

Summer 8-24-2019

Identifying Opportunities for the Role of Occupational Therapy in a Correctional Setting

Maxwell Sand

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46409/sr.VMIB8502>

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IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ROLE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN A
CORRECTIONAL SETTING

by

Maxwell K. Sand

A Capstone Project Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

August, 2019

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Maxwell K. Sand

has been approved

August, 2019

APPROVED:

Erin Schwier EdD., OTR/L, Program Director

Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L, Doctoral Coordinator

ACCEPTED AND SIGNED:

Erin Schwier, EdD., OTD, OTR/L, Program Director



Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L, Doctoral Coordinator

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background

In a recent TED Talk this past March, Adam Foss, a juvenile justice reformer and prosecutor shared his vision for a better justice system. In his presentation, Foss reports that 80 billion dollars are spent each year on our prison system today (Foss, 2016). Due to the enormous cost of incarceration, Foss suggests reallocating that money for prevention work in education, mental health services, and substance abuse treatment programs. According to Foss, these interventions could prevent crime to invest in community betterment. Aside from the billions of dollars spent on our prison system today, the greater issue lies in our society's inability to recognize the needs of the incarcerated population.

It is known that the United States leads the world with the highest rates of incarceration (World Prison Brief, 2019). There are over 2 million men and women incarcerated in the US; which equates to about 1 in every 100 Americans (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016). Unfortunately, these numbers are approximately 6 times greater than those in Canada, Australia, and Spain; 7-8 times higher than France and Italy; and 15 times higher than Japan (The Sentencing Project, 2017). According to the National Institute of Justice (2018), recidivism is measured by criminal acts that result in rearrests, reconviction, or return to prison during a three-year period following the prisoner's release. In a longitudinal study that tracked over 400,000 prisoners in 30 states after their release from 2005 to 2014, Durose, Cooper, and Snyder, (2014) found that approximately two-thirds of released prisoners were rearrested within three years of release and about 77% within five years of release. This data reflects a criminal justice system that fails to recognize this population's needs to make a change in their behavior.

High rates of recidivism are also linked to a lack of necessary skills for the successful reintegration into society. Crabtree, Ohm, Wall, and Ray, (2016) found that these “challenges are often deeply rooted in past lived experiences and circumstances such as homelessness, limited marketable work experience, intellectual disabilities, poor education, mental health conditions, little to no family support, affiliation with gangs, or a history of substance abuse” (Crabtree et al., 2016, p. 402)

Eggers, Muñoz, Sciulli, and Crist, (2006) provides one of the most complete descriptions of occupational therapy programming in a county jail. These authors describe “The Community Reintegration Project”, as the first successful attempt at bringing an Occupational Therapy program into a county jail. This collaboration grew out of a partnership between the faculty at the University of Duquesne’s department of occupational therapy, the correctional staff at the Allegheny County Jail, and Goodwill Industries of Pittsburgh. Its program was designed to decrease recidivism and support successful community reintegration by focusing on the areas of wellness, family, support structure, skills for living, education, and employment. The program structure consisted of both group and individual interventions while the resident was incarcerated and followed the resident for 1-year post-release to support successful reintegration. Each resident in prison had an individualized re-integration plan which identified specific and realistic goals for each domain area. Preliminary outcome data from this study has demonstrated success in reducing recidivism and helping individuals acquire and maintain employment following release.

Statement of the Problem

When looking at the incarcerated population, having a criminal record may disqualify many of these individuals from gaining employment, which sets in motion a cycle that defines

the high rates of recidivism (Yuancie, 2017). The stigma that comes with having a criminal record can also be devastating to one's image and self-esteem, thereby adding yet another barrier to their successful reintegration into society (Crabtree et al., 2016). Unemployment drastically limits an individual's ability to provide stable housing and safe living conditions. Without an ability to meet even the most basic needs, an individual may be more likely to commit a crime to simply to sustain themselves.

Correctional staff members face their own set of challenges associated with their profession such as heavy stress, fatigue and feelings of burnout that can incidentally impact inmates (Gould, Watson, Price, & Valliant, 2013). Morgan (2009) noted that correctional officers experience significantly higher rates of suicide than both the general public and police officers. Furthermore, these symptoms are known to be linked to a myriad of factors including, but not limited to: "the threat of violence or injury posed by inmates, the physical and mental health needs of inmates, working in a closed or restricted environment with limited access to outdoors and natural lighting, the physicality of the job, and having to be in a constant state of alertness" (Brower, 2013, p. 5).

Given that occupational therapy in the U.S. criminal justice system remains an emerging practice area, occupational therapy practitioners have begun slowly addressing the unmet needs of this underserved population. However, the amount of specific program descriptions and outcome studies are limited (O'Connell & Farnworth, 2007). With the U.S. leading the world in rates of incarceration and high levels of recidivism, occupational therapy practitioners must strive to establish a stronger presence through consistent and increased application of specific practice models to effectively implement interventions that include valid and reliable assessments tools for measurable outcomes (Muñoz, Moreton & Sitterly, 2016). With the

discovery of new evidence-based knowledge, further arguments can be made to support the notion that occupational deprivation negatively influences health and wellbeing for residents and correctional staff, alike. Meanwhile occupational enrichment supports job satisfaction for the staff and successful reentry for residents (Munoz, 2011).

Purpose Statement

This capstone aims to evaluate the specific needs and concerns of the residents and staff at a community correctional facility to provide insight into the challenges they face within their environment and the skills necessary for occupational enrichment. Therefore, the purpose of this capstone is twofold: 1) To identify strengths and barriers relative to the residents' engagement in health-promoting roles, routines, and occupations; and 2) To identify the needs of correctional staff members in addressing their health and wellness, given the interconnected nature of resident and staff relationship.

Rationale for the Proposed Project

Occupational therapists have the opportunity to influence the health of individuals, populations, and organizations through collaboration, education, and advocacy. Occupational therapy can also improve the physical, mental, and social aspects of individual's lives and work to implement change by examining factors associated with overcoming barriers and enhance occupational performance (AOTA, 2014).

