Preschool Behaviour Questionnaire (P.B.Q.)
By: Dr. Lenore Behar & Sam Stringfield
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Reviewed by: Debbie Naylor & Susan Howson

Purpose:
This questionnaire was developed as a screening tool for easy use by professionals as a first step in identifying emotional/behavioural problems in children aged 3-6 years. As well, the manual states this instrument can be used as a pre-post measure of children to indicate areas of change or growth during a given period (at least 3 months). However, a recent review (Buros’ Mental Measurement Yearbook, 1985, p. 1189) does not support this additional use.

Standardization:
The manual states that test was sufficiently standardized on an adequate sample size. The total normative sample consisted of 598 subjects. A total of 486 ‘normal’ children were selected from 5 preschools in Durham, North Carolina and 2 preschools in Portland, Oregon representing socio-economic groups ranging from lower to upper middle-class families. However, no parent data is reported to verify the diversity in family income, education or occupation.

The remaining 102 behaviourally disturbed children came from 15 preschools throughout the country involved in early intervention work.

Worthy of noting is a comprehensive review of the P.B.Q. in the Buros’ Mental Measurements yearbook, (1985, p. 1189), in which the reviewer Robert A. Fox states that the normative sample is described in the manual as “roughly comparable to the general population” in terms of gender and ethnicity, but no general statistics for the two cities are presented for comparison. In addition, data pertaining to age, sex, and/or race are reported missing for over 20% of the total sample.

Validity:
The authors of the P.B.Q. felt that content validity was too subjective to determine, so instead there objective was to determine criterion-related validity. To accomplish this, they needed to show how well the P.B.Q. could disseminate between a normal and a deviant sample. Each item and the total score were analyzed using a chi square test to determine whether the teacher’s ratings of children differed to a notable degree between the normal and disturbed groups. Results indicated that 31 of the 36 items (on the original P.B.Q.) successfully discriminated normal and disturbed children, as did the total test score.

A factor analysis which included investigating the results of other studies (Kohn & Rosman, 1972; Peterson, 1961; Rutter, 1967) as well as professional input from teachers resulted in the 3 major factors of the P.B.Q. these have been labeled as follows: Hostile-Aggressive, Anxious-Fearful and Hyperactive-Distractible. All of these factors are supported by similar scales and studies reported in the literature (ie. the Children’s Behaviour Questionnaire). All 3 factors show a moderate and positive correlation with each other and the total scale score.

Reliability:
A second study designed to replicate previous results established moderate to high inter-rater reliability coefficients for the total scale. Final analysis of results from the re-test data indicated that all three factors were found valid and reliable, and all
previous results could be replicated. The results also indicated that teachers were more valid and more reliable raters than were their assistants. On average teaching assistants did not distinguish as clearly between the two groups of children and showed a great deal more variance in their ratings. Assistants rated the children on average of nearly 4 points higher on the P.B.Q. than did the teachers. As well, the rating scale proved more accurate when used after a period of 6 weeks. After discovering that one of the teachers in the study had only been with the children for 5 weeks, the authors analyzed this data separately and then compared it to the remaining data. The interrater reliability proved to be much lower. For the children for an average of 20 weeks the interrater reliability coefficients were in the moderate to high range. Therefore, if this assessment tool is to generate a high degree of reliability, the following recommendations must be adhered to:

1. It should be only used by teachers and related child care professionals (not assistants or aids).
2. It should only be administered on children with whom the teacher and child care professional has spent at least 10 weeks getting to know the child

** This time frame is in direct contradiction with that recommended in the manual. The manual recommends a 6-week familiarity period. However, if 5 weeks has been proven inadequate and 20 weeks is ideal, than a compromise of 10 would seem not only adequate by necessary in order to maintain a moderate to high interrater reliability.

Evaluation:

The Preschool Behaviour Questionnaire successfully fulfils its stated purpose which is to identify children aged 3-6 years which emotional/behavioural problems. Its purpose is as a multidimensional screening device only. If the goal is to assess one dimension of problem behaviour such as hyperactivity, then a unidimensional scale should be used instead.

The P.B.Q. does prove useful in generating program data. Together with other assessment data, it provides a beginning point for remediation which should be initially focus on the child’s areas of strength (regarding adaptive and appropriate behaviour). Once these areas are established, major family concerns can be addressed on a priority basis. If these concerns are areas outside the child’s current level of functioning (based on assessments), this can be discussed with the parents in order to establish more realistic goals and objectives to reduce or alleviate worrisome or problematic behaviour. Thus, the P.B.Q. (along with other assessment data) successfully serves to “emphasize the relevance and utility of what can be inferred from test results which gives one a stronger basis for program planning” (Messic, 1980, p. 202)

Regarding flexibility, the P.B.Q. can only be used as the manual stipulates.

This assessment appears quite easy to administer. Administration and scoring procedures for the scale are clearly described in the manual. As well, an example is included to give the test user an appropriate perspective for making judgments and subsequent ratings of a child’s behaviour.

I would only recommend the use of this assessment as a first step in the early detection of emotional/behavioural problems. For one thing, the P.B.Q. is fairly general in its analysis of frequency. Secondly, the intensity and duration of behaviours are not considered. In addition, a thorough and professional assessment
demands the emotional/behavioural problems be assessed from a variety of perspectives using a number of methods and information sources. Witt (1988) states that “for any behavioural assessment, the same excessive, deficient or situationally inappropriate behaviours by multiply operationalized using several assessment methods” (p. 312). This would require not only the use of rating scales (at least 2 by different sources) by interviews, self-reports, and direct observation as well.

In summary, the P.B.Q. successfully fulfils its stated purpose. It has a high degree of validity and reliability, its quick and easy to administer and has received favourable reviews in several psychometric journals.