

Developing Trust as a Novice Occupational Therapist

Emma Rosenthal

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy



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Introduction

Literature Review:

- Trust necessary for effective healthcare relationships because it influences a client's acceptance of care and outcomes^{1,2}
- Trust in healthcare providers reliant on their clinical experience and self-confidence^{1,2}
- Novice OTs lack self-confidence due to their limited clinical experience³
- Novice OTs' inexperience and lower self-confidence may hinder the development of trust in their clients, yet it hasn't been addressed by existing research

Research Questions:

- What is the perspective of novice OTs as they try to develop trust in their clients despite their inexperience and lower self-confidence?
- What behaviors do they purposefully use or avoid when trying to develop trust in their clients?

Methods

Research Design: Qualitative descriptive methodology

Data Collection Method: Informal semi-structured interviews

Participants:

- 4 females, < 5 yrs. of experience, average age of ~30 yrs.
- Convenience sample
- Settings: Pediatric home-health and early intervention, pediatric outpatient, continuing care retirement community and inpatient psychiatric hospital, adult acute hospital setting

Data Analysis Method: Thematic analysis

Findings

Necessity of trust

- Increased client buy-in and participation
- Increased carry-over beyond therapy
- Greater progress and goal attainment

Facilitators of trust

- Collaborative, client-centered therapy
- Clear and confident communication
- Therapeutic-use-of-self and strong interpersonal skills

Barriers to trust

- Therapist-as-expert, authoritative approach
- Lack of self-confidence
- Being younger and/or lacking life experience

External influences

- Treatment by colleagues
- Clients' perception of the professional title
- Client's perception of OT as a similar, familiar type of person

Expectations of novices

- Difficult transition with numerous challenges
- Reported that novices are more likely to have distrustful clients, but they have not experienced it personally

Discussion

Discussion and Implications:

- Trust is not static, and novices purposefully use specific strategies to strengthen trust in clients
- Findings corroborate and extend existing literature about trust in healthcare relationships by identifying barriers to trust and external influences on trust
- Discrepancy between the expected and actual experiences of the participants suggests that clients tend to trust novices despite their inexperience and lower self-confidence
- Critical for novices to demonstrate self-confidence
- Both novice and experienced OTs can apply the findings to more easily and effectively develop trusting therapeutic relationships with their clients

Limitations:

- Qualitative research design
- Small, homogenous sample from a convenience sample limits generalizability

Future Research:

- Specific indicators of trust in clients
- The influence of age on trust
- The effectiveness of the identified strategies

References

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3. Rosa S. A., & Hasselkus B. R. (1996). Connecting with patients: Their personal experience of professional helping. *Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*, 16(4), 245-60.