

Occupational Narratives of Older Adults Participating in Music-Based Occupations

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to implement an occupational therapy intervention that could be used for telehealth services with an emphasis on participants learning ways to independently choose and sustain engagement in meaningful music activities, known as occupations. The researchers' aim was to examine how music occupation interventions lower risks of occupational deprivation (i.e., prolonged restriction from participation in necessary or meaningful activities [Law, 2002]) that could occur due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

DESIGN: Eight adults were purposively selected after sending out recruitment emails to students, faculty, and staff at the university, with instructions to forward the research information to interested family members. Those who consented and participated were 65 years or older, enjoyed music, and lived in the community in various cities in IN, IL and Ohio. The researchers used narrative qualitative methodology (Kim, 2016) to analyze focus group data to create occupational narratives (Taylor, 2017) that demonstrated change in engagement in music occupations as a result of participation in music occupation group sessions.

METHOD: The participants completed seven intervention sessions designed to increase and sustain music engagement outside of the sessions. Data from both the pre- and post-intervention focus groups, from observational field notes generated from intervention sessions, and from documents the participants produced through completion of various group activities, such as a music passport to log engagement in music occupations outside of intervention sessions, were triangulated across the eight participants. The triangulated data produced an occupational change pattern analysis and narrative. The focus of the change narrative (Taylor, 2017) was on the participant's management or prevention of occupational deprivation and loneliness.

RESULTS: The researchers identified common themes after the intervention involving change in routines and habits to include regular engagement in meaningful music activities and skills for using occupational participation as an important method of coping with the loneliness and deprivation from COVID-19. The participants reported the development of new technological skills to access music to replace in-person participation of attending live concerts and shows when deemed unsafe because of potential for virus transmission. Satisfaction with and enjoyment of working with others who had similar interests in music was described with the group members making plans to continue interactions through online meetings on their own.

CONCLUSIONS: The music occupations group delivered online has the potential for further development as a telehealth intervention for older community dwelling adults who express interest in music and who report social isolation and deprivation from restricted engagement in meaningful occupations. Next research steps involve studies of effectiveness of the intervention.

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