The Reliability and Validity of the Triage Assessment Scale for Students in Learning Environments; Middle Schools

Jamie Brownfield

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The Reliability and Validity of the Triage Assessment Scale for Students in Learning Environments: Middle Schools

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment for the requirements for

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Jamie N. Brownfield

May 2012
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Jamie N. Brownfield

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DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
Department of Counseling, Psychology, and Special Education

Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Executive Counselor Education and Supervision Program

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Approved February 15, 2012

THE RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE TRIAGE ASSESSMENT SCALE FOR STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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THE RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE TRIAGE ASSESSMENT SCALE FOR STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: MIDDLE SCHOOLS

By
Jamie N. Brownfield

May 2012

Dissertation Supervised by Rick Myer, Ph.D.,

This study determined the reliability and validity of the Triage Assessment Scale for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE) used in a Middle School setting. Participants included faculty/staff from a local middle school, masters students enrolled in a counseling program at a local private university in Pennsylvania, and experts with experience in crisis and the use of the TASSLE form. Following the viewing of three scenarios (mild, moderate, and severe), participants rated their perception of the level of reaction to the crisis using the TASSLE form. A quantitative correlational, within and between-subjects design was used to determine the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form. Content validity was demonstrated by the agreement of the ratings of the mild, moderate, and severe levels on the TASSLE form.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you!
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Students all over the country wake up each day to attend school in the hopes of receiving an education. It is assumed that schools are safe places where the teachers teach, the students learn, and students are in the care of professionals that are acting in the place of parents (Essex, 2002). However, there are times when their world may be altered by some form of crisis or act of violence.

In attempts to “ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education,” a law such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was created (Sanders, 2008). An ideal program to help students to succeed would include mental and physical health services, unfortunately funding under the NCLB Act are not provided (Sanders, 2010). Such legislation cannot prepare for environment, demographics, discipline, and unplanned crisis.

During the 1990’s the Zero Tolerance Policy was implemented requiring local educational agencies, in a state that receives federal funding, to expel any student that brings a weapon to school (Essex, 2002). The policy was reinforced when President Bill Clinton signed the federal statue, Gun Free School Act of 1994, mandating that any student who brings a gun to school is automatically expelled for a year (Essex, 2002). Initially the Zero Tolerance Policy was designed to be part of a prevention program, not as discipline procedures or punitive action that most schools tend to implement it as (Nelson, 2008). Essex makes a significant statement when he says,
“Policies that do not weigh the severity of the offense, the student’s history of past behavior, due process, and alternative education for students involved in long-term expulsion are at best highly risky. School officials are expected to strike a delicate balance between safety in their schools and the rights of students under their supervision. Anything less could result in undesirable outcomes, significant legal challenges, and mounting legal expense to the school district (p. 61).”

When a crisis occurs, there are certain laws that protect the rights of individuals with disabilities (i.e. learning, mental, physical, and emotional disabilities.) These laws include the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Sections 501, 503, and 504, and Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Blancett, 2008; Carlson & Lewis, 2007). If a child with a learning disability engages in aggressive, disruptive, or violent behavior that violates the school’s discipline policy, a Manifestation Determination must be conducted to ensure that the behavior was not a consequence of the disability (Essex, 2002). A student is able to be disciplined for any behavior that is not a manifestation of their disability (Essex, 2002). If the student is to be disciplined for the behavior and is subject to a suspension longer than 10 school days, it is the schools responsibility to provide education services, follow the stay-put provision, and/or provide an Interim Alternative Education Placement (IAEP) (Carlson & Lewis, 2007). The stay-put provision states that the school is not permitted to remove the student from the learning environment while disciplinary action is being determined (Carlson & Lewis, 2007).

Laws that protect, both regular and special education students, can be enforced on a case by case basis (IDEA and Zero Tolerance, Essex, 2002). As a school counselor, I speak with many students who trust me with information. A student’s poor judgment in their use of words may lead to an expulsion. For example, the phrase “I’m going to kill
you,” that is so frequently used by students, can be considered a terroristic threat in a school district. Although as the school counselor, I may not think that the student sincerely means that he is going to kill the person, I must report it to administration and the potential victim if the student has access to fulfill the threat. The Tarasoff Case: The Duty to Warn (1969) made it clear that counselors have the duty to protect not only their patient/client/student, but also a potential victim of harm as stated by the patient, client, or student (Fischer & Sorenson, 1996). This legal case made a great impact on confidentiality rules. There have been times when this law has to be applied to a student’s behavior that lead to severe consequences, which can be a crisis within itself. Students who are experiencing or have experienced a crisis need additional support and their achievement levels need to be looked at with a broader scope (Sandoval, 2002).

A crisis is a perception of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person’s immediately available resources and coping mechanisms (Myer, 2001, p.3). There can be many situations that occur in schools that could be viewed as a crisis. Crisis to an adolescent can be one or more of the following; drug/alcohol use, depression, suicide, teen pregnancy, self mutilation, reported child abuse, bullying, and other significant issues. Carlson and Lewis (2007) state that adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by experimentation, confusion, risk-taking behaviors, and a sense of immortality and invulnerability (p. 62).

During such a crucial developmental time, a crisis can leave an adolescent at risk for social, emotional, and psychological problems which can impede on the expectations of the student to be attentive, disciplined, responsible, and able to achieve in the school setting (Carlson & Lewis, 2007). Stanley, Canham, and Cureton (2006) stated that “20%
of school age children have mental health needs and one in ten children are burdened with a level of mental illness so severe that it impairs his or her emotional and developmental needs.” Failing to address the mental health, well being, and development of students can have severe effects on adolescents. The lack of resources and failure to address such important behavioral and emotional issues may affect a student’s self esteem, social interactions, learning ability, and consequently lead to an increase in discipline problems (Stanley, Canham, & Cureton, 2006).

Students whom have emotional, mental, and learning difficulties may act out. If such issues are affecting them socially, it may also lead to bullying; either as the victim or perpetrator. According to an article by Long and Alexander (2010), adolescents are more likely to be bullied than high school students with most bullying occurring at the middle school level. Students need to feel safe to be fully motivated to learn and often students avoid school to avoid being bullied (Long & Alexander, 2010).

Although crisis in adolescence can be in many forms other than bullying, the most significant and publicized crisis are those that consist of violence when there has been a victim, usually a fatality (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, et.al, 2002). Unfortunately, most of the violent acts are related to continuous bullying, which happens most frequently in grades 4 through 8 (Carlson & Lewis, 2007). Such violent incidents include: 1996-two male students were shot to death by a student that was a victim of bullying; March 1998-two boys killed four girls and a teacher; September 1998- two students stabbed and killed a boy, later killing themselves; October 1998- a student beat up another student whom died after being in a coma; November 1998- five boys were arrested after plotting the deaths of their teachers, administration, and students (Carlson & Lewis, 2007).
The most national symbol of violence was the attack by two teenage boys at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999 that left a total of 15 people dead (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, et.al, 2002). Publicized incidents of violence in schools, has created uncertainty and fear that an attack can happen in schools at any time (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, et.al, 2002). The feelings of uncertainty and fear lead to too many questions such as, “How can this happen?”, “What is being done to prevent it?” and “What can we do to stop the violence?” Questions such as these do not just apply to a violent act such as the shooting that happened at Columbine. What about an everyday act of violence or crisis?

Over the years, many crises have occurred in schools, however, recent incidents of school violence confirm a need for preparation and dealing with the aftermath of a crisis is necessary (Knox & Roberts, 2005). In order to plan the appropriate treatment for the individual in crisis, it is important for the crisis counselor to assess the individual’s psychological resources, functioning, and coping skills (Sandoval, 2002, p.69). Assessing a student’s level of threat and crisis can be quite challenging. Failure to accurately assess an individual in crisis would be an injustice and could possibly prevent appropriate treatment. Assessing a crisis is an action oriented, pervasive strategy throughout crisis intervention (James, 2008). Faulty assessment leads to ineffective helping and may lead to the development of destructive psychological disturbances in the person experiencing the crisis (James & Gilland, 2001 as quoted in Myer, 2001).

One of the best predictors of violence is past violence (James, 2008). As a school counselor, when dealing with a student in crisis, it would be beneficial to have a clear set of criteria in which to assess the student and a record of administrative interaction with the student (i.e. discipline and prior counselor involvement.) Throughout the literature,
there has been an abundance of research conducted on what is required in the
development of a crisis plan in the schools (e.g. *Managing School Crisis; More Than Just
Response* by Reeves, Brock, & Cowan, 2008, *Crisis Intervention and Crisis Team
Models in Schools* by Knox & Roberts, 2005); however, there is little mention of how to
appropriately assess the individual in crisis and with
what instrument (Knox & Roberts, 2005). Implementing a crisis assessment tool will
serve the purpose of this study.

Statement of the Problem

In a study done by August et.al (1996), it was found that there is a higher rate of
comorbidity (dual diagnosis) in children ages 4-16 (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity
disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, anxiety, and depression), with a high rate of
deviant behavior. Studies such as this can help to explain the increase in mental health,
behavior problems, and crises in schools. All three factors can be intertwined with each
other (i.e. mental health can cause behavior problems that can lead to a crisis; behavior
problems can be exaggerated because of mental health, which may lead to a crisis; a
危机 may be a result of multiple behavior problems). These three factors require
immediate attention. Failing to address these factors, fails to meet the students needs.

While reviewing literature on crisis and crisis assessment in schools, the majority
of the research focused on the need for crisis plans, crises response teams, crisis
intervention, but little on what is used to or how to properly assess a crisis situation in
schools (e.g. *Managing School Crisis; More Than Just Response* by Reeves, Brock, &
Cowan, 2008, *Crisis Intervention and Crisis Team Models in Schools* by Knox &
Roberts, 2005). Development of crisis plans and teams are useful to schools, but how are
team members able to communicate concerns about a crisis if there are not guidelines as to what actually constitutes a crisis? The reliability and validity of the Triage Assessment Scale for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE) has been established in regards to assessing crisis events at the university level (Blancett, 2008), but not for use with students in grades 6-8. Thus, this study used a crisis assessment form to provide middle school faculty and staff with a way of assessing student crisis and have a common form of communication about the crisis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form used to assess crisis in middle school with students in grades 6-8. Reliability of the TASSLE form was tested using inter-rater reliability to compare responses of experts, counselors in training, and middle school personnel (faculty and staff of a middle school). Validity of the TASSLE form was determined in the form of content validity. Content validity determines if the items on the TASSLE form represent the concepts they intend to measure (Houser, 1998) as represented by the Triage Assessment System.

Significance of the Study

Myer et.al (2007) developed the Triage Assessment System for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE) that is an adaptation of the Triage Assessment System (TAS) for use by mental health professionals. The TAS form is a comprehensive assessment tool to make a current assessment of a student who is in crisis by determining their affect, behavior, and cognitions (Myer, Rice, Moulton, et.al. 2007). Determining the reliability and validity of the TASSLE
with students in middle school, provides faculty and staff in schools with an instrument to assess individuals in crisis, assist the faculty and staff with communication in regards to crisis, and will benefit the field of counseling by providing a framework of what a crisis is in a middle school setting (Conte, 2005).

**Limitations**

The limitations of this study vary and some are not able to be controlled by the researcher. The first limitation of the study is the realistic versus hypothetical crisis. Each participant was presented with three different crisis scenarios and are asked to rate them using the TASSLE form. How an individual rated the hypothetical scenario may have been significantly different than how they would have rated an actual crisis. Being aware that the scenario was not real may have caused the ratings to be significantly lower when viewing the hypothetical scenario. The participants were aware that their rating could not affect or impede on the child’s learning, consequences, or well being. On the other hand, during a real life crisis, the participants may experience a variety of emotions such as fear, anxiety, and confusion that may affect the ability to rate the student appropriately.

