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DCE Site Description

Homeless Health Care Los Angeles (HHCLA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a strong multidisciplinary team that provides a variety of services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the homeless population in Los Angeles. HHCLA is composed of multiple departments including:

- Primary Healthcare
- Individual and Group Mental Health
- Substance Use Treatment
- Case Management
- Housing Services

This project was completed in partnership with HHCLA's housing services department, also known as **Housing for Health (HFH)**, that connects clients to housing options and assists with transitioning into permanent supportive housing (PSH). Occupational therapy (OT) services are delivered in partnership with the Department of OT at West Coast University. As an emerging area of practice, community-based OT services at HHCLA are utilized to address both physical and cognitive barriers to promote independent living, increase long-term housing retention, and improve quality of life.

Mission: To provide quality, integrated healthcare services that meet the physical and mental health needs of individuals currently experience or who have previously experienced homelessness (HHCLA, 2021).

Summary of Needs Assessment

Identified Areas of Need

- Increasing housing retention and addressing living skills of residents
- Desire to learn more about aging residents' lived experiences and perspectives
- Enhancing staff support via ongoing training and mental health wellness

Project Vision: “A doctoral capstone project that will strengthen HHCLA's ability to serve its target population effectively, foster a supportive work environment, and further advance the organization's mission.”

Key Points of Literature Review

Themes

- Increasing numbers of both older adults and homeless population
- Need for staff training in PSH settings to support older adults needs
- Supportive services promote housing stability, tenure, and quality of life

Significant Key Findings

- Accelerated Aging: early onset of age-related conditions due to past trauma, which then results in a service gap (Padget et al., 2020)
- Homelessness among older adults is expected to double by 2050 due to the aging population (Henwood et al., 2015)

Project Description

Purpose: Understand the lived experiences of older adults in PSH through qualitative research, deliver an interactive training series to strengthen HFH staff's knowledge/confidence with promoting safe aging in supportive housing, and develop a video-based adaptation of the training for future staff onboarding.

Student Learning Objectives

By the end of 14 weeks, the capstone student will...

1. Complete a phenomenological qualitative research study.
2. Develop, implement, and evaluate a four part housing staff training series.
3. Develop a video training certification program for future staff onboarding.

