



Waves of Wellness: Exploring the Role of Aquatic Therapy in Enhancing Veterans' Health and Participation through Occupational Therapy

Yaritza Leon, OTD/S

Faculty Mentor: Rhonda Windham, OTD, OTR/L Site Mentor: Bianca Callier, OTD, OTR/L



Site Description

- **Pools of Hope** is an indoor aquatic facility located in North Long Beach, CA
- **Services:** Aquatic therapy, group aerobics, youth programs, veteran programs, swim lessons, and community events
- **Mission:** To promote community whole life wellness in an accessible, warm-water facility

Summary of Needs Assessment

1. Program development for veterans
2. Community outreach
3. Educational resources and handouts

Literature Review

- Veterans face diverse challenges, including mental and physical health concerns and difficulties reintegrating into civilian life (Ein et al., 2024; Fullwood, 2015)
- Peer support groups enable veterans to normalize their experiences, build trust, and manage symptoms through shared understanding and acceptance (Gettings et al., 2022; Kerr et al., 2020)
- Limited research on occupational therapy's role in supporting veterans' needs and the use of group-based aquatic interventions for mental health (Kerr et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2022)

Learning Objectives

1. Develop an aquatic therapy wellness program for veterans
2. Participate in community outreach to promote the aquatic therapy wellness program
3. Implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the wellness program for veterans

Program Description & Implementation

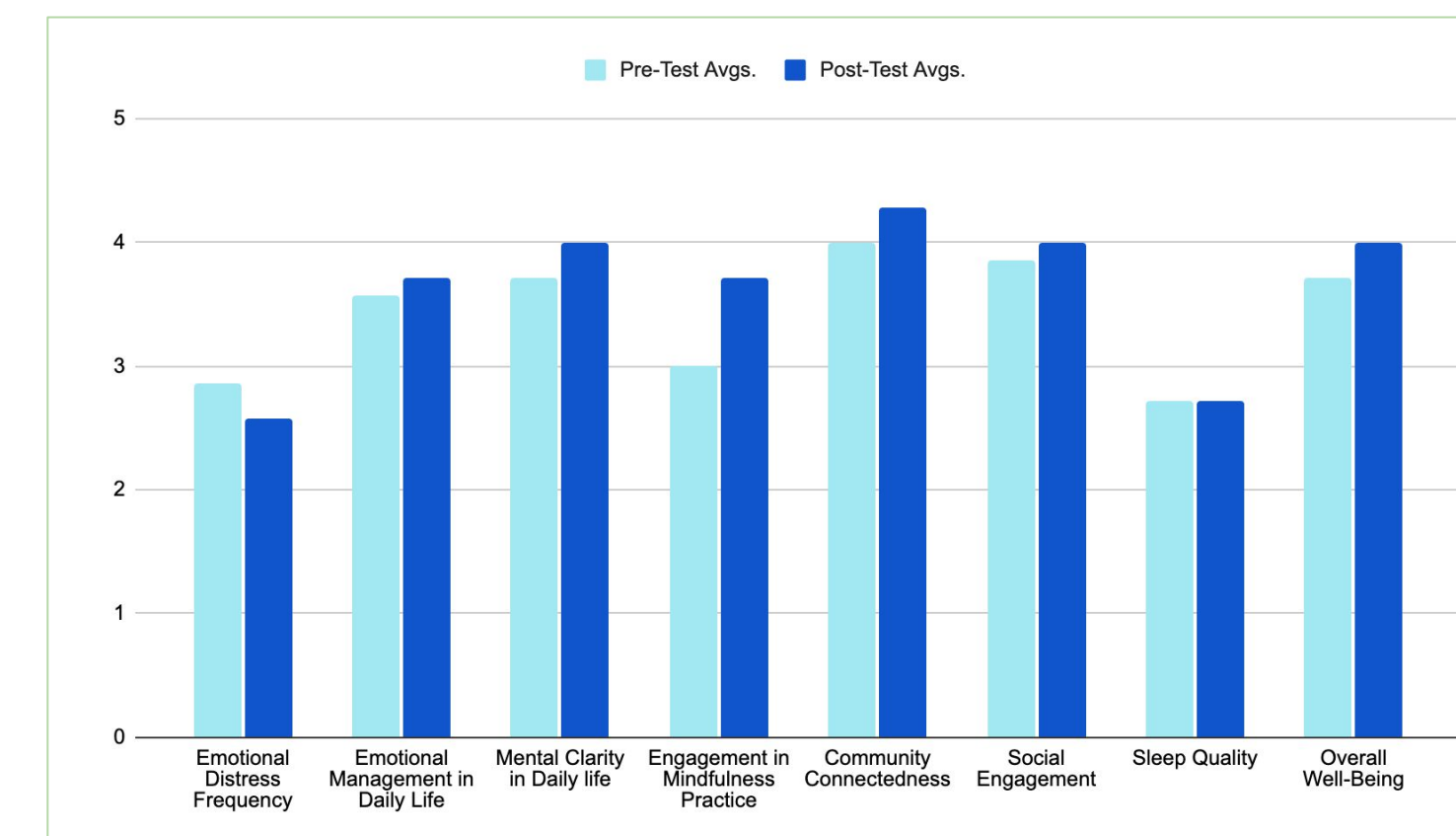
- **Purpose:** Develop a wellness program that supports the mental, emotional and overall well-being of an underserved population through peer support and water-based mindfulness practices
- **Program Structure:** One hour sessions held twice a week for six weeks
- **Program Discussion Topics:** Gratitude, social-support, self-compassion, coping mechanisms, self-care, resilience, sleep, letting go, healthier habits, personal growth, building community, self-discovery
- **Program Data Collection:** Pre-and-post surveys (quantitative), focus group discussion (qualitative)
- **Participants:** Seven