The theoretical basis of this capstone project will be supported by concepts grounded in the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) as this framework considers how each individual's occupational performance is driven by volition and habituation (Boyt Schell, Gillen, Scaffa, & Cohn, 2014). Additionally, the Person-Environment Occupation (PEO) model is another framework which is applicable to this capstone as this framework considers how each individual

can be influenced by their institutional and/or physical environmental contexts (Muñoz, Moreton & Sitterly, 2016). Previous studies within the criminal justice literature have also mentioned utilizing these practice frameworks in the selection and structuring of assessments and programs that effectively addressed the needs of this population (Munoz, 2011). The application of the MOHO and PEO within the criminal justice setting will be further expanded upon in the literature review section of this paper.

Significance of the Proposed Project

This study will be significant in determining the possible future impact of the programming at correctional facilities to address the high rates of recidivism. This capstone project aims to contribute to the evolution of occupational therapy practice in the forensic setting through advocacy and/or the development of programs for this unique population. By increasing awareness to the negative effects occupational deprivation can have on the health and wellbeing of residents and correctional staff alike, opportunities for occupational enrichment can be identified to support job satisfaction for staff and successful reentry for residents.

Preliminary Project Objectives

- Observe and assess the state of the current programming at a correctional facility.
- Explore workplace operations with the residents and staff members.
- Perform a needs assessment with the residents and staff to inform OT practice opportunities
- Describe the needs of residents and staff in order to enhance successful community reintegration.

Definitions of Terms

- *Community-based correctional setting* is defined as a residential or nonresidential setting where offenders are sent as an alternative to incarceration.
- *Community re-entry centers* are defined as institutions that provide a structured and supervised residential setting for offenders just prior to or after their release from prison. These settings assist residents with reintegration planning, job placement, and financial management; help them to locate permanent housing; and connect them with community services that can support their return to the community (Munoz, 2011).
- *Community reintegration planning* is defined as planning an offender's return to the community in a law-abiding role. Ideally, community reintegration planning should begin when the person is incarcerated, follow the offender through release, and include the provision of aftercare (Munoz, 2011).
- *Forensic setting* is defined as any setting pertaining to or connected with the correctional system.
- *Halfway or transitional house* can be defined as a transitional facility where the offender lives and is involved in school, work, training, and more, while preparing for reentry to the community.
- *Recidivism* refers to a repetition of criminal behavior resulting in a return to incarceration. (Munoz, 2011).
- *Residents* are defined as individuals in prison who has committed an illegal act.
- *Work furlough* is a correctional program which allows residents who are nearing discharge, to temporarily leave the institution for the purpose of continuing regular employment during the day but returning to confinement on nights and weekends.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study will be based under the assumption that residents have occupational needs or limitations to succeed in community reintegration including skills for living, marketable work experience for gaining and maintaining employment, family support, education, and resources. Additionally, surveys and interviews will rely upon on the participants' honest reports. It is also important to note that the residents' satisfaction and success are likely to be affected by the quality of the staff's stress and/or satisfaction levels.

Limitations of this study that may exist would be the small sample size which can limit the power of inferences with respect to a larger population and convenient sampling methods may limit generalizability due to a lack of randomization. Lastly, the participants' experiences may be dependent on the particular correctional facility.

Specific choices were made regarding this research topic such as the population, frames of reference, and the duration which all act as delimitations to this study. As a result, all preliminary objectives have been self-chosen and based upon answering specific questions posed by the topic of interest. As such, assessment of the residents, staff, and environment will focus on expanding one's understanding of a particular facility and the residents' occupational needs and barriers.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Occupational Therapy's Role

Current literature confirms that the role of occupational therapy within the forensic setting continues to be an emerging practice area. According to a scoping review of relevant literature from eight research databases and occupational therapy textbooks published between

1968-2016, one hundred sources were analyzed to identify common themes that comprised of addressing assessments, program descriptions, and asserting for the establishment of occupational therapy in the criminal justice setting (Muñoz et al., 2017). Unfortunately, practice guidelines for OT in these settings are currently nonexistent. Thus, the occupational perspective on community reentry and engagement in productive occupations is needed.

In a recent pilot study evaluating a prison's occupational therapy informal education program, Crabtree et al., (2016) found that when participants had the opportunity to choose their own educational topics instead of topics being chosen for them, they felt an increased sense of self-worth. Similarly, when Corring and Cook, (1999) viewed the perspectives of individuals with a history of mental illness and experiences with the mental health service delivery system, they discovered that the participants' primary concern was to be viewed as valuable human beings by the service providers and by society. To address these circumstances, programming in the forensic setting should fall in line with occupational therapy guidelines and aim to be client-centered to establish good rapport, and a clear understanding of the client's lived experiences, expectations, and goals.

Eggers, Muñoz, Sciulli, and Crist (2006) indicate that successful community reintegration for inmates requires a skill-set that occupational therapists have long addressed in their domain of practice. Occupational therapists can provide client-centered group and individual sessions to facilitate the acquisition of life skills such as: "vocational exploration, goal setting, development of work-place interpersonal skills, job search strategies, and money management" (Eggers et al., 2006, p. 22).

Correctional Staff Health

According to Lehman, Greener, Rowan-Szal, and Flynn (2012), there is a high demand to increase the quantity and quality of treatment programs in correctional settings. Many barriers to effective treatment in prisons exist including: “inadequate assessments that do not assure that offenders receive the types of services they need the most; difficulty recruiting, training, and retaining qualified staff; frequent conflict between therapeutic and security concerns” (Lehman et al., 2012, p. 10). Additionally, with the vocational burden of correctional staff members found to be heavy, stressful, and fatiguing leading to feelings of burnout (Gould, Watson, Price, & Valliant, 2013), job performance is likely to decline affecting the way in which staff members perform their duties and thereby negatively impacting the way in which they interact with residents in the correctional facility (Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000).

