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An Exploration of Leadership Qualities Demonstrated During Level II Fieldwork

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Abstract

Background. Occupational therapy (OT) students are expected to demonstrate leadership qualities throughout their Level II Fieldwork experiences; however, it has been reported that students lack this quality. The purpose of this project was to identify the leadership characteristics that master's-level OT students demonstrate and develop during their Level II Fieldwork experiences.

Method. This study utilized an online survey tool, Qualtrics, to understand the perceptions of Fieldwork Educators (FWEs) who have taken a Level II Fieldwork student within the past five years. A code-recode procedure was used to analyze open-ended questions. The frequency and mode of responses were used to report the results of the Likert-scale questions.

Results. A total of 25 participants completed the survey. FWEs reported that their students are effective communicators, show respect for employees in the workplace, and respond to constructive criticism. Areas of improvement for the students include seeking out resources to drive the action for change, taking risks by sharing new approaches, and taking on leadership roles by implementing new protocols.

Conclusion. This study has identified students' areas of strength and areas that need improvement in regards to developing leadership qualities throughout their Level II Fieldwork experiences.

Key Words

Education, learning, occupational therapy, performance, students

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) indicates that one purpose of Level I and Level II Fieldwork experiences is to “allow students to develop advocacy, leadership, and managerial skills in a variety of practice settings” (2009, p. 1). Campbell et al. (2015) claim that leadership is a professional behavior attribute that appears to be scarce in occupational therapy (OT) Level II Fieldwork students. There is a lack of literature regarding leadership characteristics that Level II Fieldwork students demonstrate throughout their fieldwork experiences. Thus, it is important to identify which leadership skills students are developing in Level II Fieldwork as well as which skills are not being developed during this time. While Campbell et al. (2015) identify leadership as the least-developed professional behavior attribute for Level II Fieldwork students, the only argument presented is that leadership is an attribute that develops with experience. This research fails to explore which attributes and skills constitute the professional behavior of leadership within Level II Fieldwork students.

Problem Statement

AOTA asserts that the development of leadership skills is an expectation of Level II Fieldwork students; however, there appears to be a disconnect between this established purpose and the reality of fieldwork experiences. Therefore, this study explored the leadership traits and characteristics that Level II Fieldwork Educators (FWEs) believe their students demonstrate and develop during their fieldwork experiences.

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this research study was to identify the leadership traits and characteristics that Level II Fieldwork students demonstrate during their fieldwork experiences via an online survey. This study is significant as it provides a greater knowledge base regarding the development of leadership qualities throughout students' Level II Fieldwork experiences. While

the development of leadership skills is an expectation of Level II Fieldwork students, it is believed that students generally fall short of meeting this expectation. Therefore, investigating the leadership qualities that students exhibit during Level II Fieldwork is crucial to determine where improvements could be made within fieldwork education to better fit the needs of students while complying with the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE)'s requirements for OT educational programs (2018). The present research study has identified students' areas of strength and areas that need improvement in regards to developing leadership qualities throughout their Level II Fieldwork experiences. The guiding research question for this study asked: From the perspective of Level II FWEds, what are leadership qualities that master's-level OT students demonstrate during their fieldwork experiences?

Literature Review

Leadership in OT Practitioners

Hanson and Ford (2011) suggest that it is necessary for leaders to influence group member collaboration and prosper in unusual and unpredictable circumstances. Successful leaders problem-solve to meet the needs of the people they serve by going against the norms to create new relationships in an effort to create sustainable change. They highlight the need for empowerment, create a collaborative environment, and are open to constructive criticism (Fleming-Castaldy & Patro, 2012). These characteristics could also apply to Level II Fieldwork students. It is crucial that students accept constructive criticism from their FWEds in order to improve their professional attitudes and behaviors. While doing this, it is necessary for students to create a collaborative environment with their FWEds as well as other practitioners, thus establishing a relationship of mutual trust and empowerment.