Program Evaluation & Outcomes

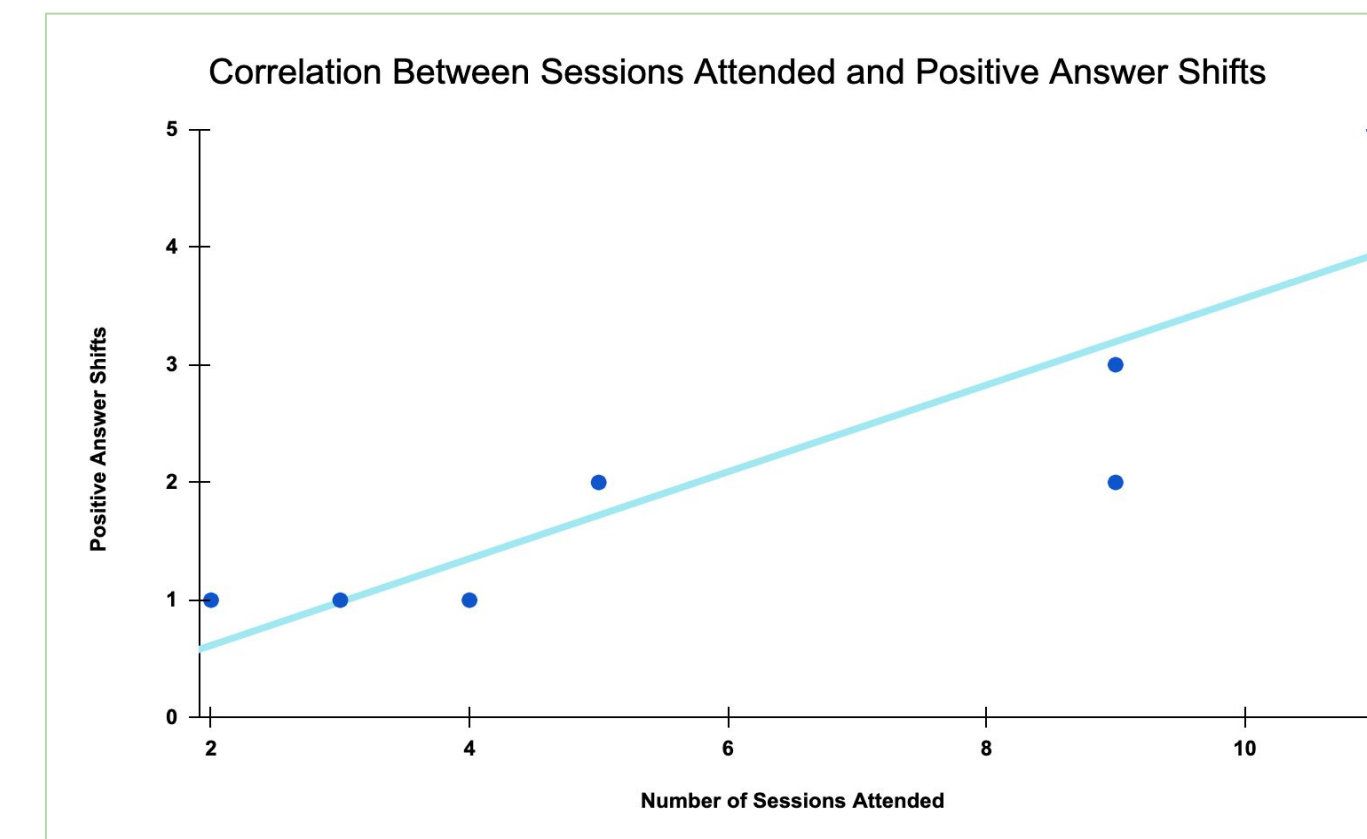
Quantitative Data

Figure 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Averages Across Key Health Measures