The second limitation was the threat to the validity of the TASSLE form. Both internal and external validity may have been threatened. One possible threat to internal validity is history. History occurs when unscheduled events take place during the course of the study and when the sample is not randomly assigned (Houser, pg 122, 1998). An unscheduled event that may take place during the study would be an occurrence of an actual crisis. If a crisis were to have taken place during or prior to the viewing of the scenarios, the participant’s ratings may have been significantly different.
Threats to internal validity with the use of non-equivalent groups, primarily the control group of experts, may have been social desirability. Although the researcher did not have knowledge of who participated in the middle school and the primary researcher did not have knowledge of the counselor’s in training participation (students), participation may have been affected by their knowledge of being in a study and wanting to be perceived in a socially desirable way to their employer or professor. The list of possible threats to external validity is more extensive than that of internal validity. The first possible threat was the comparison of the accessible population to target population (i.e. is the sample used representative of the target population) (Houser, pg. 128, 1998). The study was geared towards testing the reliability of the TASSLE form used at the middle school level. The accessible sample used in the study was from faculty and staff in a middle school in a suburban area of Pennsylvania. The sample did not necessarily represent other middle schools in Pennsylvania or other states. The second threat to external validity was the interaction between history and treatment effects. The majority of the participants were teachers. If a crisis with one of their students occurred prior or during the time the study was taking place, the teacher may be more prone to bias as to how severe he/she would rate the student.

The third limitation of this study was demographics. The limitations of demographics include the demographics of the participants, students in the crisis scenarios, and the overall demographics of the school the study takes place in. The participants may have had age, cultural, and gender bias towards the students experiencing the crisis in the scenarios. In regards to the school, the study was conducted with faculty and staff that are employed in a suburban middle school. The demographics
of participants and the actual crisis viewed in the scenarios may have been a part of this limitation. What constitutes as a crisis and how often a crisis occurs in a suburban middle school may differ drastically from what occurs in an urban middle school.

The forth limitation was crisis procedures. If a school district has a set plan of who is responsible for assessing a crisis situation, participants may not value the study as much. For instance, if the school counselor is the designated mandated reporter or the person to report to in a crisis, a teacher may think that learning and practicing using the form is useless if he or she never has to use it. The lack of care and concern may have led to low or high ratings on the TASSLE form.

The fifth limitation of this study was the participation in the study. Participants may feel they have to participate out of obligation because their boss or professor was involved in the study and stressed the importance of the study; i.e. performance in the study may have increased. It is possible that they may feel that if they do not participate, it will affect their relationship with their administration. This is also implied as social desirability; wanting their boss or professor to see them as a productive employee or student.

The sixth and final limitation of this study was previous traumatic experiences with students in crisis or in their own private lives. If the participants have experienced a significant trauma or one that is similar to the one that they are viewing in the scenarios, it is possible that their rating of the student in crisis may have been higher than other individuals. On the other hand, if the person has experienced the crisis either personally or with a student in crisis and was able to deal with the crisis in an appropriate manner,
the student may be rated at a lower level. It is possible that personal bias could have skewed the person’s view of severity.

Definitions

*Middle school personnel:* Middle school personnel may consist of the guidance counselor, principals, police officer, hall monitor, secretaries, teachers, faculty, and staff.

*Mild reaction:* The need for minimal and indirect crisis intervention when responding to a crisis in regard to the TASSLE form (Conte, 2005).

*Moderate reaction:* The need for reasonable and collaborative crisis intervention when responding to a crisis in regards to the TASSLE form (Conte, 2005).

*Severe reaction:* The need for rigorous and direct crisis intervention when responding to a crisis in regards to the TASSLE form (Conte, 2005).

Summary

Crisis is almost an everyday occurrence in middle schools, either big or small. If the school fails to assess the crisis and respond appropriately, the individual fails to receive the help that they need. The TASSLE form developed by Myer et.al (2007) can be an effective tool to assess students in crisis. This study was designed to test the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form used in middle schools by providing training to faculty/staff and counselors in training, showing crisis scenarios to both groups and a group of experts, and then comparing the ratings amongst the groups.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescents deal with a variety of issues such as achievement, participation in activities, and social interaction, which involves finding their place within the middle school environment. Carlson and Lewis (2007) state that adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by experimentation, confusion, risk-taking behaviors, and a sense of immortality and invulnerability (p. 62). While adolescents struggle to fit in or find out who they are, they may engage in behaviors that may include, but are not limited to, the use of drugs/alcohol, involvement in criminal activity, sexual promiscuity, and/or bullying.

As a result of the dangerous behaviors, many crises may occur such as self-mutilating behavior, suicidal ideation, pregnancy, and being a victim of bullying, etc. Adolescence is such a crucial developmental time, in which a crisis can leave an adolescent at risk for social, emotional, and psychological problems which can impede on the ability of the student to be attentive, disciplined, responsible, and able to achieve in the school setting (Carlson & Lewis, 2007). Many adolescents have the ability to succeed despite dealing with crises; however there are an increasing amount of adolescents that need social, emotional, and educational interventions to help deal with such crises (Carlson & Lewis, 2007).

This chapter addresses three main sections. The first section focuses on a variety of issues that adolescents face such as mental health, bullying, and discipline. The second section focuses on defining crisis. The third section describes crisis assessment.
Adolescent Behaviors

According to Carlson and Lewis (2007) there are five categories of adolescents at risk for experiencing a crisis based on demographics, family involvement, support, stressors, skill deficits, and attitude. These categories include adolescents of minimal risk (favorable demographics, positive family, school, and social interaction, limited stressors), remote risk (negative demographics, less positive family, school, and social interaction, and some stress), high risk (negative family, school, and social interaction, numerous stressors, development of at-risk personal markers, negative attitudes and emotions, and skill deficits), imminent risk (development of gateway behaviors), and at-risk (intense maladaptive behavior) (pg. 63).

Adolescents with Disabilities

Adolescents that are in the high risk category may have skill deficits. Skill deficits can range anywhere from a learning disability, physical disability, emotional disturbance, and/or mental disability. Such adolescents require more assistance with developing coping skills in the hopes of preventing them from being a victim of a crisis (Carlson & Lewis, 2007). Carlson and Lewis (2007) found research stating that alcohol and other drug use in adolescents with disabilities may be greater than it is among the general population (pg. 73).

An adolescent in middle school that has a disability, may lack the resources (coping skills) to deal with peer pressure and low self-esteem. There is a question of whether or not a person would be involved in such deviant acts or crisis if the person did not experience an altered self-concept and change in how others perceived him due to being labeled with a disability (Hoff, 1995). John Sandoval stated (2002) that
“The self-esteem and self-confidence of students with learning disabilities may be threatened by feelings of being different from peers and by difficulties with social interactions. Students with learning disabilities often have difficulty in social judgment, in understanding cause-effect relationships, in inhibiting inappropriate behavior, and in articulating their thoughts to others (pg. 68).”

Being unable to deal with such significant issues, while dealing with a disability, may lead to depression. The diagnosis of depression should be considered in the assessment and placement of a student, but is often overlooked in regards to overall functioning within the school environment (Carlson & Lewis, 2007). Chartier et al. (2008), states that “depression is prevalent among children and adolescents and often goes untreated with adverse effects on academic success and healthy development.”

There are a variety of depressive disorders such as separation anxiety disorder, adjustment disorder, and depressed mood; which diagnoses are based on severity, duration, and symptoms (Carlson & Lewis, 2007). There are five subtypes of childhood and adolescent depression. These subtypes (APPENDIX A) include anaclitic depression, reactive depression, acute depression, chronic depression, and endogenous depression (Carlson & Lewis, 2007, pg. 143). According to Brock, Sandoval, and Lewis (2001), “preexisting mental disorders may influence the development of Acute Stress Disorder and a preexisting psychopathology can also make it more difficult to work through a crisis (pg. 143).” Flannery (2006) states that “adolescents are more likely to be depressed, and most will at least think about hurting or killing themselves at some point (pg. 99).”

Working through a crisis with a student whom has a mental disability or learning disability may be difficult and may lead to discipline problems. Stanley, Canham, and Cureton (2006) state that, "an increase in emotional and behavioral problems....can manifest themselves in a variety of forms. Students may be argumentative or may show
(a) moodiness, (b) anger, (c) sensitivity, (d) aggressiveness, (e) ambivalence, (f) poor concentration, (g) lack of participation, (h) increased risk-taking activities, or (f) fatigue (¶ 2)."

*Bullying*

The manifestation of emotional or behavior problems can often lead to bullying. There is no question that students with disabilities are treated differently, not only by administration in regards to discipline, but they are also treated differently by their peers. It has been stated that a student with a disability may have difficulty with coping skills and self esteem, which often leads to bullying behavior, either as a victim or perpetrator. Long and Alexander (2010) state that, “students need to feel safe from fear, apprehension, and low self concept to be fully motivated to learn in middle schools. Too often….students avoid attending classes because of the severe intimidation and embarrassment they feel (¶ 3).”

Bullying can be defined as deliberate hostile behavior that may include, but is not limited to: kicking, shoving, name calling, intimidation, exclusion, racial slurs, and use of weapons (Long & Alexander, 2010). Sandoval (2002) defines bullying as “a form of terrorism…an unprovoked attack intended to cause distress and discomfort in the victim (pg. 105).” Bullying creates a climate of fear and affects everyone in the school (Sandoval, 2002). Between 30-80% of students are victims of bullying and approximately 160,000 students a year stay home to avoid being bullied (Schmidt, 2004). According to a study by Espelage and Holt (2001), bullying is done more in 8th grade than 6th, is done more by boys, and is often supported by groups of peers.
Another study done by Swearer, et.al (2001), found that bullying victims often experience more depression and psychopathology than students who are not bullied. Bullying may lead to many other crises, incidents that trigger unwanted emotions, and/or a crisis involving violent retaliation for the bullying. Flannery (2006) states “risk for interpersonal or relationship violence with peers is higher just because adolescents are spending more of their time with same-age peers, and they are increasingly involved in intimate relationships with other adolescents (pg. 100).” Many children who are involved in school violence show warning signs of mental health or substance abuse (Carlson & Lewis, 2007).

Incidents of violence in schools include: October 1, 1997 (Pearl, Mississippi), a 16 year old student killed his mother, two female students, and wounded seven others (Cavaiola & Colford, 2006); December 1, 1997 (West Paducah, Kentucky), a freshman killed three students and wounded five others; March 21, 1998 (Springfield, Oregon), a 15 year old student open fired in a school cafeteria killing 2 students and wounding 23 after killing his parents; March 24, 1998 (Jonesboro, Arkansas), two teenage middle school students fired guns during a fire drill, killed 5 –including a teacher, and wounded ten others; April 20, 1999, the most national symbol of school violence, and suspected retaliation, was the attack of two teenage boys at Columbine High School on that left a total of 15 people dead (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, et.al, 2002); and May 26, 2000 (Lakeworth, Florida), a 13 year old middle school student took a .25 caliber pistol to school and shot his teacher in the head for not letting him say goodbye to his friends (Cavaiola & Colford, 2006).
Often bulling gets over looked as common developmental behavior which then makes it difficult to enforce discipline for inappropriate behavior (Long & Alexander, 2010). Long and Alexander (2010) stated it best in their article when they said,

“For administrators to fight bullying in their schools, cooperation is required among everyone involved. This means that students, faculty, administrators, staff, and parents are going to have to work together to create a safe and secure environment for all students. A comprehensive plan needs to be developed and consistently followed at all times and for all offenses (¶ 12).”

Discipline

In order to prevent bullying, violence, and crises, schools must balance the need for orderliness and efficiency while trying to meet the rights and entitlements of individual students (Carlson & Lewis, 2007); this can pose a challenge when it comes to discipline. Brock, Sandoval, and Lewis (1992) state that, “School rules need to state specific unacceptable behaviors and their consequences. The rules should be reasonable and should allow for due process and appeal as appropriate (pg. 225).” Some legislation has been implemented to ensure safe schools in regards to weapons and controlled substances; Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 and Safe and Drug-Free Schools (Carlson & Lewis, 2007, pg. 298). The problem with such legislation that tries to implement a Zero Tolerance Policy is that some administration may be inconsistent with the punishment provided to students (Carlson & Lewis 2007.)

