



Understanding the Client’s Sensory Needs: Advancing Skills in Mental Health Practice

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Description of DCE Site

The Occupational Therapy Training Program (OTTP) is a non-profit community-based mental health setting in Gardena, California. OTTP's mission is to empower individuals facing mental health challenges through meaningful activities. Services include therapy, medication management, work readiness, and job placement, with specialized programs like the Sports Group, Colors group, and BRIGHT program addressing various needs. Clients, aged two to 65, receive interdisciplinary care from OT practitioners, therapists, social workers, and case managers, with funding from DMH and grants (OTTP, 2021).

Summary of Needs Assessment

- Adjustments in billing for travel time, have raised concerns among staff and clients, prompting a shift towards telehealth services to better serve the community's needs.
- Clinicians express a need for modernizing technology, including implementing electronic signatures and enhancing social media presence to improve efficiency and communication among staff and clients.
- Clients with sensory processing challenges need more comprehensive and targeted interventions during therapy sessions, including better utilization of the existing sensory room and enhanced clinician knowledge in addressing sensory needs.

Student Learning Objectives

- Learning Objective 1: Create sensory-based guidelines, checklists, a roadmap, and templates for occupational therapy practitioners
- Learning Objective 2: Deliver two presentations to educate mental health clinicians on sensory processing and a presentation for occupational therapy practitioners on how to utilize the sensory-based guidelines.
- Learning Objective 3: Conduct evaluation to measure changes in mental health clinicians’ knowledge and confidence regarding sensory processing and treatment approaches

Literature Review

Confusion with Medical Terms

- Mental health clinicians face challenges in understanding and applying various terms related to sensory processing, leading to confusion and potential limitations in choosing appropriate interventions for clients (Brown et al., 2018).

Transdiagnostic Process

- Sensory processing difficulties are not exclusive to individuals with ASD but are prevalent across various psychiatric conditions, suggesting a transdiagnostic process that impacts behavior and symptom presentation (van den Boogert et al., 2022)

Lack of Evidence-Based Research

- Despite extensive research on sensory-based interventions, there is a notable gap in literature regarding their application in community-based mental health settings, leads to less effective interventions (Case-Smith & O'Brien, 2015).

Project Implementation

- Developed guidelines, checklists, templates, roadmap, and organized sensory materials into a cart for easy access by occupational therapy practitioners at OTTP.
- Delivered presentations to mental health clinicians and occupational therapy practitioners at OTTP locations in Gardena and San Francisco, covering topics such as sensory processing, sensory-based strategies, and the utilization of sensory-based guidelines.
- The presentations included pre-and post-surveys, introduced a roadmap for clinicians to follow in utilizing sensory-based guidelines, and were recorded for use during the onboarding process for new hires at OTTP. Survey data from phase two of the project was analyzed using JASP to assess changes in knowledge about sensory processing among mental health clinicians and changes in knowledge and confidence in utilizing sensory-based guidelines among occupational therapy practitioners, with results presented to mental health clinicians at OTTP.

Evaluation

Does delivering a presentation on sensory processing increase knowledge among mental health clinicians in a community-based mental health setting?