Furthermore, Hanson and Ford (2011) assert that it is essential for leaders in healthcare to create an evolving culture of unity among all members of the group in which the leader serves as well as adapt to unusual and unpredictable circumstances. While Level II Fieldwork students may not possess the power to completely generate change among clinical settings, they should demonstrate the ability to maintain a cohesive culture that considers the needs and best interests of all the staff members and clients within these settings. In addition, students should display the ability to utilize clinical reasoning in order to adapt to unusual circumstances or impediments that may occur throughout their fieldwork experiences.

Clinical Reasoning and Leadership

Kouzes and Posner (1987) conducted extensive research and analyzed the skills and abilities that make great leaders stand out and influence the people around them. They developed the Leadership Challenge Model, which identifies the five leadership characteristics that are needed for leaders to perform at their full potential. This model is also effective within the OT profession (Dillon, 2001; Fleming-Castaldy & Patro, 2012; Grady, 1990). The following describes the five main components included in the Leadership Challenge Model (Kouzes and Posner, 1987).

- 1.) *Challenge the process:* Leaders must be innovative and step outside of their comfort zones. They challenge the system and take risks for the greater good. They view challenges as a chance to create new opportunities.
- 2.) *Create a shared vision:* Leaders develop a vision for their institution. They collaborate and communicate with the coworkers and clients needed to help turn a vision into reality. Leaders also make sure their visions benefit all of the people involved in the institution.

- 3.) *Enable others to act:* While creating trusting relationships with other individuals, leaders create a team-oriented environment. They listen, empower, and collaborate with others to reflect on their own lives.
- 4.) *Model the way:* Leaders allow others to become leaders as well. This can be accomplished by encouraging others to challenge the status quo and act upon shared values. Leaders cannot only talk, but they must also “walk the talk”.
- 5.) *Encourage the heart:* Leaders encourage other people and celebrate their achievements and accomplishments. They empower other OT practitioners and recognize their successes and contributions to the facility/profession.

Fleming-Castaldy and Patro (2012) found that leaders in the field of OT show a strong preference for the characteristics of *challenging the process* and *creating a shared vision*. They found this to be logical because “a successful outcome of confronting the status quo requires the adoption of a new perspective” (Fleming-Castaldy & Patro, 2012, p. 195). This is important in regards to creating a vision for one’s team or workplace. AOTA’s idea of creating a shared vision correlates with this finding. AOTA’s Centennial Vision (2007) and Vision 2025 (2017) emphasize the desire for practitioners in the field to exhibit power to influence others. From an educational perspective, Level II Fieldwork students may be unable to truly challenge the process due to the fact that they are usually expected to adhere to the expectations of their clinical settings; however, they can attempt to challenge the process within their settings by presenting new information and evidence-based approaches to their FWEs. While doing this, students should contribute to the setting’s knowledge base while applying theory to practice. In addition, students should display the ability to create a shared vision by collaborating and

communicating with their FWEds and clients to develop goals and opportunities that would best fit the needs of all the associated parties.

Leadership in Level II Fieldwork

Although leadership skills are important for OT students to develop during Level II Fieldwork, little literature exists in this area. Campbell et al. (2015) evaluated Fieldwork Educators' perspectives on student professional behaviors throughout their Level II experiences. FWEds ranked the top six professional attributes for students as adaptability, clinical competence, communication skills, ethical skills, responsibility, and time efficiency. Only 63.5% of the respondents viewed leadership as an essential professional attribute for their students, making it the least essential of the 21 attributes measured throughout the study. Moreover, the results of this study indicate that Level II FWEds used the terms *motivation*, *good sense of business*, *assertiveness*, and *authoritative* to define their students' leadership skills. It is suggested that leadership skills are the least essential attributes due to the fact that these skills develop over time through clinical practice (Campbell et al., 2015). Because leadership skills develop with time, the profession of OT will benefit from researching the factors that facilitate the development of leadership skills in Level II Fieldwork students.

In contrast, Ryan et al. (2018) conducted semi-structured interviews with FWEds in which most of the participants shared that they made conscious efforts to facilitate leadership skills in their fieldwork students. The FWEds wanted to not only instill clinical practice skills within their fieldwork students, but they also wanted to provide fieldwork experiences that would lay the groundwork for professional development within the field of OT. A majority of the FWEds cited allowing students to take an active role in treatment planning as a contributor to the development of leadership skills. The FWEds shared that increasing their students' confidence as

well as promoting independence, assertiveness, and interdisciplinary communication has helped them foster their students' leadership skills throughout their Level II Fieldwork experiences (Ryan et al., 2018).