Various laws have been implemented and changed over the past years, based on court cases, to not only help the schools keep order, but to honor the rights of the students. The case of Ingraham v. Wright in 1977 changed the provisions of corporal punishment in schools (Carlson & Lewis, 2007, pg. 298) after two boys were paddled causing injury that lasted for a week (Fischer & Sorenson, 1996). If the corporal
punishment is warranted it should be used as a last resort, students are to be provided with advanced notice, the student has a chance to explain behavior, and another school official is present when punishment is received (Fischer & Sorenson, 1996). In the Goss v. Lopez case of 1975, the courts ruled that students must be provided, either orally or written, evidence of misconduct prior to suspension (Carlson & Lewis, 2007, pg. 298). Prior to punishment the student must be notified in a timely manner and have the right to be heard by administration (Fischer & Sorenson, 1996).

Discipline of a student whom has a learning disability requires further procedures than that of a student who does not have a disability because the disabled student is covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Fischer & Sorenson, 1996). Fisher and Sorenson (1996) state that, “Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 says that no ‘otherwise qualified’ individual with a disability can be discriminated against in any federally assisted program or activity because of his or her disability (pg. 140).”

The Americans with Disabilities Act covers all students in both public and private schools, whereas Section 504 only covers schools that receive federal funding (Fischer and Sorenson, 1996). Fisher and Sorenson (1996) state that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act states that, “all students…. must be evaluated and provided with a free appropriate education and related services in the least restrictive environment (pg. 141).”

When a student with a disability violates school policy, the punishment is based on whether the act was a result of the disability or not. This is determined by doing a
manifestation determination review (Essex, 2002). The manifestation determination review considers all relevant information in regards to the behavior and determines that the disability did not impair the student’s ability to understand the impact of the behavior or impair the ability to control the behavior (Essex, 2002). If the student violated the school policy and it was not related to the student’s disability, under IDEA, the student cannot be suspended longer than 10 days (Carlson & Lewis, 2007).

After the violation has occurred, the school is considering an alternative placement for the student, and the parents and school disagree, the stay-put provision of IDEA takes effect (Carlson & Lewis, 2007). The Honig v. Doe case in 1988 stated that the student’s right to stay in the school and/or district be upheld while a student’s placement was being appealed, requiring that schools follow the rules and regulations of IDEA, and meet with the multi disciplinary team (MDT) to make a final decision (Fischer and Sorenson, 1996). This case changed attitudes of many in regards to discipline of students with disabilities (Carlson & Lewis, 2007, pg. 298); however, Cavaiola and Colford (2006) state that, “Public Law 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), enacted in 1992 and amended in 1997, serves as a watchdog legislation, guaranteeing that all such students remain in the “least restrictive environment” of their home schools as long as possible (pg. 204). While the decision of placement is being made, the student cannot be removed from the current education placement until the discipline action is reviewed, which is often misinterpreted by many (teachers, faculty, and parents) as students with disabilities being able to engage in behavior that would be treated differently if it was committed by a student without a disability (Carlson & Lewis, 2007, pg. 299). However, a student with a disability can be
provided the same disciplinary action and given an Interim Alternative Education Placement (IAEP) (Carlson & Lewis, 2007).

Laws such as ADA, Section 504, and IDEA protect the disabled students’ rights in regards to education provided and discipline received, but what about their rights when it comes to being a victim of bullying and harassment? Cavaiola and Colford (2006) said, “Crisis-prone students, once regulated to exclusionary special schools for a host of emotional and behavioral disabilities, now attend local public schools, supported by special services tailor-made to the unique needs of the student (pg. 204).” If such laws and regulations are set in place for a disabled student, what about non-disabled students? How do schools protect all students from crises?

Defining Crisis

An adolescent’s perception and ability to cope with a crisis is unpredictable. It is essential that school systems are prepared to respond to an unpredictable crisis which may involve severe illness/injury, violent and/or unexpected death, threatened death/injury, acts of war, natural disasters, manmade disasters, and other crises that may arise (Brock, Sandoval, & Lewis, 2001). In the hopes of preventing a crisis or dealing with a crisis appropriately, many schools have developed a crisis plan. The crisis at Columbine High School, the most nationalized incident of violence, has contributed to a rise in the literature stating the importance of school developing crisis plans (e.g. Managing School Crisis; More Than Just Response by Reeves, Brock, & Cowan, 2008, Crisis Intervention and Crisis Team Models in Schools by Knox & Roberts, 2005).

Crisis plans and anti-bullying prevention programs require the involvement of all teachers, counselors, staff, and administration. Failure to have an anti-bullying prevention
program can lead to a crisis in the school. Having such a program and a crisis prevention plan may prevent a teacher or administrator from being sued for foreseeability. Essex (2002) stated that, “Foreseeability is defined as the teacher’s or administrator’s ability to predict or anticipate that a certain activity or situation may prove harmful to students (pg. 131). Obviously there are bullying incidents and crises that a school cannot foresee, but can always set precautions into place.

How a crisis is defined may determine how to develop a plan to protect students when a crisis occurs. There are various definitions of crisis. Cavaiola and Colford (2006) state that Gerard Caplan defined a crisis as “a temporary state of upset and disorganization, characterized chiefly by an individual’s inability to cope with a particular situation using customary methods of problem solving, and by the potential for a radically positive or negative outcome (pg.3 ).” Hoff (1995) defined crisis as, “a serious occasion or turning point presenting both danger and opportunity (pg. 4). Echterling, Presbury, and McKee (2005) state that “the concept of crisis includes the following elements: confronting a momentous decision, encountering a pivotal moment in one’s life, and facing both peril and promise (pg. 7).” However, James (2008) reviewed various definitions and defines crisis as “a perception or experiencing of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person’s current resources and coping mechanisms (pg. 3).

A crisis can be a traumatic event for many and may cause individuals to act in a variety of ways. Myers, James, and Moulton (2011) state that a person who experiences a crisis may enter a transcrisis state in which the crisis disappears, but a variety of transcrisis points occur that may affect the individual’s ability to deal with the initial
crisis. In the hopes of how to understand and to be better equipped to handle a crisis, crisis theories were developed. According to the BASICS model (APPENDIX C) by Karl Slaikeu (as cited in Echterling, Presbury, & McKee, 2005), there are six different ways that people experience a crisis: behavioral, affective, somatic, interpersonal, cognitive, and spiritual (Echterling, Presbury, & McKee, 2005). Each category may have an effect on the other. For instance an individual’s thoughts can affect their affect and their affect can affect their behavior. During a crisis it is common for all aspects of an individual’s world to be altered in some way.

Two theories play an important part in crisis: chaos theory and complexity theory (Echterling, Presbury, and McKee, 2005). Both theories go by the principles that large changes can stem from small changes, that change can begin suddenly and resolve rapidly, and something unexpected will occur which will cause things to never be the same afterwards (Echterling, Presbury, and McKee, 2005). Chaos theory is based on an individual getting involved in (Chaos/mess) a crisis and being forced to come up with solutions to cope and deal with the crisis at hand (Myer, James, and Moulton, 2011).

Gerard Caplan, who did a lot of work in crisis intervention, developed a theory of crisis (Cavaiola & Colford, 2006). According to Caplan’s theory, there is a precipitating event to the crisis, the impact of a crisis is time limited (usually lasting -8 weeks), crises affect an individual’s daily living, people interpret crisis differently, and a person’s ability to cope is affected (Cavaiola & Colford, 2006). Within Caplan’s crisis theory, he was not only concerned with the crisis itself, but how well an individual’s ego functioning was during their attempt to cope with the crisis (Cavaiola & Colford, 2006).
According to James (2008) there are three different levels of crisis theory; basic, expanded, and applied. Basic crisis theory by Lindemann states that behavioral responses to crisis such as preoccupation and/or identification with the lost one, expressions of guilt and hostility, disorganization in daily routine, and somatic complaints are normal, temporary, and are able to be alleviated through techniques (James, 2008). The lack of awareness to all factors of the individual in crisis (i.e. developmental, sociological, psychological, environmental, and situational determinants) led the Basic Crisis Theory to be changed to Expanded Crisis Theory in order to address all components of a crisis (James, 2008). Applied Crisis Theory addresses normal developmental, situational, existential, and ecosystemic crises.

Myer (2001) stated that crisis intervention models should be simple and user-friendly, adaptable for use with many types of crises, and able to encompass all aspects of clients’ experiences. Myer and Moore (2006) state that their, Crisis in Context Theory: An Ecological Model (CCT), “does not diminish the importance of the individual, but rather provides an ecological perspective that allows the appreciation of the individual in crisis (¶ 3).” Dealing with a crisis involves not only the individual, but also how the individual functions within the environment, culture, and social contexts (Myer & Moore, 2006). Understanding the individual and how that individual interacts with the world he or she is a part of, is a significant part of understanding the impact of a crisis (Myer & Moore, 2006). In the Crisis in Context Theory the elements of the crisis are layered into the proximity to the crisis (distance and reactions) and meaning attributed to event (James, 2008). The second premise of the theory is that there is a reciprocal impact between the individual and system that have experienced the crisis (James, 2008). James
(2008) states that, “the third premise of CCT is that time directly influences the impact of the crisis (pg. 15).

Crisis Assessment

Along with crisis intervention theories and intervention models is crisis assessment. Crisis assessment is an immediate process done when the crisis occurs, which focuses on the present problems, social and cultural factors, and resources rather than on personality dynamics or coping deficits (Hoff, 1995). During an assessment it is essential to determine if there is an obvious or potential threat to life and if there is evidence that the person is unable to function in a usual life role (Hoff, 1995).

The Triage Assessment Model (TDA) developed by Myer, Williams, Ottens, and Schmidt in 1992, assumes that every individual’s reaction is unique to the individual themselves and the situation and should be assessed on the three domains of affective (emotion), cognitive (thinking), and behavioral (actions) (Myer, 2001). The domains are then broken down into three dimensions (Myer, 2001). The affective domain is broken down into anger/hostility, anxiety/fear, and sadness/melancholy; cognitive is broken down to transgression (rights being violated), threat (potential harm), and loss (something in life is irretrievable); behavioral is broken down into immobility (nonproductive, disorganized, or self-defeating attempts to cope with a crisis), avoidance (ignore, evade, or escape the crisis), and approach (covert or overt ways of addressing crisis) (Myer, 2001).

In order to address the three domains in the Triage Assessment Model, the Triage Assessment Form: Crisis Intervention (TAF) was developed to include a severity scale for each domain (Myer, 2001.) The TAF is a form that can be used to make a rapid and
valid crisis assessment by an individual that has little training in crisis intervention (James, 2008). The severity of the reaction of the crisis varies throughout the crisis, the assessment, and the treatment which would determine how directive an intervention should be (Myer, 2001). The higher the severity scale, the more direct the intervention would be (Myer, 2001). The results of the TAF being tested on a variety of groups such as police officers and counselors, stated that the TAF scores are more congruent when the scales are taken at face value and reading too much or too little into the observations appears to invalidate the instrument (James, 2008).

