

San Jose State University
OCTH 295 - Master's Project
Occupation-Focused Work-Readiness Program with Homeless Parents
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Abstract

Researchers conducted a work readiness program with homeless parents at a homeless shelter in San Jose. Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) was used to set objectives and mark participant progress. Of the 4 participants who attended more than 1 session, all showed marked progress in one or more goals. Greater progress was noted for participants who attended 6 or more sessions.

Research Question

The research obtained from this study will answer the question 'What is the effectiveness of an occupational therapy based work readiness program on homeless parents living in a homeless shelter?'. Research will be conducted to determine the efficacy of work readiness interventions, specifically resume building, interview skills, job search, and completion of job applications, on homeless parents' ability to achieve personally developed work readiness goals.

Background and Significance

Homeless individuals face many barriers that reduce their ability to gain employment. While these are barriers that occupational therapists are able to address to help the homeless prepare to integrate into the workforce (Lloyd & Bassett, 2012), there is limited research about the effectiveness of occupational therapists working in homeless shelters on the development of work readiness skills (Thomas, Gray, & McGinty, 2011). Employment is a crucial step in breaking the cycle of homelessness due to its central and protective role in people's lives (Shaheen & Rio, 2007).

Methodology

A quantitative pretest-posttest design was used. Each participant was expected to complete the Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) prior to treatment (Nollan et al., 2000). Quantitative data was collected using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and a GAS form to measure pre-and post-tests results (Rosenberg, 1979; Turner-Stokes, 2009). GAS was used to assess whether the participants were able to meet their individual work readiness goals and to note changes in GAS scores after completion of the work readiness interventions. The interventions were provided twice a week for one hour each time for a total of nine weeks. English-speaking homeless parents residing at the shelter who were ages 18 years and older were recruited on an ongoing basis. Utilizing the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO), occupational therapy students provided client-centered interventions tailored to each homeless parent's work readiness goals, teaching skills including resume building, interview skills, job search, and completion of job applications (Kielhofner & Burke, 1980). Because the number of participants was low, data was analyzed using visual analysis.

Results

Results of this pilot study support the efficacy of an occupational therapy client-centered work readiness program designed to meet the individual needs of homeless parents. 7 individuals attended at least one session, but due to the transient nature of the population, outcome data was limited to 4 participants. Post-test results showed that all 4 participants progressed towards their individualized goals. Additionally, 2 of the participants who attended more than 2 sessions became gainfully employed following participation in this pilot project. Furthermore, according to results from the RSES, participants' self-esteem scores were mostly high. However, the group of participants who attended more than one session had a lower average in self-esteem scores than the group of participants who attended only one session of the program..

Discussion

The results of this pilot study demonstrate the effectiveness of a work readiness intervention for homeless parents residing in a homeless shelter to develop the appropriate skills necessary to integrate back into the workforce and escape homelessness. The utilization of MOHO guided client-centered interventions that enabled participants to make work readiness goal gains. The results show that attendance in more work readiness intervention sessions leads to an increase in the development of work readiness skills. While this preliminary study's results are indicative of positive change, they are not statistically significant. Despite the definite limitations including high attrition, irregular

attendance due to the transient nature of the population, small sample size, lack of a control group, and restriction to a single site, researchers hope that this study will act as a catalyst for further research in this area.

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