

Assessing Intern Confidence: The Impact of Moving and Handling Training Programs on Occupational Therapy Interns' Perception and Self-Efficacy

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Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of a moving and handling training program on the self-efficacy and confidence of occupational therapy interns. A mixed-methods approach was employed, comprising quantitative assessments using the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES) and the Occupational Therapy Confidence Questionnaire (OTCQ), as well as qualitative interviews. Results revealed a statistically significant increase in both self-efficacy and confidence post-training. Qualitative analysis identified themes of enhanced practical skills, increased confidence, and the value of hands-on experience. These findings underscore the importance of targeted training in improving interns' readiness for clinical practice and highlight the need for ongoing skill development in occupational therapy education.

Keywords: Occupational therapy, interns, moving and handling training, self-efficacy, confidence, mixed-methods study, practical skills, qualitative analysis.

Introduction

Occupational therapy is a critical healthcare profession focused on enabling individuals to perform meaningful and purposeful activities despite impairments or limitations. Among the various competencies required in this field, moving and handling skills are fundamental, ensuring the safety and well-being of both patients and healthcare providers (Frost and Barkley, 2012). Proper training in moving and handling is essential for occupational therapy interns, who often face physical demands and potential injury risks in clinical settings (Mc Grath et al., 2015).

However, the impact of such training on the interns' confidence and self-efficacy remains under-researched. Self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's capabilities to execute necessary actions, plays a pivotal role in healthcare education and practice (Bandura, 1997). Interns with higher self-efficacy are more likely to engage in challenging tasks, persist through difficulties, and demonstrate superior clinical skills (Zimmerman, 2000).

Despite the acknowledged importance of confidence and self-efficacy, there is limited research examining how specific training programs, such as those focusing on moving and handling, influence these psychological attributes in occupational therapy interns. Previous studies have predominantly concentrated on broader educational interventions without isolating the effects of individual training components (Wilkes and Bligh, 1999; McNulty et al., 2012).

This research aims to address this gap by assessing the impact of a structured moving and handling training program on the confidence and self-efficacy of occupational therapy interns. By understanding how targeted training influences these factors, educational institutions can better design curricula that not only equip interns with essential technical skills but also enhance their psychological readiness for professional practice.

The primary research question guiding this study is: How do moving and handling training programs impact the perception and self-efficacy of occupational therapy interns? Through a combination of quantitative assessments and qualitative feedback, this study seeks to provide insights into effective educational strategies and contribute to the broader discourse on occupational therapy training.

By elucidating the relationship between specialized training and intern confidence, this study aims to inform future educational practices, ultimately improving the quality of care provided by occupational therapists.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework:

Self-efficacy, as conceptualized by Bandura (1997), refers to an individual's belief in their capability to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments. This concept is pivotal in the context of healthcare education, where confidence in one's abilities can significantly affect clinical performance and the quality of patient care (Zimmerman, 2000). Bandura's theory has been applied widely to understand the motivational processes behind learning and skill acquisition in various professional domains, including health sciences.

Importance of Moving and Handling Training:

Effective moving and handling techniques are fundamental in occupational therapy to ensure the safety of both patients and therapists. Improper handling can result in musculoskeletal injuries, which are prevalent among healthcare workers (Slusser et al, 2012). Thus, moving and handling training programs are essential components of occupational therapy education, equipping interns with the necessary skills to perform clinically while minimizing injury risks (Mc Grath et al., 2015).

Impact on Self-Efficacy and Confidence:

Several studies have indicated that structured training programs can enhance self-efficacy and confidence among healthcare professionals. For instance, a study by McNulty et al. (2012) on nursing trainees found that comprehensive training modules significantly improved their confidence in performing clinical tasks. Similarly, (Wilkes and Bligh, 1999) demonstrated that practical training interventions positively impacted medical students' self-efficacy, leading to better performance and lower anxiety levels.

Occupational Therapy-Specific Research:

Research specifically concentrating on occupational therapy interns is relatively sparse. However, existing studies provide some insights. Mc Grath et al. (2015) evaluated the outcomes of a moving and handling program for occupational therapy students and reported improvements in both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The study underscored the importance of hands-on training in fostering a sense of competence and readiness for professional practice.