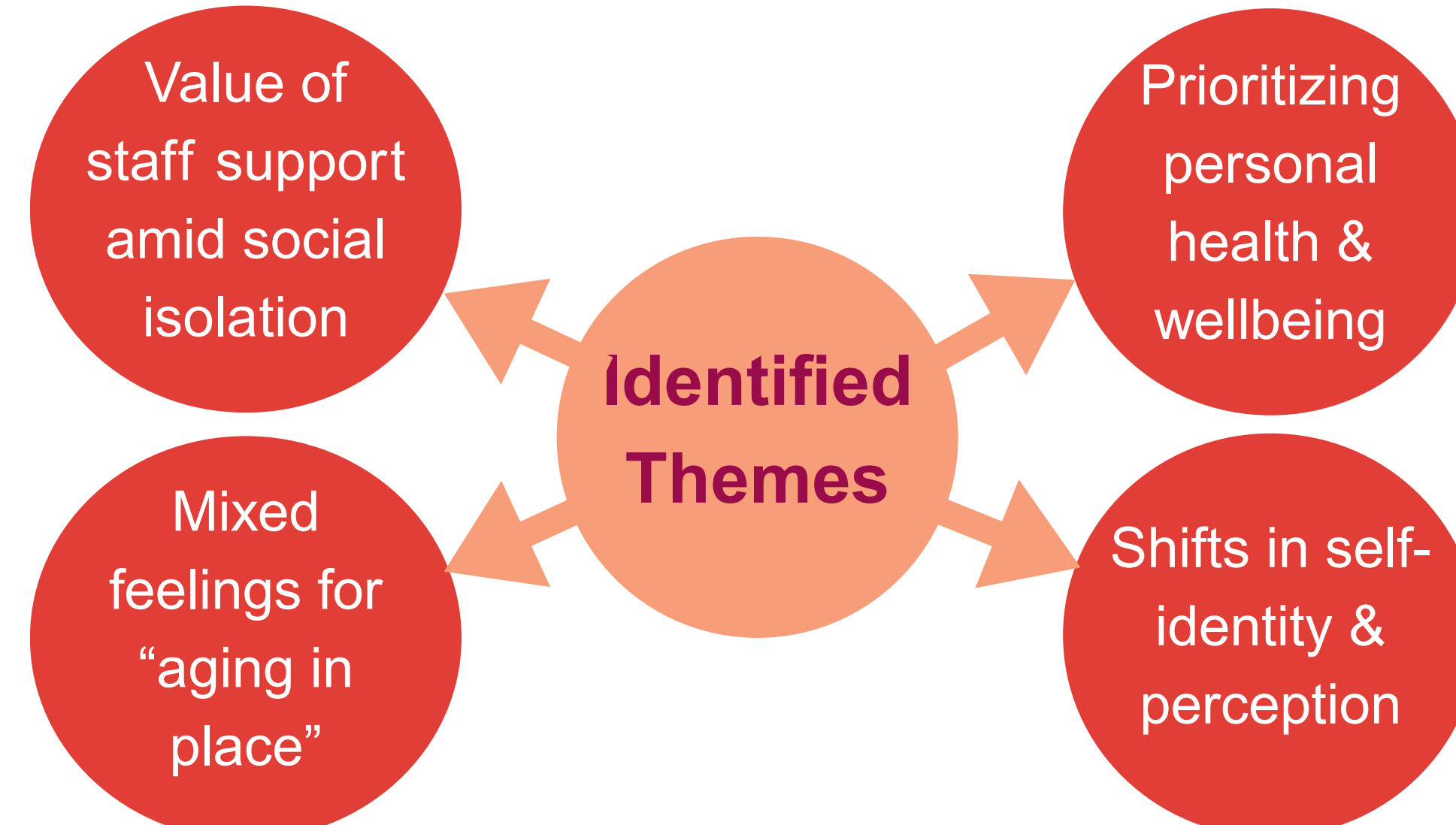
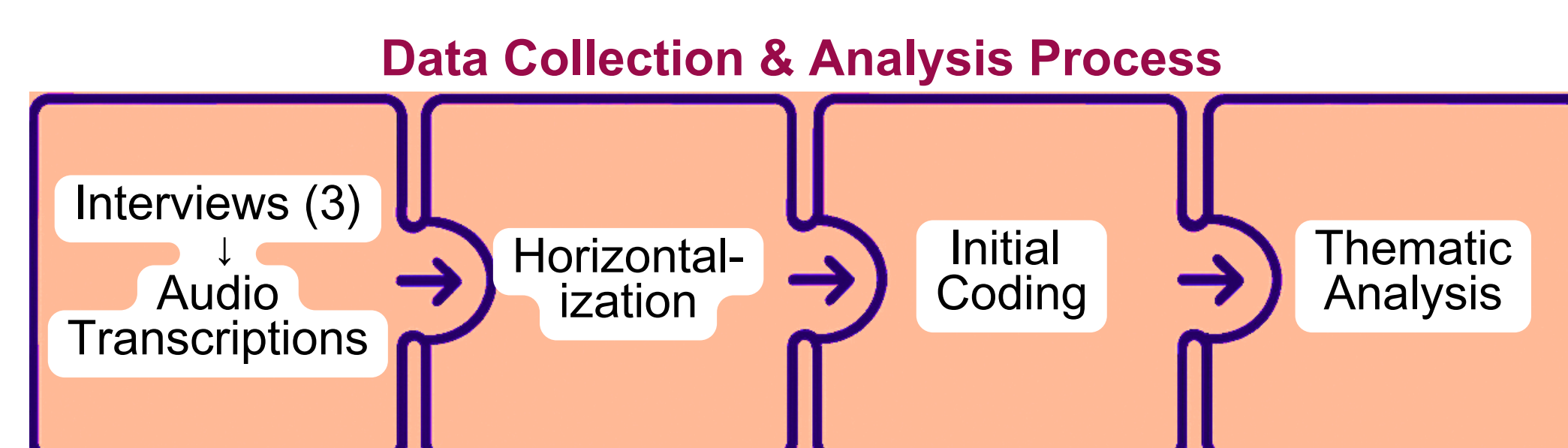
Phenomenological Research Study Questions

1. What is the lived experience of older adults living in PSH?
2. How do older adults perceive their long-term future and quality of life living in PSH?



