

# The Effectiveness of COTAD Chapter Events in Developing Cultural Competency

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of COTAD Chapter events in developing the cultural competency of first and second-year Downstate occupational therapy students. We predicted that occupational therapy students who participated in 2-3 COTAD Chapter events would demonstrate higher scores on the CCAI-UIC compared to students who only participated in standard course curriculum.

**Methods:** A pre and post-CCAI-UIC and 5-question survey were administered to analyze the cultural competency of Downstate occupational therapy students. The CCAI-UIC is a self-assessment that utilizes a three-factor model with cognitive, behavioral, and contextual components that quantitatively measure cultural knowledge, skills, and organizational support.

The pilot data was analyzed through a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to examine the relationship between these three samples:

- 1) First-year students who only participated in standard course curriculum vs. first-year students who participated in COTAD Chapter events.
- 2) Second-year students who only participated in standard course curriculum vs. second-year students who participated in COTAD Chapter events.
- 3) First-year students who participated in COTAD Chapter events vs. second-year students who participated in COTAD Chapter events.

**Results:** Findings indicated a moderate negative correlation among first-year students who did not participate in COTAD Chapter events and those who did ( $r = -.394$ ). A moderate positive correlation was observed between second-year students who did not participate in COTAD Chapter events and those who did ( $r = .301$ ). Additionally, a low negative correlation, signifying a slight association, was noted between 1st-year students who participated in COTAD Chapter events and 2nd-year who participated in events ( $r = -.261$ ). The statistical analysis suggested that exposure to varying levels of cultural competency training, including COTAD Chapter events, contributes to students' self-perceived cultural competence.

## BACKGROUND

Cultural competency is essential in occupational therapy, as it guides practitioners to effectively provide client-centered care. Research has shown that students who participate in service-learning and intercultural programs score significantly higher on cultural competency assessments, such as the IAPPC-SV. Through participation in service-learning and intercultural programs, occupational therapy students can establish relationships with clients from different backgrounds while also learning about health equity and culturally appropriate care. Research has shown that culturally competent care provision leads to better patient outcomes.

The COTAD Chapter at SUNY Downstate hosts student-led, service-learning and intercultural programs throughout the academic year to promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). In this study, the COTAD Chapter hosted 2 service-learning events and 2 intercultural events during the 2023 fall semester. Approximately 60 first and second-year Downstate occupational therapy students participated in this study.

## METHODOLOGY

### Cultural Competence Assessment Instrument (CCAI-UIC)

CONSIDERING YOUR WORK OVER THE PAST YEAR	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. I feel that I can learn from my ethnic minority clients.	6	5	4	3	2
14. It is hard adjusting my therapeutic strategies with ethnic minority clients.	6	5	4	3	2
15. I am effective in my verbal communication with clients whose culture is different from mine.	6	5	4	3	2
16. My organization does not provide ongoing training on cultural competence.	6	5	4	3	2
17. I do not consider the cultural backgrounds of my clients when food is involved.	6	5	4	3	2
18. I receive feedback from supervisors on how to improve my practice skills with clients from different ethnic minority backgrounds.	6	5	4	3	2
19. At work, pictures, posters, printed materials and toys reflect the culture and ethnic backgrounds of ethnic minority clients.	6	5	4	3	2
20. I feel confident that I can learn about my clients' cultural background.	6	5	4	3	2
21. Cultural competence is included in my work place's mission statement, policies, and procedures.	6	5	4	3	2
22. I am effective in my nonverbal communication with clients whose culture is different from mine.	6	5	4	3	2
23. The way services are structured in my setting makes it difficult to identify the cultural values of my clients.	6	5	4	3	2
24. I feel that I have limited experience working with ethnic minority clients.	6	5	4	3	2
25. It is difficult to practice skills related to cultural competence.	6	5	4	3	2
26. I am sensitive to valuing and respecting differences between my cultural background and my clients' cultural heritage.	6	5	4	3	2
27. My workplace does not support using resources to promote cultural competence.	6	5	4	3	2
28. I have opportunities to learn culturally responsive behaviors from peers.	6	5	4	3	2
29. I do not feel that I have the skills to provide services to ethnic minority clients.	6	5	4	3	2
30. I examine my own biases related to race and culture that may influence my behavior as a service provider.	6	5	4	3	2
31. I actively strive for an atmosphere that promotes risk-taking and self-exploration.	6	5	4	3	2
32. My work place does not support my participation in cultural celebrations of my clients.	6	5	4	3	2
33. I would find it easy to work competently with ethnic minority clients.	6	5	4	3	2
34. I openly discuss with others issues I may have in developing multicultural awareness.	6	5	4	3	2
35. I learn about different ethnic cultures through educational methods and/or life experiences.	6	5	4	3	2
36. It is difficult for me to accept that religious beliefs may influence how ethnic minorities respond to illness and disability.	6	5	4	3	2

### COTAD Chapter Events

#### Service-Learning Events



COTAD Chapter volunteered at local public schools in Brooklyn for Backpack Awareness Day and facilitated presentations about safe backpack use for school-aged children.

