findings. Since it began, all juvenile detention centers are required to have similar initiatives and the usage has gone outside of the centers, reaching out to youth before and after incarceration (Kohler and Reese, 2008). [See notations in your draft.] Along with helping the youth while incarcerated, Baltodano, H. M., Platt, D., & Roberts, C. W. (2005) note the need for effective methods of transition from the secure care of the centers back in to the youths’ communities. These methods need to help make the youth aware of their circumstances and how to move forward. After all, if they don’t move forward, they’ll only end right back in the centers to repeat the process all over again (Baltodano et al., 2005).

But the question still remains; how effective are the programs and services offered to troubled youth to keep them *out* of the system? Especially for the 65.6% of non-special education affiliated. [Cite source.] Nearly 20 years ago, the question about how effective programs and services were for troubled youth unqualified for special education was investigated by Fredericks (1994). It was found that programs and services acted alone and did not acknowledge the need for youth to have multiple levels of help in different areas. [Cite source. Framing with citation would eliminate this need. When you place a citation at the end of the sentence it tells the reader that you are finished with that source, until cited again.] This inability to unify the different programs and services caused the youth to not receive the full potential of help at their disposal (Fredericks, 1994).

Obviously, there are hundreds of different circumstances and hundreds of different needs for hundreds of different youth. No program will ever be perfect and the fact that rehabilitation can occur is already a large feat for the troubled youth. But it is important to continuously search for more effective methods, one step at a time.

**Methodology**

Troubled youth already deal with enough in their lives without adding to stress of school; and it’s more than just homework—it’s social skills. The goal of this study is to find how effective the education is for troubled youth in various programs and services offered in and outside of schools. Especially in regards to youth that are unqualified for special education. This means they only receive the general resources the school has to offer and not resources that could benefit them in their current troubled situations.

**Research Design**

To understand how successful behavioral education programs are for troubled youth without special education qualifications, my research will be conducted qualitatively. This allows me to be more focused on *how* the programs are run than how *many* are operating. Using several formative program evaluations to retrieve the qualitative data, I will investigate the strengths and weaknesses of various programs. To do this, I will compare various identification factors that may or may not affect the different program results, such as gender, sexual identity, ability, ethnic group, and socioeconomic class. After retrieving the data, I can formulate ideas on how to improve the programs that already exist and create a new, effective program by comparing my collected data to scientific research of child development and pedagogy.

**Participants**

Of course, there can be no data without participants. First and foremost, I need to attain a sample of youth in the programs. I will also have to attain a sample of different employees and instructors from different sections and/or departments in the programs. The youth samples will be representative of the youth without special education qualification, but show need for behavioral and emotional counseling. These samples will be handpicked, so that there is less generalization and more factual representation for my findings. I will conduct an availability sample within the programs to collect data on current clients and/or recipients, but I will also conduct a typical case sample of those same individuals for better results. With the employees and instructors, there will be a key informant sampling, because they, in their respective positions, *are* my key informants. Finally, I want to conduct a criterion sampling of those qualified for special education services. This will help me understand what and if they turn out more positive results than their unqualified peers.

**Instruments**

The instruments I will use in order to collect data from the participants, I will create questionnaires, conduct interviews, observe sessions and classes at each of the programs, keep a log of what information I have successfully uncovered or have reached a dead-end with, create a scale comparing the resources available at each program, collect secondary data from the data archives available at each program and case studies supporting (or not supporting) my research. [The actual instruments would be your questionnaire and the set of interview questions that you would use – both of which should be described here. It looks like you double-tabbed this paragraph.]

**Data Collection**

The youth will be given a personality/behavior test in the form of a bilingual, group questionnaire. Questions will include how the youth may or may not react in various situations. With the program staff and employees I will conduct semi-structured (pre-planned but flexible) interviews in order to understand how they view the program structure and curricula. I will conduct the interviews before and after my observations of the sessions and classes. The observations themselves will be unstructured, because I have already picked a specific class, the behavior exhibited is of less concern to me than the state of the students’ special education qualification. Finally—though in many ways first and foremost—there must be a consent form for each participant. The consent forms will be different based on each of the different ways I will be conducting data. [How long might the interviews take, where would they take place, and would they be audio-recorded? It looks like you double-tabbed this paragraph.]