An exploratory study by Mayeda-Letourneau, (2014) highlighted that occupational therapy interns often feel underprepared for the physical demands of the job. Their findings suggested that enhanced training programs focusing on physical handling could significantly boost interns' confidence levels. These conclusions align with broader educational theories which posit that self-efficacy is strengthened through mastery experiences and feedback (Bandura, 1997).

Gaps in the Literature:

Despite the recognized importance of moving and handling training, there remains a gap in research specifically addressing how these programs affect self-efficacy and confidence among occupational therapy

interns. Most studies, such as those by Wilkes and Bligh, (1999) and McNulty et al. (2012) focus on broader healthcare education without isolating the effects of individual training components. Additionally, existing literature often emphasizes quantitative outcomes, with limited qualitative insights into the personal experiences of interns undergoing such training.

Need for Targeted Research:

Given these gaps, there is a need for targeted research to evaluate the specific impacts of moving and handling training programs on occupational therapy interns. Such research could provide valuable data to refine educational curricula, ensuring that they not only impart necessary technical skills but also enhance psychological readiness for professional challenges. Understanding the nuanced effects of these training programs can help in developing comprehensive training modules that address both the physical and psychological aspects of healthcare work.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how a structured moving and handling training program influences occupational therapy interns' confidence and self-efficacy. By adopting both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the research seeks to provide a holistic view of the training's effectiveness and contribute to the optimization of educational practices in occupational therapy.

Findings

Quantitative Findings:

The quantitative data were analyzed to determine the impact of the moving and handling training program on the self-efficacy and confidence of occupational therapy interns. Pre- and post-training scores on the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES) and the Occupational Therapy Confidence Questionnaire (OTCQ) were compared using paired sample t-tests.

Table 1: Self-Efficacy Scores Pre- and Post-Training

	Pre-Training (T1)	Post-Training (T2)	t-value	p-value
Mean (M)	28.6	34.2	-8.964	<0.001
Standard Deviation (SD)	4.7	4.1		

Table 2: Occupational Therapy Confidence Questionnaire (OTCQ) Scores Pre- and Post-Training

	Pre-Training (T1)	Post-Training (T2)	t-value	p-value
Mean (M)	52.4	61.5	-9.532	<0.001
Standard Deviation (SD)	6.2	5.8		

The paired sample t-tests showed a statistically significant increase in both self-efficacy and confidence scores post-training ($p < 0.001$). The results indicate that the training program was effective in enhancing the participants' self-efficacy and confidence in performing moving and handling tasks.

Qualitative Findings:

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed three primary themes: enhanced practical skills, increased confidence, and the value of hands-on experience. Excerpts from participant responses are provided to illustrate these themes.

Theme 1: Enhanced Practical Skills

Participants reported significant improvements in their practical skills following the training program. They mentioned that the hands-on practice and real-world scenarios helped solidify their learning.

- Participant 3: "Before the training, I was very unsure about how to safely transfer patients. Now, I feel much more competent and confident in my abilities."
- Participant 8: "The practical workshops were incredibly valuable. They allowed me to actually practice the techniques rather than just reading about them."

Theme 2: Increased Confidence

The training program substantially boosted the confidence of the occupational therapy interns. They felt more prepared to handle real-life situations and emphasized the importance of the training in building this confidence.

- Participant 5: "My confidence has significantly increased. I no longer hesitate when it comes to moving and handling tasks."
- Participant 12: "I feel much more secure in my role, knowing that I have the skills to handle patients safely."

Theme 3: The Value of Hands-On Experience

Participants highlighted the importance of hands-on experience in their learning process. They appreciated the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in a controlled, supervised environment.

- Participant 7: "The hands-on experience was invaluable. It's one thing to know the theory, but actually doing it under supervision made all the difference."
- Participant 10: "The simulation and real-world practice were crucial. They helped bridge the gap between classroom learning and clinical practice."

