2013 Independent Studies

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Caregivers of Children with Disabilities: An Exploratory Study of Factors Influencing Occupational Therapy Home Programming Engagement
Sara E. Joersz, MOTS and Rebecca I. Polansky, MOTS

**Purpose:** Home programming for children with disabilities is prescribed frequently by occupational therapists as an effective adjunct to practice-setting occupational therapy. The effectiveness of home programming is largely influenced by the degree to which caregivers (and children) adhere to the home programming parameters. Numerous factors are thought to promote or limit home programming adherence but there is a lack of quantitative research addressing the relationships between these factors and home programming adherence. The purpose of this quantitative, independent study was to explore the factors that are correlated with or influence caregivers’ adherence to their child’s occupational therapy home program. A secondary purpose of this study was to analyze the reliability of the Multi-dimensional Occupational Therapy Home Programming Engagement Survey.

**Methods:** A prospective, exploratory online survey design was used to gather data to answer the research questions. Following IRB approval, convenience sampling was used to access respondents and gather data. Fifteen caregivers of children with disabilities completed a 44 question online survey. The Multi-dimensional Occupational Therapy Home Programming Engagement Survey was created by the researchers and was guided by the concepts within the Model of Human Occupation. Statistical analysis was used to analyze descriptive statistics, Pearson’s correlations, Spearman rho’s, tests of internal consistency, and ANOVAs to answer the research questions.
**Results:** The results indicated statistical relationships between caregiver home programming adherence and the perceived benefits to the child, caregiver value for the home program, activities fitting within the families’ daily routine, the frequency that the home program is recommended throughout the week, and the age of the child receiving occupational therapy home programming. Each of these factors contributed to greater caregiver adherence with implementing the child’s home program. No statistical significance was reached for adherence related to the environment, child and caregiver performance capacity, demographics, and the child’s ability to complete daily tasks within his or her home and school, as well as to socially interact. These factors were not related to home programming adherence.

**Conclusion:** Numerous factors influence caregiver and children’s occupational therapy home programming adherence. In order to increase overall adherence rates to home programming, it is essential that occupational therapists consider and engage in discussion about these factors (i.e. caregiver value, benefits to child, daily routines, etc.) with caregivers when prescribing pediatric home programs. Finally, further quantitative research studies are needed to more fully understand the variables influencing familial home programming engagement and methods that occupational therapists may use to enhance home programming adherence.
Research into childhood development has shown that the impacts of a traumatic life event can have adverse effects on the development and future success of a child. The focus of this qualitative study was to identify critical mentor characteristics through the experiences and opinions of occupational therapists who have worked with children from disadvantaged homes. The study explored the degree to which occupational therapists can work to mentor these children and the mentoring roles that occupational therapists are currently experiencing with their child clients. The study was constructed around the Psychosocial Development Theory created by Erik Erikson, and was intended to provide a baseline for future research for occupational therapists to actively serve as mentors for children from disadvantaged homes.

An Exploratory Study Investigating the Quality of Life in Parents of Children with Disabilities
Jeffrey Crain & Rebecca Lang

The purpose of the study is to investigate caregivers' of children with disabilities perceptions related to their quality of life through engagement in meaningful occupations. Researchers hope that data from this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on caregivers of children with disabilities. Quality of life is an outcome measure that occupational therapists utilize in their practice.

Throughout the course of the study data was collected through the use of a semi structured interview tool. Researchers developed this tool to allow participants to openly express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences related to having a child with a disability. Results of the study indicated that there is a broad impact of having a child with a disability. However, participants rated their quality of life high, and expressed the added love and enjoyment that their children bring into their lives.

Data from the current study is targeted at developing a more comprehensive view of the quality of life of caregivers of children with disabilities. This data may assist occupational therapists in developing a greater understanding of the quality of life needs related to this population. Ultimately, researchers intend for this data to be utilized by therapists who work with this population to better provide holistic, family-centered care.

Understanding Culturally Competent Care in Occupational Therapy School to Providing Clinical Practice
Tracy Lord, MOTS

Purpose: This purpose of this study is to determine if the knowledge that is gained in occupational therapy school about working with diverse cultures is continually developed and applied while practicing in the field of occupational therapy.

Methodology: Data was collected from 18 participants in a quantitative survey and 6 participants in a qualitative interview from four Southwestern states.

Results: Results of this study suggest that the therapists who have graduated within the last 20 years have a greater understanding of including a client’s culture to provide true client-centered care in the delivery of occupational therapy services. 50% of the respondents to the survey indicated that they are routinely providing client-centered care and culturally competent care. Out of those 9, 7 had have been working in the profession under 20 years.

Conclusion: Those occupational therapists within the Southwest region of the United States who have graduated from educational programs in the last 20 years are more likely to be aware of the importance of culture in relation to providing care to their clients. 50% of the participant’s surveyed demonstrated that they understood that providing client-centered care must take into consideration a client’s culture. Results of this survey suggest that cultural competence training is predominantly provided by educational programs, and it is essential that these programs address the skills necessary to provide culturally competent care in light of the demands of clinical environments. Results of the interview indicated that participants recognized that cultural competency allows for stronger rapport with clients. Techniques including interviewing, active listening, and respectful curiosity regarding cultural diversity were critical to successful outcomes. Additionally, facilities must support practicing clinicians in attainment of continued cultural competency to provide a client centered and culturally appropriate therapeutic environment by recognizing diversity needs, providing resources and removing barriers.