What Factors Contribute to Differential Perceptions Towards Evidence-Based Practices?

An Examination of Officer Role Orientation, Job Satisfaction, Confidence, and Skill

Proficiency

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Bios

Tamara Kang is an assistant professor in the School of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Her research focuses on re-entry barriers, rehabilitation and assessment for subgroups of justice-involved persons, and translation of research into practice.

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Abstract

Training probation officers on evidence-based practices (EBPs) is vital to ensuring that community supervision is maximally effective at reducing recidivism. However, after training, probation officers often have differential perceptions regarding EBPs. Thus, the present study surveyed 90 adult probation officers after they participated in a training based on the Risk-Need-Responsivity model and Core Correctional Practices and examined whether their role orientation, job satisfaction, and confidence and skill proficiency using EBPs predicted their perceptions regarding the EBPs' ease of use, usefulness, and perceived success at reducing recidivism on their caseload. Regression analyses revealed that all predictors accounted for variability in officers' perceptions regarding the perceived success of using EBPs, explaining 41.2% of the variance, but job satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = 0.18$) and officer role orientation ($\Delta R^2 = 0.10$) were most critical, solely explaining 28.5% of the variance. We conclude by providing recommendations for improving probation officers' perceptions of EBPs.

Keywords: perceptions, probation officer; evidence-based practices; risk-need-responsivity, core correctional practices

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that direct expenditures for corrections alone exceeds $80 billion each year (Hyland, 2019). The financial burden of mass incarceration is caused by the notorious revolving door, as many who are released are re-arrested (Baillargeon et al., 2009; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2019); in a 9-year follow-up study, 83% of people released from state prisons were rearrested (Alper & Markman, 2018). Community supervision is a viable alternative that reduces the costs associated with mass incarceration but can also serve a rehabilitative function through the implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs). EBPs are defined as interventions, programs, and techniques that empirical research has found if implemented, reduce recidivism (Ingel et al., 2022). Training probation officers on EBPs is essential for reducing recidivism, thereby increasing public safety and reducing taxpayer burden (Bonta, 2023; Gendreau & Goggin, 2014; Latessa, 2006).

There are evidence-based training programs designed to teach probation officers actionable skills that are rooted in the Risk-Needs-Responsivity Model (RNR; Bonta & Andrews, 2017) and Core Correctional Practices (CCP; Dowden & Andrews, 2004) and stem from the General Personality and Cognitive Social Learning Approach (GPCSL). Multiple studies have demonstrated that officers who used EBPs based on the RNR model and CCP saw a reduction of recidivism on their own caseload (e.g., Bonta, 2023; Robinson et al., 2012). As a result, evidence-based trainings for officers have the potential to improve correctional practice, yet not every officer that participates in training has positive perceptions of EBPs (e.g., Guy et al., 2014; Miller & Maloney, 2013; Shook & Sarri, 2007; Viglione, 2019). Prior research

suggests that implementation of EBPs is complex, and a number of factors impact the differential perceptions and use of EBPs (e.g., attitudes towards EBPs, organizational climate, knowledge of EBPs, person-organizational fit; e.g., Blasko et al., 2019; Debus-Sherrill et al., 2023; Viglione, 2019). Consequently, it is critical to examine what factors contribute to officers' perceptions of EBPs' post-training to increase the likelihood that officers will put the skills from these training programs into practice.

GPCSL, The Risk-Need Responsivity Model, and Core Correctional Practices

GPCSL outlines specific personal and social variable that interact with environment factors to influence an individual's propensity of criminal behavior and is at the heart of why the RNR model is effective (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). The RNR model's core principles focus on matching the treatment intensity with the risk level (Risk Principle), focusing supervision on needs that are predictive of recidivism (Need Principle), utilizing behavioral, social learning, and cognitive strategies to assist probation clients in building skills (General Responsivity), and tailoring interventions to be consistent with the individual's learning style and characteristics (Specific Responsivity, Bonta & Andrews, 2017). Officers have the best chance of reducing recidivism among probation clients by following the guidelines set forth by the RNR model during supervision sessions (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Dowden & Andrews, 2004; Joplin et al., 2004). For example, probation officers who target criminogenic needs from the Need Principle have fewer clients on their caseload that reoffend in the community (Bonta, 2023; Robinson et al., 2012).

CCP aligns with the RNR model's organizational principles and consists of five components: (a) effective use of authority, (b) appropriate modeling and reinforcement, (c) problem solving, (d) effective use of community services, and (e) the quality of interpersonal

relationships. CCP advises that recidivism reduction is most likely when the officer is clear, focused, specific, and direct by identifying clear goals, creating a realistic implementation plan, and utilizing a firm but fair approach to expectations and consequences (Andrews & Bonta, 2017; Dowden & Andrews, 2004). Officers are advised to model behaviors, reinforce prosocial behavior, and disapprove immediately and clearly if the probation client engages in antisocial behaviors. Then, the officer helps to generate alternative decisions that could be made in the future (Dowden & Andrews, 2004). CCP also guides officers' interaction style to be warm, enthusiastic, encouraging, and empathic. Officers who use CCP during supervision sessions have fewer clients on their caseload that reoffend in the community (Dowden & Andrews, 2004; Smith et al., 2012).

Components of Training Programs Designed to Teach EBPs Based on RNR and CCP

The RNR model and CCP have been used to guide the creation of packaged training programs that teach probation officers how to incorporate EBPs and modes of service delivery into their supervision sessions (Bonta et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012). The first training program developed was Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision (STICS; Bonta et al., 2011), which inspired similar programs including Staff Training Aimed at Reducing Recidivism (STARR; Robinson et al., 2012), and Evidence-Based Practices in Correctional Supervision (EPICS, Smith et al., 2012). These programs use 3 to 3½ day workshops that include an overview of the theoretical and empirical rationale of the program followed by structured role-plays to teach officers the skills encompassed by the program. Typically, officers receive follow-up trainings and coaching from experts or peers to ensure that they competently implement the skills covered in the training. Some commonalities among these programs include: (1) focusing their intervention efforts on medium- and high-risk clients (Risk

principle), (2) targeting criminogenic needs (Need principle), and (3) emphasizing the importance of a high-quality officer-client relationship (a CCP Principle, Bonta & Andrews, 2017). Additionally, programs teach officers how to implement cognitive-behavioral strategies to reduce criminal behavior and increase prosocial behaviors (Responsivity Principle), though the specific skills taught differ among the programs (see Labrecque & Smith, 2017; see crimesolutions.ojp.gov).