Upon examining existing literature on occupational therapy’s involvement with correctional facility staff members, Wagenfeld et al. (2017) explored the relationship between one’s interaction with nature and self-perception of stress for correctional system staff. Results found that correctional staff used time outdoors to cope with stress. Furthermore, the majority of correctional staff surveyed mentioned that they would benefit from an outside decompression area at their institution; this was especially the case for those who used outdoor time as a coping strategy and for those who preferred to go outside during their work breaks.

Models and Theories

A study by Muñoz, Moreton and Sitterly (2016), found that 37.5% of occupational therapy practitioners in the U.S. criminal justice settings did not utilize an occupational therapy practice model to guide their interventions. However, amongst those who did, the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) was the most frequently used model, making up 29% of respondents; followed by the Person-Environment Occupation Model (PEO), at 20%.

The MOHO is “an occupation-focused, theory-driven, client-centered, evidence-based approach to occupational therapy practice” (Boyt Schell, Gillen, Scaffa, & Cohn, 2014). The concepts of MOHO strive to understand the individual’s motives, routines, skills, and influences of the environment on their capacity to perform desired occupations.

Bowser, Link, Dickson, Collier, and Donovan-Hall (2017), provide insight into the experiences of boredom from the perspectives of eight men with psychosis detained in a secure unit. With restricted access to their community, friends, and family, participants described the way boredom was negatively impacting their mental health and motivation. These men also expressed concern for the lack of meaningful activities available to them, especially on weekends. Without access to meaningful occupations, establishing roles, routines, habits, and/or hobbies became a challenge, causing further frustration resulting in more violence and aggression (Bowser et. al., 2017). These findings highlight the influence volition and habituation have on occupational performance within social and physical environmental contexts. Therefore, the premises of MOHO will serve as an appropriate framework for gathering information about the residents’ needs, limitations, and strengths to facilitate optimal occupational engagement leading to successful community reintegration.

The Person-Environment-Occupation Model (PEO) is another model which relies upon the belief that occupational performance is determined by the person, environment, and occupation. This model was developed to place emphasis on the environment as there was a tendency in the past for occupational therapists and practitioners from other disciplines to focus largely on personal factors while neglecting the significance of the environment on occupational performance (Boyt Schell et al., 2014). The PEO model emphasizes the fact that occupational performance must be understood within its varying contexts as the environment can either inhibit

or permit occupational performance. As previously mentioned, correctional facilities are known to be restrictive environments that inhibits occupational performance for residents (Bowser et. al., 2017) as well as stressful environments that can cause fatigue and burnout for correctional staff members (Wagenfeld et. al., 2017). Thus, the application of this framework will be beneficial in gaining a greater understanding of the dynamic interrelationship between the person, environment, and occupation with an opportunity to enhance occupational skills for the residents along with job satisfaction for the staff members.

As both the MOHO and PEO models ground themselves in the examination of an individual's occupational performance within their unique environmental contexts, these two models will serve to support the theoretical basis of this capstone.

CHAPTER III

Project Description

Proposed Methods and Timeline

This section outlines the methods proposed to determine the perception of residents and staff at *CoreCivic*. In an effort to gain greater insight into the opportunities of occupational therapy as a form of intervention for enhancement of current programming, a needs assessment will be conducted, consisting of direct observation and interviews with both residents and staff members. Resulting data has the potential to identify strengths and barriers relative to the resident's engagement in health-promoting roles, habits, routines, and occupations.

Additionally, this capstone will be significant in identifying the needs of correctional staff members in addressing their health and wellness, given the interconnected nature of resident and staff relationship.

Facility. *CoreCivic* is a privately held community corrections company based in San Diego, California. The 26-year-old company operates two facilities totaling more than 600 beds, serving the Federal Bureau of Prisons and San Diego County. This organization provides cost-effective solutions for housing and rehabilitation through community corrections specializing in work furloughs, residential reentry programs, and home confinement. *CoreCivic* has agreed to participate in this project and will work in collaboration with this capstone project in gaining access to staff and facility residents in order to carry out this needs assessment.

Participants. Staff members and eligible residents will be recruited using a convenience sampling design. This sampling method is most appropriate given the brief study period as it also increases the basis of participant availability (Portney & Watkins, 2015). Participation will be voluntary, and each subject will be assigned a number for confidentiality. Interview responses will be kept anonymous and data will be stored by the researcher in a password protected electronic format. Additionally, no personal information will be shared with other residents or facility personnel.

Study Design. This research will employ a phenomenological approach to examine the detailed views of the residents and staff in an effort to provide a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and occupational needs. This approach is most appropriate for this capstone as it “seeks to draw meaning from each individual’s complex realities through careful analysis of first-person narrative materials” (Portney & Watkins, 2015, p. 307). Observations will be performed by the researcher as a complete observer as Creswell (2014), mentioned this type of observation is most useful and advantageous in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss. Upon permission and consent from the facility and participants, the researcher will conduct semi-structured, face-to-face individual and/or focus group interviews to

elicit views and opinions from participants (Creswell, 2014). Interview sessions will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to afford the researcher greater ease in tracking recurring words, phrases, and ideas.

Methods of Data Collection. Methods of data collection will include observation and semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data. Observational data will be obtained through field notes taken by the researcher and recorded during observation. Descriptive notes will include details of the participant relative to the specifics of demographics such as the time, place, date, environmental characteristics, and the accounts of particular events or activities such as the occupations discussed and performed; meanwhile reflective notes will consist of the researcher's personal thoughts and ideas (Creswell, 2014). The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) has been identified as the most commonly used theory to support the use of data collection tools within the forensic setting (Duncan, Munro, & Nicol, 2003). Thus, interview questions within this capstone have been influenced by other interview tools grounded in the MOHO such as the Occupational Profile Template and the Occupational Performance History Interview II (OPHI II). These tools have been adapted and tailored in accordance with knowledge from the literature to identify the unique needs of residents and staff of this facility.

*See Appendix A for observational data collection form, Appendix B for staff interview questions, and Appendix C for resident interview questions.