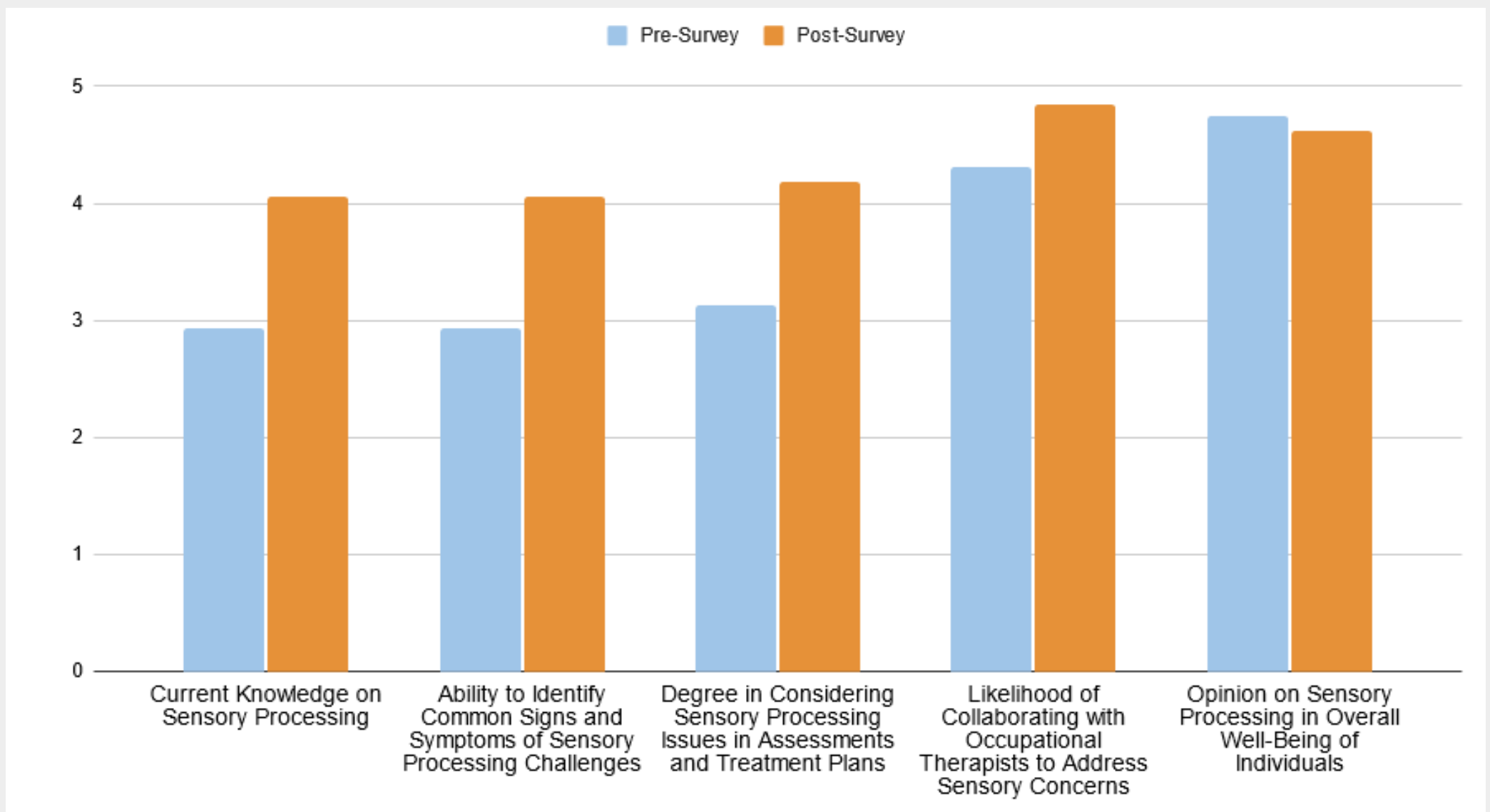


Table 1
Knowledge on Sensory Processing

Variables	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	M	SD	M	SD
Question 1	2.94	1.06	4.06	0.68
Question 2	2.94	1.06	4.06	0.77
Question 3	3.13	1.41	4.19	1.05
Question 4	4.44	0.73	4.88	0.34
Question 5	4.75	0.45	4.63	0.50

The Paired-Samples T Test compared the means of two variables among mental health clinicians .

Does creating sensory-based guidelines and delivering a presentation on how to utilize these guidelines during treatment sessions increase knowledge and confidence among occupational therapy practitioners?