Probation Officers' Perceptions of EBPs

Prior research on officers' perceptions of EBPs has primarily focused on the use of risk assessments (e.g., Guy et al., 2014; Miller & Maloney, 2013; Ricks et al., 2016; Shook & Sarri, 2007), but emerging research has examined perceptions of EBPs consistent with the Responsivity Principle and CCP (e.g., Viglione, 2019). A common theme across this research is that post-training, some officers may not believe that using EBPs will reduce recidivism (Miller & Maloney, 2013; Shook & Sarri, 2007; Viglione et al., 2015; Vincent et al., 2012; Welsh et al., 2015). Illustratively, Viglione (2019) found that some officers were skeptical that using the EBPs would result in a reduction of recidivism on their caseload (i.e., perceived success of using EBPs) and questioned whether some criminogenic needs they were asked to target were capable of change (e.g., criminal thinking, peers, or family).

Importantly, although the RNR model provides clear guidelines for officers (e.g., specifying criminogenic needs to target), it also provides clinical principles that allow the probation officer to exercise professional discretion (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). Specifically, the RNR model specifies that subjective discretion can deviate from the risk level indicated by a validated risk assessment tool (Risk Principle) or to prioritize the rehabilitation of a client's criminogenic needs (Need Principle). To complicate the subjectivities inherent to exercising

discretion with the Risk and Need Principles, the guidelines set forth by CCP and the

Responsivity Principle are less structured and more client-specific (e.g., see Bourgon & Bonta,

2014). For example, during sessions, there is much ambiguity regarding when to use strategies

such as motivational interviewing (i.e., Responsivity Principle), prosocial modeling (CCP), or

balancing a firm but fair approach (CCP). Given the increased subjectivity of training skills

related to the Responsivity Principle and CCP, it is essential to examine what factors (from the

RNR model's organizational principles) may influence officers' beliefs that investing the time

and energy post-training will result in a recidivism reduction.

Officer Role Orientation

CCP emphasizes officer-client relationship quality. However, probation officers face

dual-role conflicts, grappling with their competing dual roles of holding the probation client

accountable while also attempting to facilitate prosocial change to decrease recidivism. Officers

differ in how they view their role in supervision sessions, which is termed 'role orientation.'

Prior research has observed three types of officer role orientations including: (1) law enforcer,

(2) social worker, or (3) hybrid. Law enforcers emphasize accountability and enhancing public

safety. Social workers emphasize the rehabilitative potential of supervision sessions by showing

the probation client empathy and forgiveness. The hybrid officer balances both public safety and

rehabilitation during supervision sessions (Klockars, 1972; Ricks & Eno Louden, 2015; Skeem

& Manchak, 2008).

EBPs taught in training programs may be perceived as rehabilitative focused (social

worker) and less focused on public safety (law enforcer). Viglione (2019) found that when

probation officers were asked to implement EBPs they expressed liability concerns and felt that

they needed to focus more on risk reduction (law enforcer focus), because they believed they had

the duty to protect the public. Furthermore, Paparozzi and Gendreau (2005) examined the efficacy of a newly implemented program and found that parole officers with a law enforcement orientation (opposed to a rehabilitation or hybrid orientation) may not have implemented EBPs with fidelity, as they had more parole clients on their caseload with technical violations. Thus, the parole officers with a law enforcement orientation may not have perceived the EBPs as a successful method to reduce recidivism, opting to emphasize their law enforcer role, highlighting the potential relationship between role orientation and perceptions of EBPs.

Job Satisfaction

Role orientation can be further complicated by job satisfaction. Officers who have more positive attitudes toward rehabilitation tend to have more positive officer-client relationships (Beijersbergen et al., 2015). More positive officer-client relationships are related to increased job satisfaction (e.g., Annison et al., 2008). However, lack of job satisfaction is common among probation officers, with approximately half of probation officers in Simmons and colleagues' (1997) sample reporting they would quit their job as an officer if they could find better employment. Concerningly, job dissatisfaction is related to a host of negative outcomes, such as staff turnover, which increases the caseload size for the remaining staff and caseload size was associated with decreases in job satisfaction (Krupa, 2021). Staff turnover results in monetary costs for the agency, expending resources to re-hire and re-train new staff (Matz et al., 2014; Rhineberger-Dunn & Mack, 2020). Turnover also negatively impacts the probation client as high caseloads often lead to officers spending less time and energy using rehabilitative practices during supervision (Lee et al., 2009; Simmons et al., 1997). As a result, job satisfaction may impact officers' perceptions regarding the usefulness and ease of use of implementing rehabilitative EBPs rooted in the RNR model and CCP.

Confidence and Skill Proficiency with EBPs

After participating in training, officers may differ in their confidence and skill proficiency in using the EBPs during sessions with probation clients (Guy et al., 2014; Miller & Maloney, 2013). Wilson et al. (2022) found that the prevalence of complete competence (i.e., skill proficiency) in utilizing EBPs ranged from 32% (i.e., using EBPs to facilitate the development of prosocial relationships) to 79.9% (i.e., documenting non-compliance). Furthermore, prior research suggests that officers' skill proficiency and confidence using EBPs could be related to whether they believe that incorporating EBPs into their supervision sessions will be time-consuming (Vincent et al., 2012). Thus, officers' confidence and skill proficiency may contribute to officers' post-training perceptions regarding EBPs' ease of use and usefulness.

