



Enhancing Wellness and Reducing Stress in Undergraduate Kinesiology Students

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Site Description

The Kinesiology Department at Cal State LA

- California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA) serves a diverse undergraduate population, with the School of Kinesiology (Kin) preparing students for careers in movement science and health promotion
- Dedicated to promoting health, fitness, and overall well-being, especially among first-generation students from Los Angeles' multicultural population
- The academic environment emphasizes critical thinking, research, and service, yet students face high academic and emotional demands
- Established 1947

Needs Assessment Summary

- Lack of Awareness:** Many students and faculty are unaware of how sensory strategies like mindfulness, sensory breaks, or calming environments can reduce stress and prevent burnout
- Limited Access:** Students have minimal access to sensory tools and dedicated stress-relief spaces on campus (e.g., sensory rooms or relaxation zones)
- Routine Integration Needed:** There is a critical need to embed sensory strategies into students' daily routines to promote long-term mental well-being and academic success

Project Description

Purpose:

- This project employs sensory-based interventions to reduce stress among Cal State LA undergrad kin students. Using occupational therapy (OT) principles to integrate interactive workshops, sensory toolkits, and calming spaces into daily routines

Participants: 256

Program Structure:

Sensory-Based Workshops:

- Using Sensory Profile Measure- 2 for self-assessment
- Creation and use of personalized sensory toolkits to support stress management.

Calming Spaces:

- Establishment of pop-up sensory tents on campus before exams for immediate stress relief.

Peer-Led Initiatives:

- Training 10 kin student ambassadors to facilitate ongoing sessions

Data Collection:

- Pre/post surveys and qualitative journals were collected from Kin classes (1000-4000 level)
- Completed: Lectures seven , Workshops: seven , Pop-up tents: three , OT tabling: 12 and Sensory breaks facilitated: 17

Literature Review

- High stress and anxiety are common among college students, especially in rigorous programs like kinesiology. (Mac *et al.*, 2024)
- Sensory and self-guided interventions (e.g., mindfulness, CBT, sensory tools) are effective for stress management. (Amanvermez *et al.*, 2022; Harrold *et al.*, 2024)
- Instructor and environmental support enhances the success of interventions. (Hsu & Goldsmith, 2021)
- Long-term benefits are seen when sensory strategies are integrated into daily routines. (Worsley *et al.*, 2022; Camarata *et al.*, 2020)

Learning Objectives

By 14 of the DCE, the doctoral capstone student will

- Developed an educational workshop and a plan to train OT-interested students to lead future workshops and continue promoting these strategies to integrate sensory strategies into daily routines to manage academic stress.
- Implement workshops using sensory materials and create a toolkit for students. OT-focused students will be involved in the process, with regular follow-ups and training to ensure they can present the toolkit to Kin and Exercise Science club members for long-term sustainability.
- Collect the necessary data to evaluate the effectiveness of sensory strategies in supporting students' mental health and utilize evidence-based strategies connected to specific class topics.

Focus Area

- Education, Advocacy and Clinical Practice Skills

Evaluation plan and Project Outcomes

Measures & Analysis:

- Utilized 5-point Likert scales to gauge stress, knowledge, and confidence regarding sensory strategies
- Employed descriptive statistics and paired t-tests for comparing pre- and post-intervention data
- Analyzed qualitative feedback using thematic coding to identify common participant insights

Data Collection:

- Pre- and post-intervention surveys were administered for three activities:
 - Pop-Up tent N=28
 - Workshop N=88
 - Presentation N=140
- Total matched responses:** 256

Enhanced Awareness:

- Participants showed a clear improvement in their understanding of sensory strategies

Improved Confidence:

- There was a noticeable increase in confidence in using sensory tools following the intervention

Reduced Stress:

- Trends in the data suggest that perceived stress levels declined after the interventions

High Engagement:

- The strong participation (n = 256 matched responses) supports the program's effectiveness and long-term sustainability

Implementation Plan

Weeks 1-3	Weeks 2-12	Weeks 3-14	Weeks 13-14
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review evidence-base d sensory strategiesMeet with faculty to align content with Kin courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Deliver PowerPoint lectures on sensory strategiesHost workshops and "Ask an OT Student" tablesTrain Kin Student Ambassadors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Distribute SPM-2 assessmentsRun "Build-Your-Own Toolkit" sessionsLaunch pop-up sensory tent with Kin exercise science /OT studentsLink guest lectures to Kin curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Collect pre/post surveys and student reflectionsAnalyze and organize data

