Verbal interaction analysis of the intervention to an adult with severe behavioral problems

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Background

The psychological interventions are the verbal context in which the basic processes of behavioral change are set in motion. (Kohlenberg & Tsai, 1991). The analysis of verbal behavior interaction in clinical contexts may allow us to understand the psychological interventions outcomes. This knowledge will be useful to improve the psychological services for different kind of problems (Froján-Parga, Fidalgo, & Elvira, 2007). However, we are so far to the complete understanding of the verbal interaction processes.

Aim

The purpose of this study is to analyze the verbal interaction between the clinician and a person with severe behavioral problem.

Method

Participants

Using observational methodology we analyzed 7 recorded therapy sessions of an adult diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BDP).

Variables and Instruments

To register the verbal behavior interaction we used an adaptation of the AcoVeo classification system of verbal behavior in psychological therapy. The variables are the therapist verbal behavior and the patient verbal behavior (table 1).

Analysis of data

Once the sessions were registered, the results were analyzed through a sequential analysis (Bakeman & Quera, 2011).

References:

Bakeman, R., & Quera, V. (2011). *Sequential analysis and observational methods for the behavioral sciences*. Cambridge University Press.
Froján-Parga, M. X., Fidalgo, M. M., & Elvira, A. C. (2007). Why do people change in therapy? A preliminary study. *Psychology in Spain*, (11), 53–60.
Kohlenberg, R. J., & Tsai, M. (1991). *Functional analytic psychotherapy: Creating intense and curative therapeutic relationships*.

Table 1. Variables

Client Verbal Behavior. (Dependent variables)

- As response:
- Provide Information / Request information.
 - Show acceptance / Show disappointment.
 - Follow Instructions /Unfollow instructions.
 - Wellbeing verbalizations / Discomfort verbalizations.
 - Achievement verbalizations / Failure verbalizations.
 - Behavior problem in session / Target behavior in session.
 - Verbalizations of emotional reaction.
 - Description of behavior problem out of session.
 - Description of target behavior out off session.

Psychologists verbal behavior. (Independent variables)

- As antecedent:
- Discriminative function
 - Instructional function
- As motivational operation:
- MO with appetitive consequences.
 - MO with aversive consequences.
 - MO with appetitive pairing.
 - MO with aversive pairing.
 - MO with clinical information.
- As consequent:
- Reinforcement (weak and strong)
 - Punishment (weak and strong)

Table 2. Conditioned probability of the following psychologist's verbalizations given a client behavior.

Client given behavior	Discriminative	Instructions	Clinical info	Consequences -	consequences +	Pairing +	Pairing -	Strong reinforcement	Weak reinforcement	Strong punishment	Weak punishment
Problem in session	0,15	0	0,08	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,39	0,38
Problem out of session	0,79	0,02	0,05	0	0	0	0,04	0	0	0,05	0,05
Target behavior out of session	0,22	0	0,03	0	0	0	0	0,25	0,47	0,03	0
Target behavior in session	0,09	0	0,06	0	0	0	0	0,56	0,29	0	0

Figure 1. Probability of client's target behavior in session per session.

Results

As we can see in 2, for this case the most probable psychologist's behavior following the *Problem out of session* was a *Discriminative*; this could be because the psychologist is looking for more information about that behavior. For *Problem in session* the most probable consequence were the use of punishment made by the psychologist. *Another noteworthy fact is that no verbal reinforcer has been given to the different types of behavior problems.*

Also the most probable psychologist's behavior following the target behavior in session was the strong reinforcement. This could explain the increment of occurrence probability of target behavior in session (table 2).