There have been five research projects completed using the form based on the Triage Assessment System. The first study by Diane Watters (1997) determined the reliability and validity of the TAS with four groups; undergraduate students, police academy recruits, graduate students, and crisis intervention personnel. The second study by Janice Pazar (2005) studied the inter-rater reliability of the TAS applied to a domestic violence scenario by groups of counseling professionals, social workers, crisis volunteers, and graduate students. Both of these studies were based off of the Triage Assessment Form: Crisis Intervention. This form is the original form developed from the Triage Assessment System. In the studies by Watters and Pazar, the TAF was found to be reliable and valid after four groups (students at undergraduate and graduate level, police academy recruits, experiences counseling program graduate students, and experienced crisis personnel) were trained, watched video scenarios, and rated the scenarios using the TAF form (Myer, 2001). The TAF is an ideal form to use when assessing a crisis because the form is user friendly, the domains are easy to remember, the TAF addresses all areas
of the client’s life (holistic), the severity scales can be used as a guide for interventions, and the TAF can be used throughout the treatment process (Myer, 2001).

The third study done by Christian Conte (2005) studied the reliability and validity of the Triage Assessment Survey: Organizations (TAS: O). The TAS: O form was different because it was a likert scale and self report that was collected across four levels: mild, moderate, marked, and severe. The TAS: O was found to be a reliable and valid measure of individual responses to organizational crisis (Conte, 2009). Another study was done by Leslie Slagel (2009) with the Triage Assessment Form: Families. Like Conte’s study, the form was modified into a likert scale and was also self report. The study included ratings of mild, moderate, marked, and severe. The study found the TAS: F form to be reliable, but weak validity. The other study done on the reliability of a form based off of the Triage Assessment System was Jeff Blancett’s (2008) study of the reliability and validity of the Triage Assessment System for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE) form. This study also found this form to reliable and valid.

The Triage Assessment System for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE) is a modified version of the Triage Assessment Form (Myer, Rice, Moulton, et al., 2007). The TASSLE form was developed for personnel on college campuses to make on the scene decisions about a student that may in be a threat to self or others (James, 2008). The TASSLE form can be used in a single incident or as a cumulative record to track problematic behaviors, determining the amount of support and supervision the student needs, what intervention would be appropriate, and to monitor strategies that have been used to manage the crisis (James, 2008). The TASSLE form can help organize thoughts and assist in answering questions about the particular crisis (Myer, Rice,
Moulton, et al., 2007). The TASSLE form provides the following: a method to monitor intervention, justification of intervention strategies and decisions, data for advocating for student support and consistent rating and tracking system to be utilized in decision making (Myer, Rice, Moulton, et al., 2007, pg. 2).

The TASSLE form is used during a crisis and the staff checks off the behaviors of the student, some of which are marked with a level of severity (i.e. should not be left alone, potential of harm), which require the student’s mental and physical health to be monitored (James, 2008). The form can be used in the initial crisis assessment and when terminating the assessment, which can show a significant change in scores depending on how the situation was addressed and the arrival of various supports (James, 2008). The final score of the TASSLE form determines the level of intervention. If the student has a rating in the single digits the student is free to go, the student needs more support and supervision if the score is in the teens, and the student needs intervention and transported to a different location if the score is in the twenties (James, 2008).

An accurate assessment of a crisis situation is significant. How the student is rated determines the level of care the student receives. James (2008) says,

“Unhappily, many assessment devices that can give the human services worker an adequate perspectives on the client’s problem, are unwieldy and time consuming, and mandate that the client be in enough control to complete the assessment process or be physically present while undergoing evaluation (pg. 42).

The TASSLE form is useful to professionals because it provides a common rating system that facilitates communication between professionals where everyone is on the same page and using the same language (Myer, Rice, Moulton, et al., 2007). The TASSLE form assists with justifying the treatment that was provided to the student and being that the form provides a common language, other professionals will be able to
understand the justification of the rating and treatment that was provided (Myer, Rice, Moulton, et al., 2007).

Myer, Rice, Moulton, et al., (2007) state that the “TASSLE form is a scientifically based researched tool that can be used to substantiate your actions and decisions…based on a reliable and valid model for making specific behavioral observations versus making broad statements… (pg. 3) In order to train residence hall staff on the use of the TASSLE form, the staff completed training, watched videos of crisis scenarios, and rated the severity of the crisis (James, 2008).

Reliability of the TASSLE: Middle Schools will be determined by using inter-rater reliability. In order to determine a correlation amongst the groups, an ANOVA will be utilized. Validity of the TASSLE form will be determined by comparing the average ratings of the groups with the experts of crisis intervention using a between-subjects design. The different ratings of mild, moderate, and severe will be compared using a within subjects design.

Summary

Assessing a crisis in schools can involve many factors such as the content of the crisis, the mental capacity of the student, if there is bullying involved, does the situation require discipline, crisis response procedures, and interventions needed. The lack of formal crisis assessment in schools can be counterproductive to ensuring the safety and well being of students. Having knowledge of and common communication of crisis indicators will assist appropriate personnel in making the necessary interventions to help the student in crisis.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the reliability and validity of the Triage Assessment System for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE) (Appendix B) form used to assess crisis in middle school with students in grades 6-8. Reliability of the TASSLE form was tested using inter-rater reliability to compare responses of experts, counselors in training, and middle school personnel (faculty and staff of the middle school). Validity of the TASSLE form was determined by using content validity as measured by the Triage Assessment System which looks at anger in a three dimensional crisis model. Content validity determined if the items on the TASSLE form represent the concepts they intended to measure (Houser, 1998). The TASSLE form identified primary feelings, behavior, and cognitive reactions. The agreement in all three areas is significant.

In this chapter, the sample, the instrument being used, research design, material needed, procedures, and data analysis are described.

Participants

Three groups were used to determine the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form used in middle schools. The groups were made of convenient samples; chosen by accessibility (Patton, 2002). According to Houser (1998), the sample is considered convenient because it is accessible to the researcher. Advantages of using a convenient sample are accessibility and the minimal cost to the researcher (Patton, 2002.) Disadvantages of using a convenient sample are not gaining a significant amount of information from a varied sample and the lack of generability to the population (Patton,
2002.) The larger the sample size, the more generalizable the research is to the population.

In this study, the participants were not randomly assigned to any particular treatment; rather, they were part of one of three groups; middle school personnel, counselors in training, and experts. A convenience sample with a total of 64 middle school personnel, master level students, and experts participated in this study. Within this study, there were 44 middle school personnel, 17 master students, and 3 experts. The participants ranged from 20-65 years of age. The data indicated that 15 participants ranged from age 20-25, 11 participants were between 26-30, 4 were between 31-35, 6 were between 36-40, 5 between 41-45, 6 between 46-50, 3 were between 51-55, 6 were between 56-60, and 6 were between 61-65.

Included in this data were 38 females and 12 males. There were a total of 47 educators (seventy-three percent), 7 counselors (ten percent), and 10 that did not reply. The total experience ranged from 6 months to 41 years working in either education or counseling field. This data does not include the individuals who have experience in both education and counseling.

The group of middle school personnel included 44 faculty and staff, primarily female, at a suburban middle school in western Pennsylvania who has had little or no training in counseling, crisis intervention, and/or the TASSLE form. The personnel have not been provided with crisis assessment training, and the school lacks a standard form for crisis assessment.

The counselors in training included masters level students who have had some experience and/or some training in counseling/crisis intervention. This particular sample
of counselors in training, were students in a Student Assistance Program course at a private university in Western Pennsylvania. Although data about the course work that the students have completed was not collected, the students in this course have been fully accepted into the program; with the majority have completed have of the counseling program. As part of the course, the students may have been provided information on the TASSLE form.

The third group, (the experts) were counselors who have over 30 years of experience doing crisis intervention, provided crisis intervention training, and have numerous publication regarding crisis and/or the use of the TASSLE form. All three of the experts, two males and one female, are professors in counselor education programs. This group was used to establish a base line for the correct rating of the TASSLE form following the viewing of the videos portraying crises that occur in the middle school setting.

Instrument

The Triage Assessment Scale for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE) form is an adapted form of the Triage Assessment System developed by Myer et al. (1992) to make valid crisis assessments rapidly (James, 2008). When a crisis occurs, a student can respond to a crisis in many ways and how the reaction is handled is significant. James (2008) states that the TAS Form meets the five composite criteria that include severity, client’s emotional status, coping mechanisms, level of lethality, and defusing/deescalating of the crisis.

The TASSLE form was developed by Crisis Intervention & Prevention Solutions, Inc. at the request of University of Memphis housing officers in the hope that the form
would help identify student who may interrupt the learning environment and may be in need of more support (Myer et al., 2008). The primary use of the TASSLE form was for individuals responsible for overseeing students in residence halls to make decisions regarding a student’s behavior and risk to self or others (James, 2008). The TASSLE form can help organize thoughts, increase ability to get help for students, and assist with the ability to answers questions regarding the student (Myer, Rice, Moulton, et al., 2007).

The most significant benefit of using the TASSLE form in this study is that the form provides a rating system that all professionals and paraprofessionals can be trained in to facilitate common communication about a particular student/crisis (Myer, Rice, Moulton, et al. 2007).

The TASSLE form was designed specifically to be used at the college/university level to make onsite, immediate decisions regarding a student in crisis. The use of the form can be used for a one time crisis or to make a decision based on multiple forms used on a particular student. The form is significantly useful when required to provide evidence and support for a decision made about a student.

Many feelings arise during a crisis, which may cause an array of reactions. The TASSLE form is based on three primary reaction categories; feelings, behaviors, and thoughts. According to Myer, et.al. (2007), feelings can be lumped into the three categories of anger, fear, and sadness. These three categories of feelings can cause a student to react in three behavioral ways as well; approach, avoidance, and immobility. An individual’s thoughts can also be in the three categories of transgression, threat, and loss. It is also possible that the reactions can be a combination of the three.
The TASSLE form is considerably useful when determining what level of intervention is needed based on the individual’s reaction to a crisis (Myer, Rice, Moulton, et al., 2007). The TASSLE form allows an individual to rate the reactions through levels of severity (control, intensity, and duration) (Myer et al. 2007). The final score, after rating each scale with the lowest number being 3 and the highest 30, will determine the level of need in regards to interventions (Myer et al. 2007). If the final score is in the single digits, no intervention is needed and the student is free to go, if the score is in the teens more support is needed, and if there is a rating in the twenties, the student must be transported to a safe place away from the learning environment (James, 2008).

After reviewing a student’s reaction to a specific crisis, rating the reaction accordingly, and determining the level of intervention, the form will provide a format for discussion with administration and other personnel involved. Using the form as a basis for discussion may facilitate common knowledge, respect, and cooperation among all that are involved in the process of helping the student in crisis.

Design

This study was a replication of a study conducted using university students and setting. The original study was done to determine the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form on students that attend higher education. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the original study of the TASSLE form was done by Blancett (2008) that found the form to be reliable and valid at the university level.

The researcher intended to determine inter-rater reliability. Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2008) state that “if ratings reflect the actual behavior and not idiosyncrasies of the observer, then we would expect the observers’ ratings to agree” (pg.
According to this study, the behavior of the actress in the crisis scenario was being observed. How the three groups rated the portrayal of a crisis scenario was compared to each other. If the groups were to rate the crisis scenarios fairly similar, the ratings would indicate inter-rater reliability. The TASSLE form would be a reliable measure of crisis in middle schools regardless of who the observer (rater) was and how much experience the observer has.

Validity was demonstrated by using internal validity and content validity. Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2008) state that “internal validity refers to the degree of certainty with which one can make statements about the existence of a casual relationship between variables (pg. 85.)” The relationship between the independent variable of the level of experience (three groups) and the dependent variables (ratings) is determined with internal validity. The more we controlled extraneous variables, the more valid the results of the study were.

Content validity determines if the assessment illicit responses that represents what the assessment intends to measure. Aiken and Groth-Marnat (2006) state that “if the subject-matter experts agree that a test looks and acts like an instrument that was designed to measure whatever it is supposed to, then it is said to possess content validity. Such judgments involve…the cognitive processes involved in answering them (pg. 98.)” Houser (1998) states that “content validity is generally determined by having experts in a particular content area rate the degree to which the items represent the content or concept intended (pg. 143.)” Not only is it beneficial to have experts rate the content area that the assessment is intended to measure, but it is helpful for experts in the specific area to help develop the assessment items. In this particular study with the content area being crisis
and crisis being measured by the TASSLE form; it is helpful that one of the co-developers of the TASSLE form was a participant in the expert group. Having the experts, who have extensive experience in crisis and the crisis form as the control group, formed a basis for content validity. The results of the ratings on the TASSLE form would indicate content validity if the items on the TASSLE form represented a crisis.

