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Submitter Information

Mark W. Lipsey
Email: mark.lipsey@vanderbilt.edu

Abstract Information

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Effect Size Metrics for Recidivism Outcomes in Meta-Analysis of Interventions with Offenders

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Authors:

Mark W. Lipsey, PhD Peabody Research Institute Vanderbilt University

Abstract:

A meta-analyst must decide what effect size metric to use for representing the intervention effects reported in the studies of interest. For example, the standardized mean difference, correlation coefficient, odds ratio, or relative risk ratio might all be applicable to at least some forms of the outcome measures reported in those studies. Reoffense recidivism outcomes in studies of interventions with offenders present especial challenges for selection of an effect size metric. Such outcomes are often presented in binary form, e.g., proportion rearrested or not, but not infrequently in continuous form, e.g., mean number of arrests. The effect size metrics most suitable for one form, such as odds ratios for binary outcomes, are not easily applied to other forms. Moreover, the reoffense baserates often vary widely among studies, and different effect size metrics have different sensitivity to baserate differences. An additional issue is that different forms of recidivism are often reported, e.g., rearrest, reconviction, or reincarceration, over different intervals, e.g., 6 or 12 months post-intervention. To produce results comparable across studies, an effect size metric should be relatively insensitive to these differences and respond consistently to the underlying treatment-control differences on the underlying reoffense construct. This presentation will report the results of an extensive empirical investigation of the characteristics of different effect size metrics for recidivism drawn from a large meta-analysis of research on interventions with juvenile offenders. The results provide guidelines for selecting the most appropriate effect size metric for such outcomes, procedures for handling a mix of binary and continuous recidivism outcomes, and techniques for adjusting effect sizes for variation in the ways in which recidivism was measured in the source studies.