Behavioral Intention to Use EBPs

According to the theory of planned behavior, an individual's behavioral intentions to engage in a behavior (e.g., implement EBPs with fidelity) is the strongest predictor for future behavior (e.g., implementation). Behavioral intentions are impacted by a person's perceptions regarding if using the new practices will in fact result in a desired outcome which is then indicative of whether they believe they have control over the outcome (Ajzen, 2002). In general, the theoretical framework argues that an officer's perceptions are said to represent their behavioral intention to implement the new practices (e.g., Gefen & Reychav, 2014). Thus, as indicated by the theory of planned behavior, it is vital to better understand what factors (e.g., role orientation, job satisfaction, and confidence and skill proficiency using EBPs) are associated with probation officers' behavioral intentions to use EBPs taught during training.

Theory of planned behavior is a theoretical framework that has been utilized in prior research on developing a better understanding of probation officers' differential reactions to

implementation of EBPs (e.g., Viglione & Blasko, 2018). As discussed above, correctional

research has found that probation officers have differential post-training perceptions of EBPs'

ease of use (Vincent et al., 2012), usefulness, and effectiveness (e.g., Viglione et al., 2015;

Welsh et al., 2015). Other fields have similarly found that these differential perceptions (i.e., ease

of use, usefulness, and effectiveness) are indicative of the employees' behavioral intentions to

implement new EBPs. Li (2013) found that employees' cognitive perceptions were predictive of

their intentions to implement the practices later (perceived ease of use, usefulness, and success).

Similarly, Gefen and Reychav (2014) and Durlak and DuPre (2008) found that employees who

had positive perceptions towards a newly implemented project reported greater intention to

implement the new project (e.g., perceived the project as effective, efficient, less time

consuming, and a worthwhile investment).

Present Study

Although prior research has found that implementing EBPs is beneficial for the officer

(reduction of caseload), public safety, and the justice-involved person (e.g., Bonta, 2023), there

is less known regarding why officers formulate differential perceptions regarding EBPs' ease of

use, usefulness, and efficacy post-training. There is a critical need to investigate whether

dynamic factors such as role orientation, job satisfaction, appraisal of confidence using the EBPs,

and skill proficiency contribute to whether EBPs are perceived as easy to use, useful, and

effective at reducing recidivism. As a result, the present study examines the extent to which a

probation officer's role orientation (Aim 1), job satisfaction (Aim 2), and confidence and skill

proficiency using EBPs (Aim 3) predicts officers' perceptions towards the ease of use,

usefulness, and perceived effectiveness of implementing the EBPs taught in a training. We

hypothesize that probation officers with balanced and rehabilitative focused role orientations,

higher job satisfaction, and higher levels of confidence and skill proficiency using EBPs will report that EBPs are easy to use, useful, and effective at reducing recidivism.

Method

Participants

Data used for the present study were collected at a probation agency that was implementing EBPs consistent with the RNR model and CCP in a training referred to as Skills Driven Supervision (SDS), described further in the procedure section below. G*Power revealed that 85 participants are needed to conduct a multiple linear regression fixed effects model with four independent variables and medium sized effects ($\beta = .80$, $\alpha = .05$, $f^2 = 0.15$). A medium effect size was chosen, because Li (2013) found strong positive correlations between employees' perceived usefulness ($r = .79$) and ease of use ($r = .65$) of the information, and their intention of behaving in ways consistent with the information they learned in a training. Participants were 92 adult probation officers from a probation agency in a Southern U.S. state. Most of the sample was female ($N = 64$, 69.6%). Ages ranged from 23 to 61 ($M = 38.27$; $SD = 9.85$). Only 12% ($N = 11$) had a master's degree or higher while most officers reported that their highest level of education attained was a bachelor's degree ($N = 81$; 88%). Most officers had a degree in Criminal Justice ($N = 60$). Officers' years worked in the corrections field ranged from 1 year to 39 years ($M = 12.18$; $SD = 9.10$). Caseload size ranged from 10 to 375, with 31 officers reporting they carried a specialized caseload. Alcohol monitoring ($N = 15$), mental health ($N = 7$), and sex offender ($N = 7$) specialized caseloads were the most reported. Most officers had attended an EBP training on risk assessment prior to participating in the agency's training ($N = 71$; 76.3%). Almost half (44.1%; $N = 41$) of the sample had never been trained on relationship quality

between an officer and probation client. Table 1 provides a summary of descriptive demographic data.

Measures

Perceptions of EBPs

The post-training survey included a 12-item measure that assessed the officers' post-training perceptions of EBPs' ease of use, usefulness, and effectiveness. As indicated in other fields (e.g., Gefen & Reychav, 2014; Li, 2013), these perceptions define the officer's behavioral intentions to implement the EBPs learned during a training and are indicative of whether they believe that their actions could have an impact on the outcome of recidivism. Each item was measured on a 1 to 7 Likert scale, with '1' being strongly disagree and '7' being strongly agree. The survey consisted of three subscales, which assessed the officer' perceived ease of use, usefulness, and perceived success of using the EBPs taught during the training. The three subscales were derived from two studies (i.e., Gefen & Reychav, 2014; Li, 2013). A copy of the post-training survey can be accessed using the following OSF link: https://osf.io/w27ux/?view_only=17d71ac754c640bdbc4d1f8f7925ff42.

   Ease of Use Scale. The Ease of Use Scale was derived from Li (2013). The scale consisted of three items rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with '1' meaning strongly disagree and '7' meaning strongly agree. Li (2013) achieved a .91 composite reliability. In the present study, the scale achieved acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .75$). The scale has been validated on a sample of employees in corporate settings. An example item for the Ease of Use Scale is, "I feel that using the techniques described in the SDS training will inconvenience my everyday work."