Quantitative Findings

Figure 1. Stress Levels of Students

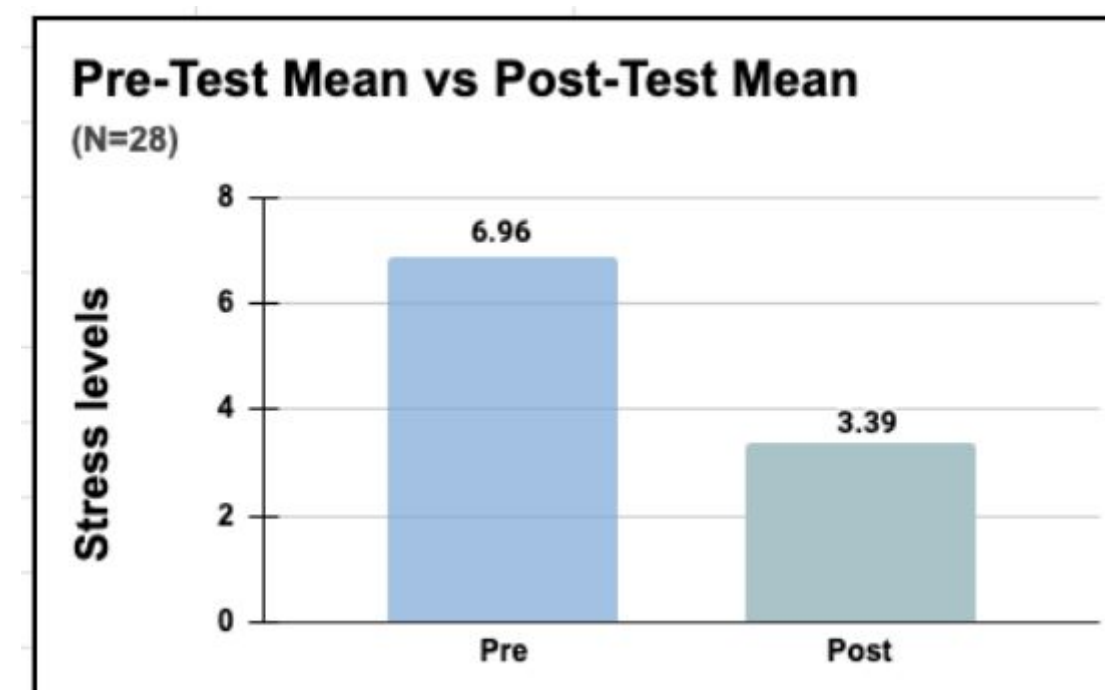


Figure 2. Student's Confidence Levels