Facilitators to Developing Leadership Skills in Level II Fieldwork

Fieldwork experiences are a critical component for OT students to learn the skills and knowledge needed to become competent entry-level practitioners. However, numerous factors influence students' learning and success in fieldwork. According to a study conducted by Grenier (2015), learning in fieldwork education is a highly individual and dynamic process that is influenced by many factors. This study found that friendly, positive, supportive, and professional FWEds facilitated learning by creating a positive learning environment for students (Grenier, 2015). Additionally, FWEds who were highly motivated, demonstrated a passion for OT, took into consideration the knowledge of the student, and had realistic expectations of the student contributed to positive learning experiences. Therefore, in order for OT students to succeed in developing leadership skills, it is critical to have a good fit between the student and their FWEd.

When trying to find the ideal fit for a student's Level II Fieldwork experience, Kemp and Crabtree (2017) recommend matching the student's abilities to the demands of the setting. Kemp and Crabtree (2017) conducted a study to determine student qualities that FWEds believe are needed to be successful during Level II Fieldwork. According to the FWEds, the top five characteristics of students were time management, communication, overall professional behavior, the ability to make changes based on feedback, and flexibility. The researchers also found that the desired characteristics and abilities of students differed depending on the type of OT setting. Overall, acute care, pediatric hospitals, inpatient psychiatric settings, and outpatient neurological settings placed a higher emphasis on a student's ability to multitask, demonstrate

initiative, communicate with other health providers, handle medically complex patients, and respond to changes in a patient during a treatment session. On the other hand, school settings did not place a high value on those characteristics and abilities. This study shows that finding a good match between the student's abilities and the demands of the fieldwork site may result in better learning and higher overall student satisfaction (Kemp & Crabtree, 2017). In addition, creating a better fit between the Level II OT student and the fieldwork site may help facilitate the development of leadership skills.

Barriers to Learning for Level II Fieldwork Students

Although Level II Fieldwork is an advantageous learning opportunity, it does not always maximize students' learning or provide them with the skills and knowledge required to be competent entry-level practitioners. According to the study conducted by Grenier (2015), characteristics of FWEds such as disengagement, a high need for control, closed-mindedness, lack of communication and experience, and intimidation can negatively influence the students' learning experience. FWEds who were distracted, complacent, and did not take the time to explain concepts or clinical reasoning impeded students' learning (Grenier, 2015). When Level II Fieldwork students are paired with FWEds who do not provide supportive learning environments, the development and the ability to portray leadership skills may be hindered. Additional research examining the barriers impacting the development of leadership skills in Level II Fieldwork students will benefit both students and FWEds.

While the qualities of a FWEd may impact student learning, student characteristics may also contribute to a poor fieldwork experience. A study conducted by Gutman, McGreedy, and Heisler (1998) identified common factors among students who succeeded academically but did not pass fieldwork. This study examined the behavioral and communicative characteristics that

appear to predict potential problems during Level II Fieldwork. Eight common characteristics were identified from students who did not pass fieldwork which included: rigid thinking, poor clinical reasoning skills, lack of insight, difficulty interpreting feedback, externalizing responsibility, difficulty learning from mistakes, discomfort with handling patients, and reliance on validation (Gutman et al., 1998). In order to prevent future problems in Level II Fieldwork, it is the students' responsibility to seek assistance and guidance from their FWEds or fieldwork coordinators when facing difficulties, which also enables the development of leadership skills.

Theory

The theoretical framework used for the current study was the Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) model. The EHP model views human performance as the interaction between the person and the environment (Dunn et al., 1994). Therefore, a person's performance cannot be understood without considering the context that surrounds them. Similar to Level II fieldwork students, it is imperative to have a supportive learning environment in order to promote the development of their leadership skills.

The main concepts of EHP include the person, tasks, and context. The person is comprised of all of an individual's sensorimotor, cognitive, psychosocial skills and abilities, and life experiences (Dunn et al., 1994). Tasks are a specific set of behaviors that are necessary to accomplish a particular goal. Lastly, contextual factors that can impact a person's performance include physical, temporal, social, and cultural features.