Procedures/Timelines. This study will be carried out over a 16-week period (Table 1). During this time, specific objectives will be met according to a timeline. The following procedures will be used for this study: The first four weeks will consist of observation and assessment of the current programming at the site. A needs assessment of the residents and staff members will also begin at this time. Collection of qualitative data through observations and

interviews will start throughout the next eight weeks. During this time, the researcher will also begin analyzing data and deriving themes through transcript coding and thematic analysis. Lastly, the remainder of the time will be allotted for assessing and prioritizing their unique needs.

Table 1. Timeline of Project Objectives

Objectives	Timeline			
	3/25 – 4/25	4/26 – 5/26	5/27 – 6/27	6/28 – 8/16
Observation and assessment of the current programming.	X	X	X	
Explore workplace operations with the residents and staff.	X	X	X	
Perform a needs assessment with the residents and staff to inform OT practice opportunities.	X	X	X	
Describe the needs of residents and workforce in order to enhance successful community reintegration.				X

Planned Analysis and Envisioned Next Steps

Data analysis for this project will consist of transcript coding to identify common themes and concepts derived from the transcribed data. Thematic analysis will then be used to interpret and derive meanings for inferences can be made. Through this analysis, the researcher seeks to understand the underlying meaning of the words and concepts that were described by the participants. Sufficient data collection will be determined once saturation occurs. Saturation occurs when there is a lack of newly emerging themes or concepts during the data collection process. Upon completion of data analysis, the researcher will describe the results on a written manuscript and disseminate data through an avenue most suitable for its varying audiences (e.g. poster boards, PowerPoint presentation, handouts and/or pamphlets) to advocate for the role of occupational therapy in forensic settings.

Actual Methods and Timeline

A recent change in the facility’s ownership from the formerly known “CAI” (Correctional Alternatives Incorporated) to what is now called “CoreCivic” (a corporate organization) resulted in the site requiring more time to approve the aforementioned capstone experience. Due to this unforeseen circumstance, the direction of this research changed into a qualitative study examining the experiences of individuals who previously worked in or currently work in correctional facilities, in an effort to gain an understanding of their lived experiences and occupational needs, different roles, and workplace culture through their perspectives. The title of this study has thus been modified to “Assessing Workplace Wellness in Correctional Settings.” As a subset of this study, a scoping review of relevant literature was conducted identifying articles associated with trauma and/or trauma-informed care in the correctional setting. The following table outlines the actual timeline and objectives carried throughout this study.

Objectives	Timeline			
	4/01 – 4/30	5/01 – 5/31	6/01 – 6/30	7/01 – 8/16
Applied sound reasoning and evaluation of research examining factors associated with trauma and trauma-informed care in correctional settings.	X			
Engaged in professional communication with study participants for recruitment process.		X		
Conducted semi-structured interviews with correctional staff participants.			X	
Analyzed evidence and data for the advancement of OT practice in the forensic setting.				X

Study Design. This research employed a phenomenological approach to examine the diverse views of correctional staff members in the effort to provide a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and occupational needs. Approval from the IRB committee at the

University of St. Augustine was granted for this study, and upon permission and consent from the participants, research was conducted in semi-structured individual interviews to elicit views and opinions from participants. Given each participant's unique location and time constraints, interviews were conducted in the way which was most suitable for their situation. This resulted in three in-person interviews, two over the phone, one through email, and one using an online video conferencing platform, each according to the interviewee's preferred method. Aside from the one written interview, sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to afford the researcher greatest ease in tracking recurring words, phrases, and ideas.

Participants. Participants were recruited by word of mouth through snowball sampling originating from the staff and faculty members at the University of St. Augustine San Marcos campus. The inclusion criteria consisted of individuals with work experience in a correctional facility; additionally, there were no gender requirements for participation. The student investigator contacted participants by means of phone call and/or email using a prepared script (see Appendix D). Participants included adults (over 18 years old) with a self-identified past or current experience working in a correctional setting. A total of seven participants were interviewed. The years of experience working within their respective correctional settings consisted of a range between one and 13 years. Job titles comprised of two correctional officers, a program supervisor, group counselor, vocational electronics instructor, a teacher's assistant, and a volunteer intern in the reintegration department. Three out of the seven participants worked in a juvenile correctional setting.

Methods of Data Collection. After recruitment, consent forms were distributed via email. The student investigator met with each participant for one interview session lasting approximately 60 minutes. Participant interviews took place either virtually or in a public agreed

upon space. If the interview was in person, the participant identified a public space agreeing they were satisfied with the level of privacy it provided. In accordance with knowledge from the literature, the researcher posed open-ended questions that focused on the following themes regarding workplace wellness in correctional settings: environment, training, communication, safety, and stress. (See Appendix E). Information obtained from the participants were stored on the student investigator's personal computer with password protection which could only be accessed by the student investigator. For increased security, each participants' name was omitted and replaced with a number to ensure confidentiality.

CHAPTER IV

Results & Analysis

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this project consisted of transcript coding to identify common themes and concepts derived from the transcribed data. After an initial reading of all transcripts, the student investigator assigned codes to relevant information pertaining to the research topic and previous literature. Thematic analysis was then used to interpret and derive meaning from the findings. Themes were analyzed through in-depth review and cross-reference between the transcripts to compare, contrast, and identify emerging patterns and meanings. The student investigator's mentor with extended experience in criminal justice research, then reviewed interview transcripts and cross-checked codes for confirmation, to enhance validity of the study.

Results

Upon completion of the study, four main themes relative to the health and wellness of correctional staff members emerged from the analysis of the participants' transcripts: 1) An

overly challenging work environment; 2) A lack of institutional support; 3) Pressing safety concerns; 4) Stress and burnout; and 5) Engaging in meaningful activities.

Theme 1: Challenging work environment. The physical work environment was found to be tough, challenging, demanding, and time-consuming for most participants due to the excessive amount of overtime shifts and/or long work shifts required. Many participants believed that being overworked restricted them from maintaining a balanced lifestyle which in-turn negatively affected their health and wellbeing.

