

Research Questions

What do Fieldwork Educators (FWEs) need from Academic Fieldwork Coordinators (AFWCs) and Occupational Therapy (OT) Departments to better support the success and overall fieldwork experience for OT/s and Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA)/s who have invisible disabilities?

How can academic programs better prepare their students for discussions regarding disclosure with Occupational Therapy Practitioners (OTPs) and future colleagues?

Background

Research suggests further work is needed to “develop guidelines and education for fieldwork educators on how to best incorporate accommodations into their programs” (Ozelie et al., 2019, p 14).

FWEs are also looking for AFWCs to provide "program support personalized for each student when extra support/guidance is needed." (Cohen, 2021)*

More research is needed to explore AFWC and FWE for their perspectives on challenging fieldwork experiences, especially disclosure and securing reasonable accommodations.

Methods

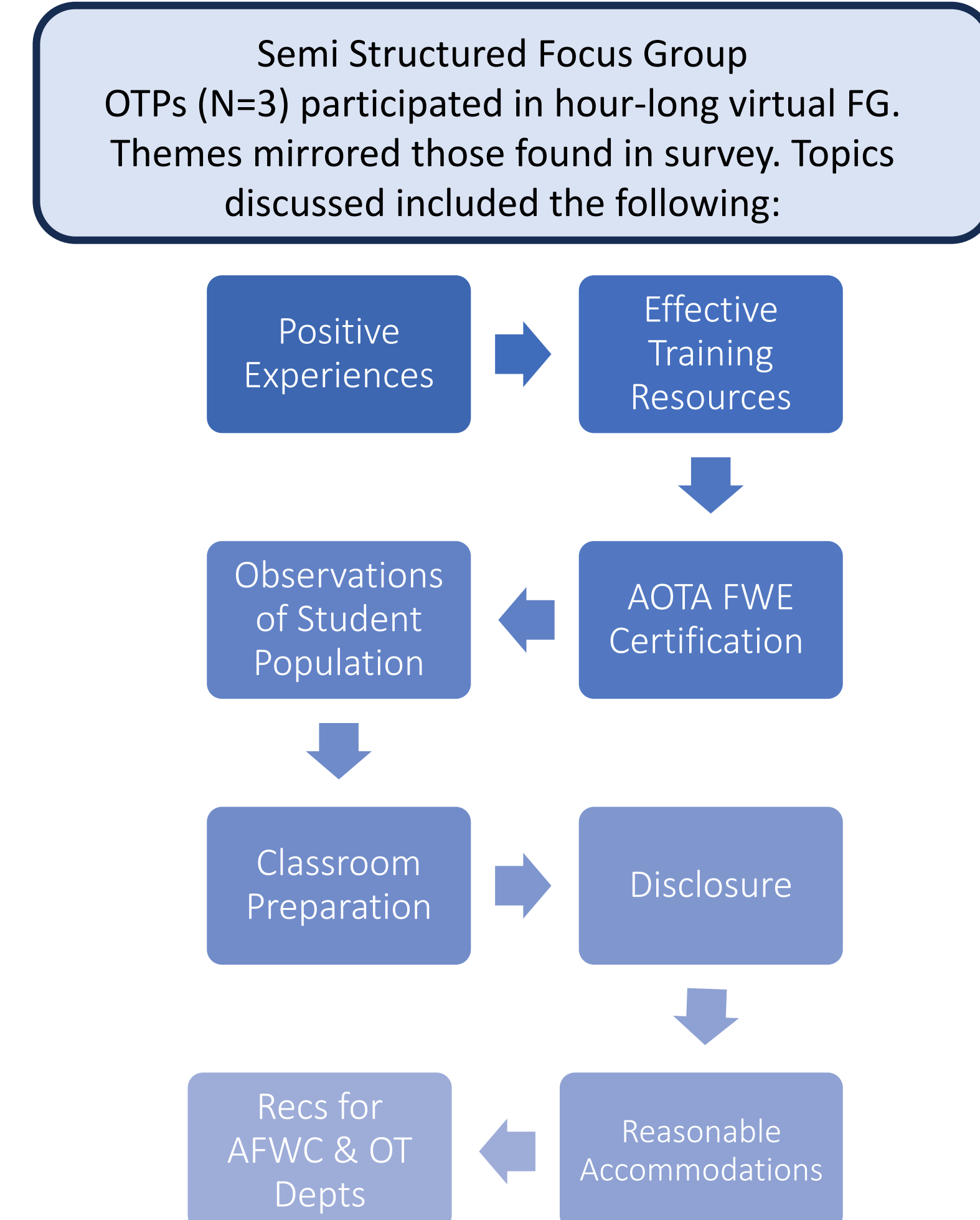
Survey	Semi Structured Focus Group (FG) with the following topics	Data analysis	Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researcher created Demographic ?s Slider scale ?s re: perceptions Optional free response sections for elaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disclosure Accommodations in workplace FWE training & support resources Recommendations for AFWCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triangulate themes & notable findings from survey Discernment of findings in Survey vs FG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of survey responses & FG themes Identification of main points Recommendations for future program development