This study utilizes two different research designs; within-subjects and between-subjects. The between-subjects design compared subjects across the three levels of the independent variable (crisis) categorized as mild, moderate, and severe. The between-subjects design determines the differences amongst the ratings of the three intact groups with the control group being the experts. The within-subjects design examined each group’s ratings across different levels of mild, moderate, and severe crises. The advantages of using the within-subjects design is that it minimizes variance due to individual variation with all participants being exposed to the same training (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008).

There are three intact groups used in this research, two of them received an informational session on the TASSLE form: the middle school group consists of faculty and staff that work at employed suburban school in western Pennsylvania, the counselors in training are masters students enrolled in a counseling program at a private university in western Pennsylvania, and the experts are individuals who have had extensive training and experience in crisis intervention and the TASSLE form. Using a between-subjects design determined differences across two or more groups when compared with a comparison group.
Procedure

Prior to any research being performed for this study, the Institutional Review Board was contacted and all ethical guidelines in the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics were followed. In order to conduct the research with the middle school personnel, a copy of the dissertation proposal was provided to the assistant superintendent and a meeting was scheduled to discuss the details of the proposed research. Following the discussion and permission from the assistant superintendent, the research date was scheduled during an In-service in September.

Upon approval from the assistant superintendent, the training was mandatory for all middle school staff during the scheduled In-Service. Educational trainings are mandatory as part of the state requirement of Act 48 of 1999 which requires all professional educators that hold a PA public certificate to complete 6 approved In-Service credits (PDE, 2011). The school board, superintendent, and assistant superintendent organize staff development and training during In-Service days.

The TASSLE form can be used in any educational setting by any nonprofessional and requires little to no training. The middle school personnel and counselors in training were provided an informational session on the significance of the TASSLE form, an explanation of the categories on the TASSLE form, and how to utilize the TASSLE during a crisis. The information of the TASSLE form offered during the In-Service and to the counselors in training included assessment of students in crisis. The purpose of the informational session of the TASSLE form was to assist middle school personnel with having a common language about crises.
Following the information session, middle school personnel were informed that the purpose of the study was to collect research on the reliability and validity of a crisis assessment form (TASSLE). Although all personnel were informed of the TASSLE form, everyone’s responses were not included in the research. The middle school personnel were then asked to participate and informed that there was not a penalty if they chose not to participate in the research. The participants were introduced to the study, the significance of the study, and were informed of any potential risks that were involved. Participation was anonymous to avoid any feelings of obligation or conflict in interest because the participants were co-workers of the co-researcher.

Recruitment of the counselors in training consisted of students enrolled in a counseling program at a private university in Western Pennsylvania. The students who were enrolled in this program were students that were interested in becoming school counselors. The age and experience amongst the students varied. During the selected class, the students were provided an information session on the use of the TASSLE form. Each student was asked to participate and the professor was unaware of the students who participated in the study.

The experts were recruited based on knowledge and training of the TASSLE form. The experts were a former student in the Counselor Education and Supervision Program at a private university in Western Pennsylvania, as well as professors whom have had training in the use of the TASSLE form. This particular group was used as the control group that will help to determine the reliability of the TASSLE form.

Two of the three groups (middle school personnel and counselors in training) were provided approximately one hour of an information session on the use of the
TASSLE form as part of the mandatory In-Service or class requirement. Prior to collecting the data, the expert group has already received training. The primary researcher (whom has developed the TAS and part of the TASSLE form) discussed the necessity of crisis intervention and crisis assessment prior to research. Following the discussion, the primary researcher provided information about the history of the TASSLE form, the significance of crisis assessment, and provided videotaped scenarios for personnel and students to watch.

Three scenarios (Appendix C) were developed by the primary researcher and co-investigator that were designed to portray common crises that may occur in middle schools. The three scenarios portrayed three different levels of crisis: mild, moderate, and severe. Each scenario had the same characters, but involved a different level of the crisis. Following the hour informational session on the TASSLE, with middle school personnel, the participants were provided three videotaped crisis scenarios. During the viewing of the crisis scenarios, the video did not stream properly and skipped frequently. The middle school personnel viewed the scenarios with the mild scenario first, the severe scenario second, and the moderate last.

The MAXMINCON principle was applied to the scenarios in the sense that the researcher tried to maximize the variance of the variables, minimize the error variance, and control for unwanted extraneous variables (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). Using the MAXMINCON principle assisted the researcher in making an accurate investigation of the research question and helped us to make inferences about the relationship between variables, which is considered to be internal validity (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). The MAXMINCON is based on Kerlinger’s principle;
control of the experiment so as to obtain the most accurate or complete investigation of the research question,” (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008, pg, 68). Strong experimental control includes random selection of participants, manipulation of the independent variable, minimization of differences between groups, the absence of cofounding variables, and attempting to reduce extraneous variables such as bias.

The counselors in training were provided approximately 20 minutes of information on the TASSLE form. Following this information provided by the lead researcher, each participant viewed the three videotaped scenarios. The counselors in training viewed the scenarios in chronological order of mild, moderate, and severe. During the viewing of the crisis scenarios, there was inadequate audio. The crisis scenarios were barely audible and may have prevented the counselors in training from distinguishing what level of crisis was being portrayed.

The experts reviewed the videotaped scenarios based on prior training and experience with crisis intervention and the TASSLE form. The order in which the experts viewed the crisis scenarios was unknown to the researcher and co-researcher; the DVD of the crisis scenarios was provided to the experts via mail. After viewing the three scenarios, the participants rated the crisis as mild, moderate, and severe using the TASSLE form. All participants were asked to rate each crisis scenario on the affective, behavior, and cognitive scales, as well as a total of all three ratings.

In completion of the ratings of all three scenarios, the primary researcher debriefed the participants in the development of the scenarios; the scenarios were scripted and performed by an actress. The primary researcher answered questions from participants and held a dialogue of the importance of crisis intervention and prevention.
Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was analyzed to determine the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form used in middle schools. Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2008), state that reliability is, “the degree to which obtained scores reflect the true scores of individuals (pg. 314).” According to Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2008), “the relationship between two manifest variables is a function of their relationship and the reliability of the measures.” Validity is the degree to which the test measures what it is intended to measure (Houser, 1998).

In this study two variables were used in this study; expertise and crisis. The expertise variable has three different levels; no training of the TASSLE form (middle school personnel), some training of the TASSLE form (counselors in training), and significant training and experience (experts). The second variable was crisis with the three levels being mild, moderate, and severe.

In order to determine the reliability (the degree of agreement) of the TASSLE form, a between and within treatment analysis of variance was conducted. Several inferential statistics were ran in order to establish reliability by determining the differences between groups (middle school personnel, counselors in training, and experts) and the within groups variance measures the naturally occurring differences within the groups (crisis: mild, moderate, and severe) (Gravetter & Wallnau 2009). Each category of feelings, behavior, and thinking was also analyzed to determine agreement within and between groups. When determining the validity of the TASSLE form, the experts were used as a control group to compare how an experienced group of experts would rate the TASSLE versus how the two groups with little or no crisis and/or TASSLE training
would rate the crisis scenarios. If no significant differences were found within and between groups, the instrument would have shown to be reliable and valid.

Research Questions

1. How reliable is the TASSLE form in regards to three different groups’ ratings of crisis scenarios and the subscales of feelings, behaving, and thinking?

2. How valid is the TASSLE form in regards to three different groups’ ratings of crisis scenarios and the subscales of feelings, behaving, and thinking?

Summary

This chapter has discussed the intended use of a within and between subjects research design. The procedures of the study, the use of the TASSLE form in middle schools, and the sample of the three intact groups (middle school personnel, counselors in training, and experts) were also described. The intended analysis of reliability and validity was reported as well as data collection.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The overall purpose of the study is to determine the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form in measuring common crises in middle schools. Statistical analyses were conducted in order to test the hypothesis of the study based on the Triage Assessment Scale for Students in Learning Environments: Middle Schools (TASSLE: MS). Reliability of the TASSLE was determined by comparing the mean rating scores of the three groups on the different crisis scenarios. This was accomplished by within-groups and between groups ANOVA and MANOVA.

The hypothesis and null hypothesis are as follows:

Null Hypothesis:

\( H_0: \) The TASSLE will not be a reliable instrument to measure crisis in middle schools. This is indicated by a significant difference between the means of all three scenarios rated and the subscales of feelings, behaviors, and thoughts.

Hypothesis:

\( H_1: \) The TASSLE is a reliable instrument to measure crisis in middle schools. That is, the mean rating scores by the three groups are relatively the same for the different scenarios and the subscales of feelings, behaviors, and thoughts.

Demographic Information

A convenience sample of 64 middle school personnel, master level students, and experts participated in this study. Within this study, there were 44 middle school personnel, 17 master students, and 3 experts. The participants ranged from 20-65 years of age. The data indicated that 15 participants ranged from age 20-25, 11 participants were
between 26-30, 4 were between 31-35, 6 were between 36-40, 5 between 41-45, 6 between 46-50, 3 were between 51-55, 6 were between 56-60, and 6 were between 61-65.

Included in this data are 38 females and 12 males. There were a total of 47 educators, 7 counselors, and 10 that did not reply. Of those participants that did respond to the demographics, 49 have experienced a crisis and 11 did not. The total experience ranged from 6 months to 41 years working in either education or counseling field. This data does not include the individuals who have experience in both education and counseling.

Table 1: GENDER FREQUENCIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability

A one-way, between-subjects, ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean rating scores on the three crisis levels; between the level of expertise (training on the TASSLE and experience with crisis). The independent factor included three levels: Middle School Personnel (little or no experiences with either/or the TASSLE form and/or crisis), Master Students (counselors in training with some information of the TASSLE), and Experts (experience with both the TASSLE and crisis). The dependent variable was the different ratings of the three scenarios as well as the ratings of the different categories of the scenarios (feelings, behaviors, thinking).

ANOVA results are presented in Table 2, which shows the means and standard deviations of each group’s ratings of the scenarios. In Scenario 1, the mean of all three groups were 10.34 (Middle School Personnel), 8.62 (Master Students), and 10.00
Scenario 2 was rated fairly higher than Scenario 1, with mean scores of 21.34 (Middle School Personnel), 17.87 (Master Students), and 20.33 (Experts). In Scenario 3, the mean ratings of the three groups were 26.06 (Middle School Personnel), 26.12 (Master Students), and 24.66 (Experts). When looking at this data, it would appear that the Middle School Personnel and Experts rate the crisis scenarios fairly similar.

Table 2: Scenario Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 1</td>
<td>Middle School Personnel</td>
<td>10.66</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masters Students</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 2</td>
<td>Middle School Personnel</td>
<td>21.23</td>
<td>4.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masters Students</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>20.57</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 3</td>
<td>Middle School Personnel</td>
<td>26.07</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masters Students</td>
<td>26.12</td>
<td>4.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>24.67</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ANOVA analysis showed that the mean differences among the scenarios were not significant, (Scenario 1) $F (2, 58) = 1.114, p = .34$, (Scenario 2) $F (2, 55) = 2.86, p = .066$, and (Scenario 3) $F (2, 51) = .11, p = .895$. The lack of significant differences between the means of all three scenarios amongst the groups would indicate that the three groups rated the scenarios fairly similar.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was also conducted to determine the effect that different levels of experience of each group would have on the
ratings of feeling, behavior, and thinking of all three scenarios. Green and Salkind (2008) stated that a one-way MANOVA tests the hypothesis that the population means for the dependent variables are the same for all levels of a factor, that is, across all groups (p. 223). The independent variable, groups, included all three groups (middle school personnel, master students, and experts) and the three dependent variables were the rating scores of the scenarios (feelings, behavior, and thinking). The MANOVA results were not significant for all three scenarios in the categories of feelings, behavior, and thinking, indicating that the ratings of all three groups were fairly similar, indicating reliability.

