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Restoring Meaning through Leisure: Exploring the Benefits of Leisure-Focused Occupational Therapy for Individuals with Neurological Diagnoses

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Restoring Meaning through Leisure: Exploring the Benefits of Leisure-Focused Occupational Therapy for Individuals with Neurological Diagnoses

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Faculty Mentor: Dr. Mackenzie Feldhacker

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Leisure Disruptions Due to Neurological Conditions:

- Those with acquired brain injuries (ABI) experience changes in physical, cognitive, and emotional, functioning, social rejection, and disrupted self-identity which contribute to decreased leisure participation (Villa et al., 2020).
- Health, body functioning, depression, embarrassment (Williams et al., 2014), and low motivation (Rosly et al., 2018) are barriers to leisure for those with spinal cord injuries (SCI).
- Fatigue, numbness, embarrassment, and limited mobility are reasons for decreased leisure participation for those with progressive neurological conditions (McCabe et al., 2008).

Need for Leisure

- Regular participation in leisure is a healthy habit linked to physical wellbeing (Williams et al., 2014), stress reduction (Kim & Brown, 2022), reduced anxiety, and mental wellbeing (Santini et al., 2022).

Occupational Therapy Role in Leisure Restoration

- OT involves enabling participation in life's occupations. As a profession concerned with the interaction between daily activities and health, OT should seek to address leisure disruptions for persons served.

Purpose:

- The purpose of this Capstone was to explore occupational therapy's role in restoring leisure participation for those with neurological conditions in the Sioux Falls VA Community Living Center (CLC) and VA Adaptive Sports.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) (Kielhofner, 2008):

- A person's volition, habituation, performance capacity, and the environment are components of an open system of interactions. These components contribute to one's sense of identity and role competence (Kielhofner, 2008).
- Volition**, or one's interests and values, was targeted through interviews and evaluations to understand participants' leisure and recreation interests.
- Performance capacity** involves the skills needed to interact with the environment. Performance capacity was addressed in adaptive sports, where participants were instructed in skiing or bocce ball and given time to practice and improve skills, and the CLC, where participants were provided opportunities to engage in leisure activities.
- Habituation** refers to roles, routines, and habits. Participants were encouraged to form leisure habits by scheduling adaptive sports events and increasing the frequency of participation in the CLC, during occupational therapy interventions.
- Aspects of the **environment** were modified with assistive technology, adaptive equipment, and trained staff to encourage participation in adaptive skiing and CLC leisure interventions.

METHODS

Goal 1: Gain skills in adaptive recreation for individuals with neurological conditions.

- Deliverables:
 - Adaptive Ski Instructor Certificate
 - Adaptive Sports Evaluations with Summary of Site Mentor Feedback
 - Summary Report of Supports and Barriers to Inform CLC Programming
 - Video Story
 - Recruitment Letters, Safety Checklist, and Reflection and Summary of Veteran Participation

Population:

- Five Veterans in adaptive skiing were 37 to 73 years old and had diagnoses of SCI (20%), low vision (40%), ABI (20%), and peripheral nerve paralysis (20%). Four of the Veterans were male.
- Eighteen community members in adaptive skiing were 9 to 64 years old, and had conditions of autism spectrum disorder (27.8%), cerebral palsy (22.2%), spina bifida (11.1%), low vision (11.1%), and other (27.8%). The majority of participants were males.

Goal 2: Determine how leisure exploration can be implemented into occupational therapy in rehabilitation settings.

- Deliverables:
 - Site Needs Assessment and Interview Guide
 - Continuing Education Course Certificates and Summary of Integration of Knowledge
 - Leisure-Focused Intervention and Assessment Toolkit
 - Outcomes Summary from LSS-SF and Q-LES-Q-SF
 - Presentation of Leisure Outcomes and Toolkit

Instruments:

- Leisure Satisfaction Scale – Short Form (LSS-SF) measured leisure satisfaction (Beard & Ragheb, 1980 as cited by Kim & Cho, 2022).
- Quality-of-Life Enjoyment and Satisfaction Questionnaire – Short Form (Q-LES-Q-SF) measured quality of life and perceptions of wellbeing (Endicott et al., 1993).

Population:

- Three Veterans over the age of 50 participated in leisure interventions and completed pre- and post-outcomes including two males and one female. Two had a history of stroke with comorbidities such as low vision, chronic low back pain, cellulitis, and obesity. One Veteran had pneumonia and an appendectomy with resulting muscle weakness.

RESULTS

Student Outcomes:

Goal 1 was achieved:

- The student gained skills through adaptive ski instructor training, led ski lessons, and facilitated participation for those with neurological conditions.
- The student became proficient in adaptive sports evaluations, identifying Veterans' needs, and collaborating to form goals.
- The student organized events and created tools to improve the safety and planning of the events.
- The importance of having inclusive recreational opportunities was demonstrated in the video story.