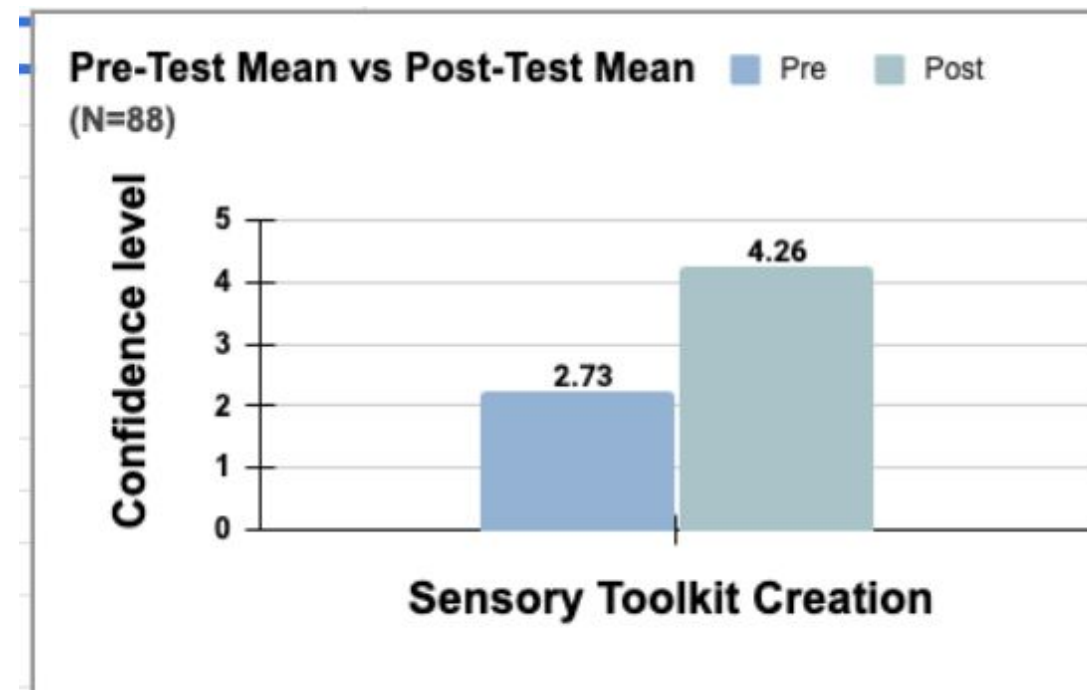


Figure 3. Perceived benefits of Sensory item

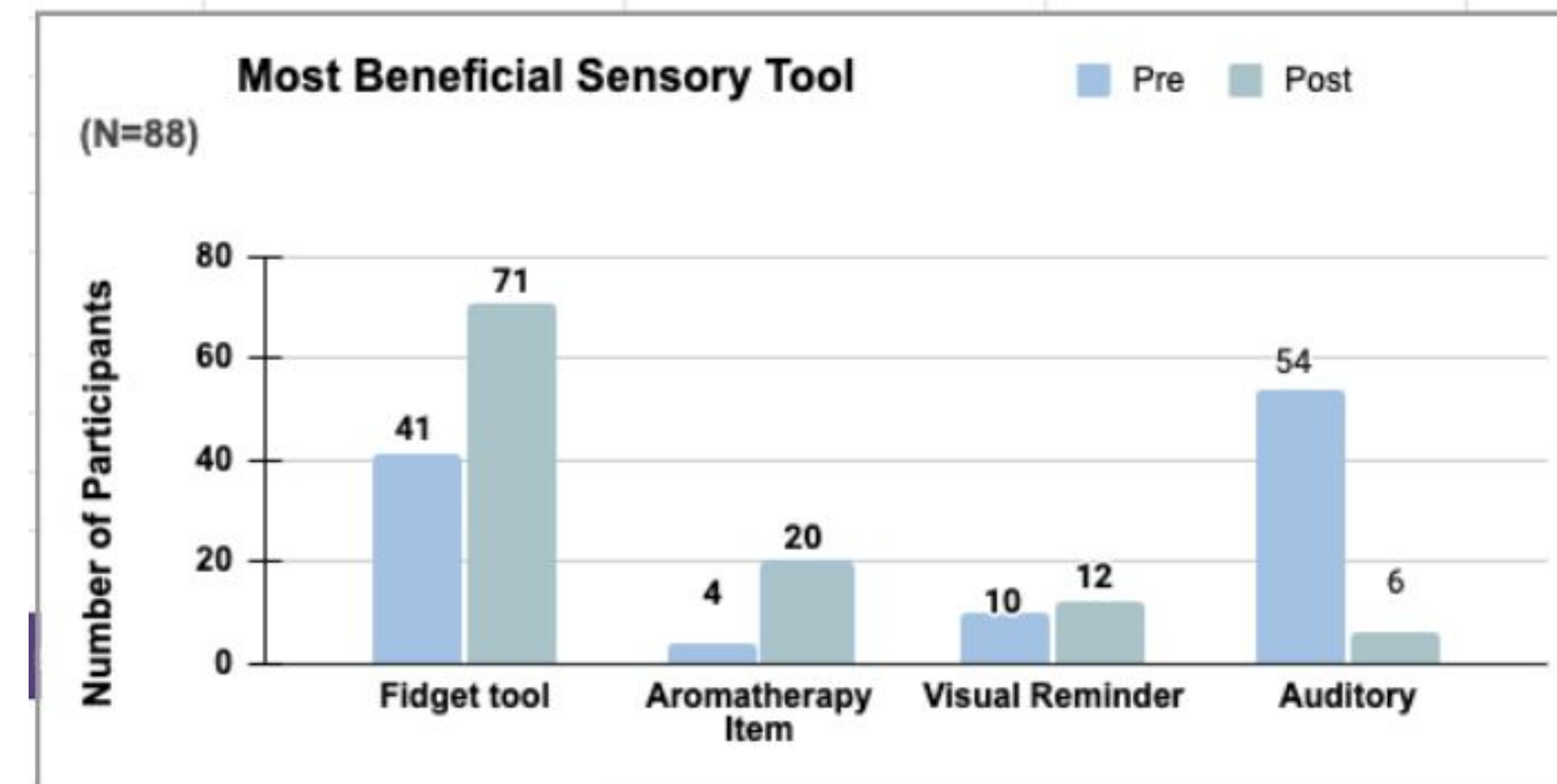
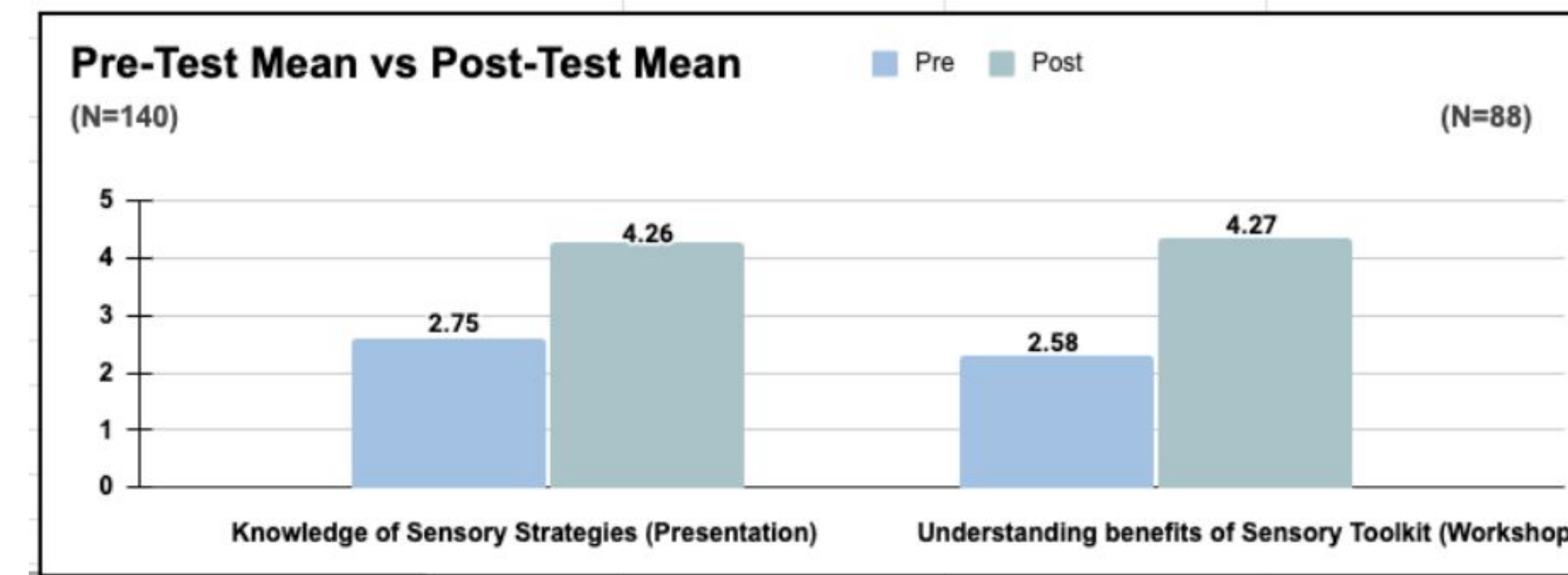


