



Sensory Processing Workshops: Promoting Staff Confidence, Knowledge, and Understanding

Nicole Tafolla, OTD/S • Faculty Mentor: Kathryn Duke, OTD, MATESOL, OTR/L • Site Mentor: Florence Arnecillo and Kathlene Parker



DCE SITE DESCRIPTION

OPARC is a non-profit organization that serves adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to find employment, work on social skills, and integrate these individuals into the community through OPARC’s multiple adult day programs.

Mission Statement: “All individuals deserve the human right to be valued members of society regardless of their intelligence or physical capabilities. OPARC’s mission is to help individuals with IDD reach their full potential” (OPARC, 2023).

SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. The development and modifications of OPARC’s sensory rooms.
2. Improve community integration, including safety awareness.
3. Increasing vocational skills to increase job employment opportunities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Common Themes Studies show that it is essential to educate clients and caregivers on sensory processing to expand awareness and the usage of sensory interventions. Studies also suggest that even one session can lead to clinically meaningful outcomes for both caregivers and children who experience challenges related to sensory processing (Bagatell et al., 2022; Forsyth and Trevarrow, 2018; Heyburn et al., 2023).

Literature Gaps To date, no study has explicitly explored how autistic adults’ sensory processing patterns influence community participation, including a limited body of evidence documenting the effectiveness of group-based caregiver training on self-perceived knowledge of sensory processing topics, actual knowledge of sensory processing topics and self-perceived competence & questionnaire (Cratsa et al., 2023; Gee and Peterson, 2016; Bagatell etc., 2022).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Develop and deliver sensory processing workshops to staff members.
2. Design and alter two sensory rooms at two different locations.
3. Present outcomes of the capstone project to staff.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PURPOSE

Develop and deliver staff workshops to promote confidence, knowledge, and understanding of sensory strategies to be implemented for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

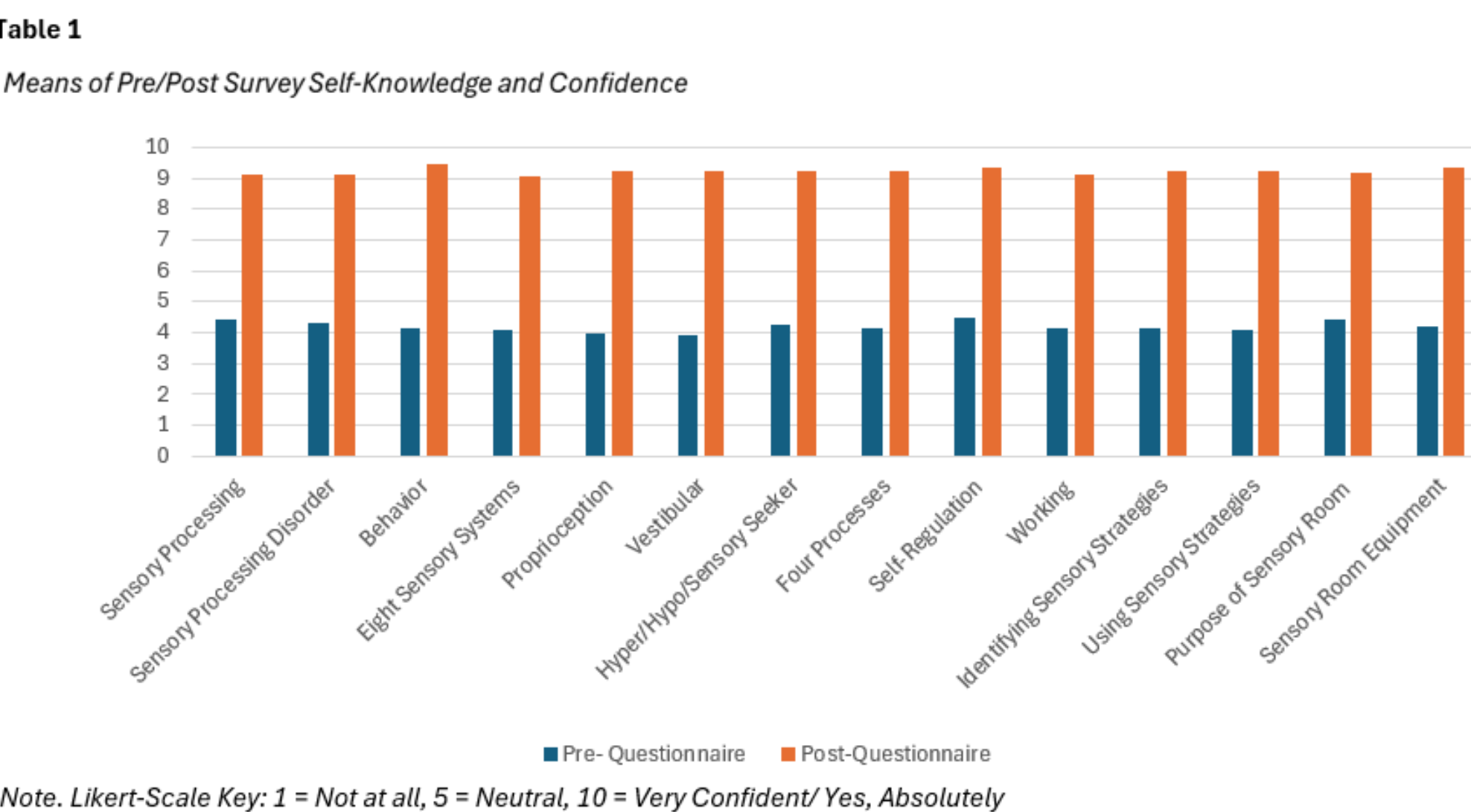
Staff members completed a pre/post-questionnaire, a four-day sensory workshop, including topics on, “Sensory Processing”, “Sensory Modulation”, “Dunn’s Model”, “Sensory Strategies”, “Sensory Rooms” and post-interviews.