Goal 2 was achieved:

- Guided by continuing education in assistive technology, literature, and needs assessment findings, the student personalized leisure interventions for Veterans in the CLC to improve leisure satisfaction and quality of life.
- The leisure sessions promoted physical activity, social participation, and progress toward the rehabilitation goals.
- An evidence-based leisure toolkit was created to guide leisure-focused services at the site.
- Pretest and posttest outcomes and the toolkit were shared with the rehab team at the Sioux Falls VAMC to promote leisure-focused occupational therapy.

Leisure Satisfaction Scale – Short Form (LSS-SF)

- Leisure satisfaction improved in all domains except relaxation leisure satisfaction, which remained the same (see Figure 1).
- Overall leisure satisfaction improved to a greater degree with additional sessions (see Figure 2). The Veteran who participated in one session saw a 3% increase, while the one who participated in 3 sessions saw an 18% increase.

Quality-of-Life Enjoyment and Satisfaction Questionnaire – Short Form (Q-LES-Q-SF)

- After leisure interventions, quality of life improved by 8% (see Figure 3).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

- Leisure is an area of occupation that is under-addressed in occupational therapy, though it can have a large impact on health and wellbeing.
- As indicated by literature and veterans' reports, those with neurological conditions experience many barriers that prevent their participation in leisure and recreational activities.
- Guided by MOHO, the Capstone project was implemented to explore how occupational therapists can improve leisure participation for such individuals, both in rehabilitation settings and adaptive sports.
- The student developed skills & expertise in adaptive recreation for those with neurological conditions, demonstrated the importance of having inclusive recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and determined how leisure-focused occupational therapy can be implemented in rehabilitation settings.
- Findings indicate that leisure satisfaction and quality of life were improved after leisure-based interventions.

IMPLICATIONS

- Occupational therapists have a role in adaptive sports & recreation, as they have a well-established foundation of skills and perspectives for restoring recreation. Further education is needed to gain expertise and skills in adaptive sports settings.
- Enabling sport and recreational involvement is an impactful way to support physical and mental wellbeing for those with neurological conditions.
- Occupational therapists should pursue a leisure-focused approach in rehabilitation to improve leisure satisfaction and quality of life.
- Leisure-based interventions can improve motivation and engagement in exercises during physical rehabilitation.
- Leisure-based interventions should be individualized based on the personal interests, and a choice must be presented to retain the intrinsically motivated nature of leisure participation.

Figure 2.