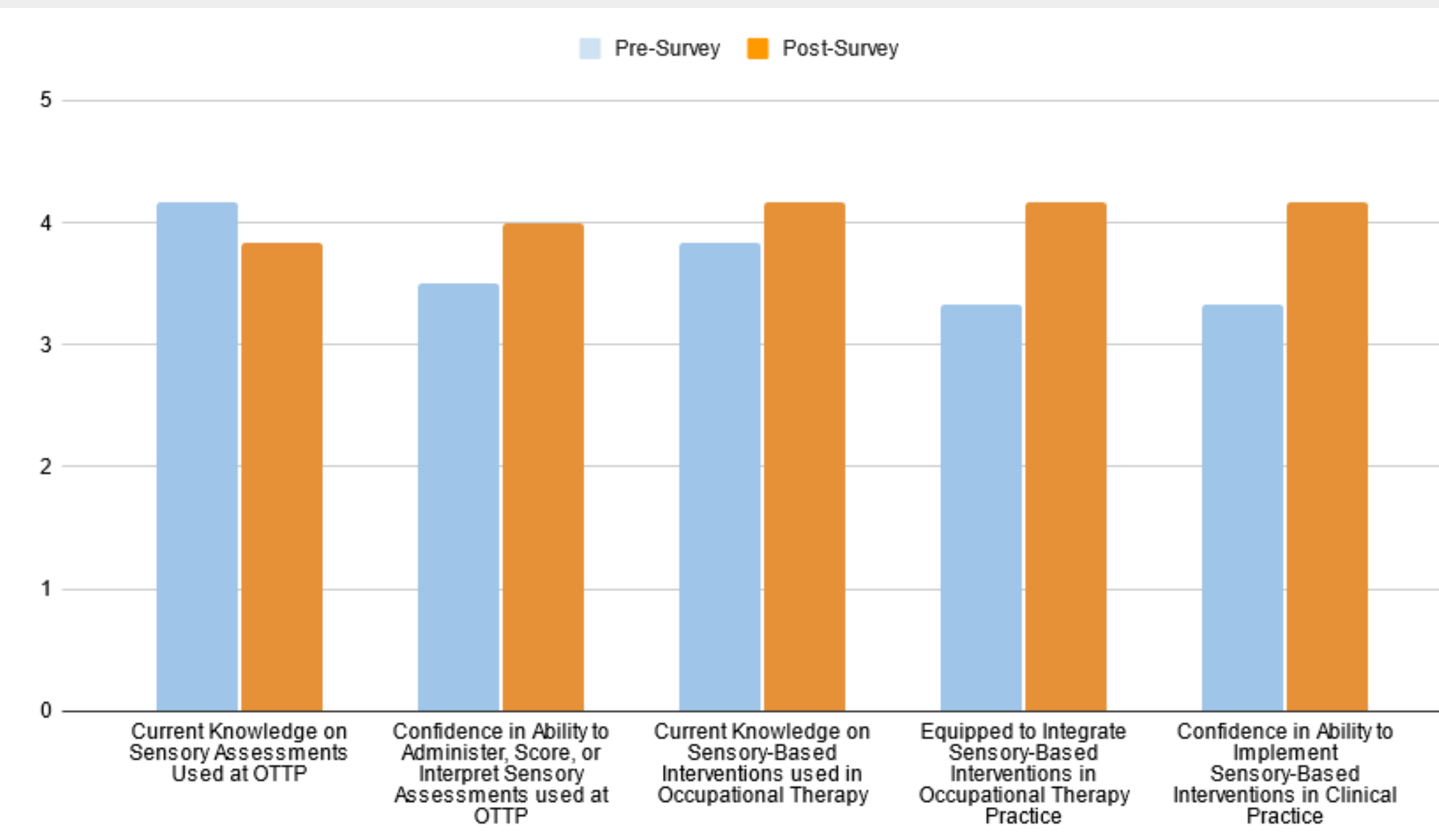


Table 2
Knowledge and Confidence with Sensory-Based Guidelines

Variables	Pre-Survey		Post-Survey	
	M	SD	M	SD
Question 1	4.17	0.75	3.83	0.75
Question 2	3.50	1.05	4.00	0.63
Question 3	3.83	0.75	4.17	0.41
Question 4	3.33	0.82	4.17	0.75
Question 5	3.33	0.82	4.17	0.75

The Paired-Samples T Test compared the means of two variables among occupational therapy practitioners.

Project Outcomes

- Improved comprehension of sensory processing among mental health clinicians post-presentation, attributed to clarifying terminology and providing clear definitions.
- Increased willingness of mental health clinicians to collaborate with occupational therapy practitioners on sensory challenges, recognizing OTPs' expertise in sensory processing.
- Increase in knowledge and confidence among occupational therapy practitioners in utilizing sensory-based interventions post-presentation, enhancing readiness to incorporate these interventions into practice.
- Educating mental health clinicians about the interplay between sensory processing challenges and various diagnoses enhances awareness and fosters holistic, evidence-based approaches in mental health care.

Occupational Therapy Implications

- Enhanced knowledge of sensory processing in mental health empowers clinicians to recognize sensory issues, improve assessment and diagnosis accuracy, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and enhance overall client outcomes.
- Future directions may involve longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effects of sensory processing education and guideline implementation on patient outcomes, expanding training to include more sensory-based approaches, especially for specific psychiatric diagnoses

Scholarly Deliverables

Two guidelines on how to administer, score, and interpret sensory assessments, eight guidelines on how to utilize sensory-based strategies based on the scores of the sensory assessments, 11 checklists, one roadmap, four templates, a recorded presentation on sensory processing, a recorded presentation on how to utilize sensory-based guidelines in occupational therapy practice, and a recorded presentation on the results of the pre-and post-surveys.

References



Guidelines

