

Reviewer Comments-1:-

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Behavioral Threat Assessment Programs in Preventing School-based Active Shooter Incidents

Comments to the editor:

Thank you for the opportunity to review “Evaluating the Effectiveness of Behavioral Threat Assessment Programs in Preventing School-based Active Shooter Incidents”, which was a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of BTAs. The manuscript, while thorough, suffers from two major flaws that I describe to the author(s) in my comments. First, the major sections of the paper (separated by page breaks, which is not standard practice for a manuscript) appear to have been written by different people (based on my reading). Several points are restated and redundant and several terms are repeatedly spelled out even though acronyms have already been presented and used. This redundancy, I believe, has contributed to the length of the paper (45 pages of text) but not contributed to my understanding of BTAs. Overall, I suggest the author(s) trim the paper down to avoid such redundancy. Second, and far more importantly, this paper is massively under-referenced. There are only seven references in the reference list (though at least two sources that are cited parenthetically are missing from the reference list). That is not a sufficient number of references for a 45-page comprehensive review. Several case studies and examples are provided, but none are cited with any sources. Without that, the reader is left to wonder if all of this is made up based on the author(s) intuition rather than based on the literature and best practices in the field. Many more references are needed to make this paper acceptable, in my view. I hope my comments are useful during the editorial process.

Comments to the authors:

Thank you for the opportunity to review “Evaluating the Effectiveness of Behavioral Threat Assessment Programs in Preventing School-based Active Shooter Incidents”, which was a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of BTAs. The manuscript is certainly comprehensive and provides many different perspectives with which to think about BTAs, however, I have identified two major issues that the author(s) should address. I also include some minor comments for manuscript improvement. My comments are as follows:

Minor Issues:

1. The abstract does not really discuss the goal of the manuscript. It reviews BTAs, as it should, but ultimately, I was left wondering what was actually done in this study that is being submitted for publication. It turns out that it is a comprehensive review, but that was not stated.
2. In the first paragraph of the introduction, I suggest the author(s) state openly that this study is a comprehensive review of BTAs rather than an empirical study. It would help the reader understand what the goals of the project are.
3. There is an issue throughout the manuscript in which terms such as Behavioral Threat Assessments and Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines are written out again and

again, even though acronyms are provided (e.g., CSTAG, BTA, etc.). I encourage the author(s) to only write out these terms once and to stick to their acronyms for the rest of the manuscript.

4. At various points in the manuscript (pages 11, 21, 27, 29, 33, and 41), page breaks are entered, separating major sections. It is not recommended (or APA style) to have page breaks in this way. Remove the page breaks and have the document be one continuous flow. The only time page breaks are needed is between the manuscript and reference list, and between any tables/figures, which there appear to be none of in the current manuscript.

5. There appears to be at least one reference missing from the reference list that was cited parenthetically. A one-to-one reference check is needed. In particular, the two papers written by Jackson and Viljoen, which were both cited heavily in the manuscript, do not appear in the reference list.

Major Issues:

1. Related to numbers 3 and 4 above, based on my reading, it appears that multiple authors wrote the multiple sections of this manuscript. That is fine, but there should be a thorough integration of this work so that the manuscript sounds as if it has been written by one voice. More importantly, almost all of the points, recommendations, suggestions, etc. that were made in this manuscript were restated again and again to the point of redundancy. This paper should be streamlined and shortened to avoid this redundancy. This paper was 45 pages of text, and much of it did not add to my understanding of BTAs. Again, this paper should be trimmed so that novel points are only made once.

2. Much more importantly, this manuscript is massively under-referenced. There are only seven references in the reference list (nine if you count the two papers I noted above were missing from the reference list). That is not sufficient for a 45-page comprehensive review of a topic. The author(s) cite numerous case studies and examples, make several recommendations with checklists, frameworks, etc., but almost none of it includes citations, sources, or backing from the extant literature. A related problem is the overreliance on certain sources. The two papers by Jackson and Viljoen are cited no less than 27 times. The paper by Cornell was cited nine times. Without a robust list of references and citations, a reader is left wondering if the author(s) just made up most of these recommendations based on their own intuition, without proper grounding in the literature. Therefore, I strongly urge the author(s) to review this manuscript and add a sufficient number of sources to provide this theoretical support. At the very least, citations should be provided for the case studies and examples so that a reader is assured that the author(s) are not just making things up off the tops of their heads.

Overall, this study shows promise and is quite thorough, but the above issues need to be addressed for the article to be suitable for publication. I hope my comments are useful during this process.