

# Factors influencing the Mental Health & Self-Efficacy of OT Practitioners Working During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Yan-hua Huang, Stephen Wong, Sarah Taylor, Mallory Sheldon, John Stokes

California State University Dominguez Hills, Carson, CA, USA

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Primary Author and Speaker: Yan-hua Huang, [yhuang@csudh.edu](mailto:yhuang@csudh.edu)

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is to evaluate factors influencing the mental health and self-efficacy of occupational therapy practitioners working during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**DESIGN:** This comparison study utilized an online survey. The participants were OTs and OTAs who were at least 18 years old, spoke English, and worked in the United States.

**METHOD:** This survey included demographic questions and the following five standardized instruments: Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale, Generalized Anxiety Disorder Assessment, Patient Health Questionnaire, General Self-Efficacy Scale, and Perceived Stress Scale. Data was analyzed using independent t-tests in SPSS.

**RESULTS:** 98 participants were recruited for this study. There were statistically significant differences between participants who worked directly with COVID patients compared to those who did not. Participants working with COVID patients have higher levels of anxiety and depression ( $p < .05$ ). We compared participants through demographic variables and found that stress increases in clinicians who are married, do not participate in physical activity, and are of a lower socioeconomic status (SES) ( $p < .05$ ). Factors such as having a higher SES and being provided with mental health coping strategies at work were associated with lower stress levels ( $p < .05$ ). The data also indicated that practitioners under 50 years old tend to exhibit higher levels of anxiety, depression, and stress as compared to practitioners over 50 years old ( $p < .01$ ).

**CONCLUSION:** Our research supports OT employers integrating mental healthcare resources in work settings since this was associated with higher levels of perceived self-efficacy. Finally, our research demonstrates that several life factors, such as participation in physical activity, SES, and marriage status, can contribute to increased stress, anxiety, depression, and lower perceived self-efficacy among OT practitioners.

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