#### Intercultural Events



COTAD Chapter hosted a Hispanic Heritage Month event highlighting Hispanic cultures and educated students on how to provide culturally competent care for Hispanic clients.

## DISCUSSION

This study examines the impact of COTAD Chapter events on students' cultural competency. Pilot data from pre- and post-surveys revealed diverse cultural competency levels among participants. While student-led events were generally effective, suggestions for improvement were noted. Weak to moderate support was found for the hypothesis that 2-3 COTAD Chapter events enhance CCAI-UIC scores, necessitating further research. The pre-survey indicated that most participants learned about topics on cultural competency through various classes in school, while the post-survey indicated increased knowledge through work and fieldwork placements. Intrinsic motivations for attending events were curiosity to learn about different cultures and community engagement, with a 20% increase in motivation due to academic requirements in the post-survey.

Integrating service-learning and intercultural events into standard course curricula is recommended. Our literature review aligns with findings from Brown & Stav (2020) and Geo-DiFrancesco et al. (2021), emphasizing that service-learning programs boost cultural competency in occupational therapy students. Merrill (2019) further supports occupational therapy students to start their careers with high cultural competency self-assessment. Our qualitative survey's emerging themes reinforce literature findings, highlighting the importance of developing cultural competency during the occupational therapy didactic program to ensure confident and effective care provision. Recommendations for future research include exploring diverse event locations, increasing sample sizes, and investigating events targeting self-confidence in cultural competency across multiple occupational therapy programs.

## LIMITATIONS

1. Due to the small sample size of 60 first and second-year students, there may be a challenge with generalizing the findings to other occupational therapy student populations (i.e. larger programs, those located in rural or international settings).
2. The study's short duration suggests the need for long-term research to fully understand the continuous impact of service-learning and intercultural events on the Downstate occupational therapy program's cultural competency.
3. Potential desirability bias among participants may have influenced responses toward positive attitudes of cultural competence, potentially affecting post-assessment survey outcomes.
4. Past participation in COTAD Chapter events may have influenced student's interest in cultural competency, potentially affecting post-assessment/survey outcomes.
5. A convenience sample of Downstate OT students was used; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized.

## REFERENCES

- Brown, J., & Stav, W. (2020). Servant leadership in Zambia: A quantitative study on increased critical thinking and cultural competency of OT students. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 74(4, Supplement-1). <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2020.74.4.107028>
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- Merrill, M. (2019, June 19). *Increasing cultural competence through project H.O.P.E. (healthy occupations for people everywhere)*. Boston University Libraries OpenBU. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from <https://openbu.edu/handle/2144/56922>
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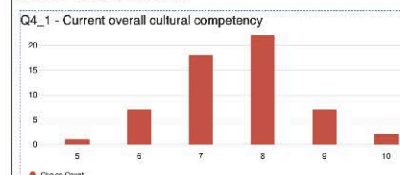
## RESULTS

### Quantitative Data

#### PRE-SURVEY RESULTS

Personal Rating of Current Overall Cultural Competency:

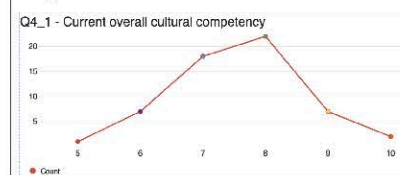
Average=7.54 Min=5 Max=10



#### POST-SURVEY RESULTS

Personal Rating of Current Overall Cultural Competency:

Average=7.58 Min=5 Max=10



### Qualitative Data

Theme	Student Testimonial
Increased Confidence to Serve Diverse Populations	- "COTAD Chapter events have given me insights into specific aspects of different cultures, like holidays and cuisines. This will help me design therapy interventions that utilize this knowledge to build better rapport with my clients and help increase treatment adherence."
Increased Knowledge of Different Cultures Through Student-Led Presentations, Food, and Music	- "I have learned about holidays, customs, food, and music that are traditional to various cultures. It is more authentic than reading from a website or a textbook, as I am learning directly from students of that specific culture."
Better Understanding of the Local Community Due to Service-Learning Events	- "COTAD Chapter events have allowed me to work within communities. I was able to interact with students during backpack awareness day and raise awareness about the importance of wearing backpack correctly, which was something the students were unaware of in the beginning."
Contrary Views on the Impact of COTAD Chapter Events on Cultural Competency	- "I don't think COTAD chapter events have affected my overall cultural competency. I am an individual who actively seeks cultural education through reading/videos and podcasts. I hope to see more frequent COTAD Chapter events where discussions can be had surrounding the cultural competency in the individuals with room."