Scenario 1

Scenario one was based on, Ashley, a young lady in middle school who broke up with her boyfriend due to the lack of trust between them. Ashley was sent to the school counselor to discuss the situation because she was visibly upset. The participants in the research study were to rate Ashley’s reactions to the crisis situation (the argument/breakup between the two.)

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of FBT Scenario 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.90(2.03)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Students</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.18(2.27)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.33(.57)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.23(2.12)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the ANOVA analysis, the ratings of Scenario 1 on the three different levels for all groups were not significantly different as shown by the means in Table 3 above. Table 4 shows that the ratings of Scenario 1 in each group was not significant; F (2, 58) = 1.11, p = .335. The lack of a significant difference in the means shows that there is a similarity in how all three groups rate the crisis scenarios. MANOVA results for
Scenario 1 show that the feelings ratings were, \( F(2, 58) = 2.57, p = .085 \); behavior ratings were, \( F(2, 58) = .35, p = .701 \); and thinking ratings were, \( F(2, 58) = 2.86, p = .065 \).

**Table 4: Test of Between-Subjects Effects; Scenario 1 Ratings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUP</td>
<td>46.357</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23.18</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1207.315</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>1253.672</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 2**

Scenario two was based on Ashley’s jealousy of her boyfriend flirting with another girl. Instead of being predominately upset with her boyfriend Jordan, she turns her anger towards the girl that Jordan pursues. Ashley verbally threatens the girl and attempts to go after her. A teacher stops her and sends her to the school counselor. The participants were to rate Ashley’s reaction to the crisis situation (threatening another student.)

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of FBT Scenario 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6.63(2.24)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Students</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.76(2.05)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.33(1.15)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6.60(2.14)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the ANOVA analysis for Scenario 2 showed the mean ratings (Table 5) of all three different levels of crisis for all groups were not significantly different with the ratings; \( F(2,55) = 2.855, p = .066 \). The MANOVA results show the following for the feelings, behaving, thinking categories: Feelings, \( F(2, 55) = .57, p = .567 \); Behavior, \( F(2, 55) = .45, p = .637 \); and thinking ratings were, \( F(2, 55) = .51, p = .598 \).
**Table 6: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects; Scenario 2 Ratings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>7936.70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7936.70</td>
<td>493.579</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUP</td>
<td>91.83</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45.92</td>
<td>2.855</td>
<td>.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error Corrected</td>
<td>884.39</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>976.22</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenario 3**

Scenario three is a continuous crisis of the first two scenarios, yet more severe. Ashley attempts to work things out with her boyfriend, however, Jordan feels that it would be best if they did not date any longer, based on his parents request. Ashley has a difficult time accepting the perceived rejection and expresses a desire to die. Participants are to rate the elevated level of crisis (expressed suicidal ideation.)

**Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of FBT Scenario 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8.33(2.43)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Students</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.65(1.90)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.67(.58)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8.39(2.20)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the ANOVA results, the final scenario was also not significantly different; \( F(2, 51) = .11, p = .895 \). The MANOVA results stated that the differences in ratings in the three different categories of feelings, behaving, and thinking were also not significant: with the ratings of feelings, \( F(2, 52) = .30, p = .741 \); Behavior, \( F(2, 52) = .00, p = .997 \); and thinking ratings, \( F(2, 52) = .61, p = .544 \). Each p value for all three subscales for all three scenarios exceeded the p value of .05.
Table 8: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects; Scenario 3 Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUP</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1296.33</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>1302.00</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When evaluating the within and between subjects data, the researcher looked at the relationship among the ratings of all three scenarios. The primary goal was to find a linear relationship between all three scenarios in all three groups. Ideally, there would be a straight line, or regression line, that would demonstrate the relationship between all three scenarios. When looking at the ratings of all three scenarios, the study aimed at having the ratings consistently progress from mild, moderate, and severe, with all three groups rating the scenarios relatively the same. Table three shows that there is a significant linear relationship by having a significance level of .000. In Table 9 (Plot Graph), the regression line demonstrates a linear relationship within all three scenarios and between subjects, showing a pattern of consistently steady increase in the ratings between scenarios.

Validity

The validity of the TASSLE form was evaluated by using the form of internal validity. Internal validity was demonstrated by utilizing as much experimental control as possible according to the MAXMINCON principle. The primary form of experimental control utilized in this study was the control for bias. There was no room for bias in the research study due to the researcher and co-researcher being unaware of whom participated in the study.
The Triage Assessment System for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE) is a modified version of the Triage Assessment Form (Myer, Rice, Moulton, et al., 2007). The TASSLE form was developed for personnel on college campuses to make on the scene decisions about a student that may be a threat to self or others (James, 2008). Validation of the TASSLE form was demonstrated in a previous study done by Jeff Blancett (2008) on the reliability and validity of the Triage Assessment System for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE) form.

Validating this instrument was determined by using the group of experts as a control group. Two of the experts are licensed psychologists and one is a licensed counselor. All three of them are working as professors of counseling. Among the three of them, they have an extensive amount of experience in crisis intervention and prevention, not to mention multiple publications in the field of crisis. Their expertise in the field of crisis, counseling, and the TASSLE form, make a strong argument for their ratings on the TASSLE form to set a standard to meet.

Table 9: Plot Graph; Profile of All Three Groups Ratings of Scenarios
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study investigated the reliability and validity of the Triage Assessment Scale for Student in Learning Environments. For the purpose of this study, this research examined the capacity of the TASSLE to distinguish between mild, moderate, and severe crisis scenarios. In addition, the TASSLE form was used to assess a students’ affective, behavioral, and cognitive reaction to a crisis that occurs in a middle school setting. The reliability of the TASSLE form was tested by running a one-way ANOVA and a one-way MANOVA. This chapter will provide a discussion of the results and further recommendations for research will be provided.

The results of this research indicated that the use of the TASSLE is a reliable instrument to measure individual students’ responses to different levels of crisis; however other results may have been confounding. The reliability of the ratings of the scenarios would indicate that our hypothesis (H₁) would be accepted and the null hypothesis (H₀) would be rejected; lack of significant differences between the mean ratings of the scenarios. The slight differences between ratings of all three levels of affect, behavior, and cognition may question the acceptance of the hypothesis. It is suggested that the reader uses caution when generalizing to the population. It appears that a revision of this form maybe needed to be used with the middle school population, faculty, and staff, as well as control of confounding variables.
Discussion

While conducting the research, it was essential that the researcher applied the MAXMINCON principle to the scenarios in the sense that the researcher tried to maximize the variance of the variables, minimize the error variance, and control for unwanted extraneous variables (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). Using the MAXMINCON principle attempted to increase internal validity by having strong experimental control.

Strong experimental control includes random selection of participants, manipulation of the independent variable, minimization of differences between groups, the absence of confounding variables, and attempting to reduce extraneous variables such as bias. All factors of strong experimental control have not been controlled in an idea manner. This would include the variation of sample size, particularly the experts, the various levels of training and experiences within and between the groups, and confounding variables such as viewing of the scenarios. The one extraneous variable that was controlled was bias on part of the researcher. The researchers were not aware of who participated in the researcher study. Not knowing who participated reduced the bias in the relationships between professor/student and co-researcher/co-worker.

Demographic Information

The sample was taken from three different groups; middle school personnel, counselors in training, and experts with a total of 64 participants. The sample size of the three groups varied drastically. The middle school personnel consisted of at least 44 participants, 16 counselors in training, and 3 experts. The uneven amount of participants, especially the three members of the expert groups, may have skewed the results.
Random selection of participants was not utilized in this study. All three samples were convenient samples; accessible to the researcher (Patton, 2002.) The middle school personnel were from suburban school in Pennsylvania. This sample was utilized as part of the research because it was accessible to the co-researcher as a place of employment. Choosing to conduct this research in this particular school in this part of PA, may be considered in the ratings of the scenarios and the levels of feeling, behavior, and thinking.

There are three factors to consider regarding the student population of this particular school in western Pennsylvania; (a) they may not be significantly diverse; (b) they may not have been prone to significant amount of crises; and (c) the faculty may not have been trained in the use of this form of assessment of crisis. The data from this particular sample may not be an accurate example to generalize to the majority of the middle schools in western Pennsylvania or middle schools across the country in regards to the demographics of students, faculty, and staff.

When conducting research with a convenient sample, particularly at a place of employment, there is always the risk of social desirability. During the viewing of the crisis scenarios, the middle school personnel were aware that the counselor in the video was the co-researcher. The participants were also aware that the research was done in conjunction with the researcher, co-researcher (co-worker), and a private university in western Pennsylvania. The participants may perform (participate in the study) to higher standard because they are aware that they are part of study as requested by administration or their professor, therefore, they may also want to appear desirable as a good employee or student.
Another possible predicted limitation was the crisis procedures of the district. This may have been an issue for those who chose not to participate; however, it did not appear to be a problem. Although those are possible factors when conducting research, these variables did not appear to be relevant in a negative way. If anything, the participation in this study triggered questions and perceived interest in the study and use of the TASSLE form.

The counselors in training were selected at a university in western Pennsylvania. This particular sample was chosen because it was accessible to both the researcher and co-researcher. Selecting to use master level students from this particular university may be an advantage and/or disadvantage. The advantage of selecting this sample of master level students from this university is that the creator of the TASSLE form is a professor at the university and some of the students may have been provided with some information and/or training of the TASSLE form prior to the research study. A disadvantage of using this particular group of master students from this university is that the program requirements may have been different than other students in a similar program in a different university in PA. The students may also have been at different levels in the program; had more knowledge and experience with the TASSLE form and counseling in general. Another disadvantage of using master level students compared to middle school personnel is that master students may not have had the knowledge of normal adolescent middle school behavior. Although, the majority of the middle school personnel may not have had the counseling knowledge and background that the master level students may have had.
The experts were also chosen as a convenient sample that was assessable to the researcher. The experts were the researcher of the study and the creator of the TASSLE form, a counseling professor in another university in Tennessee, and the third expert was a professor of counseling at a university in another part of PA. Two of the experts helped with the development of the TASSLE form. All three of the experts teach crisis intervention and prevention. The use of these participants varied, but the lack of a larger sample may have affected the ratings. Having two experts from different universities other than the lead researcher and the master students may have helped with the consistency of the ratings; showing that the knowledge of the TASSLE form and experience amongst the three experts was consistent regardless of demographics.

Scenario Identification and Rating

Each scenario portrayed a middle school female in crisis. These particular crisis scenarios differed from mild, moderate, and severe. In each crisis (APPENDIX E) the student experiences a different level of crisis involving a recent break up with her boyfriend. Participants were asked to rate each crisis scenario using the TASSLE form following a brief video of the crisis acted out. The ratings of the crisis scenarios may have been affected by the quality of the videos. During the presentation at the middle school, the video would freeze and/or skip. While presenting to the master students, the volume on the lap top and over head projector were not sufficient. Without speakers, the students in the crisis scenarios were barely audible. The lack of appropriate streaming and inadequate sound quality may have affected the participants’ ability to receive an accurate portrayal of the crisis scenarios and to differentiate between the levels of crisis.
Conclusions

The TASSLE demonstrated reliability and validity throughout the study as shown through the relatively consistent increase in rating regardless of the confounding variables. The middle school personnel viewed the crisis scenarios with the mild first, severe second, and the moderate last. The counselors in training viewed the scenarios in order of mild, moderate, and severe. The order in which the experts viewed the crisis scenarios was unknown to the researcher and co-researcher. Another confounding variable that could have affected the ratings of the crisis scenarios were the poor streaming for the middle school personnel and the poor audio for the counselors in training. Regardless of the quality of equipment, there was relatively a steady increase of the ratings of the crisis scenarios. The relatively consistent ratings of the crisis scenarios, regardless of the order of presentation and poor equipment, indicates that the TASSLE measures crisis consistently and it measures what it claims to measure; the level of crisis.