According to the EHP model, there are two explanations for a person's limitations in performance. A person may attempt a task in a supportive context, but the person has a limited set of skills and abilities and is not capable of performing the tasks necessary to accomplish the goal (Dunn et al., 1994). During fieldwork, a Level II student may have a FWEd who is

supportive and creates a positive working environment, but if the student does not have the skills and abilities to critically think and create interventions independently, the student may feel overwhelmed and may be unable to perform to the best of their ability. The other explanation is that a person has the required skills and abilities to perform the task, but the context is restrictive and limits performance (Dunn et al., 1994). In Level II Fieldwork, a student may possess the skills and abilities to write accurate, comprehensive notes in the documentation system, but if the documentation system is currently not working, the student is not able to complete their notes in a timely manner.

Level II Fieldwork is an important time for students to continue to develop their leadership skills in order to become competent entry-level OT practitioners. FWEds can help fieldwork students develop leadership qualities by considering the interplay of the student and their context. By taking into account the student's current leadership skills and providing a supportive context for the student to continue to develop their leadership skills, the FWEd can help their students become future leaders in the profession of OT.

Methods

Research Design

This study utilized a cross-sectional, non-experimental design, surveying Level II FWEds who have accepted fieldwork students from various universities throughout the country. Quantitative items were used to address the research question. An online electronic survey tool, Qualtrics, was used to increase the sample size and to simplify data collection. A survey method was the preferred type of approach for this study because it was inexpensive, convenient, had a rapid turnaround in data collection, and it easily reached participants across the country. This method allowed participants to complete the survey at a time that was convenient for them.

Participants were asked to complete one survey; therefore, data were only collected at one point in time.

Participants

A total of 25 participants completed the survey. The participants for this study consisted of Level II FWEs employed in various settings across the United States. Inclusion criteria for the participants were that they must have been a FWE for a Level II student within the past five years and a current practitioner within the United States. Individuals within the desired population were identified via a list provided with contact information of Level II FWEs affiliated with Grand Valley State University who have accepted a Level II Fieldwork student within the past five years. In addition, the researchers posted a link to the survey on an AOTA CommunOT research forum. The sampling design for this population was a single-stage approach due to the accessibility to individuals within the population and the ability to directly contact the participants. This protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Grand Valley State University.

Instrumentation

Participants completed the online survey through Qualtrics. This method was chosen due to its convenience and cost-effectiveness. The survey was created by the researchers for the specific utilization within this study. There were 31 items on the survey that measured general sociodemographics of the participants as well as the participants' perceptions and opinions about the qualities and characteristics that their Level II students demonstrated and developed during fieldwork. The questions on the survey were developed after reviewing the literature on general leadership in the field of OT. The survey was comprised of factual and opinion-based 5-point

Likert-scale questions with some open-ended questions. Sixteen survey questions were answered using the following 5-point Likert-scale: (a) *very often*; (b) *often*; (c) *not very often*; (d) *not at all*; and (e) *undecided*. Please refer to Appendix A for the full list of questions included on the survey. Sample questions from the survey are as follows:

1. How do you facilitate the development of leadership qualities within your OT Level II Fieldwork students? (*open-ended question*)
2. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take initiative?
 - a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided

To ensure that the survey was valid, it was completed and reviewed by five occupational therapists and one public health professor, and the survey was revised based on their responses to improve the format and questions asked in the survey. Their feedback was used to simplify the questions and make them clearer. The reviewers indicated that the survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Data Collection

An email that detailed the purpose of the study as well as who was involved in the study was sent out to potential participants. A link that sent the respondent to the survey on the Qualtrics website was included in the email. Please refer to Appendix B to review the email script. The first page of the survey provided the respondent with an informed consent form that reiterated the purpose of the study, how the data would be collected and analyzed, and how the data would be stored. Please refer to Appendix C to review the informed consent form. Two weeks after the initial email was sent out, a reminder email was sent; additionally, each survey

link closed two weeks after they were opened. It is believed that this study's sample size (N = 25) was sufficient to gain insight on the qualities and characteristics that Level II FWEs observe in their fieldwork students. This sample allowed for higher accuracy in the inferences that were made through the survey responses.