PARTICIPANTS

19 staff members (one program manager, two case managers, one receptionist, and 15 direct support professionals) employed at OPARC.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS



Statistically Significant Improvement

A significant **increase in all questions** was observed.

Promoting Confidence and Knowledge

The data collected signified the importance of how education in sensory processing promotes confidence and knowledge to help implement sensory strategies for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Improved Confidence

“It was helpful. My confidence level increased on sensory. I am able to point out things that make sense.”

“One thing in particular was the clothing. I realized that with one of our participants when you mentioned that.”

Increased Knowledge

“It was eye-opening. I learned new terms. It was well explained and very helpful.”

Refresher Course

“I had an intro to the topic in previous classes but it wasn’t as in depth like this. I saw like the basic to the extended part of our eight senses. Your lecture was like college-level.”

DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

Discussion When provided with the opportunity to educate staff members on sensory processing through educational workshops and educational handouts, staff members who attended the workshops reported having improved knowledge and confidence regarding topics of sensory processing disorder, sensory processing needs, and sensory strategies. In the interviews, staff members were able to correlate the workshops to their participants and their sensory needs, including their participants’ stimming patterns.

Implications Greater need for education on sensory processing for healthcare workers working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to better support their sensory needs. Results show that education in adult day programs increased comprehension, expanding the area of occupational therapy needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Duke, Florence, and Kathlene for your amazing support throughout this entire experience, and I’m genuinely grateful for your mentorship. To the staff and participants of OPARC, thank you so much for all of your positivity and for treating me as part of the OPARC family. Lastly, to my family and friends, thank you for believing in me and being part of such an incredible, unforgettable journey. You saw me enter school filled with nerves as an Occupational Therapy student and now leave as a Doctor of Occupational Therapy. We did it!

DELIVERABLE PRODUCTS

Educational Handouts



Sensory Proecssing Manual



Sensory Rooms



References