**Data Analysis**

Once the data has been collected, I will have to analyze it. For the purpose of my research, I will be using both statistical and interpretative procedures for data analysis. The interpretative procedure I will use is frame elicitation. This involves using questions that the participants in the study can relate to in turns of the research topic at hand. It also involves phenomenology, which asks about the experience (of what is being researched) of the participants (Marlow, 2011). I will keep count of themes and similarities in each of the answers, acknowledge contradictory evidence, and create flow charts of the data to keep track of everything. With the statistical procedure, I will be using nominal data. Nominal Data is similarities and difference between the participants based on specific categories (i.e. ethnicity, age, gender; etc.) (Marlow, 2011). I will measure the range between each category so I can better understand which participants are more or less affected by my hypothesis. My hypothesis will be non-directional (acknowledges the impact of various variables on the results, but not the how or why it occurs) so as to defend my hypothesis, but not be overwhelmed by personal bias (Marlow, 2011). You say that you will analyze statistical data, but do not say how.

**Feasibility**

In any research process; with all the planning in the world; there is potential for conflict and/or a roadblock in the process. Before beginning the research process, these circumstances must be looked into and understood to the degree that, when faced with them, the researcher can work around or adjust to their existence. For this particular research study, limitations include the population being investigated and individual experiences. The population being investigated is that of troubled youth with behavioral issues that are not being dealt with properly in schools. This can really limit the research because there are far too many circumstances (individual experiences) amongst youth to pinpoint a specific group that will give me the best data. Along with these limitations, there are also constraints. First and foremost, finances. Without finances, conducting the research would be very difficult. This affects the second constraint, which is time. Without a proper amount of funding, the research may only last a short period of time. With constraints on time, there is room for missing and poorly represented data. Along with these outside affects, personal biases and assumptions can affect the outcome of the research. For this particular research, biases and assumptions might include who is and is not in need of special education services, what programs are the best for troubled youth, and what youth would benefit from more, different, or the same services.

Social, political, and economic implications are other important considerations for this proposed research. Socially, because the research will be focused on a population of troubled youth, perceptions and treatment of the population by other groups may or may not change—for better or worse. Politically, laws might go in to effect about the required programs and standards available to this population in schools. Economically, if the programs for troubled youth *do* change, there is the possibility of school funding being cut even further than it already has to make do. Naturally, as the research progresses, new implications may arise. These are the main implications to be aware of ahead of time.

As the research progresses and when it is complete, there will be specific individuals that will benefit from the findings. If the findings match the assumption that troubled youth would benefit from more individualized care, the youth, and their families—that are not receiving the support they need—will benefit from new, more effective support. Regardless of the findings, the individuals working directly with these youth will benefit from more knowledge about what they should and should not do to create improvements in their programs. Schools will also benefit by receiving better guides on how to approach such youth in a more productive manner. Of course, schools and the troubled youth that attend them may also be potentially harmed from this research. If the economic implications (as stated above) do occur, lower-income districts will have to cut other programs to fulfill their required quota for these youth. Plus, as is the natural way of things, there is still the possibility that not enough will be improved to benefit all youth. Ethically, if ever an individual feels that the research is obstructing the help they require, they have every right to be removed from the list of participants. The same goes for the programs and schools I will be working with. Sometimes having a physical “outsider” presence causes intimidation and lack of comfort. Statements might be made in the heat of things that the participant later wants to take back. These are but a few of the ethical considerations to be made before the research begins so that the chance of causing harm is averted as much as possible.