Detailed tables with additional qualitative exemplar quotes found by accessing QR code on bottom right corner of poster

FWE Perceptions of reasonable accommodations, Academic (A) vs. Workplace (W)
4 item subset of 10 reasonable accommodation variables

Results

Qualitative Themes	Exemplar Quotes
Theme 1: Disclosure as a facet of communication Subtheme: FWE understanding	I think the most we can do is encourage the student to talk to their fieldwork coordinator or whoever they need to, about any special needs that they may have. (FG3) It allows the educat[or] to understand a little more about any struggles that may be occurring and allows them to develop a plan on how best to help the student get the most out of their fieldwork placement. (S12)
Theme 2: Disclosure as prerequisite for receiving reasonable accommodations Subtheme: Timing Subtheme: Setting	We can't really do anything to help support [a student] until she really tells us what's going on. And with the fieldwork sites, you know, legally, unless we are given permission by the student, we can't. (FG3) If they are discovered part way through the affiliation [that] the student [is] struggling it can be too late. (S7) [A]t our hospital, if somebody needed some accommodations, I don't know if we would necessarily be able to provide them... if the hospital has to provide something specific. I don't know if that's available, necessarily. It just depends. (FG2)
Theme 3: Disclosure as influential fieldwork experience for FWE and student Subtheme: Positive influence Subtheme: Negative influence	If your disability [a]ffects your ability to successfully complete your fieldwork, or impairs your ability to fully participate... [disclosure] determines the best course of action for the student to get the most of the fieldwork as possible. (S12) For me personally, as someone who also has an invisible disability, it's useful to know my students' identities. I think it helps me adjust my communication styles, meetings, and planning to know their needs. (S11) I'm seeing more invisible challenges, and they're not disclosed which puts the fieldwork educator at a disadvantage to helping a student. (FG1)



Survey Respondents		More Time		Deadline Extensions		Add'l PTO, Sick Leave		Modified Schedules	
Area of Practice	# OTs	A	W	A	W	A	W	A	W
School Based	6	83	83	83	66	33	33	83	66
Outpatient Pediatrics	4	100	75	100	75	50	50	75	75
Inpatient	9	100	77	88	44	55	66	77	77
Emerging Practice Area	4	100	50	100	25	25	25	75	50
Hand Therapy	3	100	0	100	0	0	33	66	66
Outpatient Adults	2	100	0	100	0	0	50	50	50
Mental Health	4	100	75	100	50	50	50	75	75
Community Based	2	100	0	100	50	0	0	0	0
Outpatient Acute	1	100	0	0	0	0	100	0	100

