

4-14-2022

Understanding Travel for Families with a Physically Disabled Child through the Occupational Therapy Lens

Dinah Adams

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

Karen Park

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

Susan MacDermott

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: <https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstones-spring2022>



Part of the [Aviation Safety and Security Commons](#), [Occupational Therapy Commons](#), [Patient Safety Commons](#), and the [Social Justice Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Adams, D., Park, K., & MacDermott, S. (2022, April 14). Understanding Travel for Families with a Physically Disabled Child through the Occupational Therapy Lens. Poster presented at the Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium, University of St Augustine for Health Sciences. Retrieved from <https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstones-spring2022/17>

This Poster/presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the OTD Capstone Symposia at SOAR @ USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2022 Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium by an authorized administrator of SOAR @ USA. For more information, please contact soar@usa.edu, erobinson@usa.edu.

Understanding Travel for Families with a Physically Disabled Child

Dinah Aiad Adams, OTS; Karen Park, OTD, OTR/L, BCP; Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

Travel is a complex occupation that involves interactions between body function, activity participation, and the environment (Kim & Lehto, 2013). For families traveling with a physically disabled child this occupation becomes even more complex. The available literature on the lived experiences of these families traveling by air, is significantly limited.

PURPOSE

- Conduct a research study to assess the supports and barriers to participation in air travel for families with a physically disabled child
- Evaluate the needs of this population
- Add to the literature and provide a better understanding of the travel experience for families with a child who has a physical disability
- Highlight ways this population can be advocated for and supported

METHODS

A mixed methods research design was utilized to gather information from parents' firsthand experiences traveling with a physically disabled child. Participants were recruited from social media, word of mouth and snowball sampling

- 46 survey participants (40 mothers, 5 fathers, 1 caregiver), on average took 5-10 minutes to complete
- 11 interview participants (9 mothers, 2 fathers), ~45 - 60 minutes long. Thematic analysis was completed on transcripts

RESULTS

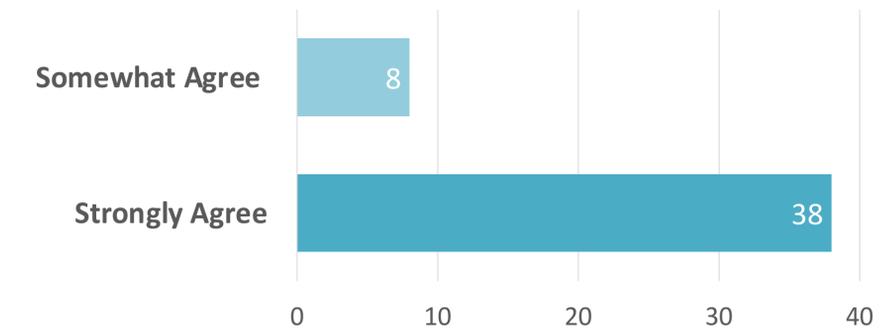
Emerging Themes	Quotes
<p>Preparation becomes an occupation of its own</p> <p>Subtheme: Anticipation of Issues during planning</p>	<p>"Probably takes six months, I'm starting now on my list of things to do. Tomorrow morning is to call vendors down in Orlando and our trip is July 17th. "</p> <p>"My husband always travels with wheelchair tools, because we always expect that. Yeah, there is usually something that needs to be adjusted."</p>
<p>Disability affects "every single thing" about travel</p>	<p>"It affects everything about it. It affects where we can go. It affects how often because it's such a production. There's only so often you can go if it effects every single thing about it."</p>
<p>Lack of accessibility hinders/prevents participation in ADLs and IADLs</p>	<p>"He stops drinking water about four hours before he goes. He would never attempt to use the restroom on the plane."</p> <p>"You know an 8-hour flight you know he's gonna need a diaper change at some point and he's too big for the bathroom. So, we have to lay him down like on the floor in front of us like in the seats. So, there's not really a good option. "</p>
<p>Familiarity supports participation in travel</p>	<p>"Because I've traveled so much because I've got such familiarity with all of the airlines, with the policies, with the procedures. Like I don't feel like I'm doing extra work."</p> <p>"We're really comfortable traveling and flying that, um so we kind of know what to do. So, I think there's like there's maybe a little bit of a difference with our family because we've done it just so often...so we just don't rely, we don't need to rely on airline staff as much, maybe I guess "</p>

Acknowledgment: Special thanks to Michele Erwin from All Wheels Up

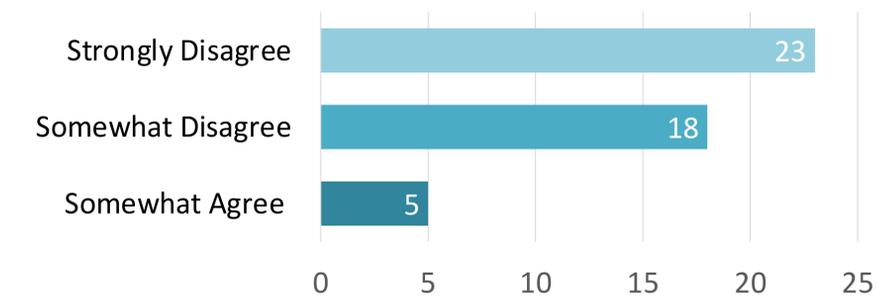
Please scan for references →



My child's disability has an impact on if and where we decide to travel



Airplanes are accessible for my family when we fly



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- Air travel for this population is a highly complex and dynamic experience & this study provides new insight into the experiences of air travel for families with a physically disabled child
- Most of the findings were barriers to occupational performance in travel
- Accessibility & poorly trained airline staff were significant barriers to air travel for these families
- Many participants discussed difficulty finding resources resulting in the development of Air Travel for All
- OTs can advocate for a more inclusive & accessible air travel experience & better training for airline staff
- Recommendations for future projects include developing and carrying out a sensitivity and disability etiquette training for employees in the air travel industry