FACTORS THAT IMPACT FIELDWORK PERFORMANCE SCORES

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Introduction

• Research in occupational therapy and other clinical disciplines has found that there are multiple confounding variables that can impact fieldwork performance and resulting scores.
• Academic grades have been shown to be a poor predictor for fieldwork performance and suggest investigation of other variables (Best, 1994).
• One such variable, the Same Site Model (SSM) used at Tufts University Boston School of Occupational Therapy (BSOT) recommends the completion of a Level I and Level II fieldwork requirement at the same fieldwork site (Evenson, Barnes, and Cohn, 2002).
• Fieldwork educators and students found benefits to using the SSM included gaining familiarity with the setting, increasing comfort, decreasing anxiety and stress as well as preparation for Level II fieldwork (Evenson, Barnes, and Cohn, 2002).
• The purpose of this study is to explore variables of fieldwork placements including category, cycle, setting, program start, SSM and their impact on passing Fieldwork Performance Evaluation scores (FWPE) in order to inform stronger fieldwork placement practices.

Methods

Participant Selection:
• Inclusion criteria: Tufts University BSOT master’s degree candidates (n=91) completing Level II Fieldwork between 2008-2011.
• Exclusion criteria: 6 participants who did not complete one of their first two Level II placements were removed from data set.
• Rationale for exclusion: No data was collected for failed placements, reasons for failure varied, small number of failures.

Measure:
• Fieldwork Performance Evaluation (FWPE), 2003 version; a tool for fieldwork educators to measure occupational therapy student Level II fieldwork performance.
• Includes 42 total performance items categorized into 7 key performance areas that define core competencies required to practice safe and effective occupational therapy.
• Rated on 4-point scale: 4=exceeds standards, 3=meets standards, 2=needs improvement, 1=unsatisfactory.
• Passing scores: midterm = 90 total points and above; final = 122 total points and above.
• Intended to differentiate between competent and incompetent students, not between levels of competence.

Data Collection:
• Data mined from completed FWPEs by BSOT Fieldwork Coordinators.
• Each participant was assigned a unique ID number.

Procedure:
• Formulated research questions based on information provided by BSOT Fieldwork Coordinators.
• Revised research questions based on available data.

Data Analysis:
• Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a predictive analytics software used for comparative data analysis.
• Variables recoded from nominal to ordinal for SPSS:
  - SSM: “no” = 1, “yes” = 2
  - First FW Cycle: Summer = 1, Fall = 2, Winter = 3, Spring = 4
  - Program start: Fall = 1, January = 2

Results

• Original hypothesis: “Fieldwork cycle and setting and category have the strongest relationship with first fieldwork score.”
• ANOVA with multiple (≥3) variables: n not great enough to calculate results for all comparisons.

Hypothesis 1:
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

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<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
<th>Observed Power</th>
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a. R Squared = .026 (Adjusted R Squared = .019)
b. Computed using alpha = .05

Hypothesis 2:
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

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<td>Corrected Total</td>
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</table>

a. R Squared = .060 (Adjusted R Squared = .049)
b. Computed using alpha = .05

Conclusions

• We found that there is no significant relationship between the variables of first fieldwork cycle and program start on first fieldwork final total scores.
• We found a significant relationship between use of Same Site Model and students’ first fieldwork final total scores.

Discussion

• Results regarding SSM model only show an effect on scoring and do not reflect findings from the pilot study that the SSM reduces students’ anxiety by familiarizing student with placement site and supervisor.
• The SSM is still a valuable tool to use for its intended purpose, but perhaps not beyond short or long term effect.
• Factors related to the fieldwork supervisor that should be investigated further include:
  - Efficacy of supervisor training seminars as related to supervisor understanding of tool and confidence in grading students.
  - The importance of communication between students, supervisors, and coordinators.
  - Use of learning contracts to facilitate communication between student and supervisor.
• Factors related to the student that should be investigated further are:
  - Student characteristics and personal attributes.
  - Student caseload during placement.
• Research suggests that current evaluation tools based on a set of traditionally defined clinical skills are not applicable to emerging fields in occupational therapy.
• There is a need for a tool that:
  - Measures more global professional skills that develop over the course of a fieldwork.
  - Is relevant to all occupational therapy practice settings, including emerging areas.
  - Provides opportunities for qualitative feedback.
• New assessment measures such as Competency Based Fieldwork Evaluation, Student Performance Evaluation Form and Occupational Therapy Attribute Scale have been developed to address these needs but further research regarding their efficacy, reliability and validity is needed.

Directions for Future Research

• Investigation of reliability and validity of current FWPE.
• Further research on the SSM is needed to:
  - Show reduction in student’s anxiety when using SSM and decipher whether this is a short or long term effect.
  - Determine whether SSM can reduce rates of Level II failure by serving as a checkpoint for “goodness of fit” for both the student and supervisor before placement.
• External conditions such as supervisor grading, student preparation, or personal factors not accounted for in our data may have impacted our findings.
• It was difficult to relate findings to the literature due to limited research and available literature on occupational therapy fieldwork performance.

References