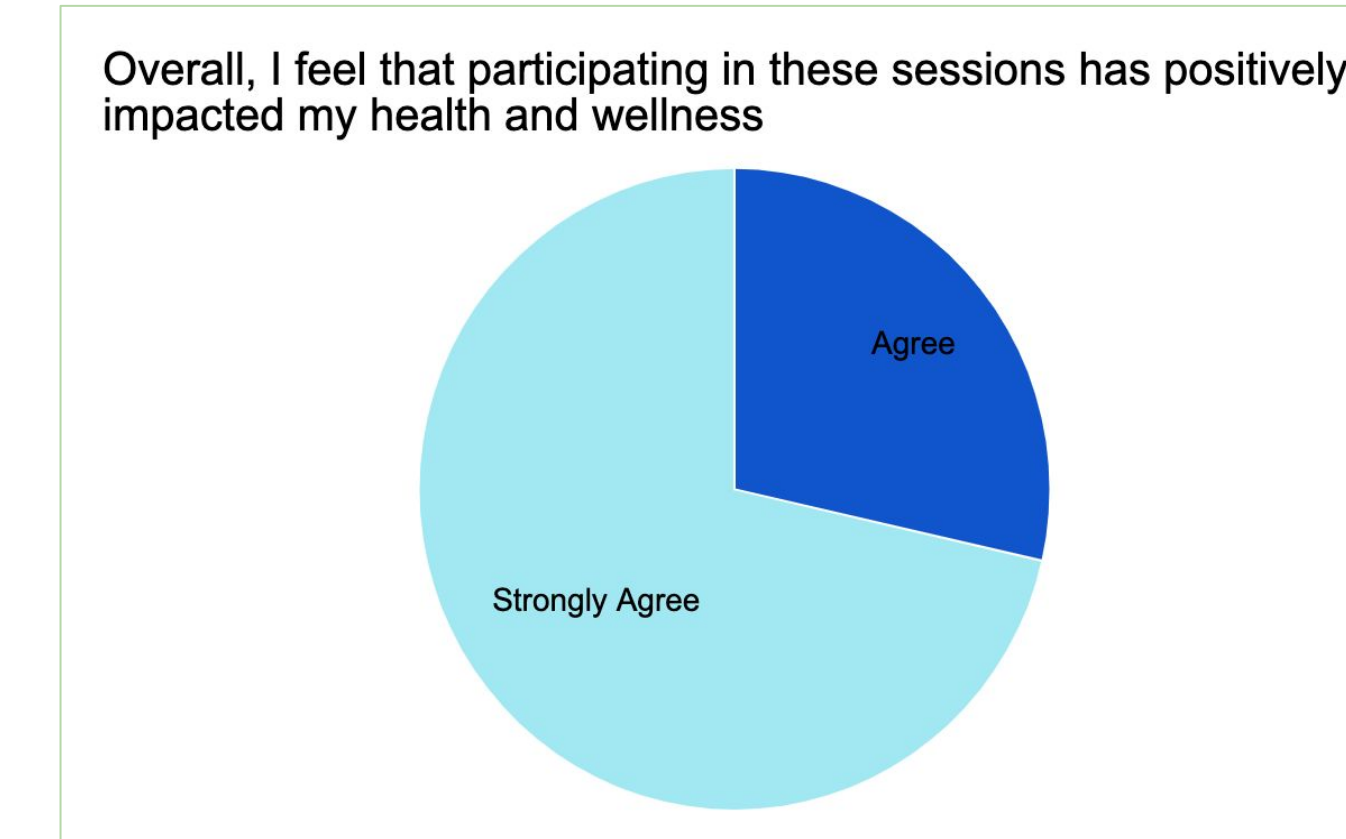
Statistically Significant Improvement:
In how often participants engaged in mindfulness practice

Figure 2. Correlation Between Sessions Attended and Positive Answer Shifts



Positive Correlation:
Higher attendance was associated with more positive answer changes

Figure 3. Perceived Impact of Sessions on Health and Wellness



Perceived Program Impact:
All participants reported the sessions positively impacted their health and wellness

Qualitative Data

Increased Mind-Body Awareness
"I feel more in tune with my body, I'm more mindful and aware of my actual movements... I've learned how to be present."

Promoted Social Connectedness
"The program topics helped me break out of my comfort zone, gave me an incentive to connect with others I can relate to..this is my people."

Improved Physical Health
"My posture and balance have improved... I've learned how to focus more on my breathing when I do certain tasks, making them easier to complete."

Discussion & Implications

Discussion:

- Quantitative analysis revealed a statistically significant increase in participants' frequency of mindfulness practice after completing the program
- Qualitative data reinforced the significance of mindfulness practices, and highlighted the positive impact on social connectedness, and physical benefits

Implications:

- The positive correlation between attendance and outcomes suggests that more frequent or ongoing sessions could lead to better outcomes
- Importance of ongoing advocacy and occupational therapy services for this underserved population

Limitations

- Small sample size
- Short program duration
- Inconsistent attendance, as participation in every session was not required

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Deliverable Products



Scholarly Deliverables



References