“... we were forced to do double shift which took away our sleeping time, no time for gym for even the next day since we would have to make up the sleep from previous lost hours of sleep.” - Participant #2

“I was working 50 hours a week, sometimes 60.” - Participant #3

“First of all, you work like long hours... it wasn't uncommon for you to be asked to work 12 hours, so you work eight hours and then you're asked to stay... or even double, so do like 16 hours. So that was one thing. And then, another facility I worked, we worked seven consecutive days, 12 hours in a row... I mean it just starts to beat you up and if you're working overnight shifts, it's hard to kind of switch gears to come back into like the daytime reality. So, when you're at home you're kind of like a zombie.” - Participant #6

“There's definitely always a lot of overtime because we're always low on staff, understaffed... I remember periods where people were just like working 16-hour shifts like for days on end, you know? ... and yeah, you would hear the complaints, you would physically see the wear and tear that it does to an individual.” - Participant #7

Some participants described how the demands of their work environment negatively impacted their health and nutrition.

“... when you're in the classroom you really have to be dedicated to being in that classroom and be staying aware, so you can't really like, sit down and take a lunch break.” - Participant #1

“There were times where I literally would not be eating, you know, that'll happen at least three times out of the week where I would skip a meal because I'm so overworked... more than three times a week, to be honest, and when I would eat,

it would have to be something that was fast and easy. So, I would drive down to the closest taco shop, or you know, to the vending machine.” - Participant #7

Social aspects such as family, friends, and home life were also negatively impacted for some participants by the demands the facility placed on them.

*“... out of the 23 officers from my academy, only 5 of the officers stayed with their significant others, and those officers quit before their relations were in serious danger, but the rest of the 18 officers had a divorce or broke-up within a couple years. I personally was a single college guy with no family at that time, but I was still having difficulty finding time to hang out with my friends since I can't make any plans due to unpredictable mandatory overtime. Not to mention, I can't make a phone call letting my friends know that I've been hit with overtime since I'm not allowed to take our phones in with us, this has ruined few friendships for me.”
- Participant #2*

“Some days it would really be tough when I went home, I know sometimes I was a little bit maybe on the edge, just kind of grumpy just because of some things that have happened during the day at the prison. Even my wife has made some remarks, like "ever since you started working there, you've just been really on edge" and you know depending on the individual, I think it could change a person no doubt.” - Participant #5

“... your family wants to participate and do something and you're just, you're too dang tired.” - Participant #6

The majority of participants also reported that top-down policies negatively increased their job difficulties and frustrations. Safety was always a high concern, and this often created unwanted repercussions for employees of the facilities.

“There were rules that put officers in jeopardy. This could be prevented if management worked as an officer for 1-2 days. For example, in culinary they provide oranges every week, and the inmates turn them into prison made alcohol, get drunk, and begin to cause trouble. This could be fixed by giving the inmates vitamin C in a powder form.” - Participant #2

“... every once in a while, we'd ask, you know have a request for supplies, like paper, pencils, and that would just take a really long time to get kind of thing... and they have to approve every little thing... and so the kind of bureaucratic red tape that went along with that made it difficult sometimes.” - Participant #4

“It was such a bureaucracy, just trying to get anything done in there was extremely difficult. Even when I had like new equipment or new books or new

tools for my classroom before it could come into the facility, into the classroom, you had to go through all of those different hoops to get even like a volt meter or a stool.” - Participant #5

Theme 2: Lack of institutional support. Many participants expressed their concern for the lack of support they had from the correctional facility management they worked for. Communication between staff members and their supervisors/management was sparse as participants felt there was a disconnect and a lack of understanding. Not to mention, wellness programs that facilitated their engagement in healthy activities were non-existent.

“... the safety which puts officer’s life in jeopardy that is caused by poor policy procedures.” - Participant #2

“I felt safe and trusted around my line staff, but when it came to management stuff, I couldn't say the same thing... I have to say, generally speaking, I was not listened to.” - Participant #3

... we were trying to explain to them all the things that we go through in the classroom, but you know, they aren't really recognizing or listening to you...” - Participant #5

“Um, I think lack of support from upper management for sure... um, overworked... and unrealistic expectations... I mean for me what I've experienced is that management was too busy on numbers and stuff. At the end of the day it comes down to the bottom line... they weren't too concerned with how the workers feel. They're just concerned about, hey, we're low on staff we need somebody to, you know.” - Participant #7

Safety training programs offered by the facility was minimal and all participants reported there were no specific training offered on how to interact with inmates.

“They did not provide any safety training at all.” - Participant #1

“I didn't really receive any training leading into it.” - Participant #4

“... quality of training was really poor. I mean we had policies like active shooter policies and stuff like that. We had a basic like how to operate a fire extinguisher.

But I mean, if you're looking for something substantive, nothing comes to mind right now.” - Participant #7

Theme 3: Safety concerns. The majority of participants explained that the unpredictable nature of their work with respect to both the residents and the physical environment, put their safety in jeopardy and therefore caused them a lot of stress and tension. Safety programs and specialty classes offered by the facilities were very minimal and as a result, staff members reported feeling underprepared or unprepared given the unique nature of the correctional environment.

“I think one of the biggest stressors is that you just don't really know how they're going to react to things... Um, so I think just the stress of not knowing... Just like the unpredictable nature.” - Participant #1

“I mean, the job itself is stressful... you're basically standing around waiting for a fight to happen.” - Participant #3

“Inmates are always trying to manipulate... either they're always trying to intimidate you, just always trying to get into your head and mess with you and, so they could really wear you down after some time. I didn't have any real leverage, like if this guy's giving me a hard time, I could call the CO (correctional officer), and get him yanked out of class, but guess what, I'm going to have to see this dude tomorrow, you know?” - Participant #5

Theme 4: Stress and Burnout. Generally speaking, the majority of participants agreed that working with inmates evoked emotional responses which lead to additional feelings of stress and burnout. Furthermore, there existed little to no support for these correctional facility workers, and they were unprepared to handle such a burden.

