

Preliminary Analysis of Virtual Photovoice Methods Used in Exploring OT Students' Lived Experience During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Lauren Selingo, OTR/L¹, Melissa Barcelona, Dawon Lee, Miranda Massey, Nikki Panganiban, Hailey Pink, Mariah Schaller¹, Isabella Smith, Zach Smith, Virginia "Ginny" Stoffel, PhD, OT, FAOTA¹

¹University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, United States

DOI: 10.5014/ajot.2022.76S1-PO117

Date presented: April 2, 2022

Primary Author and Speaker: Lauren Selingo, lselingo31@gmail.com

PURPOSE: The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant changes in how occupations (social, educational, employment) are conducted, with many being held in a virtual format for increased safety and ease of access. As we transition to a new virtual norm, there is an increasing need for exploration into the effect of the pandemic on the lived experience of occupational therapy (OT) students, amongst other populations. The purpose of this study was to 1) explore the lived experience of occupational therapy students during the COVID-19 global pandemic through virtual Photovoice methods and 2) assess the feasibility and accessibility of the virtual methods implemented.

DESIGN: The study utilized a qualitative, participatory action-research-based approach and engaged occupational therapy students in virtual Photovoice methods (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) and subsequent thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) of the students' data using the Canvas and Zoom platforms.

METHOD: Participants were recruited through word-of-mouth at an urban, Midwestern university. After obtaining informed consent, the Principal Investigators (PIs) created a structured 'course' through the Canvas platform for participants to access and engage with the study materials and upload photos and finalized Photovoice pieces. Interactive Photovoice session workshops were held on Zoom where participants completed four sessions where they learned about, engaged in, and completed the Photovoice methodology, which included the ethics (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001) of taking photos, engaging in discussions on the lived experiences of occupational therapy students during the COVID-19 pandemic, taking photos that explored their lived experience, and generating a Photovoice piece consisting of their chosen photo and accompanying narrative (Wang & Burris, 1997). Thematic analysis was used to analyze the participant workshop transcripts and Photovoice pieces (Braun & Clark, 2006). The PIs and student participants first determined codes regarding the 'methods' versus the 'lived experience' aspects of the study, before generating initial themes regarding the 'methods' codes.

RESULTS: Preliminary themes identified from the 'methods'-based data include the importance of having attuned facilitators, participant role induction across the study where through collaboration, students moved into active co-researcher roles and activated synergy across the research team.

CONCLUSIONS: Initial results of the study provide valuable insight into OT students' perspectives on their experiences engaging in virtual Photovoice methods and add to the body of literature surrounding the benefit of student engagement in virtual participatory action research methods (Gordon & Edwards, 2012). Future waves of data collection with students from other OT programs will implement these findings to assure attuned facilitation of the Photovoice process, provision of accessible materials, and facilitation of active engagement in identifying important stories that generate a collection of Photovoice pieces, with at least one piece created by each participant (photo and narrative). Online facilitation of the thematic analysis steps (Braun & Clark, 2006) involves a transformative process where students perceived their role as moving from research participant to co-researcher, creating synergy as they discerned the data into meaningful themes. After future waves of the study are implemented, participants will be invited to contribute their perspectives and build their skills in thematic analysis, thus validating the creation of feasible and accessible virtual Photovoice methods.

References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Gordon, S. M., & Edwards, J. L. (2012). Enhancing student research through a virtual participatory action research project: Student benefits and administrative challenges. *Action Research*, 10(2), 205–220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750312439900>
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369–387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309>
- Wang, C. C., & Redwood-Jones, Y. A. (2001). Photovoice Ethics: Perspectives from Flint Photovoice. *Health Education & Behavior*, 28(5), 560–572. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019810102800504>