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Leadership Roles in the Field of Occupational Therapy

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Background

- A leader is not just someone who has a management position, but someone who goes "against the status quo to develop new relationships and transform already existing cultures to achieve sustainable change" (Fleming-Castaldy & Patro, 2012, p. 188). Leadership roles can be formal, those individuals with authority and title, as well as informal, including those who "play a key role in enabling, influencing, and guiding others in the work environment" (Heard & Scott, 2018, p. 1).Occupational therapists are capable and able to be leaders but do so less than other professionals. Breaking into leadership roles can be difficult, especially for new graduates (Braverman, 2016).

- The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA, 2016) has been pushing for occupational therapists to be leaders in healthcare. A 2017 mandate, was later rescinded which would have required all entry-level occupational therapy programs to transition to the entry-level doctorate (AOTA, 2018). According to AOTA (2018), the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) continues to support the entry-level doctorate, believing it is the appropriate admission point for the profession.

- The AOTA (2019) places great emphasis on the development of influential leaders within the profession. One of its five pillars for "AOTA's Vision 2025" is "leaders" (AOTA, 2019). Despite the press within occupational therapy for clinicians to take on leadership roles, there is a lack of literature serving to illustrate the essential qualities occupational therapists in leadership possess (Fleming-Castaldy & Patro, 2012)

Problem Statement

Current didactic coursework in occupational therapy does not emphasize leadership roles in the healthcare field. Further, the majority of programs just requiring an entry-level master's degree. The AOTA supports the development of the entry-level doctorate program and has highlighted the importance of leadership in its *Vision 2025* (AOTA, 2017).

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to demonstrate leadership through program development and implementation, utilizing the leadership qualities identified as essential for occupational therapy leaders through experience and expertise.

Methods

Interviews

- Four interviewees identified through Mary Shotwell, Ph.D., OT/L, FAOTA, professor and Interim Program Director of MOT/OTD Programs at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences.

- Conducted over the phone or via Zoom

Program Development

- The steps defined within the TeamSTEPPS 2.0 program were modified and used as a basis for program development for this capstone project (Dod & AHRQ, 2012).

Program Implementation

- Online parent/caregiver education program on developmental milestones

- 7-9 minute video released each week for 6 weeks

- Video 3: Fine Motor Skills

  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm--7VSLHAU

Program Evaluation

- Four steps were used to measure the effectiveness of the program using a pre- and post- program implementation survey:

  - 1) data was gathered before the implementation of the program

  - 2) the program was implemented

  - 3) the same data was gathered after the implementation of the program

  - 4) the pre-program implementation data were compared to the post-program implementation data (DoD & AHRQ, 2012).

Interview Results

Themes
- Takes on many projects at a time
- Facilitative Leadership Approach
- Demonstration of Leadership through Program Development

Essential leadership qualities:
- Creativity
- Ability to work with people
- Good communication skills
- Good at listening to others
- Relentless with a vision
- Efficient at problem-solving

Figure 1. Leadership Hand

Program Development Results

The program developer was able to determine effectiveness thorough program evaluation utilizing a twenty question multiple choice pre- and post-program implementation survey.

Table 1. Measurement of Effectiveness

Participants	Pre-Program Implementation Questionnaire	Post-Program Implementation Questionnaire
1	11/20 (55%)	16/20 (80%)
2	7/20 (35%)	15/20 (75%)
3	8/20 (40%)	13/20 (65%)
4	9/20 (45%)	14/20 (70%)
5	9/20 (45%)	N/A
6	10/20 (50%)	N/A
7	12/20 (60%)	N/A
8	5/20 (25%)	N/A
Average Score	**43.75%**	**72.50%**

Dissemination

This capstone project explored the role of leadership within the field of occupational therapy. Using the essential leadership qualities identified in interviews to develop, implement, and evaluate a program at an outpatient rehabilitation facility, provided an example of how occupational therapy students or entry-level clinicians can demonstrate leadership within the profession. Additionally, information about the steps occupational therapy students or entry-level clinicians can take to develop a program are thoroughly discussed. Determining the essential qualities that have made occupational therapy leaders successful in the past and present provided the student with insight into demonstrating leadership. As a student or entry-level clinician, there are multiple ways to demonstrate leadership without holding a formal title, such as through program development. Using the qualities identified through interviews, the student was able to successfully complete the program develop process in its entirety and provided a clinic with a resource to benefit their clients indefinitely.

References