“I think the biggest stress for me was that, um, empathy factor in trying to, trying to do the best that you can do every day and not get emotionally bogged down with... I was working with the kids that were sentenced to long periods of time and I went through a really hard phase where I didn't know how to kind of emotionally digest that and still go to work and be positive.” - Participant #1

“There's kind of like a level of guilt in a way of like, I can walk in, I walk out every day... and they're always there... and so, I think, um, that got stressful once they, you know, built connections with people and realize that they were ready to transition home and then learned that they still have 10 more years on their sentence, 20 more years of their life in prison... and it's like this is just such a waste of a life. But, um, so those kinds of emotional stressors were hard once the relationships got built...” - Participant #3

“Um, no. I mean there were definitely days that like, it was emotionally draining because, you know, you're hearing their trauma stories a lot of the time too. And like learning why they, how they got there, like that can be really sad and really, um, hard to hear.” - Participant #4

For some, this negatively impacted how satisfied they felt with their job.

“There is so much unnecessary stress that 20 out of 23 officers quit from my academy that were much happier since they left.” - Participant #2

“To be honest, after working there for... it didn't take me long like maybe six months, it's like, man, this isn't the right place for me.” - Participant #5

Theme 5: Engaging in Meaningful Activities. With respect to stress, all participants indicated that engaging in their meaningful activities, roles, or routines helped them cope with the stressors and feelings of burnout associated with working in a correctional facility. Additionally, some participants found comfort in talking with fellow coworkers who also shared similar experiences. Recreational activities such as being out in nature, exercising, going on trips, and spending time with family and friends were all viewed as positive outlets for decompression.

“I used to swim every day after work. So, there was a lot of physical de-stressing. Um, I tried to take vacations, like a small vacation, like once a month over the weekend... or just talking to other staff or faculty and talking.” - Participant #1

“... talking to my fellow officers about all the stress they are dealing with so that I know I am not the only one...” - Participant #2

“... there were guys that I would call towards the end of the shift and we'd go out and have a few beers every night after work, which is not a healthy way to, I mean the socialization part is healthy... going to the beach once in a while probably would've been helpful but I didn't have that.” - Participant #3

“I was enrolled in dance classes at school. And so that was a really great outlet for me at the time. My roommate was my best friend, so talking it out pretty much kind of being my sounding board for stuff like that... I would get a coffee from the same cafe down the street every time. And so, there was something about that routine that kind of was a de-stressor after each time I went in.” - Participant #4

“Live music with friends, fishing, and Kempo (martial arts) ... just talk to other instructors about some things that I was going through.” - Participant #5

“... back then it was just like physical activity, um, you know, physical exercise. Um, maybe hanging out with coworkers outside of work, which really isn't a great strategy, but it's something that you do right? Cause you kind of, you can talk a little bit about work...” - Participant #6

“... my spirituality that always made me, gave me the abilities and the tools, coping skills to be able to manage my stress... for me and my particular case within my religious context, practicing rituals, prayer, meditation, sacraments, things of that nature. Um, and for me also within the realm of spirituality was the family that I have, always making sure that I build time to be present, not so much in the doing but in the being, you know.” - Participant #7

CHAPTER V

Discussion & Conclusion

Discussion

The participants in this study described how the workplace culture of a correctional setting can have a negative impact on their health and wellbeing. On average, they viewed their work environment to be challenging and overly demanding which prevented them from maintaining a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Poor work policies, minimal to no training on safety or inmate interaction, and an overall lack of communication from the management lead to feelings of frustration, stress, and dissatisfaction within the workplace. Furthermore, emotional

burden contributed to feelings of burnout and stress. All in all, participants found that being able to engage in their meaningful occupations outside of work was the most effective coping strategy for dealing with the negative effects of working in a correctional setting.

Results of this study are consistent with existing literature, in that it describes the unique challenges associated with the correctional profession, and areas of opportunity for both correctional facility workers and the population for which they serve. When participants in this study were asked what types of training they felt would have been most helpful for them, the majority of them highlighted the importance of communication skills and having empathy. Compassion training and coping strategies was also noted to be of importance for others. Participant responses confirm findings from the scoping review, further indicating the high prevalence of trauma experienced by correctional staff and the need for trauma-informed care in the correctional setting.

“I think some training with how to deal with kind of the heaviness of the situation emotionally I think would be beneficial... and then some training in communicating with families...” - Participant #1

*“... communication between staff members, minors... there's ways to approach it.”
- Participant #3*

*“Having empathy for people in that setting is all you need to be successful...”
- Participant #4*

“...techniques to help you relax, to help you cope, you know, but, um, it wasn't there. We had to seek that out and get it kind of on our own.” - Participant #5

*“... just how to communicate with people... just because I have a badge on, you know, you have to do what I say and that's not how it works... the badge isn't really important. It's just who you are and how you kind of treat folks that, you know, makes things better.”
- Participant #6*

“... communication skills, definitely. Um, some compassion training. So, education around that.” - Participant #7

This study confirms that engagement in meaningful occupations, roles, and routines provide individuals with a sense of identity, purpose, and fulfillment which has the potential to mitigate negative effects associated with being in a correctional setting. Reflecting back upon the interconnectedness of worker and resident relationships, these positive benefits are likely to enhance resident health and wellbeing as well.

Despite the limited amount of research in the forensic setting, the findings of this study coincide with existing research by revealing that correctional staff experience heavy stress, fatigue, and feelings of burnout, as noted by Gould, Watson, Price, & Valliant (2013). Additionally, the experiences shared by these participants confirm that stressors are caused by a multitude of factors that include: “the threat of violence or injury posed by inmates, working in a closed or restricted environment, and having to be in a constant state of alertness” (Brower, 2013, p. 5). The interconnected nature of resident and staff relationships, warrants that the needs of correctional staff members health and wellness should be explored in order to improve job performance and satisfaction. Existing literature indicates a positive impact on workplace culture as a whole, has the potential to enhance the residents’ success as well. Lehman, Greener, Rowan-Szal, and Flynn (2012), discovered a high demand for increasing the quantity and quality of treatment programs in correctional settings. “Difficulty recruiting, training, and retaining qualified staff, as well as frequent conflict between therapeutic and security concerns” were noted to be some of the major factors that contribute to a lack of effective programs for residents. (Lehman et al., 2012, p. 10).

