

Analyzing the Relevancy and Implementation of an Emotional Intelligence Curriculum in Occupational Therapy Education Programs from the Perspective of Faculty Members

This research project is the analytic phase of an ongoing effort to develop and promote the use of an effective emotional intelligence (EI) training curriculum in occupational therapy education programs in the U.S. Growing evidence indicates the importance of embracing emotional EI by healthcare professionals and students. Demonstrating EI skills in both personal and professional life facilitates stress management, conflict resolution, professional growth, and client-centered care. However, EI training has not been formalized as part of the health professional's education curriculum and many students are left unprepared for the challenges of Level II fieldwork placements. To help students better prepare for a successful fieldwork experience, the Occupational Therapy Department of SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University developed the Emotional Intelligence Curriculum (EIC) for master-level occupational therapy (OT) students. They had also invited other healthcare education programs to use the curriculum to promote the standardization of EI training in healthcare education programs. For analytical purposes, OT education programs including doctoral, master's and OT assistant's certification programs that had requested and were provided permission to use the curriculum were surveyed to obtain information about each program and its implementation, feedback, and suggestions regarding the curriculum. The sample population were contacted by email and invited to complete an electronic questionnaire that contained open-ended and closed-ended questions and Likert scales. The data collected indicated that the EIC was highly relevant, easy to use and helpful to increase awareness of soft skills among students. A few respondents suggested additional topics for the EIC, including managing negative feedback, working with LGBTQ+ individuals, and motivating difficult clients. The results supported the promotion of the EIC and gathered the perspectives of healthcare educators.