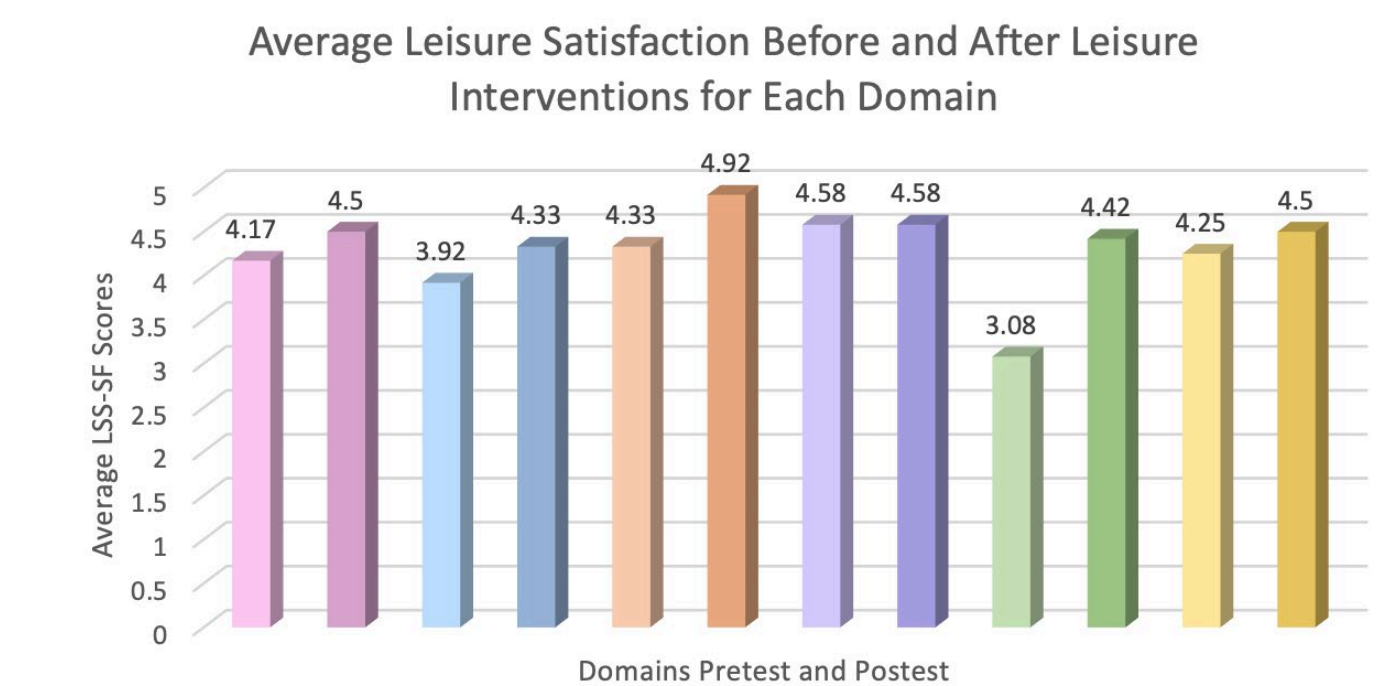


Figure 1.

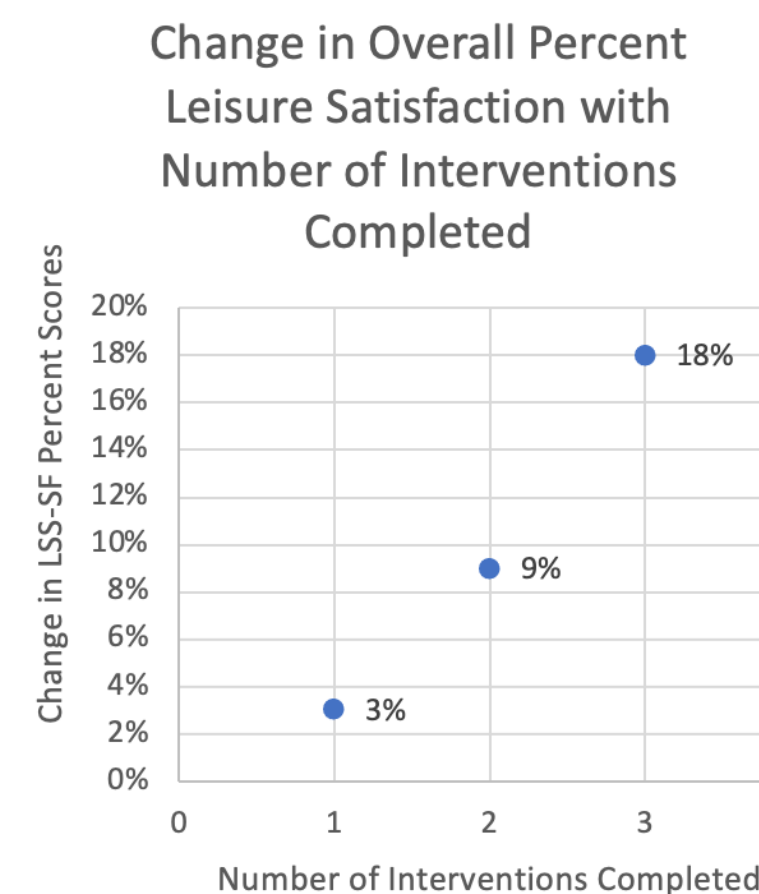
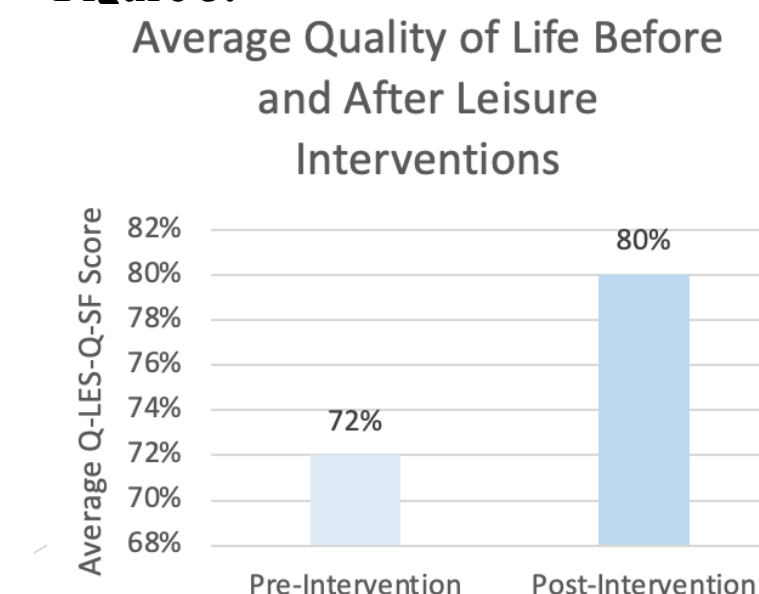


Figure 3.



REFERENES

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