Figure 4. Knowledge of Sensory Strategies and Understanding Benefits of Sensory Items



Qualitative Findings

Increased Awareness of Sensory Preferences:

- "I never realized how much my environment affected my stress until I learned to notice its subtle cues."

Improved Emotional Regulation:

- "The sensory strategies gave me practical tools to control my emotions during overwhelming moments."

Enhanced Academic Focus and Confidence:

- "I now feel more focused during classes and confident in managing my stress independently, which has really improved my academic performance."

Discussion & Implications for Occupational Therapy

Discussion:

- The implementation of sensory-based interventions yielded statistically significant outcomes, including enhanced understanding and familiarity with sensory strategies, increased confidence in tool use, and a substantial reduction in perceived stress levels among participants
- Qualitative findings revealed an emergent awareness of individual sensory processing patterns, improved capacity for emotional regulation, and a strengthened sense of autonomy in managing academic stressors
- Findings underscore the relevance of OT approaches in addressing student wellness in higher education settings

Implications:

- Sensory-based interventions, a hallmark of OT practice, show promise in reducing academic stress and enhancing student well-being
- The positive trends support the role of OT practitioners in designing and implementing innovative wellness programs on campus
- These findings encourage further collaboration between OT professionals and educational institutions to foster holistic, proactive mental health strategies

Scholarly Deliverables



Brochure



Presentation



Resource guide



Sensory toolkit Materials

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References (available upon request)

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