If the TASSLE is a reliable and valid measure of a students’ feelings, behaviors, and thoughts during a crisis, it would be logical to assume that the ratings for each scenario would increase as the crisis increases and that all three groups would rate similarly. However, the results of the ratings of these three subscales tended to fluctuate, but still did not show a significant difference in ratings. The lack of significant differences in the ratings would indicate that the TASSLE form was reliable, but with weak validity with regards to feeling, behaving, and thinking subscales. A between-subjects factor was also conducted to determine the similarities and/or differences between the different groups. This particular analysis divides the participants into the different groups: middle school personnel, master students, and experts.
According to the one-way ANOVA, the results stated that there was no significant difference between the three different groups. Therefore, the rating score among the three different groups on all three scenarios were relatively the same and were not significantly different from each other (P value great than .05).

Reliability

The TASSLE form showed to be reliable by each groups increased ranking of each scenario as the level of the crisis increases. This was demonstrated by the means increasing at every level of crisis. The mean ratings of the middle school personnel for each Scenario increased roughly 10 points from Scenario 1 to Scenario 2, and roughly 5 points from Scenario 2 to scenario 3. For the master students, the increase was similar. The mean rating of Scenario 2 was roughly 10 points above Scenario1 and Scenario 3 was roughly 8 points above Scenario 2. The experts mean ratings for Scenario 2 were roughly 10 points above Scenario 2 and Scenario 3 was roughly 4 points above Scenario 2 (as demonstrated in Table 5.)

The researcher intended to determine inter-rater reliability. Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2008) state that “if ratings reflect the actual behavior and not idiosyncrasies of the observer, then we would expect the observers’ ratings to agree” (pg. 316.) According to this study, the behavior of the actress in the crisis scenario was being observed. How the three groups rated the portrayal of a crisis scenario was compared to each other. According the results of the analysis, the groups rated the crisis scenarios and the sub scales fairly similar, indicating inter-rater reliability. The consistent results, lack of significant differences between the group ratings, would indicate that the TASSLE is a
reliable measure of crisis in middle schools regardless of who the observer (rater) was and how much experience the observer has.

Validity

Validity was demonstrated by using internal validity and content validity. Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2008) state that “internal validity refers to the degree of certainty with which one can make statements about the existence of a casual relationship between variables (pg. 85.)” The relationship between the independent variable of the level of experience (three groups) and the dependent variables (ratings) was determined with internal validity. The more we controlled for extraneous variables, the more valid the results of the study were.

Houser (1998) states that “content validity is generally determined by having experts in a particular content area rate the degree to which the items represent the content or concept intended (pg. 143.)” The results of the ratings on the TASSLE form indicated content validity, due to the items on the TASSLE form representing a crisis. Having the experts, who have extensive experience in crisis and the crisis form as the control group, formed a basis for content validity. Regardless of the level of expertise in crisis and the TASSLE form, all three groups were able to accurately rate a reaction to crisis based on the categories on the TASSLE form, indicating content validity.

Recommendations

This study is the first attempt to statistically analyze the TASSLE form for use at the middle school level. The results indicated that the TASSLE is a fairly reliable instrument to measure crisis in middle schools. However, further modification of the
research design is necessary to strengthen validity of the TASSLE form as used in the middle schools.

The researcher and co-researcher intended to confirm that the TASSLE form is a relatively simple form to use to assess crisis with little or no training. This assumption appeared to be accurate with the relatively close ratings of the middle school personnel and master students. It is assumed that with more training on the use of the form, the participants in each group would have a more accurate rating of each crisis scenario.

Ratings of feelings, behavior, and thinking appeared to vary amongst the groups. Particularly, Scenario 2 ratings from the middle school personnel and master students were quite similar. The ratings of the experts on Scenario 2 in regards to the feelings, behaving, and thinking, may be the result of many factors. Such factors include the experts’ extensive knowledge of the TASSLE form, and significant experience with crisis and crisis assessment.

There can be various factors considered into the ratings of the other two groups as well: perception of the severity of the crisis, lack of crisis experience, and limited knowledge of the categories. Each category on the TASSLE form had a sub category. A more in depth description and discussion of each sub category may have been beneficial to the participants when rating the scenarios. Mostly importantly, adequate sound and picture quality of the crisis scenarios may have played a significant role in the low or higher ratings of the crisis scenarios.

In this research, three crisis scenarios were used that were based primarily on a situation experienced at different levels. The student portrayed different emotional reactions to her breakup with her boyfriend. Demonstrating different crisis scenarios in
different forms may have been beneficial to assist the participants with identifying the different level of crisis. Being that the crisis scenarios were different levels of the same story line, the participants may have had difficulty deciphering the severity of each crisis.

Demographics of the student in the video may have been a factor as well; African American female. The race of the student in the crisis scenario may not portray the demographics of others schools that may possibly use the TASSLE form in the future. The scenario is portrayed on how a female reacted to the crisis. If the participants were provided a crisis scenario with a Caucasian male, would they rate the crisis differently? For example, if a male came into the office threatening to fight another male student for flirting with his girlfriend, would the teacher think that the boy is more likely to hurt someone than the female student? If a Caucasian teacher is rating a Caucasian student versus an African American student, would one student have a higher rating than the other? Although each crisis should be rated objectively, individual bias may play a part in the perception of the crisis. Further research can be done to eliminate these variables such as written or audio crisis scenarios.

Finally, the research demonstrated that the TASSLE form used in middle schools is a reliable and somewhat valid instrument to assess crisis in middle schools. However, since the results were based on a convenient sample, it may be best if the study is replicated with a more heterogeneous sample; middle schools with diverse populations from different parts of PA/USA, master students at different universities, and larger sample of experts.
References


## APPENDIX A

### Subtypes of Childhood and Adolescent Depression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBTYPE</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anaclitic Depression</td>
<td>Loss of caregiver with no provision for a substitute; period of misery followed by loss of interest in environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive Depression</td>
<td>Trauma or loss frequently accompanied by feelings of guilt for past failures; poor parent-child relationship is important factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute Depression</td>
<td>Onset occurs after some traumatic event; prognosis for recovery is good if relationship with caregiver is healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Depression</td>
<td>Repeated separations from caregiver beginning in infancy; presence of depression in mother; no immediate precipitating event; periodic recurring emotional-depriving experiences; suicidal ideation early in childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endogenous Depression</td>
<td>Genetically or biochemically determined; no identifiable stressors; believed to exist, to some degree, throughout life of child; may reach psychotic or suicidal proportions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX B

Triage Assessment System for Students in Learning Environments (TASSLE)

Staff Member: _____________________________________________________________________
Date:__________________________ Location:__________________________ Times:__________________________

Complaint Information
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Student Name: ____________________________ ____________________________ ____________________________
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Observations (Check as many that apply)
__ off medication __ hallucinating *** (__ smells __ sights __ sounds __ touch)
__ bizarre behavior/ appearance __ poor hygiene __ absurd, illogical, nonsensical speech
__ paranoid/suspicious thoughts __ flashbacks, loss of reality contact __ intoxicated/drugged
__ harassment __ coercion/intimidation __ aggressive gestures
__ reckless behavior __ self injurious behavior __ physically violent ***
__ verbal threats to self or others __ suicidal/homicidal * __ suicidal/homicidal *
__ thinking/verbalizing gestures/behaviors *** __ suicidal/homicidal plan clear ***

*** removal from learning environment recommended *additional evaluation recommended

Triage Assessment (X = Initial Assessment/ O = Terminal Assessment)

Feelings __Anger__ Fear__ Sadness Behavioral __Approach__ Avoidance__ Immobile Thinking __Transgression__ Threat__ Loss

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Initial Total Score: ______ Terminal Total Score: ______ (if used)

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66
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEVERITY SCALES</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Impairment</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimal Impairment</td>
<td>Stable mood, control of feelings.</td>
<td>Affect elevated but generally appropriate.</td>
<td>Evidence of negative feelings pronounced and are increasingly inappropriate.</td>
<td>Feelings are primarily negative and are exaggerated or increasingly diminished.</td>
<td>Feelings are negative and highly volatile or may be nonexistent.</td>
<td>Feelings are extremely pronounced to being devoid of feeling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate Impairment</td>
<td>Brief periods of slightly elevated negative mood.</td>
<td>Duration of feeling intensity longer than situation warrants.</td>
<td>Efforts to control emotions are not always successful.</td>
<td>Emotions not under control but remain focused on crisis.</td>
<td>Emotions start to generalize from crisis event to other people and situations.</td>
<td>Emotions of the crisis are generalized to other people and situations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marked Impairment</td>
<td>Emotions are under control.</td>
<td>Emotions are substantially under control.</td>
<td>Emotions are controlled but focused on crisis event.</td>
<td>Responses to questions/requests vary from rapid and agitated to slow and subdued.</td>
<td>Responses to questions/requests are emotionally volatile or beginning to shut down.</td>
<td>Responses to questions/requests noncompliant due to interference of emotions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe Impairment</td>
<td>Responses to questions/requests are calm and composed.</td>
<td>Responses to questions/requests are emotional but composed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cannot respond to questions/requests because of interference of emotions.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors are socially appropriate.</td>
<td>Behaviors mostly effective, outbursts if present are inconsequential.</td>
<td>Behaviors are somewhat ineffective, yet not dangerous.</td>
<td>Behaviors are maladaptive but not immediately destructive.</td>
<td>Behaviors are likely to intensify crisis situation.</td>
<td>Behaviors are totally ineffective and accelerate the crisis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily functioning unimpeded.</td>
<td>Can perform tasks needed for daily functioning with minimal effort.</td>
<td>Performing tasks needed for daily living minimally compromised.</td>
<td>Performance of tasks needed for daily living is noticeably compromised.</td>
<td>Ability to perform tasks needed for daily functioning seriously impaired.</td>
<td>Unable to perform even simple tasks needed for daily functioning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threat or danger nonexistent.</td>
<td>Behavior demonstrates frustration, but is nonthreatening.</td>
<td>Behaviors minimal threat to self or others.</td>
<td>Behavior is a potential threat to self or others.</td>
<td>Impulsivity has the potential to be harmful to self or others.</td>
<td>Behaviors are highly destructive possibly to cause injury/death to self or others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavior is stable and non-offensive.</td>
<td>Behaviors mostly stable and non-offensive.</td>
<td>Behavior becoming unstable and offensive.</td>
<td>Upon request, behaviors can be controlled with effort.</td>
<td>Behaviors are very difficult to control even with repeated requests.</td>
<td>Behavior is out of control and nonresponsive to requests.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Decisions are considerate of others.</td>
<td>Decisions may not be considerate of others.</td>
<td>Decisions are inconsiderate of others.</td>
<td>Decisions are offensive and antagonistic of others.</td>
<td>Decisions have the potential to be harmful to self or others.</td>
<td>Decisions are a clear and present danger to self and others.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Decisions are logical and reasonable.</td>
<td>Decisions becoming indecisive but only with respect to crisis.</td>
<td>Decisions becoming illogical, unreasonable, and generalized beyond crisis.</td>
<td>Decisions about crisis beginning to interfere with general functioning.</td>
<td>Decisions are illogical, have little basis in reality, and general functioning is compromised.</td>
<td>Decision making frenetic or frozen and not based in reality and shuts down general functioning.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>THOUGHTS</td>
<td>Perception of crisis event substantially matches reality.</td>
<td>Thinking influenced by crisis, but under control.</td>
<td>Thinking focused on crisis but not all consuming.</td>
<td>Thoughts are limited to crisis situation and are becoming all consuming.</td>
<td>Thoughts about crisis have become pervasive.</td>
<td>Thoughts are chaotic and completely controlled by crisis.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Able to carry on reasonable dialog and understand and acknowledge views of others.</td>
<td>Able to carry on reasonable dialog, understand and acknowledge views of others.</td>
<td>Ability to carry on reasonable dialog restricted and problems in understanding and acknowledging views of others.</td>
<td>Responses to questions and requests are restricted or inappropriate and denies understanding views of others.</td>
<td>Defiant to requests and questions and/or inappropriate with and antagonistic of others.</td>
<td>Requests and questions are believed as threat and responded to aggressively.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem solving intact.</td>
<td>Problem solving minimally compromised</td>
<td>Problem solving limited.</td>
<td>Problem solving blocked.</td>
<td>Problem solving ability absent.</td>
<td>Problem solving not observable with no ability to concentrate.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Covering the BASICS

