Unit 7 DB Lecture:

Welcome, to our Unit 7 Discussion lecture. This week, you will learn about employee engagement, social validity, and ensuring support for interventions in organizations. You will also continue your study of the effective evaluation of interventions and discriminate between quantitative and qualitative data.

Throughout our study related to changing staff behavior in organizations, it is clear that problems in organizations are rarely a result of bad workers. It is the environment and the system that either increase or decrease the desired behaviors from performers. The same can be said about employee engagement. How engaged employees are in their day-to-day tasks is largely a result of the behaviors of leadership and the environment in which these behaviors occur. Employee engagement is the extent to which your employees are committed to the organization and their jobs, complete their job duties efficiently and effectively, and express passion for what they do. You have learned about this earlier when we discussed discretionary effort. This is the above-and-beyond behaviors that employees display; they are not simply clocking in and out but are truly giving one hundred percent from start to finish. Engagement is not something that can be forced; it is a very individualized response to a variety of variables. Unfortunately, research shows that very low percentages of the workforce report being fully engaged at their jobs. This is evidenced by the high turnover rates and general apathy many people express regarding their daily grind.

Of course, employee engagement can be described as a set of behaviors, so behavior analysis has something to say about why employees are not engaged and how employee engagement can be increased. One of the key ways to ensure high levels of employee engagement is through the use of positive reinforcement. This should start from the very top. If managers are not fully engaged, there will be no way that any of the other workers will be fully engaged in their work. So, a good starting part is to use positive reinforcement to shape manager behavior before moving to employees at other levels. Not surprisingly, when looking at the type of consequences that are most effective in increasing employee engagement, positive, immediate, and certain consequences are necessary.

Another way to promote employee engagement is to create a meaningful work environment. Research has found that when employees are given the opportunity to engage in part of the problem-solving process and set goals, there is a greater demonstration of discretionary effort. Very often, frontline employees have a deeper knowledge of the ins and outs of the organization. Therefore, they may, in fact, have information that could be valuable when solving problems in organizations. When employees are active participants in the way things are done or are working towards a goal, it increases the reinforcing value of assisting with the goal. Additionally, incorporating as much natural reinforcement into day-to-day tasks as possible and allowing autonomy when completing tasks are other ways to increase staff performance.

Social validity is another important concept related to the success of interventions within organizations. “Social validity” refers to how acceptable the intervention is in the organization. Simply put, this is how much people like and agree with the intervention. In order to adhere to the characteristics of ABA and OBM, interventions and procedures must be acceptable to society and stakeholders involved in the intervention. The results of an intervention could be ineffective but acceptable, or it could be effective and not acceptable, neither of which is an acceptable outcome in applied behavior analysis. Social validity should be evaluated throughout the problem-solving process. This begins with assessing the acceptability of your planned intervention among key stakeholders prior to implementation and addressing any issues before moving forward. Following the implementation of the intervention, one must assess the validity of goals, procedures, and results.

Measuring social validity can pose a challenge, as it will mainly rely on subjective evaluation. This may involve the use of a survey in which staff members provide their opinions on the goals, results, and processes. Another way this could be done is by holding a discussion group or forum in which people in the organization are allowed to express their opinion. As long as the limitations of this data are acknowledged, this can provide valuable information related to the acceptability of the intervention, which can provide a strong indication of the long-term success of the intervention — or even the organization as whole.

As you have discovered, evaluating data related to a variety of aspects of the intervention occurs throughout each step in the problem-solving process. There are two key types of data that can be employed: qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data is collected through observations, interviews, and surveys. Data analysis of this type of data focuses on themes or general attitudes and is not numerical in nature. This type of data is relevant to the previous discussion of social validity. Attitudes and opinions may be used to determine the acceptability of procedures. As noted earlier, a word of caution regarding this type of data is that it is subjective and may not be used to draw causal inferences about interventions.

Quantitative data is the more widely used and acceptable data format in behavior analysis. This is more focused on facts and involves the use of numerical data. Data is collected through direct observation or evaluation and is often evaluated using visual or statistical analyses. Some examples of this type of data in the program evaluation process are number of widgets produced, percent correct on treatment integrity measures, and number of behavior incidents. Questionnaires can also produce quantitative data when a rating scale or other numerical measure is employed. When utilized correctly, this data is considerably more valid, reliable, and objective than qualitative data. This allows researchers to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of interventions with confidence and allows one to draw causal inferences about interventions.

That wraps up our Unit 7 Discussion Board lecture! Thanks for viewing!