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Increasing Engagement in the Occupation of Camping for Older Adults

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Increasing Engagement in the Occupation of Camping for Older Adults

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BACKGROUND

Research on older adults and leisure pursuits has identified a decrease in active leisure activities after 75 (Lawton, 2002). As people age, they participate in outdoor recreation less often, especially if the activity is physically demanding (Colley et al., 2019). Adults over 60 make up 20% of the general population but only 4% of greenspace users, reporting lower amounts of outdoor recreation in greenspaces than younger people (Cohen et al., 2016).

PROBLEM

Older adults report they disengage from adventurous leisure activities as they age, such as camping, because it becomes more physically difficult to complete and it is challenging to find peers willing to participate.

PURPOSE

To outline ways to improve engagement in outdoor recreation for older adults through increased accessibility and participation in the occupation of camping.

Outcome Objectives:

- Identify occupational therapy's role in enhancing older adult's participation in outdoor recreation and determine how occupational therapy can support engagement.
- Create an educational and experiential program that teaches older adults how to adapt outdoor recreation and camping.

METHODS

Participants

Participants were recruited using word of mouth and snow ball sampling online through:

- Facebook groups focused on camping and national park use
- Sisters on the Fly camping group
- San Marcos Senior Center

Sisters on the Fly



Surveys & Interviews

The survey was administered using Google Forms. The survey consisted of 20 short answer questions that developed quantitative and qualitative data. Participants were given the opportunity to participate in an additional semi-structured virtual interview which consisted of questions related to camping and outdoor recreation. Interviews were conducted over the phone, Facetime, and Zoom.

- 64 Survey Responses
- 19 Virtual Interviews

Transcription and Analysis

Interviews were not recorded but notes were taken using the voice typing tool on Google Docs. Transcripts were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis an inductive approach to code data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Acknowledgement: Special thanks to the Sisters on the Fly Camping group, the San Marcos Senior Center, and Steven Thompson of the National Park Service. I would also like to thank my mentor, Lori Reynolds OTD, OTR/L for her support and guidance throughout this project.

RESULTS

Increasing Engagement in Camping for Older Adults

RESULT FROM THE STUDY EXAMINING STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OLDER ADULTS (65+) EXPERIENCE WHILE CAMPING

CAMPING FOR SOCIALIZATION

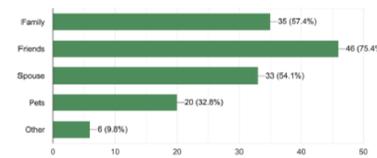


The ability to participate in the occupation of camping with friends and family is a strong motivator to continue participation in camping

- "During this time (COVID-19) it is beneficial to us as older people. So that's why we're going camping. With that it's more of a convenience for us to be able to see family and friends. Traveling around to see people and that's what we did for a long time to be with family and friends. Camping is the easiest way to do that (Participant 2)"

Who do you typically camp with? Select all that apply.

61 responses



UPGRADE IN ACCOMMODATION FOR "CREATURE COMFORTS"

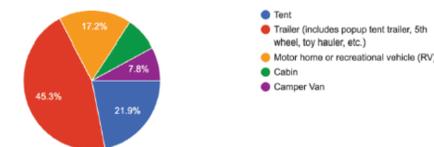


89% of participants reported that they previously used a tent when camping and decided to "upgrade" to a trailer or RV with more creature comforts

- "As I've got older, I am more comfortable with the creature comforts afforded by using my camper rather than a tent"

What type of accommodation do you typically use while camping?

64 responses



CHALLENGES AFFECTING PARTICIPATION IN CAMPING



- Physical Limitations (bad knees, bad back, arthritis)
- Lack of Camping Companions (including health of spouse or caregiver role limiting participation)
- Lack of Camping Resources (supplies, RV/trailer, \$)
- Booking a Campsite Online
- COVID-19 Pandemic (campground closures, over-crowded campgrounds, anxious about health safety while camping)

BENEFITS OF CAMPING AS AN OLDER ADULT

Results indicated that older adults believe camping is a leisure activity that can be fully enjoyed as they age. The most reported benefit was the ability to camp more often and for longer periods of time.



CAMPING IS A TRADITION

Camping is a valued tradition that includes story telling and sharing knowledge and personal skills to family and friends.

ONLINE PROGRAM

The planned in-person camping for older adults program was modified to be administered online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The **Camp-OT.com** website was developed to share the research with a large audience and be update as continued research is developed. The pages within the website include information on occupational therapy (OT) in nature and outdoor recreation, activity adaptations or adaptive equipment for older adults participating in camping, planning skills, and a review of the research and literature. The target audience is adults over 65 interested in the occupation of camping, OT or OT students looking to further the research on outdoor recreation and OT or to gain insight on the benefits of camping for older adults and OT implemented in a nature environment.

Dissemination: The results of this study were shared utilizing an online infographic with the Sisters on the Fly women's camping group (shown in Results column). The infographic included results on accommodation changes, who participants camp with, and common strengths and challenges reported by members.

OT Impact: Utilizing EHP and MOHO, this capstone project helped to outline how OTs can approach nature occupations such as camping. Camping and outdoor recreation activities can become a useful resource for occupational therapy interventions if determined to be meaningful to the client.

Scan QR Code for References