Limitations

Despite having gained in-depth knowledge on the individual experiences associated with workplace wellness in correctional settings, several limitations exist in this study. First and

foremost, the qualitative nature of this study yields purely subjective findings. Each participant's experience is dependent upon their specific job title, years of experience, and the particular correctional facility at which they worked for. Moreover, convenient sampling methods along with a small sample size is likely to limit the power of inferences with respect to a larger population. This study did not include specific inclusion and exclusion criteria for specific professions within the correctional field, years of work experience, or the amount of time passed since last employed at respective said facilities. Due to the varying locations of participants and their time constraints, not all interviews were able to be conducted face-to-face. Therefore, responses could vary as the delivery of interviews were not consistent. Lastly, member checking was not used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings with participants. Member checking would have provided the participants an opportunity to comment and/or confirm that the findings are indeed true, thus improving the validity of this study.

Implications for Occupational Therapy

Current literature confirms that the role of occupational therapy within the forensic setting continues to be an emerging practice area. Much of the existing literature focuses on treatment for the residents and depicts correctional facilities as a restrictive environment which inhibits occupational performance. However, little has been said about programs for the staff members who are also known to suffer from occupational deprivation.

Upon examining existing literature on occupational therapy's involvement with correctional facility staff members, Wagenfeld et al. (2017) explored the relationship between one's interaction with nature and self-perception of stress for correctional system staff. Results found that correctional staff used time outdoors to cope with stress. According to Wagenfeld et al. (2017), the majority of correctional staff surveyed mentioned that they would benefit from an

outside decompression area at their institution; this was especially the case for those who used outdoor time as a coping strategy and for those who preferred to go outside during their work breaks. Findings of this study highlight the impact environmental modifications can have, and further support the need for health-promoting policies and programs. Occupational therapists are equipped with the necessary skill-set to influence the health of individuals, populations, and organizations through collaboration, education, and advocacy. Occupational therapists also possess the ability to improve the physical, mental, and social aspects of individual's lives and work to implement change by examining factors associated with overcoming barriers and enhancing occupational performance (AOTA, 2014). Thus, occupational therapists are uniquely positioned to assist in this environment.

Occupational therapists can assume a consultative role to deliver client-centered interventions to correctional staff members. Interventions can focus on facilitating optimal occupational engagement by the use of assessments such as the COPM to identify each individual's unique needs, strengths, and limitations. Consultation can also be offered in the form of group training sessions to provide useful techniques in stress management and optimizing engagement in meaningful activities and routines to enhance overall wellbeing. In effort to address stress and burnout, consultative services can more specifically include techniques for relaxation, and effective coping strategies. Additionally, when addressing workplace challenges such as, lack of support, services can focus on facilitating effective communication within the institution by changing the employer's focus to a more employee first perspective. Occupational therapy practitioners are particularly useful in this setting because they are well versed in providing a comprehensive assessment of the multidimensional nature of

residents and staff relationships as it relates to their specific performance patterns, skills, client factors, contexts and environments (AOTA, 2014).

In an effort to expand upon research in forensic settings, future research can further examine the relationships between inmates and staff. A mixed methods review using surveys and focus groups can generate a greater sample size and expand upon the existing research. Future studies can also benefit from focusing on a specific job title for a particular population of residents; such as correctional officers for the adult incarcerated population. In contrast, a study looking at one particular facility and assessing the needs of all staff members of different roles can provide even more valuable information on the organizational climate unique to that facility to improve workplace culture.

Future projects can focus on advocating for the role of occupational therapy in a correctional facility. A needs assessment can be performed with not only the staff, but also with residents to understand both perspectives on occupational deprivation and how they impact one another. Further understanding here can lead to development and implementation of a program that promotes occupational enrichment for this unique population. As an example, occupational therapists could aid in enrichment by providing a wellness program which includes gardening, yoga, and meditation as a part of workplace routine for stress management. Furthermore, occupational therapists can advocate for health-promoting policies that encourage health and fitness; this could include: offering free physical checkups for staff, gym memberships, and staff outings to promote physical activity and fellowship amongst coworkers.

Findings of this study provide support for the advancement of occupational therapy in the correctional setting. As such, this manuscript has the potential to be published in journals such as: *The Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, and

Occupational Therapy in Mental Health. However, the Journal of Offender Rehabilitation would be most appropriate for the dissemination of this study to inform other practitioners, educators, and researchers involved in the criminal justice setting about the role of occupational therapy. This multidisciplinary, international peer-reviewed journal focuses on the research and analysis of criminal justice program policies, practices, and services. Similarly, this study also meets the standard of being an original qualitative research that looks to improve correctional policies and practice. Additional information regarding submission can be found in Appendix F.

Conclusion

This study provides insight into the experiences of 7 individuals who had previous first-hand experience working in a correctional setting. Workplace culture related to health and wellness are discussed where participants disclose negative effects the environment posed to their wellbeing which in turn impacted their job satisfaction. Correctional settings prove not only to be restrictive to inmates, but also to staff members as they limit access to meaningful occupations, roles, and routines. Job demands linked to poor work policies and interaction with inmates are also found to take a toll physically, mentally, and emotionally which further exacerbates symptoms of stress, fatigue, and burnout. As such, the results of this study are found to be consistent with previous literature on correctional staff members. Furthermore, these factors may generalize to other correctional settings where staff members are also likely to be deprived of their health-promoting roles, routines, and occupations. In closing, occupational therapists are uniquely equipped with the necessary skills to examine and enhance workplace wellness in correctional settings, thereby improving overall well-being and quality of life for residents and staff alike.