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**Appendix A**

**Assessing the Effectiveness of Programs and Services Designed for Troubled Youth**

**Consent Form**

**PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER:**

Lauren Milne

Undergraduate Student, Department of Human Services

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

(425) 359-8580

**DESCRIPTION:**

I am interested in the effectiveness of behavior management programs and services. You, as a participant in these programs, are the best person to describe this effectiveness. This research study will ask you to answer a brief questionnaire about your experience in the program and may include a 30-45 minute interview about the structure of the program. The interview will be audio taped using a handheld recorder and transcribed, word-for-word. Once the transcription is complete, all audio will be erased.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Your name will not be included in interview responses or questionnaires. All names you provide will be kept in a locked file that is only accessible to me. Any information published from this study will not use those names.

**BENEFITS:**

The results of this study may benefit youth that receive similar help to you by changing how schools provide support. There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study.

**RISKS:**

You may feel uncomfortable discussing some of the topics in this study, but otherwise there are no known risks involved in participating.

**CONTACT PEOPLE:**

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the Primary

Researcher at the phone number listed above.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTCIPATION:**

This study involves voluntary participation. If you do not wish to participate or wish to be removed from the study once it begins, that is your right to do so and will suffer no penalty or loss on your behalf.

**SIGNATURE:**

Your signature is voluntary and indicates your full understanding of the above study and what is being asked of you in order to participate. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to ask the researchers at any time before, during, or after the study.

Signature of Participant\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**If participant is under the legal age of consent (18 years of age)**

Signature of Parent or Guardian\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A copy of this consent form is available for you to keep

(Modified from Marlow, 2011, p. 154)

**Appendix B**

**Assessing the Effectiveness of Programs and Services Designed for Troubled Youth**

**Consent Form**

**PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER:**

Lauren Milne

Undergraduate Student, Department of Human Services

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

(425) 359-8580

**DESCRIPTION:**

I am interested in the effectiveness of behavior management programs and services. You, as an educator in these programs, are the best person to describe this effectiveness. This research study will 30-45 minute unstructured interview about the structure of the program and may include observation of your classroom. The interview will be audio taped using a handheld recorder and transcribed, word-for-word. Once the transcription is complete, all audio will be erased.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Your name will not be included in interview responses or questionnaires. All names you provide will be kept in a locked file that is only accessible to me. Any information published from this study will not use those names.

**BENEFITS:**

The results of this study may benefit youth that receive similar help to you by changing the level of help schools are required to have available for troubled youth. There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study.

**RISKS:**

You may feel uncomfortable discussing some of the topics in this study, but otherwise there are no known risks involved in participating.

**CONTACT PEOPLE:**

If you have any questions about this research, please contact the Primary

Researcher at the phone number listed above.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTCIPATION:**

This study involves voluntary participation. If you do not wish to participate or wish to be removed from the study once it begins, that is your right to do so and will suffer no penalty or loss on your behalf.

**SIGNATURE:**

Your signature is voluntary and indicates your full understanding of the above study and what is being asked of you in order to participate. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to ask the researchers at any time before, during, or after the study.

Signature of Participant\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A copy of this consent form is available for you to keep

(Modified from Marlow, 2011, p. 154)

**Appendix C**

**Assessing the Effectiveness of Programs and Services Designed for Troubled Youth**

**Interview Guide**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Job Position:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Note: All recordings and notes will be transcribed into one written document**

1. How long have you been working for this program/organization/institution and what is your role here?
2. What background training do you have?
3. Why did you choose to work with troubled youth?
4. Where do you think you succeed the most with the youth (based on the structure of the program)? Why? Please provide examples.
5. Where do you think you do not succeed with the youth (based on the structure of the program)? Why? Please provide examples.
6. What changes do you feel should be made and/or would benefit your program?
7. How do the youth with special education and the youth without special education compare in progress?

Thank you for sharing your research proposal Lauren. This is a very important issue and it deserves the attention of researchers and policy makers. Were your proposed study to be carried out, it might uncover inequities related to social class and differential access to special education. You put some good thinking into articulating and organizing your proposed study. Great work!

Proposal: 19/20

Instrument: 2/2

Consent form: 2/2

Presentation: 3/3

Total: 26/27