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## Exploring Integration of Occupational Therapy Services for the Refugee Population

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# Exploring Integration of Occupational Therapy Services for the Refugee Population

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## BACKGROUND

Refugees experience a distinct susceptibility to systemic barriers (Depoux et al., 2018). Studies show that refugees suffer from a higher rate of physical and mental stress as a result of extreme suffering from the accumulative effects of physical and mental trauma, geological and cultural displacement (Din et al., 2019). These experiences of displacement and subsequent marginalization lead to occurrences of occupational injustices that limit occupational performance and independence (Huot et al., 2016).

**Problem:** There is a lack of knowledge regarding occupational therapy's roles supporting refugee integration into host countries (Arslon et al., 2018; Darawsheh, 219; Huot et al., 2016).

**Purpose:** The purpose for this qualitative capstone research project is to contribute to the rehabilitation body of knowledge regarding occupational therapy's roles using meaningful occupations to support and enhance refugee integration into their respective host countries.

## OBJECTIVES

### Outcome objectives:

- Develop an understanding about current refugee services through completion of a mixed methods survey by interdisciplinary professionals who have prior experience providing services to refugees as compared to current available literature.
- Identify and create a role for occupational therapy through the development of a mental health program as a member of an interdisciplinary team to support refugee integration services onsite at a non-governmental organization
- Identify roles for occupational therapy within refugee integration by administering a mixed methods survey questionnaire to service providers that identifies the level of recognition toward using occupations in refugee integration services

## METHODS

The study utilized a qualitative research approach to gain professional perspectives of current refugee integration services. A mixed methods survey was distributed to current refugee service providers in California, Florida, Texas, New York, and Washington D.C.

### Participants

- 85 participants who worked in the field of refugee services were invited to complete the survey
- 15 participants completed surveys
- 1 time participation
- Duration to complete the survey: 10-15 minutes