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APPENDIX A

Proposed Observational Data Collection Form

APPENDIX B

Proposed Staff Interview Questions

1. What do you believe are the greatest needs your residents demonstrate?
 - a. What are the factors affecting these needs?
2. What goals have your residents expressed to you?
 - a. How do you feel they are being addressed?
3. What are the greatest barriers that you think your residents will face in meeting these goals?
4. What is your current job title and responsibilities at this facility?
5. What does a typical day of work entail?
6. Describe the working relationship between coworkers here
 - a. How well does everyone work together?
 - b. How would you describe the level of teamwork?
7. How satisfied are you with your job?
8. What do you find most effective about the re-entry program here?
9. What do you find the least effective? (if any)
10. Is there anything you personally would like to see being addressed here within the programs?
11. Is there any stress associated with your job?
 - a. If so, what are the main contributing factors?
 - b. And what are the three most common ways you deal with it?
12. What do you enjoy doing in your free time? Any hobbies?

APPENDIX C

Proposed Resident Interview Questions

1. Are you currently employed?
 - a. If so, what do you do?
 - b. Do you enjoy your work?
2. If not currently employed, what type of job would you find most enjoyable for you and why?
3. What are some strengths that you believe you possess?
4. What do you enjoy doing in your free time? Any hobbies?
5. What occupies the majority of your time?
6. What do you find most helpful about this facility and the programs they offer here?
7. What do you find the least helpful? (if any)
8. If there anything you personally would like to address or work on in the programs here?
9. What goals do you have for yourself?
10. What are your needs in terms of trying to meet these goals?
 - a. Do you feel supported?
11. Do you find the current programs useful in helping you meet your goals?
12. What are your greatest concerns for when you leave this facility?
 - a. Is there support for your transition?
 - b. Do you feel prepared to re-enter society? (mentally, physically, emotionally)

APPENDIX D

Email Script

To Whom This May Concern,

My name is Maxwell Sand, and I am a third-year doctorate student at the University of St. Augustine (San Marcos campus). I received your contact information from _____ (name of faculty/staff connection). I am reaching out to you with respect to my capstone project regarding the assessment of workplace wellness in the correctional settings. The purpose of this study is to explore the needs of correctional staff members in addressing their health and wellness. I am hoping to talk to people who currently work or have worked in the past in correctional settings (any role). This study would consist of an interview (phone, virtual, or in person) lasting approximately 60 minutes.

If you are willing to talk, please let me know if you would prefer to have this meeting via phone, virtual medium (i.e. zoom) or in person? Also, if you would like to meet in person, what location would be best for you? Finally, can you please provide me with your best contact information and let me know some times that will work for you these upcoming weeks? I can be available Monday through Sunday by appointment.

Additionally, I am available to answer any questions you have and am thankful for any interest in assisting me with this project.

Warmest Regards,

Maxwell K. Sand, OTD/S, Student Principal Investigator
Occupational Therapy, Class of 2019
Phone: 808-259-1924
E-mail: m.sand@usa.edu

APPENDIX E

Actual Interview Questions

1. What was/is your current job title and responsibilities at this facility?
 - a. Did/do you feel supported?
2. How did you become involved in this line of work?
3. What is your educational background?
4. What was it like being a new employee at this facility?
5. What did/does a typical day of work entail?
 - a. Describe your role in working with clients/individuals incarcerated.
6. Describe the working relationship between coworkers at your past/current facility
 - a. How well did/does everyone work together?
 - b. How would you describe the level of teamwork?
7. How was/is the communication between workers and management?
 - a. Were/are there any issues with communication? If so, what?
8. Were/are there any policies or rules that made/make your job difficult or easier to perform? If so, describe them.
9. Were/are there any safety programs at the facility that were helpful? If so, what and how?
10. How concerned were/are you about your safety at the facility?
 - a. Did/does this affect your satisfaction with your job? If yes, in what ways?
 - b. If yes, how did/do you address these concerns?
11. Overall, how satisfied were/are you with your job?
12. What part of your training has been the most helpful for working in this setting?
 - a. Was/is there anything you learned outside of training that has been helpful for your job?
 - b. Is there any other types of training that you feel would be helpful? If so, what?

13. Were/are there any wellness programs at the facility that facilitated your engagement in healthy activities while at work? If so, what?
 - a. Were/are there any aspects of the physical environment or company policies that promote health and/or fitness?
14. Were/are there any aspects of your work or workplace environment that inhibit your ability maintain good health? If so, what?
15. Was/is there any stress associated with your job?
 - a. If so, what were/are the main contributing factors?
 - b. What were/are the three most common ways you dealt/deal with it?
16. What did/do you enjoy doing in your free time while working at said facility? Any hobbies?
17. Did/do any aspects of your work prevent you from engaging in healthy activities outside of the workplace?
 - a. What factors of this job affect your health and nutrition?
 - b. What factors affect how you feel at home and/or your family life?
18. What did/do you believe were/are the greatest needs your residents demonstrated/demonstrate?
 - a. What were/are the factors affecting these needs?
19. What concerns have your residents expressed to you?
 - a. How do you feel they were/are being addressed?
 - b. What were/are the greatest barriers that you think your residents faced/will face in addressing these concerns?
20. What did/do you find most effective about the programs for the residents there?

21. What did/do you find the least effective? (if any)
22. Was/is there anything you personally would have liked or currently like to see being addressed within the programs?
23. Do you feel that you changed as a person after working here? If so, in what ways?

APPENDIX F

Instructions for Journal Publication

Instructions for authors

Thank you for choosing to submit your paper to us. These instructions will ensure we have everything required so your paper can move through peer review, production and publication smoothly. Please take the time to read and follow them as closely as possible, as doing so will ensure your paper matches the journal's requirements. For general guidance on the publication process at Taylor & Francis please visit our Author Services website.

This journal uses ScholarOne Manuscripts (previously Manuscript Central) to peer review manuscript submissions. Please read the guide for ScholarOne authors before making a submission. Complete guidelines for preparing and submitting your manuscript to this journal are provided below.

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