Implementation, Evaluation, & Outcomes

Phenomenological Research Study



Significant Quotes

“I'm like 'I'm not getting old, I'm just getting better.' I get better and better each day”
- Participant 1

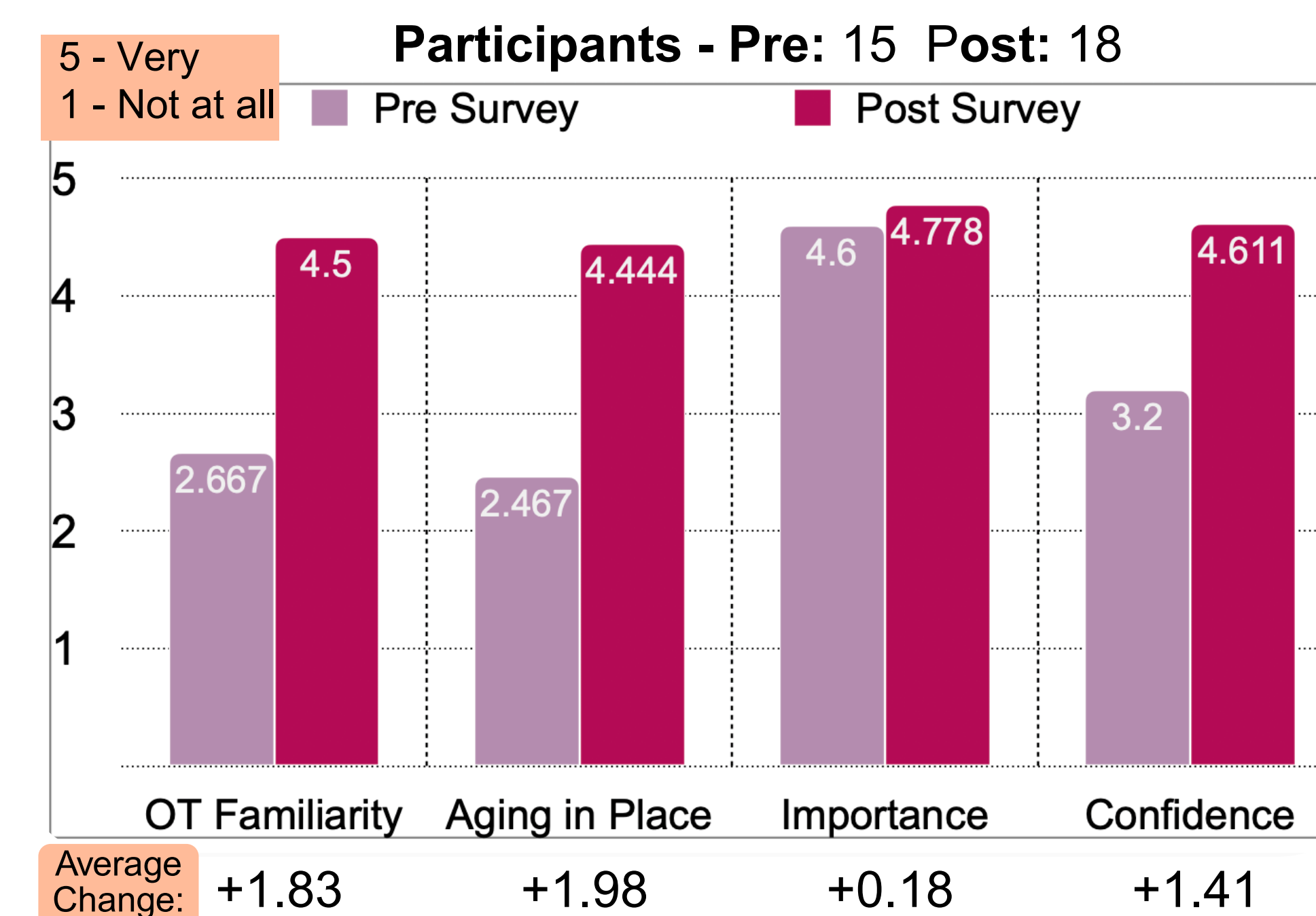
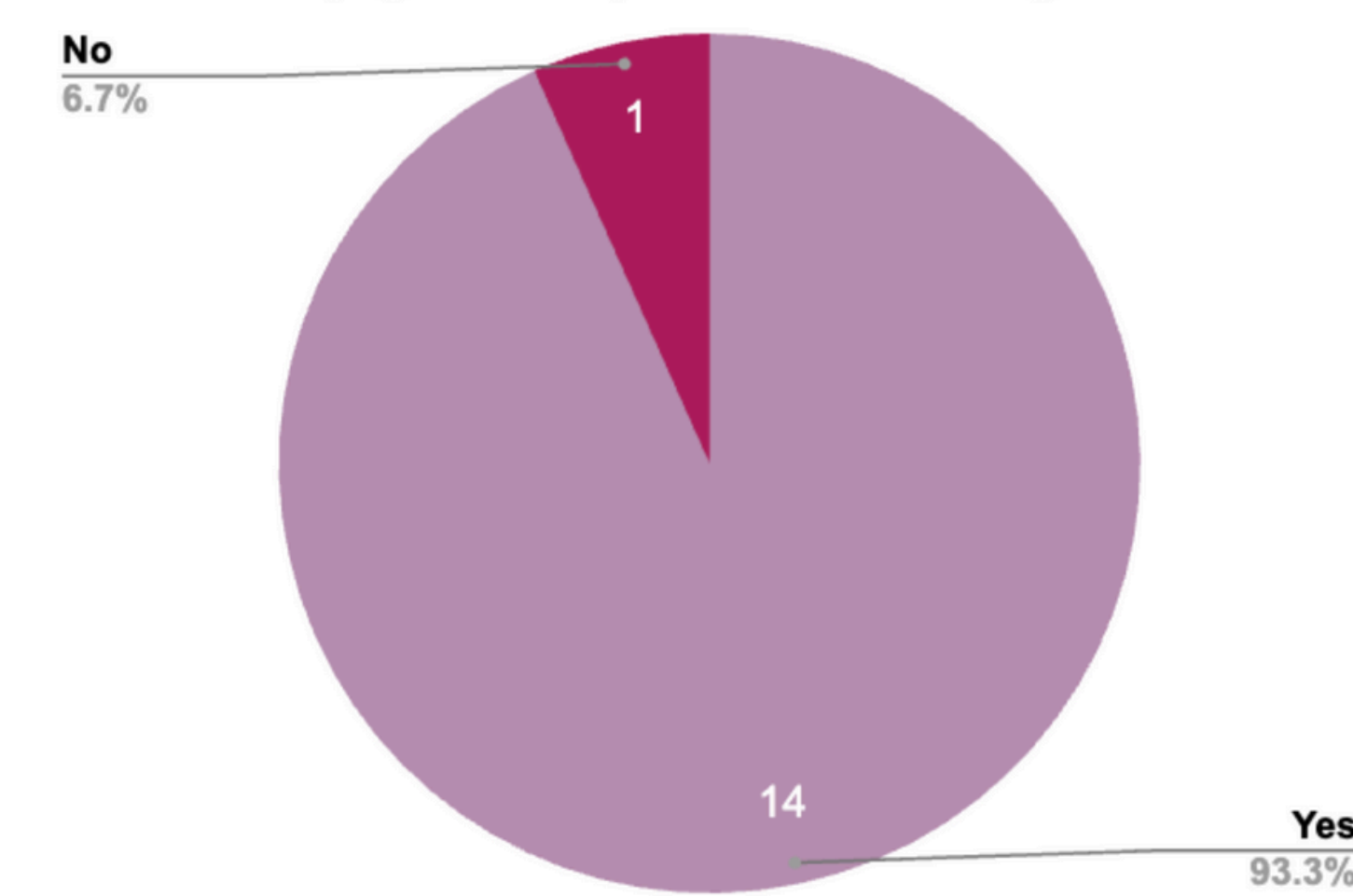
“So thinking about getting old here? Well, I plan to be here until death comes for me. Remaining here as I get older. Yes, everything is good here.”
- Participant 2