Behavioral
Previous Attempts.......................... Previous Coping
Current Preparations......................... Current Coping

Affective
Depression..................................... Hope
Anxiety........................................ Courage
Bitterness...................................... Compassion

Somatic
Illness........................................... Health
Pain............................................. Physical Comfort

Interpersonal
Alienation........................................ Support Network

Cognitive
No Alternative................................. Possibilities
Suicidal Ideation.............................. Ideas for Coping
Suicide Plan.................................... Survival Plan

Spiritual/ Meaning
Meaningless.................................... A Sense of Meaning
No Future....................................... A Sense of Future

(Checking for risks and exploring strength: Covering the BASICS)

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHICS

*ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL BE HELD CONFIDENTIAL AND WILL NOT INFLUENCE YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY OR BE USED TO IDENTIFY YOU IN ANY WAY. THE INFORMATION IS PROVIDED STRICTLY FOR DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS.

1. PLEASE STATE YOUR AGE AT THE TIME OF PARTICIPATION.

   20-25 _______ 26-30 _______ 31-35 _______
   36-40 _______ 41-45 _______ 46-50 _______
   51-55 _______ 56-60 _______ 61-65 _______
   66+ _______

2. YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN YOUR PROFESSION AS AN
   EDUCATOR __________
   COUNSELOR __________

3. HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED A CRISIS IN YOUR FIELD
   YES/ NO

4. GENDER M/F
APPENDIX E

Scenario #1 (Mild):

Alexis is a 12 year old female in the 7th grade and Jordan is a 14 year old male in the 8th grade. Alexis is a good student who maintains honors and has no reported discipline problems. Jordan does fairly well in school, maintaining average grades, and has had some disciplinary referrals. Alexis and Jordan have been dating for six months. Jordan had heard from another student that a 7th grade boy was sending texts to Alexis. Jordan confronted Alexis about the situation and although Alexis did not reply to the text messages, Jordan was upset and has not spoken to Alexis since yesterday morning. Alexis was visibly upset during Science class and was sent to the school counselor. Alexis cries uncontrollably for approximately 10 minutes before the guidance counselor can find out exactly why she is so upset. Alexis repeats over and over, “I didn’t do anything wrong. I love Jordan. I would never do anything to hurt him.”

Scenario #2 (Moderate):

Alexis and Jordan worked out the issue with the text messages and have now been dating for 7 ½ months. Although the previous issue with the text messages has been resolved, Jordan does not trust Alexis to be around other boys. Alexis feels that if she is not permitted to have guys that are friends, then Jordan is not permitted to be friends with girls. However, Jordan does not agree with how Alexis feels. The jealousy between the two has increased. Alexis sees Jordan talking to a girl in 8th grade. As they are talking, the girl touches Jordan’s arm more than once. Alexis gets upset and verbally attacks the girl by calling her obscenities and stating that she better stay away from Jordan or she will “kick her a**.” Alexis goes over to the girl and begins to pull her hair. A teacher sees
the incident, stops Alexis, and sends her to the school counselor. When Alexis arrives in the counselor’s office, she is visibly upset. Her face is red, she is scowling, and tears are running down her face. She continues to pace back and forth while making punching motions with her hands.

**Scenario # 3 (Severe):**

Jordan decides, with convincing from his parents, that he and Alexis should take a break from each other. Alexis is not happy with Jordan’s decision. Alexis continues to send text messages and call Jordan at all hours of the night. When returning to school the next day, Alexis tries to talk to Jordan before first period. By the time lunch comes around during 5th period, Alexis hears rumors that Jordan is dating another 7th grade girl, the same girl that she saw him with in the hallway. After lunch Alexis sees Jordan in the hallway talking to the girl. Alexis comes up, pulls the girl away from Jordan, throwing her across the hall, slams Jordan into the locker, grabs his face, and proceeds to say to him, “I can’t believe you could do this to me! How can you date that whore? If I don’t have you, I don’t have a reason to live!” A teacher saw the situation and buzzed the office for someone to escort her to the school counselor. When Alexis gets into the office she is crying. When asked what is wrong, she states that she wants to die and that she is going to use her father’s gun, which is in the night stand, to kill herself.
APPENDIX F

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
600 FORBES AVENUE • PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
MIDDLE SCHOOL PERSONNEL

TITLE: The Reliability and Validity of the Triage Assessment Scale for Students in Learning Environments: Middle Schools

INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Rick Myer (Dissertation Chair)
(412)-396-4036

Ms. Jamie N. Brownfield (Student Investigator)
104 Neville Street
New Eagle, Pa 15067
(724)310-3551
(412) 897-7753

ADVISOR: (if applicable :)
Dr. Rick Myer (Dissertation Chair)
ExCES
(412)-396-4036

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in education at Duquesne University under the advisement of Dr. Rick Myer.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to determine the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form used to assess students reactions to a crisis. Determining the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form in middle school will provide faculty and staff in middle schools with an instrument to assess individuals in crisis, assist the faculty and staff with communication in regards to crisis, and will benefit the field of counseling by providing a framework of what a crisis is in a middle school setting (Conte, 2005). Inter-rater reliability will be used to analyze the differences in the ratings given by the individuals in the three different groups.

YOUR PARTICIPATION: For this research study, I am requesting your permission to analyze the pre-existing data from your ratings on the TASSLE form that were completed as part of an In-Service training required by the state of Pennsylvania. This is the only request that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Participating in this study may expand your knowledge of the crisis behaviors, the different levels of intervention based on a student’s reaction to a crisis, and the significance of crisis assessment. The study may help increase the understanding of student’s affective,
behavioral, and cognitive reactions during a crisis situation. Your decision not to participate in this research study will not influence your employment status, your professional employee rating, or relationship with staff. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

COMPENSATION: There is no compensation for participating in this study, nor will your participation cost you anything either.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your participation in this study will be anonymous. There will be no personal information on the TASSLE form that would identify your participation in the study. Your response(s) will only appear in statistical data summaries. The results will be kept for 5 years following the research study and will be provided to you upon request.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time by choosing not to provide the TASSLE rating form.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: If you would like the results of this research study, contact information of the researchers will be provided to you in order to obtain the results.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Dr. Joseph Kush, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-6326).

In addition, you can contact Jamie N. Brownfield at (412) 897-7753, as researcher or her advisor and lead researcher, Dr. Myer at (412) 396-4036 if you have any questions.

_______________________________________  ___________________  
Researcher's Signature  Date

_______________________________________  ___________________  
Co-Researcher’s Signature  Date
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
MASTER STUDENTS

TITLE: The Reliability and Validity of the Triage Assessment Scale for Students in Learning Environments: Middle Schools

INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Rick Myer (Dissertation Chair)
(412)-396-4036

Ms. Jamie N. Brownfield (Student Investigator)
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New Eagle, Pa 15067
(724)310-3551
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PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to determine the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form used to assess students reactions to a crisis. Determining the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form in middle school will provide faculty and staff in middle schools with an instrument to assess individuals in crisis, assist the faculty and staff with communication in regards to crisis, and will benefit the field of counseling by providing a framework of what a crisis is in a middle school setting (Conte, 2005). Inter-rater reliability will be used to analyze the differences in the ratings given by the individuals in the three different groups.

YOUR PARTICIPATION: For this research study, I am requesting your permission to analyze the pre-existing data from your ratings on the TASSLE form that were completed as a class requirement. This is the only request that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Participating in this study may expand your knowledge of the crisis behaviors, the different levels of intervention based on a student’s reaction to a crisis, and the significance of crisis assessment. The study may help
increase the understanding of student’s affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions during a crisis situation.

Your decision not to participate in this research study will not influence your grade, how you are treated in this course, or your program of study. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

**COMPENSATION:**
There is no compensation for participating in this study, nor will your participation cost you anything either.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**
Your participation in this study will be anonymous. There will be no personal information on the TASSLE form that would identify your participation in the study. Your response(s) will only appear in statistical data summaries. The results will be kept for 5 years following the research study and will be provided to you upon request.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**
Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time by choosing not to provide the TASSLE rating form.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**
If you would like the results of this research study, contact information of the researchers will be provided to you in order to obtain the results.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**
I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Dr. Joseph Kush, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-6326).

In addition, you can contact, Jamie N. Brownfield at (412) 897-7753, as researcher or her advisor and lead researcher, Dr. Myer at (412) 396-4036 if you have any questions.

_______________________________________  __________________
Researcher's Signature  Date

_______________________________________  __________________
Co-Researcher’s Signature  Date
APPENDIX H

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
600 FORBES AVENUE ♦ PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

EXPERTS

TITLE: The Reliability and Validity of the Triage Assessment Scale for Students in Learning Environments: Middle Schools

INVESTIGATOR:
Dr. Rick Myer (Dissertation Chair)
(412)-396-4036
Ms. Jamie N. Brownfield (Student Investigator)
104 Neville Street
New Eagle, Pa 15067
(724)310-3551
(412) 897-7753

ADVISOR: (if applicable :)
Dr. Rick Myer (Dissertation Chair)
ExCES
(412)-396-4036

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in education at Duquesne University under the advisement of Dr. Rick Myer.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to determine the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form used to assess students reactions to a crisis. Determining the reliability and validity of the TASSLE form in middle school will provide faculty and staff in middle schools with an instrument to assess individuals in crisis, assist the faculty and staff with communication in regards to crisis, and will benefit the field of counseling by providing a framework of what a crisis is in a middle school setting (Conte, 2005). Inter-rater reliability will be used to analyze the differences in the ratings given by the individuals in the three different groups.

YOUR PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study will be based on previous training on the significance of the TASSLE form and the use of the TASSLE form to assess a student in crisis. You will be provided three videos portraying students in crisis. Following the viewing of the crisis scenarios, you will be asked to rate the scenarios using the TASSLE form. For this study, I am requesting your permission to analyze the data from your ratings on the
TASSLE form. These are the only requests that will be made of you.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** Participating in this study may expand your knowledge of the crisis behaviors, the different levels of intervention based on a student’s reaction to a crisis, and the significance of crisis assessment. The study will help increase the understanding of student’s affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions during a crisis situation. Your decision not to participate in this research study will not influence your relationship with the researchers or co-researcher, your affiliation with the University, or with colleagues. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

**COMPENSATION:** There is no compensation for participating in this study, nor will your participation cost you anything either.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your participation in this study will be anonymous. There will be no personal information on the TASSLE form that would identify your participation in the study. Your response(s) will only appear in statistical data summaries. The results will be kept for 5 years following the research study and will be provided to you upon request.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:** Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time by choosing not to provide the TASSLE rating form.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:** If you would like the results of this research study, contact information of the researchers will be provided to you in order to obtain the results.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:** I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Dr. Joseph Kush, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-6326).

In addition, you can contact, Jamie N. Brownfield at (412) 897-7753, as researcher or her advisor and lead researcher, Dr. Myer at (412) 396-4036 if you have any questions.

________________________________________  _______________________
Researcher's Signature          Date