Usefulness Scale. The Usefulness Scale was derived from Li (2013). The scale consisted of four items ranging from 1 to 7, with '1' indicative of strongly disagree and '7' indicative of strongly agree. Li (2013) achieved a .98 composite reliability. In the present study, the scale achieved acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .90$). An example item for the Usefulness Scale is, "Using the techniques described in the SDS training during supervision sessions can improve my work performance." Both the Usefulness Scale and Ease of Use Scale have been validated in multiple studies across many organizational contexts (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006; Li, 2013; Venkatesh & Brown, 2001; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996).

Perceived Success Scale. The Perceived Success Subscale was derived from Gefen and Reychav (2014) and was defined as the employee's trustworthiness of the perceived success of implementing the new skills taught during the training. These authors adopted this subscale from Gefen (2004). Before administering the survey to participants, two individuals from the corporation reviewed the survey as well as one academic to ensure there was no ambiguity in the wording of each item. Gefen and Reychav (2014) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis and the individual scale items properly loaded on the hypothesized constructs ($\chi^2 = 222.64$, $p = .001$, RMSEA = 0.043, NFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.99, Standardized RMR = 0.038. GFI = 0.90, adjusted GFI = 0.86).

The scale consists of five items rated on a scale from 1 to 7, with '1' indicative of strongly disagree and '7' indicative of strongly agree. Gefen and Reychav (2014) achieved a .91, Guttman-Cronbach alpha. Similarly, in the present study, the scale achieved acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .91$). The scale has been validated on a sample of employees at a government agency. An example item for the Perceived Success Subscale is, "if I use the

techniques described in the Skill Driven Supervision (SDS) training, I will see a reduction in the

rate of recidivism in my caseload."

Revised Community Corrections Officer Orientation Scale

The Revised Community Corrections Officer Orientation Scale (RCC; Ricks & Eno

Louden, 2015) was used to measure the officer's role orientation. Role orientation captures how

the officer views their role in supervision sessions. The orientations include a social worker

orientation, a law enforcer orientation, and a hybrid / balanced orientation, which were discussed

in depth earlier (Klockars, 1972; Ricks & Eno Louden, 2015; Skeem & Manchak, 2008). The

RCC consists of 24 items, and response options for each item range from -3 to 3, with 0 as the

midpoint (Ricks & Eno Louden, 2015). The RCC is composed of items with two polar opposite

statements that depict either a care or control perspective that the probation officer must respond

to. A sample item of the RCC includes the statement, "within ten years of release, more

offenders will commit another crime than those who become productive people" on one extreme

(-3). If officers agree with this statement, they follow a law enforcer orientation. On the other

extreme (+3) the item includes the statement, "if you do good work helping him reform his

behavior, you can help reduce an offender's chances of committing another crime." This extreme

focuses strongly on rehabilitation of the client (Ricks & Eno Louden, 2015). Officers that score

111 or above are considered to have a rehabilitative orientation. Officers that score 76 or below

are considered to have a law enforcer approach. Officers who score between 76 and 111 on the

RCC are categorized as following a hybrid approach. Ricks and Eno Louden (2015) examined

the psychometric properties of the RCC with adult probation officers and achieved a .85, 95% CI

[.82, .88], Guttman-Cronbach alpha. In the present study, the scale achieved acceptable internal

consistency (Cronbach α = .61; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The RCC was found to have

concurrent and divergent validity when its content was compared to scales measuring

rehabilitation orientation and legal authoritarianism.

Job Satisfaction

Officer Job Satisfaction was measured by a scale adopted from Getahun et al. (2008). Job

satisfaction was defined by officers' enjoyment of the work they do, whether they are looking for

other employment options, satisfaction with salary and benefit compensation, and whether their

job aligns with their career goals. The scale consists of six items rated on a 1 to 7 scale, '1' being

strongly disagree and '7' being strongly agree. An example item is, "My satisfaction with my job

here is sufficient that I have no immediate plans to look for another job elsewhere." In the

present study, the scale achieved acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .80$). The scale

has been validated on a sample of probation and parole officers.

Confidence Using EBPs Scale

The Confidence Using EBPs Scale consisted of five questions rated on a scale of 0 (not

confident) to 100 (highly confident). Confidence using EBPs was defined by the officers' self-

reported confidence using the skills learned in the training during five difficult situations with

probation clients (e.g., confidence using EBPs when they have concerns for their personal safety

during a supervision session or when the number of clients on their caseload is overwhelming).

In the present study, the scale achieved acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .88$).

Skill Proficiency Scale

The Skill Proficiency Scale consisted of 5 questions, rated from 1 Aware (you are aware

that you learned the skill, but not ready to use the skill in supervision sessions) to 4 Expert (you

are able to teach or coach other officers on how to correctly use the skills). Skill proficiency was

defined by examining the officers' self-reported competency performing various skills they

learned during the training, such as using motivational interviewing skills (Responsivity Principle), identifying problematic behavioral targets to focus on (Need Principle), and establishing a dual role relationship with clients (CCP). In the present study, the scale achieved acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach α = .76).

Procedure

The probation officers in the present study participated in a structured 3-day training referred to by the agency as Skills Driven Supervision (SDS). SDS was derived from STARR (Robinson et al., 2011), which itself was based on STICS (Bonta et al., 2011). Consistent with the programs it was distilled from, SDS consists of a 3-day interactive workshop incorporating role-plays and active learning activities. The workshops began with an overview of the research base for the RNR model, CCP, and structured programs such as STICS. The bulk of the workshops were devoted to teaching the officers the specific skills of SDS, which are EBPs drawn from the RNR model and CCP: establishing a dual role relationship, active listening skills (reflect/clarify, affirm, and/or summarize), intervention skills (e.g., cognitive model and identification of thoughts, behaviors, and consequences), role clarification, brokering community resources, skills for effective disapproval and reinforcement, prosocial modeling, problem solving, a review of motivational interviewing skills (e.g., eliciting change talk, rolling with the resistance), and identification of behavioral targets. For each skill, the workshop facilitator described the purpose of the skill, explained the steps involved in executing the skill, and provided a demonstration of the skill being used via either a live role-play or prerecorded video. This was followed by small group role-plays where each officer practiced the skill and was provided feedback. The workshops concluded with a discussion of how officers should structure supervision meetings with their clients.