Data Analysis

Once the study was concluded, de-identified data were downloaded from Qualtrics and stored in an online password-protected file. The researchers performed a code-recode procedure on the collected open-ended data in an effort to promote the dependability of the findings by analyzing the data to find key terms and themes. Dependability is a component of trustworthiness in which the qualitative data are considered to be consistent (Brown, 2017). Trustworthiness is the accurate representation of the participants' perceptions and experiences and is a critical aspect of research analysis. The code-recode procedure consists of initially coding qualitative data and then coding them again at a later time. The findings from the two instances of coding are evaluated to make sure that the results are consistent (Lysack, Luborsky, & Dillaway, 2017). Each researcher independently read through all of the open-ended responses and identified key terms from each response (i.e. "communication", "collaboration", "education", etc.). The researchers then compared their key terms and went through the qualitative responses together to collectively decide upon the key term that would be associated with each open-ended response. The next phase of this process entailed making a list of all of the key terms and identifying the terms that had the most responses for each open-ended question (i.e. it was documented that 21 responses were coded with "take initiative" for one question). The three key terms with the highest response rate were chosen as the themes of three of the open-ended questions, with the fourth open-ended question having two themes.

Furthermore, analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the Likert-scale questions was completed. Descriptive statistics included the frequency and percentage for each Likert-scale question, illustrating Level II FWEds' perspectives of their students' performances. In an effort to simplify the data analysis process of the quantitative Likert-scale questions, the responses were separated into two categories: *very often/often* and *not very often/not at all*. The fifth Likert-scale response, *undecided*, was excluded from the analysis because none of the participants used this response for any of the questions. Once all the data was reviewed, the researchers developed conclusions about the leadership characteristics that Level II Fieldwork students demonstrate and develop based upon the participants' responses.

Results

A total of 25 Level II FWEds completed the survey. The participants represented many practice settings within the field of OT: pediatrics; skilled nursing facility; mental health; long-term care; home health; acute care; outpatient; adult day services; inpatient rehabilitation; schools; and hand therapy. Each FWEd completed every question on the survey. Table 1 presents all of the responses to the quantitative 5-point Likert-scale questions.

Table 1.

Quantitative Questions Asked of Participants with Likert-scale Answer Options

Question	Very Often n (%)	Often n (%)	Not Very Often n (%)	Not At All n (%)	Undecided n (%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take on leadership roles by providing in-services?	7 (28%)	12 (48%)	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take on leadership roles by implementing new protocols?	0 (0%)	7 (28%)	13 (52%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take on leadership roles by creating new interventions?	7 (28%)	11 (44%)	5 (20%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students	0 (0%)	12 (48%)	11 (44%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)

take risks by sharing new approaches that are typically not used within your workplace? (i.e. interventions, assessments, etc.)					
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students actively listen to other practitioners and clients in your workplace?	16 (64%)	8 (32%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students communicate with you during the fieldwork experience?	23 (92%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students collaborate with other therapy practitioners and clients in your workplace?	12 (48%)	10 (40%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students contribute to a team-oriented environment?	10 (40%)	10 (40%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students show respect for employees of the workplace throughout their fieldwork experiences?	24 (96%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students empower/encourage people around them?	5 (20%)	12 (48%)	8 (32%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students seek out resources to drive the action for change (in the work environment, for clients, etc.)?	6 (24%)	7 (28%)	10 (40%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take initiative?	5 (20%)	15 (60%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students respond to constructive criticism?	13 (52%)	12 (48%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students utilize critical thinking skills to solve problems?	11 (44%)	13 (52%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students educate other members of the therapy team (i.e. educate therapists, advocate for OT, and explain OT to clients)?	5 (20%)	16 (64%)	4 (16%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students display confidence in their abilities?	19 (76%)	2 (8%)	4 (16%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*Note: N = 25

All of the participants (100%; n = 25) reported that their Level II Fieldworks students are effective communicators, show respect for employees in the workplace, and respond to constructive criticism. The majority of the participants (96%; n = 24) reported that their students actively listen to practitioners and clients in the workplace and utilize critical thinking skills to

solve problems. Similarly, 88% of the participants (n = 22) reported that their students collaborate with other therapy practitioners and clients in the workplace. Eighty-four percent of the participants (n = 21) reported that their students educate other members of the therapy team and display confidence in their abilities. These characteristics constitute students' areas of strength in regards to developing leadership skills throughout their fieldwork experiences.