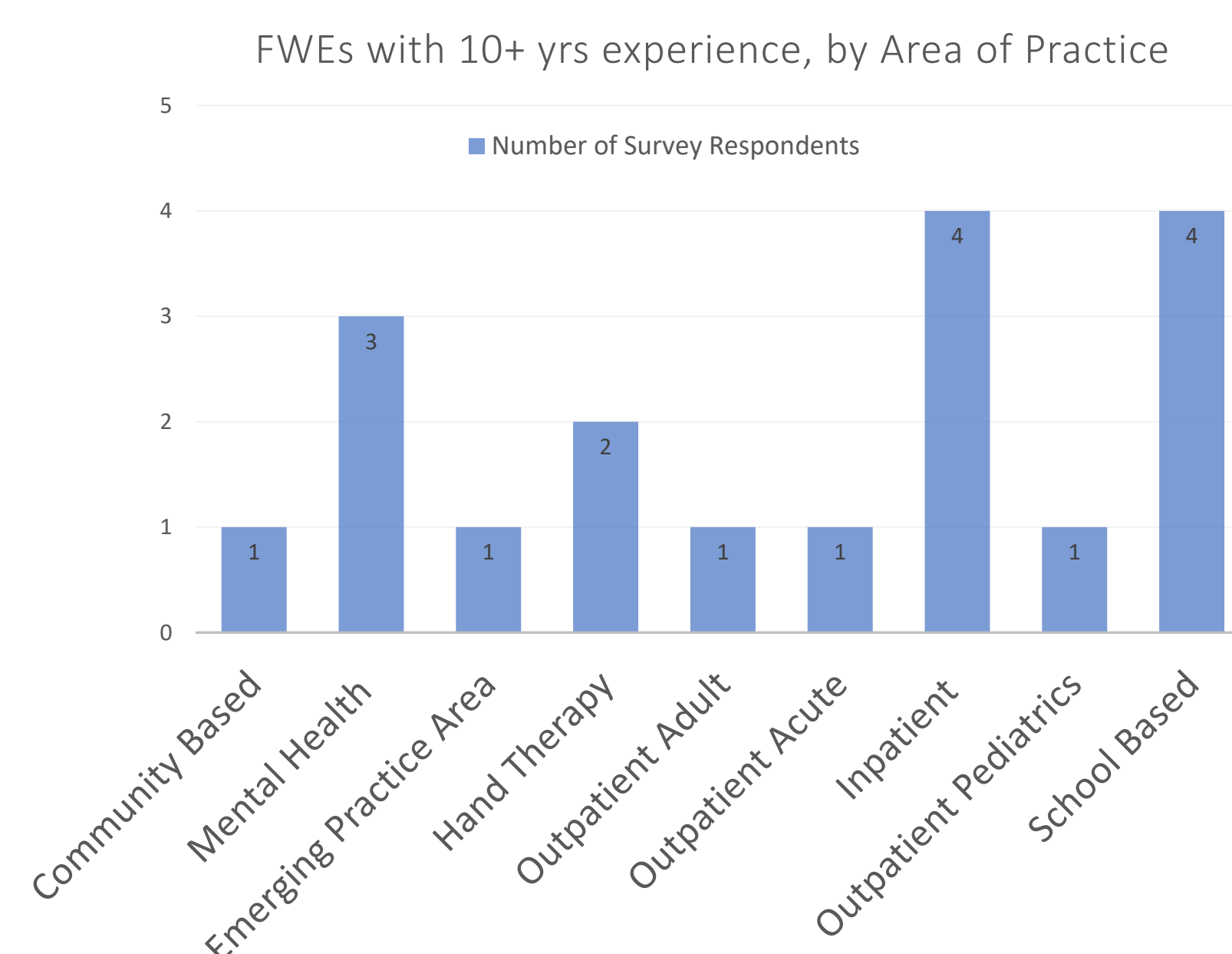
More Time: A > W by 26%
 Deadline Extensions: A > W by 45%
 Additional PTO: A < W by 3%
 Modified Schedule: A > W by 11%

Note: When summed, # of FWEs in each Area of Practice exceeds total # of Survey Respondents (n=27) due to OTPs in multiple practice areas. Bolded numbers represent differences of at least 50% (A vs W) or interesting responses within practice area.

Participants

Survey Respondents n= 27, Focus Group Participants n=3. Participants are Occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) that have had/ currently hold positions as FWEs

Yrs as OTP	less than 1 yr FWE	1-3 yrs FWE	3.1-5 yrs FWE	5.1-10 yrs FWE	10+ yrs FWE
1.1-4 yrs	0	0	1	0	0
4.1-10 yrs	1	2	0	3	0
10.1-15 yrs	0	1	0	0	2
15+ yrs	0	3	0	2	12



Discussion

OTPs perceive that AFWCs who value site relationships are **eager to meet the unique needs** of FWEs and of their students. AFWCs who observe more graduate students with **invisible disabilities** (such as anxiety, depression, ADHD, chronic illnesses, & various learning disabilities) may want to prepare FWEs with **targeted support resources** while also providing students with education regarding benefits of disclosure.

Recommendations for AFWCs and OT Academic Departments

- FWE education re: reasonable accommodations (workplace settings across various practice areas)
 - Potential need for increased advocacy in workplace environments where feasibility is low
- Collaboration-- Provide personalized support/mentorship for FWE, formal/ informal opportunities for FWE and students to problem solve issues while on fieldwork (i.e., support group, seminar, etc.)
- Program development for students-- Student panel of disclosure success stories prior to first fieldwork
- Increased communication-- practice conversations re: students' invisible disabilities with AFWC prior to conversations with FWE

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my advisor, Tufts OT Department, colleagues and loved ones. **For references & more information**, please scan the QR code or contact Deja M. Stockdale, OT/s email: deja.stockdale@tufts.edu or find me on LinkedIn