The agency's training adhered to best practices and used a variety of training exercises to allow the probation officers to practice the skills (with feedback) and provided a space for reflection and focus groups to troubleshoot implementation issues. In addition, the agency utilized an implementation team where there was a representative from all levels of the agency (e.g., line officer, middle management, stakeholders) and a peer coaching model where 10-15 probation officers were trained at a time. Once those trained officers had mastered the skills from the training, the next group of officers were trained. The same trainers and training materials were utilized for all trainings, and there were no meaningful significant relationships between which training the officer attended and the present study's variables of interest.

After each 3-day training, the research team administered a post-training survey consisting of the aforementioned measures to officers. The post-training survey materials were administered via pencil and paper, which was distributed to officers on the last day of training by a research analyst employed by the agency. The surveys did not solicit identifiers but were labeled with a unique code generated by the research team to preserve confidentiality. A waiver of signed consent was approved by the university's IRB to avoid introducing any identifying information that could link the officer to their survey answers. The survey packet included a study information sheet alerting officers that participation is voluntary. The survey packets included a pre-stamped envelope addressed to the research team so that officers could mail the survey directly to the research team and their responses remain confidential. Survey packets were distributed to 106 probation officers and 92 probation officers filled out the survey (86.7% response rate). Data were missing from two probation officers and thus, they were excluded from the analyses presented.

Analytic Strategy

Hierarchical linear regressions (Aims 1, 2, and 3) were utilized to address the aims of the present study. Specifically, for the hierarchical linear regression analyses, the focal predictors included officer role orientation (1 [law enforcer], 4 [balanced], 7 [social worker]), job satisfaction (1 [strongly disagree] to 7 [strongly disagree]), confidence utilizing the EBPs (0 [not confident] to 100 [very confident]), and skill proficiency (1 [aware] to 4 [expert]), all of which are ordinal variables. The dependent variables include the ordinal scales for ease of use, usefulness, and perceived success of using the EBPs taught during the 3-day training (all rated on a 1 [strongly disagree] to 7 [strongly disagree] point Likert scale). For the regression analyses, for block 1, role orientation was entered into the equation. For block 2, job satisfaction was entered into the equation. For block 3, confidence using EBPs was entered into the equation, and for block 4, skill proficiency using EBPs was entered into the equation.

Results

Correlations and variance inflation factors (VIF) were used to examine potential multicolinearity issues. VIFs ranged from 1.02 to 1.07 (r range = .01 to .19), suggesting multicolinearity was not an issue among the predictors. Next, examination of the residuals revealed that there were no violations regarding normality of residuals or homoscedasticity. Next, bivariate correlations among all predictors and the dependent variable were performed to examine linearity. All predictors were significantly linearly associated with all three dependent variables, except for confidence using the EBPs, which was only significantly associated with perceived success of using the EBPs ($r = 0.27$, $p = .010$) and ease of use ($r = 0.22$, $p = .032$), but was not significantly related to officers' perceptions regarding the usefulness of EBPs ($r = .11$, $p = .288$). Thus, although confidence using the EBPs was hypothesized to be related to perceptions regarding the EBPs, in the present study, confidence was only significantly linearly associated

ease of use and with perceived success of using EBPs. As such, the regression models were

adjusted accordingly to only include confidence using EBPs as a predictor for the models with

ease of use and perceived success as the criterion variables. See Table 2 for the correlations

among all variables used in the analyses.

The first regression analysis examined the extent to which officer role orientation, job

satisfaction, competence using EBPs, and skill proficiency were able to predict officers'

perceptions regarding if the EBPs were **easy to use**. For this model, job satisfaction, $F(1) = 5.27$,

$p = .024$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.05$, and skill proficiency, $F(1) = 6.19$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.11$, significantly

contributed to the model. Officer role orientation did not significantly contribute to the model,

$\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, $p = .164$. Similarly, competence using EBPs also did not significantly contribute to

the model, $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$, $p = .085$. Notably, skill proficiency was the predictor that contributed

most to the model, explaining 11.9% of the variability in officers' perceptions regarding if EBPs

are easy to use. The total model explained 23% of the variance in perceptions of the ease of use

of the EBPs taught during the agency training (adjusted $R^2 = 0.19$).

The second regression analysis examined the extent to which officer role orientation, job

satisfaction, competence using EBPs, and skill proficiency were able to predict perceptions

regarding the **usefulness** of the EBPs taught during the agency training. The model with all three

predictors explained 22.2% of the variance in perceptions regarding the usefulness of the EBPs

(adjusted $R^2 = 0.19$). Specifically, officer orientation, $F(1) = 8.82$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .10$, job

satisfaction, $F(1) = 6.37$, $p = .013$, $\Delta R^2 = .06$, and skill proficiency, $F(1) = 7.99$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 =$

.05, all significantly contributed to the prediction of officers' perceptions regarding the

usefulness of the EBPs. The officer's role orientation contributed most to the predictive utility of

the model, explaining 10.3% of the variance in perceptions regarding the usefulness of EBPs

($\Delta R^2 = .10$, $p < .001$). As officers' role orientation increased (i.e., becoming more balanced or social worker oriented), officers' perceptions regarding the usefulness of EBPs increased by 0.69 (unstandardized $b = 0.69$, SE $= .21$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [0.26, 1.11]).