Only 52% of the participants (n = 13) reported that their students seek out resources to drive the action for change in the work environment. Forty-eight percent of the participants (n = 12) reported that their students take risks by sharing new approaches that are typically not used within the workplace. Twenty-eight percent of the participants (n = 7) reported that their students take on leadership roles by implementing new protocols. Thus, these are all areas of potential growth for students to develop their leadership skills throughout their fieldwork experiences.

This study also utilized qualitative research by asking FWEs four open-ended questions. These questions allowed FWEs to explain how they define leadership, facilitate the development of leadership, facilitate a supportive learning environment, as well as offer other information regarding leadership in their own fieldwork experiences. The questions were then analyzed by the research team to develop common themes and further support the quantitative findings.

Discussion

The purpose of this cross-sectional, non-experimental study was to learn about Level II FWEs' perspectives on leadership qualities and traits that their students exhibit throughout their fieldwork experiences. In addition, this study aimed to contribute to the limited literature about this topic. The results of this study answered the research question: "From the perspective of

Level II FWEs, what are leadership qualities that master's-level OT students demonstrate during their fieldwork experiences?", as demonstrated in Table 1.

All of the participants indicated that their students possess essential communication skills, show respect for those that they work with, and professionally respond to constructive criticism. One participant defined leadership as "Good communication, ability to make sound decisions using clinical judgment and the ability to think creatively." Most of the participants (96%, n = 24) indicated that their students use their critical thinking skills to solve problems within their practice and actively listen to those around them. Hanson and Ford (2011) also believe that it is essential for leaders in healthcare to display the ability to utilize clinical reasoning in order to adapt to unusual circumstances or impediments that may occur throughout their fieldwork experiences. Kouzes and Posner (1987) assert that great leaders listen, empower, and collaborate with others to reflect on their own lives. In the present study, 88% of the participants (n = 22) indicated that their students do well with collaborating with other professionals in the workplace. Thus, according to the participants' perspectives, communication, respect, critical thinking, active listening, and collaboration are the strongest characteristics that Level II Fieldwork students demonstrate throughout their fieldwork experiences.

On the other end of the spectrum, only 28% of the participants (n = 7) indicated that their students often take on leadership roles by implementing new protocols. In addition, 48% of the participants indicated that their students often take risks to share new approaches that are not typically used in the workplace. Only 52% of the participants (n = 13) indicated that their students often seek out resources to drive actions for change within the work environment. The lack of risk-taking and implementation of new protocols demonstrated by fieldwork students

relate to findings by Campbell et al. (2015) being that leadership as a whole is underdeveloped in Level II Fieldwork students. This information also presents a disconnect from Schell and Schell's definition of leadership as "the process of guiding change" (2018, p. 499). One respondent shared the following statement when asked if they have any additional information regarding the development of leadership in Level II Fieldwork students: "Students are still developing their confidence as clinicians, so at this point, leadership development/opportunities are somewhat limited."

One aspect of Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Challenge Model is to *challenge the process*, which states that leaders must be innovative, think outside the box, and take risks that will benefit the greater good (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). However, the findings from the current study indicate that risk-taking is a weakness among Level II Fieldwork students. A possible explanation for these findings may be due to the fact that clinical settings set expectations that students must follow, thus limiting their confidence to address challenges and providing contextual barriers that limit their abilities to take risks. However, students can present new information and approaches supported by evidence-based practice that may benefit their clinical settings in order to attempt to challenge the process. In addition, Ryan et al. (2018) found that FWEs believe that their roles as educators include increasing their students' confidence and leadership skills throughout the students' Level II Fieldwork experiences. These views align with the views of one participant in the present study being that students are still developing confidence in their own clinical abilities; therefore, there are limited opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills. Furthermore, another participant in the current study shared the following statement when asked if they have any additional information regarding the development of leadership in Level II Fieldwork students: "The great thing is that at the end of fieldwork, the

students are more confident in their skills, ability to correct errors that the clients may be making and modify treatments that might not be going as well as expected”. Thus, the educational component of Level II Fieldwork may exempt students from the need to demonstrate risk-taking behaviors in order to be viewed as leaders in the fieldwork setting.