“I like the way that they (staff) keep in touch with you. They call you and say, “Oh, hi. Is everything going OK?” See, that's what the world misses.”
- Participant 3

In-Person Staff Training

Topics Covers: OT's Role, Aging in PSH, Older Adult Support & Resources

Have you worked directly with older adults (aged 55+) in this setting?



Statistically Significant Changes:

Improved OT familiarity, understanding of safe aging in place, and confidence supporting older adults with age-related challenges (p<0.05)

Discussion/Implications

PSH is considered a safe and secure option for individuals that have previously experienced homelessness. However, evolving physical and mental health needs linked to rapid aging present new challenges. HFH staff plays a key role in providing practical and social support, which can be crucial for promoting housing stability and tenure among older adults in PSH.

Findings from the qualitative research study offered insights into the lived experiences of older residents and informed the development of the training series. Outcomes from the in-person training demonstrated statistically significant improvements in three out of four measured domains. These results highlight the potential for OT-informed training to positively impact staff preparedness and resident experience, especially as the PSH population continues to age. Although this setting is an emerging area of practice in the field of OT, integration of OT services has the potential to enhance staff capacity, improve resident outcomes, and support organizational goals related to long-term housing stability.

Future Implications

- Continue to build awareness and strengthen support for residents that are aging in PSH.
- Utilization of OT services to assist with housing stability and aging support.
- Introduction to aging in PSH via video training for future HFH staff during onboarding process.

Scholarly Deliverables & References



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