The third regression analysis examined the extent to which four predictors (i.e., officer role orientation, job satisfaction, competence using EBPs, and skill proficiency) were able to predict officers' perceptions regarding the **perceived success** of using the EBPs. For this model, all predictors significantly contributed to the model and collectively explained 41.2% of the variance in officers' perceptions regarding whether using the EBPs would actually result in a reduction of recidivism on their own caseload (adjusted $R^2 = 0.38$). Compared to all other predictors, job satisfaction contributed the most to the predictive utility of the model, $F(1) = 19.53$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.18$, solely explaining 18.5% of the variability in officers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of implementing EBPs. The officer's role orientation was the 2nd most potent predictor in the model, explaining 10% of the variability. As officers' role orientation became more balanced or social worker oriented, their perceptions regarding the success of using EBPs increased by 0.55 (unstandardized $b = 0.55$, SE $= .16$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.23, 0.86]). Confidence using the EBPs contributed the least to the model, only explaining 5.2% of the variability in perceptions regarding the success of using EBPs, $F(1) = 6.52$, $p = .012$, $\Delta R^2 = .05$. Table 3 provides a summary of the parameter estimates for each model.

Discussion

The present study delved into the factors that are predictive of probation officers' differential post-training perceptions regarding EBPs' ease of use, usefulness, and effectiveness at reducing recidivism. The probation officers in the present study participated in a training on EBPs, consistent with the RNR model and CCP, and then were expected to implement the EBPs

taught during the training in supervision with their clients. The results revealed that officer role orientation, job satisfaction, confidence, and skill proficiency all significantly contributed to predicting officers' perceptions regarding whether using the EBPs would realistically result in a reduction of recidivism on their own caseload, explaining 41.2% of the variance. Specifically, job satisfaction and officer role orientation were most critical, explaining 28.5% of the total variance explained (i.e., 41.2%).

Unexpectedly, confidence using EBPs was the weakest predictor overall and was not significantly predictive of perceptions regarding the ease of use or usefulness of EBPs. Officer role orientation was most important for predicting perceptions regarding the usefulness and perceived success of EBPs (10.3% and 10% of variance explained, respectively) but did not significantly contribute to the prediction of perceptions regarding the ease of use of EBPs. Skill proficiency and job satisfaction significantly contributed to predicting all perceptions regarding EBPs (i.e., ease of use, usefulness, and perceived success of EBPs). Although, job satisfaction was most vital for predicting perceptions regarding the perceived success of EBPs (explained 18.5% of variance) while skill proficiency was most critical for explaining officers' perceptions regarding the ease of use of EBPs (explained 11.9% of the variance). These results have critical implications for increasing endorsing perceptions of EBPs post-training. The implications discussed below are ordered in terms of what agencies may consider before, during, and after implementing a training on EBPs.

Before the Training: Setting the Stage for Success

Job Satisfaction

Out of all the factors investigated in the present study, job satisfaction was the most crucial in predicting probation officers' perceptions of the ease of use, usefulness, and perceived

success of using EBPs. This suggests that factors that exist prior to the training may need to be

addressed before a training is conducted or the agency may experience the aforementioned

negative consequences that result from staff turnover, such as decreases in the job satisfaction of

the remaining staff and staff spending less time, attention, and energy on using rehabilitative

practices during supervision sessions (Lee et al., 2009; Matz et al., 2014; Rhineberger-Dunn &

Mack, 2020; Simmons et al., 1997). This is consistent with Viglione and Blasko's (2018)

findings, which indicated that positive attitudes towards the agency (that existed prior to the

implementation of EBPs) were indicative of more positive attitudes towards EBPs.

     Given the field's differing conceptualization of job stress versus job satisfaction (e.g.,

Cranny et al., 1992; Lambert et al., 2007; Rhineberger & Mack, 2020), it is important to note that

in the present study, job satisfaction was operationalized by tapping into the officer's enjoyment

of the work they do, desire to look elsewhere for employment, satisfaction with salary and

benefit compensation, general satisfaction with their job, and whether their job aligns with their

career goals. Job satisfaction does not equate with job stress, even though the two are negatively

associated (Rhineberger & Mack, 2020). Illustratively, Rhineberger-Dunn and Mack (2020)

found that reducing role ambiguity was related to decreased job stress but was not related to

increased job satisfaction. Thus, role clarification trainings may reduce job stress, but may not

necessarily solve issues related to job satisfaction. Moreover, input in decision-making and

safety trainings were related to job satisfaction, but not significantly related to job stress

(Rhineberger-Dunn & Mack, 2020). Furthermore, Krupa (2021) examined the associations

between personal and organizational characteristics and job satisfaction and found that

organizational characteristics, such as communication, supervisory support, and organizational

support, were associated with increased job satisfaction while personal characteristics, such as

caseload size, experience, and tenure, were not significantly related to job satisfaction. Thus, the

agency's approach to ameliorating job satisfaction may need to focus more on staff retention.

Although agency's ability to increase officers' satisfaction with compensation is a costly and, in

many cases, practically impossible, there still could be value in improving officers' enjoyment

and meaningfulness of the work they do and organizational climate (e.g., Blasko et al., 2019)

rather than focusing solely on personal characteristics, such as caseload size (Krupa, 2021).

Officer Role Orientation

Much like job satisfaction, the officer's role orientation is a factor that exists prior to

participation in a training on EBPs. The present study found that officer role orientation was

critical for predicting perceptions regarding the usefulness and perceived success of

implementing EBPs, with officers with more rehabilitative and balanced orientations having

more positive perceptions towards the EBPs. These findings are in line with prior research that

similarly found that officers more supportive of rehabilitation practices were more likely to adopt

EBPs (Belenko et al., 2018). Thus, it may be helpful for agencies to provide staff training and

support for maintaining a balance between reinforcing rehabilitation initiatives while also

holding the justice-involved person accountable for their behaviors. Notably though, Belenko

and colleagues (2018) also found that even those who were supportive of rehabilitation were still

more likely to emphasize risk management, but to a lesser extent compared to officers who were

more supportive of punishment and deterrence-oriented approaches. The emphasis of risk

management and sanctions rather than rehabilitation has also been found in other studies as well

(e.g., Schlager, 2010; Viglione, 2019), suggesting that role orientation is important, but there are

definitely other factors that may play a role in explaining differential perceptions regarding EBPs

post-training.