In order to improve leadership characteristics among Level II Fieldwork students, Kemp and Crabtree (2017) recommend matching the student’s skills and abilities to the demands of the clinical context. In the present study, participants were asked how they facilitated a supportive learning context for their fieldwork students. One participant stated, “Students have the opportunity to design their placement to meet their skills that need improvement as well as to gain a better understanding of the population”. In addition, other participants believed it was important to have open communication, provide immediate feedback, have an open door policy, and create a warm learning environment that promotes questions and suggestions. Overall, a student’s ability to learn in Level II Fieldwork is a highly individual and dynamic process that is influenced by many factors. Therefore, providing a supportive context for the fieldwork student to learn and take risks can help develop their leadership skills.

Limitations

One limitation of the present study is that participants may have misinterpreted the questions, and this could have led to irrelevant data collection that does not correlate with the intended research question. Utilizing a survey does not provide participants with an opportunity to ask researchers to clarify questions. Another limitation of the study design is that participants were unable to expand on the Likert-scale questions. This prevented participants from adding additional comments to further illustrate their opinions and feelings about how students demonstrate and develop leadership skills. The present method fails to allow participants to

identify potential facilitators and barriers to developing particular leadership skills. In addition, the present study obtained 25 participants and was sent to FWEds within the United States. Without including participants from outside of the United States, results from this study cannot be generalized to a larger population. Additionally, only 25 Level II FWEds completed the survey, which is a small proportion of the total number of Level II FWEds within the United States.

Conclusion

There is a lack of literature regarding the leadership characteristics that master's-level OT students should possess and establish during their fieldwork education. Therefore, the purpose of this research study was to reach out to FWEds via an online survey in order to identify the leadership traits and characteristics that Level II Fieldwork students demonstrate and develop throughout their fieldwork experiences. Utilization of the EHP model directed this research through the examination of contextual factors that may shape a student's perceived abilities in taking on leadership roles throughout his or her Level II Fieldwork education. Furthermore, this research has pinpointed areas in which students excel as well as areas in which students may need to improve within their fieldwork experiences in order to coincide with ACOTE's requirements for OT educational programs.

Results from this study allow researchers to draw conclusions regarding the strengths and weaknesses Level II Fieldwork students exemplify from the perspectives of FWEds. Strong characteristics that were demonstrated by students included communication, respect, critical thinking, active listening, and collaboration. Areas of potential growth include taking on leadership roles by implementing new protocols as well as taking risks to share new approaches that are not typically used in the workplace.

Future research regarding leadership qualities in Level II Fieldwork students should explore the barriers that students face during Level II Fieldwork. For example, it can be beneficial to look into how FWEs are trained to take fieldwork students and facilitate the development of their leadership skills. Another possible area for future research could explore the similarities and differences between Level II Fieldwork students enrolled in an entry-level master's program versus those enrolled in an entry-level doctoral program. Further education may provide doctoral-level students with more opportunities to develop leadership skills and therefore facilitate increased confidence to utilize these skills throughout their fieldwork experiences. Lastly, future research could examine how leadership skills vary depending on the Level II Fieldwork setting based on site-specific differences and requirements.