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

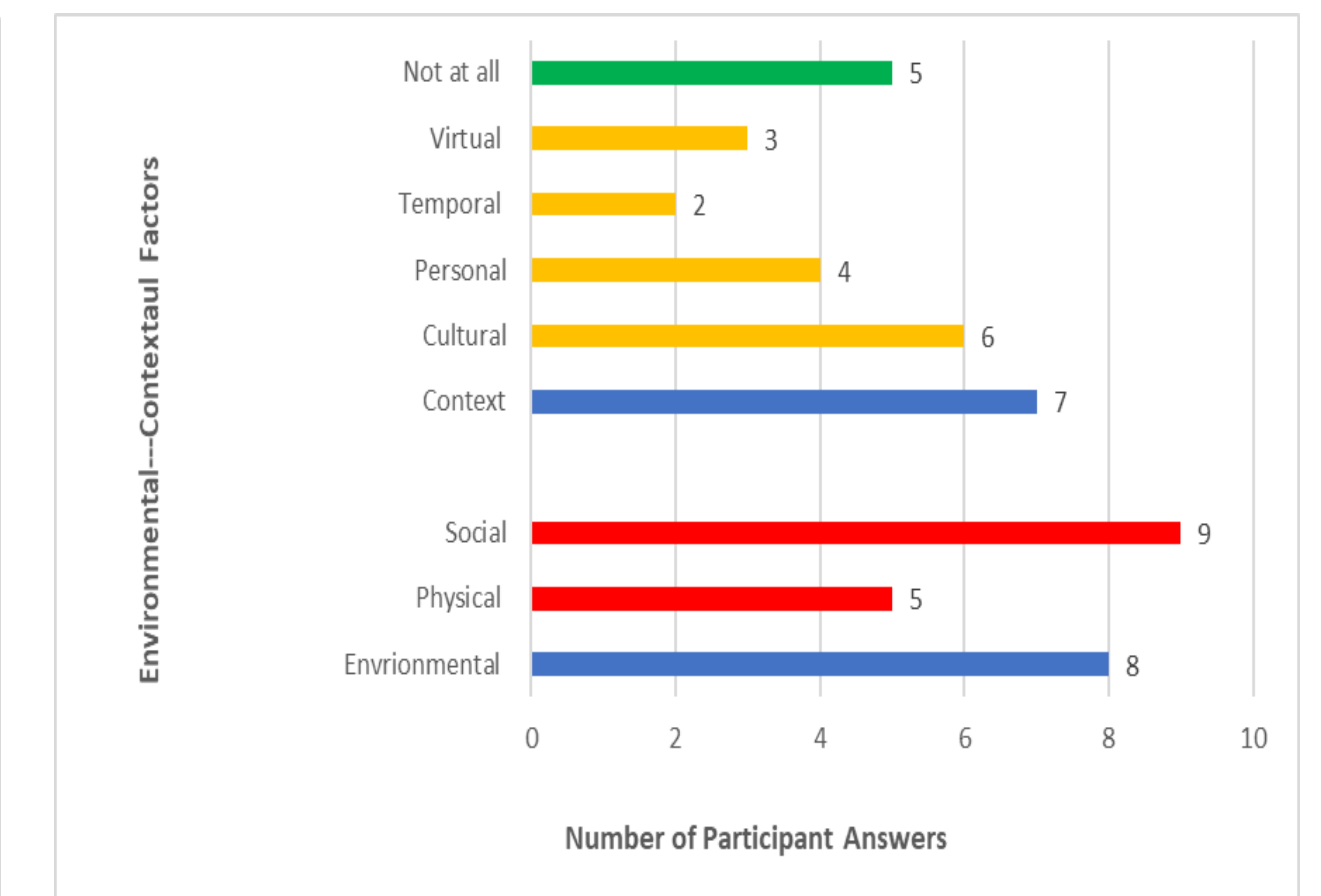
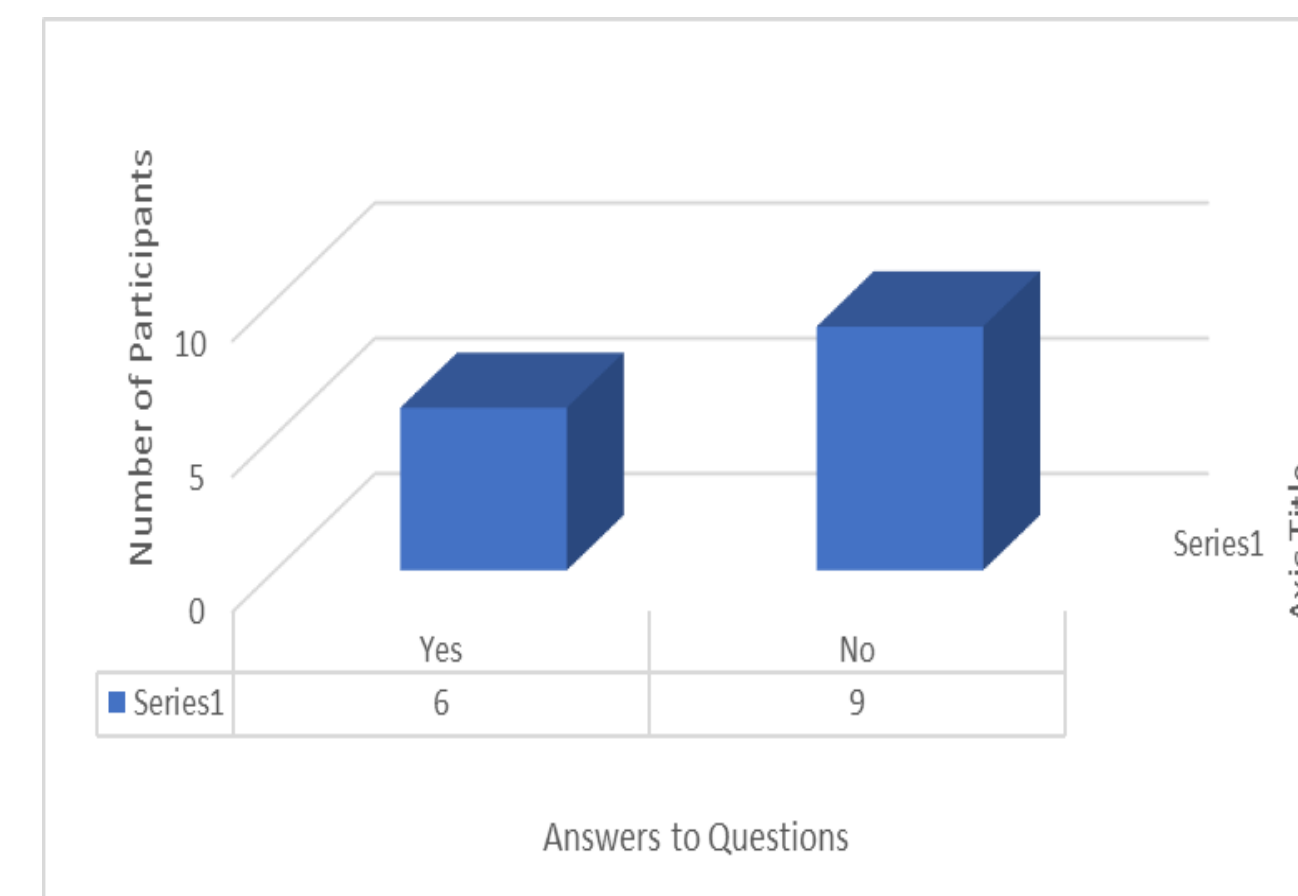
- What is occupational therapy's role within refugee integration services?
- How are resettlement services prioritized?
- What environmental and contextual factors shape refugee services?
- What are the occupations recognized when providing resettlement services?
- How do prior performance patterns influence resettlement services?

## THEORETICAL BASE

- Applied Systems Theory
- Model of Human Occupation
- Occupational Justice

## RESULTS

### Data Analysis



## CONCLUSIONS

- Refugee integration services do not utilize prior occupational roles when providing transition services.
- Refugee integration professionals recognize daily activities as relevant to transition services.
- The refugee integration system lacks understanding of the complex nature of occupation.
- In the current structure of refugee integration services, occupational therapy seems to play little to no role within the organizational service structure

## IMPLICATIONS FOR OT

- The results of the survey imply a great opportunity for occupational therapy to provide services to this vulnerable population.
- For example, occupational therapists can train service providers, develop effective and sustainable transition programs, and serve in leadership roles within the non-profit organizations
- Occupational therapy as a part of an interdisciplinary team can play a vital role in assisting the integration of refugees through occupational participation, performance, and independence.
- Occupational therapy can advocate for social change by adopting professional perspectives that highlight occupational injustice.

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