During the Training

The present study's results suggest that officers had doubts regarding the perceived success of using the EBPs they had just been taught during the training. Meaning, they were unsure that utilizing the EBPs with fidelity would result in a reduction of recidivism on their caseload, thereby increasing community safety. According to theory of planned behavior, the officers' uncertainty regarding whether using EBPs will in fact result in the desired outcome (i.e., recidivism reduction) is indicative of whether they believe they have control over the outcome (Ajzen, 2002). Thus, content presented during trainings may benefit from first, recognizing that implementation places greater demands on line staff (e.g., Viglione, 2015), and realistically, probation officers are limited in what they can do to help tip cost-reward densities in favor of law-abiding behavior (Kang, 2023). Second, in line with CCP, emphasizing that even within navigating limited resources and existing legislation, the higher the quality of the relationship between the officer and their client, the more control the officer has over changing their client's antisocial behavior (e.g., Daigle-Zinn & Andrews, 1980; Dowden & Andrews, 2004). Enhancing the officer's sense of control over their client's reoffending may increase the likelihood of using EBPs by simultaneously alleviating liability concerns. For example, Viglione (2019) found that probation officers had liability concerns regarding implementing EBPs with fidelity. Namely, officers focused more on risk reduction as they felt they had a duty to protect the public (Viglione et al., 2019), which suggests that training content may need to be tailored to gain buy-in regarding how EBPs can decrease recidivism and will consequently increase public safety (Bonta, 2023).

As found in the present study, even when evidence on the efficacy of EBPs is presented in aggregate form, this approach does not reduce skepticism for many probation officers. Given

the skepticism reported in the present study and in prior research (e.g., Vilgione, 2019), it may be worthwhile to examine supplemental materials to enhance the efficacy of existing training programs. Public health care research has investigated tools to improve risk communication by enhancing the presentation of empirical evidence (e.g., Fagerlin et al., 2005). In community corrections, Maruna and colleagues (2012) created an innovative training tool in the form of a coproduced 45-minute documentary on the desistance process. The film integrated experiences of practitioners, families of the justice-involved, service users, and academics. The efficacy of the documentary has yet to be empirically examined, but perhaps future research could benefit from examining a variety of visually appealing training tools that capitalize on anecdotal evidence from fellow probation officers who can provide testimonials on how consistent with prior research (e.g., Bonta, 2023; Bonta et al., 2011), they have used EBPs and experienced a reduction of recidivism on their own caseload. Prior research suggests that using peers in the training process can be helpful (e.g., peer coaching strategies) as peers may influence their fellow officers through representativeness and credibility (Damschroder et al., 2009).

After the Training

Post-training, often agencies use an implementation science framework to guide implementation efforts where there are three main components that need to be attended to for implementation to be successful (e.g., Alexander, 2011; Fixsen et al., 2009; Mathews, 2015). The components include Staff Competency (e.g., coaching or staff beliefs), Organizational Supports (e.g., decision data support system or external coordination of resources), and Leadership drivers (Alexander, 2011; Damschroder et al., 2009; Fixsen et al., 2009; Mathews, 2015). The present study focused on the Staff Competency driver, because probation officers have direct contact with justice-involved persons, and thus, implementation science would

suggest that the Staff Competency driver is achieved by: (a) providing initial training on EBPs,

(b) selecting officers who are open to using EBPs, receiving constructive feedback on their use

of EBPs, and incorporating the feedback into their supervision sessions with clients, and (c) the

use of coaching to provide opportunities for individualized follow-up support after the initial

training (e.g., Alexander, 2011; Waters et al., 2013). However, based on the strong relationship

between job dissatisfaction and negative perceptions regarding EBPs found in the present study

and found in prior research (e.g., Krupa, 2021; Rhineberger-Dunn & Mack, 2020), after training

officers and requesting that they use EBPs, it may be important to allocate resources to increase

(or maintain) job satisfaction, rather than expending the majority of resources focusing on the

officers' adherence to using the EBPs (e.g., increasing skill proficiency).

Illustratively, in the present study, skill proficiency was not as strongly related to

perceptions regarding the efficacy of using EBPs but contributed more to whether the officer

found EBPs easy to use. Consequently, post-training efforts focused on increasing skill

proficiency (e.g., using peer coaching strategies, Waters et al., 2013) appear to contribute most to

whether officers find the EBPs easy to use but may not be as relevant to perceptions regarding

the efficacy of implementing EBPs. Thus, agencies may need to attend to job satisfaction and

role orientation before, during, and after training to ensure the content taught during the training

is well-received and continues to be worth the officers' effort. As a result, the components

required to achieve the Staff Competency driver (listed above, e.g., skill proficiency) may be

necessary, but in and of itself, may not be sufficient for successful implementation of EBPs.

Limitations

The present study focused on variables consistent with the organizational principles (i.e.,

setting, staffing, and management) set forth in the RNR model and CCP (Bonta & Andrews,

2017). To influence officers' perceptions that emerge regarding EBPs after participation in a

training, agencies may need to attend to all levels of the organizational system, not just the

individual line officer level perceptions, skill proficiency, and confidence using EBPs (see

Krupa, 2021; Rhineberger-Dunn & Mack, 2020; Viglione & Blasko, 2018). For example,

management staff may be equally integral to shaping officers' perceptions post-training. As

echoed throughout the extant literature, individual *and* organizational level variables are crucial

to understanding noncompliance with EBPs. Further, most officers who participated in the study

had a role orientation that was more balanced or rehabilitative focused, which suggests that their

perceptions towards EBPs may be more positive compared to probation officers at other

agencies.

Furthermore, the present study focused on behavioral intentions and did not

longitudinally follow-up with the probation officers on if their behaviors aligned with their

perceptions. Future research may benefit from longitudinal analyses examining the connection

between post-training perceptions and future behaviors at multiple follow-up time points and

across changes in agency leadership. Lastly, data collected in the present study were from one

agency, and although the survey packets were distributed to 106 probation officers, only 92

probation officers filled out the survey (86.7% response rate). Additionally, listwise deletion was

used for the 2 officers who were missing survey data. This may limit the generalizability of the

findings, and the relationships found in the present study need to be subjected to further

examination.

