



BACKGROUND AND POSITION PROFILE OF AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

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Introduction

The background of Occupational Therapists (OT) has been assessed in China (7), Australia (1) and Canada (6). These issues have also been assessed with Physical Therapists in the United States (US) (3). The background and position of OT has not yet been studied in the US. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess the background, preparation, and position characteristics of OT in the US, and to assess gender differences therein.

Methods

- 101 OT (Age = 43.87 ± 13.57 years) participated. Surveys were sent via conventional mail to 493 OT in the United States whose information was obtained from the AOTA. Subjects included 96 women and 5 men, from 31 states. A qualitative, cross-sectional conventional mail survey was used to characterize AOTA occupational therapist's background and position profile.
- The survey instrument, National Role Delineation of Occupational Therapists, was adopted from a previous published research study of physical therapists (2,3). The survey contained 30 open-ended and fixed-response questions, resulting in 404 pages of data.
- Subjects provided written informed consent prior to participating and the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board.
- Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to determine the relationship between subject variables and measures of job satisfaction.
- Descriptive data were analyzed, using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 24.0).
- Answers to open-ended questions were content-analyzed (5).

Results

- Salary was positively correlated with years worked ($r = 0.33$, $p = 0.003$), hours worked ($r = 0.31$, $p = 0.006$), and time at the end of workday ($r = 0.48$, $p \leq 0.001$).

Results (Continued)

- Salary was negatively correlated with start of workday ($r = -0.37$, $p \leq 0.001$).
- 52 subjects hold a Masters of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT). 20 have a BS, 12 have an OTD, 10 have an Entry Level Masters, and one did not specify.
- 69 subjects specified they did not receive direct admission access.
- 79 subjects do not own or co-own the business where they work.
- Table 1 demonstrates the gender comparison.
- Table 2 indicates employment status based on hours worked per week.
- Table 3 shows the background profile data.
- Table 4 lists the top five higher order OT certifications out of the 44 specified.
- Table 5 lists top five OT specializations.

Table 1 : Gender Comparison

Higher Order Themes	Female	Male	Difference
Average Age	44.3	35.20	20.54%
Average Education	2.44	2.00	18.03%*
Average Grad Internships Hrs.	1045.98	1205.00	13.20%
Average Observation Hours	1.78	2.00	11%*
Average Number of Hours	69.14	380.00	81.81%
Average Undergrad GPA	3.61	3.26	9.70%
Average Programs Applied	2.13	4.80	55.63%*
Average Years of Experience	16.51	12.90	21.87%
Average Hours/week	36.90	42.50	13.18%
Average Start of Work-day	781.49	792.00	1.33%
Average End of Work-day	1630.00	1686.00	3.32%
Average Annual Salary (\$)	75744.20	79000.00	4.12%
Average Salary for 40hr/week	81257.52	80125.00	1.39%

*Statistically Significant Difference ($p \leq 0.05$).

Table 2: Employment Status

Type	Number
Full-Time	74
Part-Time	15
Pro Re Nata (as is needed)	2
Per-Diem	2
Other	1

Table 3: Background Profile Data

Mean \pm SD Data for a Variety of Variable Assessed	
Average Undergrad Research	1.84 ± 1.90
Average Undergrad Intern Hours	688.12 ± 792.16
Average Graduate Internship Hours	1058.96 ± 1432.61
Average Undergraduate Studies	1.84 ± 1.90
Average Observation Hours	92.11 ± 154.33
Average Undergraduate GPA	3.59 ± 0.30
Average Programs Applied	2.26 ± 1.65
Average Years of Experience	16.24 ± 12.17
Average Start of Work-day (hours)	$0812 \pm 00:58$
Average End of Work-day (hours)	$1644 \pm 01:13$
Average Annual Compensation (\$)	$75,801 \pm 22,158.72$
Average Annual Comp. 40 hr/week (\$)	$81,192 \pm 25,174.57$
Average Number of Employers	4.18 ± 3.03

Table 4: Top 5 OT Certifications

Certification	Number
None	49
Certified Hand Therapist	5
Certified Lymphedema Therapist	4
Sensory Integration Praxis Test	4
Lee Silverman Voice Treatment	3

Table 5: Top 5 OT Specializations

Specialization	Number
None	72
Certified Lymphedema Therapist	4
Low Vision	3
Pediatrics	3
Sensory Integration	3

Discussion

This is the first comprehensive study of the background, preparation, and position characteristic of OT in the United States. Results show the profession includes primarily women, consistent with previous research of other countries (6,7) and in Ohio (4).

In the current study, women were older and more educated than their male colleagues. However, there were no gender differences in salary.

Discussion (Continued)

This finding contrasts with previous research with physical therapists (3) and chiropractic (2), which demonstrated that men earned that 13.56%, and 29.5% more, respectively.

However, compared to chiropractors and physical therapists, OT made approximately \$86,000, and \$20,000, less, respectively (2,3). In the comparison of OT in the US versus Canada (2019) (6), US OT earn approximately \$11,000 more, though accurate interpretation would have to consider the US to Canadian dollar exchange rate.

In the current study, the average age was approximately 4.5 years younger than PT (3) and the OT possessed about 6.25 years less experience (3). The OT worked approximately 4.5 to 5 hours less per week than PT and chiropractors, respectively (2,3).

The average college grade point average of OT was 3.59/4.0 which was higher than some professions such as chiropractic (3.4/4.0), but lower than PT (3.67/4.0) (2,3).

The OT in the current study had fewer certifications and specializations compared to chiropractors (2) and physical therapists (3).

Conclusion

Prospective and current OT can use these data to understand the qualifications and conditions of employment the profession.

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