

CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Critical appraisal should be an aspect of PBT that is encouraged at all times. However, much of the time, it is done very loosely with only comments regarding whether it was a good article or not. It is suggested that, with one or two of the problems, it be identified within the group that this is a problem for which critical appraisal of the literature is a focus. Students should be prepared to discuss the quality of the articles which they have read and back up their opinions.

GUIDING QUESTIONS TO CRITICAL APPRAISAL:

Purpose and Literature Review:

- Is there a clear statement of the purpose or problem under study?
- Do they describe a theoretical rationale on which the study is based?
- Is the need for the study well supported?
- How does the proposed study go beyond what is already known?
- Have they covered all the pertinent literature in making their case?

Methods:

- Is the description significantly detailed to allow for replication eg. setting, subjects, procedures, analysis, measurement?
- Are the variables operationally defined?
- Is the intervention adequately described?
- Can you tell who did what to whom, where, for how long and how often?
- Are the subjects similar to your own clients?
- Are the inclusion/exclusion criteria clear?
- Was the sample size adequate to determine if a true effect exists?
(sample size calculation based on previous knowledge).
- Was there a control group?
- Was assignment random to group/treatment protocol or order?
- Was the intervention controlled by the researcher?
- Is there reported evidence of reliability and validity of the outcome measures used?
- Are they responsive to change?
- Were randomization and measurement blinded?
- Did they measure the appropriate outcomes?

Results:

- Were all the relevant outcomes reported?
- Were the results statistically significant?
- Were the results clinically important?
- Were all the subjects accounted for at the end of the study?
- Did the participants comply with the intervention?
- Were they receiving any other interventions concurrently?
- Did they measure and report that?
- Were follow-up assessments done to see if the treatment effect was maintained?
- Was similarity between the groups documented?
- Were the conclusions drawn appropriate for the results reported?
- Is this intervention feasible in your practice?
- Do the researchers appear biased in their interpretation of the results?
- Do they describe any limitations or any other possible explanatory factors?