Table 3: Summary of Qualitative Themes and Participant Responses

Theme	Key Points	Illustrative Quotes
Enhanced Practical Skills	Skill improvement, practical application	"Now, I feel much more competent." - P3<->"The practical workshops were incredibly valuable." - P8
Increased Confidence	Boosted confidence, preparedness	"My confidence has significantly increased." - P5<->"I feel much more secure in my role." - P12
Value of Hands-On Experience	Application of theory, supervised practice	"The hands-on experience was invaluable." - P7<->"Simulation and real-world practice were crucial." - P10

These qualitative findings provide a deeper understanding of how the training program impacted the interns, complementing the quantitative results by highlighting the personal and professional growth experienced by the participants.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings:

The results of this study indicate that the structured moving and handling training program significantly improved the self-efficacy and confidence of occupational therapy interns. Quantitative findings revealed a marked increase in both self-efficacy and confidence scores post-training, with highly significant p-values (<0.001). These improvements suggest that targeted training can effectively enhance the psychological readiness of occupational therapy interns for practical tasks, which aligns with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy that posits mastery experiences as a crucial factor in developing self-belief.

The qualitative data further supported these quantitative findings. Themes emerged around enhanced practical skills, increased confidence, and the value of hands-on experience. Participants reported that the practical and supervised components of the training were particularly beneficial, reinforcing the notion that practical exposure is integral to competence development (Eraut, 2004).

Implications for Practice:

These findings underscore the importance of incorporating comprehensive moving and handling training into the curricula of occupational therapy programs. By enhancing both the technical and psychological preparedness of interns, such training can lead to more effective and confident practitioners. Education providers should ensure that practical components are an integral part of their training programs to facilitate real-world skill application.

Furthermore, the increase in interns' self-efficacy and confidence can contribute to better patient outcomes, as confident therapists are more likely to engage in best practices and maintain high standards of care (Zimmerman, 2000). This has implications not only for educational institutions but also for healthcare providers who employ these newly trained therapists.

Comparison with Existing Literature:

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on the impact of targeted training programs in healthcare education. Studies by (Wilkes and Bligh, 1999) and McNulty et al, (2012) similarly reported that structured training interventions substantially boost self-efficacy and confidence among trainees. Additionally, Mc Grath et al. (2015) highlighted the specific benefits of moving and handling training in their evaluation, noting improvements in both theoretical knowledge and practical application among occupational therapy students.

However, this study extends the existing literature by focusing specifically on occupational therapy interns and combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of training impacts. The qualitative insights offered by this study are in line with Mayeda-Letourneau, (2014) findings, which stressed the importance of hands-on experience in building confidence and preparedness.

Limitations :

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. The sample size, though adequate for initial exploration, was relatively small and limited to interns from three universities, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample to enhance external validity.

Another limitation was the short follow-up period. While immediate post-training improvements were evident, it remains unclear whether these gains are sustained over the long term. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess the lasting impact of moving and handling training programs on self-efficacy and confidence.

Additionally, while thematic analysis of qualitative data provided valuable insights, it can be subjective. Efforts were made to ensure reliability through independent coding and discussion, but inherent biases in qualitative research cannot be entirely eliminated.

Future Research:

Future research should aim to address these limitations by conducting studies with larger, more diverse samples and over extended periods to evaluate the long-term effects of training. Investigating the impact of continuous professional development and refresher courses on self-efficacy and confidence could also provide valuable insights into sustained competency in occupational therapy practice.

Moreover, exploring the integration of advanced simulation technologies and virtual reality into moving and handling training programs could offer innovative ways to enhance skill acquisition and confidence. Comparative studies between traditional and technologically enhanced training methods could identify best practices for occupational therapy education.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the significant positive impact of moving and handling training programs on the self-efficacy and confidence of occupational therapy interns. By providing both practical skills and psychological readiness, such training prepares interns for the challenges of clinical practice. Educational institutions and healthcare providers should recognize the value of these programs and continue to integrate practical, hands-on training into occupational therapy curricula to ensure the development of competent and confident therapists.

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