Concluding Remarks

Probation officers often report that their decision to default to risk management strategies

is because they believe they have a duty to keep the public safe (e.g., Viglione, 2019). These

findings coupled with the present study's results suggest that officers' doubts regarding if using

EBPs will result in a reduction of recidivism (resulting in increased public safety) is partially

explained by job dissatisfaction and their role orientation (explained over one fourth of the

variability in officers' perceptions regarding EBPs). Thus, the present study provides support that

job satisfaction and role orientation may set the foundation for whether EBPs taught in the

training are perceived as efficacious.

Although some methods of attending to job satisfaction and difficulties balancing dual

roles are not realistic for agencies due to limited resources (e.g., increasing compensation,

implementation of new trainings), there are inexpensive and less time-consuming changes

agencies could implement to improve job satisfaction and manage the stress from role conflicts.

For example, prior research suggests that role stress can be reduced by involving input from line

officers when making decisions (e.g., Minor et al., 2014) and having clear and consistent

communication and policies (Lambert et al., 2009). Furthermore, Taxman and Gordon (2009)

found that organizational fairness and procedural justice increased job satisfaction. As such,

agencies may be able to improve job satisfaction by providing officers a platform for providing

input into their agency's policies and practices. Matching the agency's mission (e.g.,

commitment to emphasizing supporting officers to adhere to a firm but fair, balanced role

orientation) with the line staff's values and expectations may improve job satisfaction.

Illustratively, Verquer et al. (2003) conducted a meta-analysis on 21 studies and found that

person-organization fit (i.e., congruence between the person and organization's goals and values)

was associated with improved job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and decreases in

intention to seek other employment opportunities. In addition, having inexpensive outside of

work networking events (e.g., potlucks) and implementing team building exercises have

improved job satisfaction by fostering connected, supportive relationships among coworkers (Steiner & Wooldredge, 2017).

Understandably, probation officers often view rehabilitative and deterrence skills as opposing, competing forces. However, "rehabilitative and punishment/deterrence-based responses to crimes are not always in direct competition" (Belenko et al., 2018, p. 323). Although more costly, if resources permit, it may be beneficial for agencies to provide staff ongoing support on how to use rehabilitative and deterrence-based skills as complementary, not opposing, strategies (see Dowden & Andrews, 2004). Equipping staff with support and skills for effectively balancing their dual roles can readily satisfy the officer's liability concerns regarding their obligation to keep the community safe (Viglione, 2019) while concurrently equipping the probation client with the skills necessary to succeed as a law-abiding citizen. The benefits of implementing EBPs may even extend beyond increasing public safety and may also increase job satisfaction. Witnessing, first-hand, a reduction of recidivism on their own caseload may instill a sense of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in their job, thereby decreasing staff turnover, which benefits the agency, line staff, probation client, and the public (e.g., Lee et al., 2009; Rhineberger-Dunn & Mack, 2020).

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Table 1. *Demographics*

	M (SD)	Range
Age	38.27 (9.85)	23-61
Years working in corrections	12.18 (9.10)	1-39
Biological Sex	*N (%)*	
Males	28 (30.4%)	
Females	64 (69.6%)	
Education		
Bachelor's	81 (88%)	
Master's degree	11 (12%)	
Degree type		
Criminal Justice	60 (65.2%)	
Social work	7 (7.6%)	
Psychology	9 (9.8%)	
Other	16 (17.4%)	
Specialty caseload (missing: $n = 19$)		
Yes	32 (46.2%)	
No	43 (34.4%)	
Previously attended training on:		
Risk assessment	71 (75.5%)	
Relationship quality	38 (40.4%)	

Table 2. *Bivariate correlations between all variables (both predictor and criterion variables) inputted in the regression analyses.*

Variable Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Job satisfaction	(.80)						
2. Officer role orientation	.146	(.61)					
3. Confidence	.002	.194	(.88)				
4. Skill proficiency	.060	.116	.141	(.76)			
5. Perceived success	.401**	.375**	.272*	.339**	(.91)		
6. Usefulness	.265*	.356**	.114	.282*	.761**	(.90)	
7. Ease of use	.269*	.180	.228*	.404**	.512**	.557**	(.75)

* $p \leq .05$; ** = $p < .001$

The diagonal includes the Cronbach alphas for each scale.

Table 3. *Parameter estimates for the regression analyses that examined factors that predict officers' post-training perceptions of evidence-based practices' (EBPs).*

Predictor	ΔR^2	Standardized β	SE	*p*-value	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Criterion Variable 1: Usefulness of EBPs						
Job satisfaction	.069*	0.263	0.104	.013	0.056	0.470
Officer role orientation	.103*	0.324	0.213	.002	0.268	1.114
Skill proficiency	.050*	0.226	0.201	.022	0.068	0.866
Total variance explained by all predictors	$R^2 = .222$;	Adjusted $R^2 = .19$				
Criterion Variable 2: Ease of Use of EBPs						
Job satisfaction	.058*	0.240	0.116	.024	0.036	0.489
Officer role orientation	.021	0.148	0.248	.164	-0.145	0.843
Competence using EBPs	.032	0.183	0.005	.085	-0.001	0.018
Skill proficiency	.119**	0.348	0.223	*p* < .001	0.354	1.243
Total variance explained by all predictors	$R^2 = .230$;	Adjusted $R^2 = .19$				
Criterion Variable 3: Perceived Success of Using EBPs						
Job satisfaction	.185**	0.430	0.079	*p* < .001	0.192	0.505
Officer role orientation	.100**	0.319	0.160	*p* < .001	0.233	0.867
Competence using EBPs	.052*	0.232	0.003	.012	0.002	0.013
Skill proficiency	.076*	0.278	0.142	.002	0.182	0.747
Total variance explained by all predictors	$R^2 = .412$;	Adjusted $R^2 = .38$				

* $p \leq .05$; ** $= p < .001$