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Appendix A

Leadership in Level II Fieldwork Survey Questions

Authors: Summer Besteman, Katelyn Hartman, Amy Maurer, and Jessica Mooney

General/demographic questions:

1. Do you feel that Level II OT students have the ability to demonstrate leadership skills during Level II Fieldwork? (*yes or no*)
2. What practice setting do you work in? (*fill in the blank*)
3. How would you define leadership in the field of OT? (*open-ended question*)

Questions about student performance:

4. How do you facilitate the development of leadership qualities within your OT Level II Fieldwork students? (*open-ended question*)
5. How do you facilitate a supportive learning environment for your OT Level II Fieldwork students? (*open-ended question*)
6. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take on leadership roles by providing in-services?
 - a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
7. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take on leadership roles by implementing new protocols?
 - a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
8. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take on leadership roles by creating new interventions?
 - a. Very often

- b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
9. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take risks by sharing new approaches that are typically not used within your workplace? (i.e. interventions, assessments, etc.)
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
10. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students actively listen to other practitioners and clients in your workplace?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
11. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students communicate with you during the fieldwork experience?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
12. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students collaborate with other therapy practitioners and clients in your workplace?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all

- e. Undecided
13. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students contribute to a team-oriented environment?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
14. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students show respect for employees of the workplace throughout their fieldwork experiences?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
15. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students empower/encourage people around them?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
16. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students seek out resources to drive the action for change (in the work environment, for clients, etc.)?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
17. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students take initiative?
- a. Very often

- b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
18. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students respond to constructive criticism?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
19. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students utilize critical thinking skills to solve problems?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
20. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students educate other members of the therapy team (i.e. educate therapists, advocate for OT, and explain OT to clients)?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided
21. How often do your OT Level II Fieldwork students display confidence in their abilities?
- a. Very often
 - b. Often
 - c. Not very often
 - d. Not at all
 - e. Undecided

22. Do you have any other information regarding leadership within your own fieldwork experiences that you would like to share? (*open-ended question*)

Appendix B

Email Script

Authors: Summer Besteman, Katelyn Hartman, Amy Maurer, and Jessica Mooney

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by the Occupational Science and Therapy Department at Grand Valley State University. The purpose of this prospective research project is to identify the leadership traits and characteristics of a Level II Fieldwork student demonstrated during their fieldwork experience. You have been selected as a potential participant in this study as you currently are an OTR who has supervised an OT Level II Fieldwork student within the past five years. The researchers hope to gain insight regarding what leadership is for a Level II Fieldwork student, what leadership looks like in a fieldwork setting, and how leadership skills can aid in the development of entry-level OT practitioners.

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked a series of questions in an online survey. Topics included in the survey will include your background as an OTR as well as your perceptions regarding the leadership qualities and traits that your OT Level II Fieldwork student(s) has exhibited throughout their fieldwork experiences. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes and will be completed online.

If you choose to participate in this survey, please click on the following link:

[An Exploration of Leadership Qualities Demonstrated During Level II Fieldwork](#)

Thank you in advance.

This study has been approved by the Grand Valley State University IRB Committee. Any questions about human rights issues should be directed to the Office of Research Compliance and Integrity at 616-331-3197.

Appendix C

Consent Form

Authors: Summer Besteman, Katelyn Hartman, Amy Maurer, and Jessica Mooney

You are invited to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that your participation is voluntary, to explain the risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

You are invited to participate in a research study being led by Breanna Chycinski, MS OTRL of the Occupational Science and Therapy Department at Grand Valley State University. The purpose of this prospective research project is to identify the leadership traits and characteristics that Level II Fieldwork students demonstrate during their fieldwork experiences. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you are currently an OTR who has supervised an Occupational Therapy (OT) Level II Fieldwork student within the past 5 years. From this study, the researchers hope to learn more about exactly what leadership is for a Level II Fieldwork student, what it looks like in the fieldwork setting, and how leadership skills aid in the development of competent OT practitioners.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an online survey. Topics included in this survey will include your background as an OTR as well as your perceptions about the leadership qualities and traits that your OT Level II Fieldwork students have exhibited throughout their fieldwork experiences. The survey will take between 10-15 minutes and will be completed online.

There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. There are no costs to you for participating in this study. The information collected may not benefit you

directly, but the information learned will help to make improvements. This survey is anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. However, individuals from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may inspect these records. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed.

You are asked to voluntarily provide specific information to this survey. You may skip any question, or stop participating at any time. The information collected will be used for the stated purposes of this research project only and will not be provided to any other party for any other reason at any time except and only if required by law. You should be aware that although the information you provide is anonymous, it is transmitted in a non-secure manner. There is a remote chance that skilled, knowledgeable persons unaffiliated with this research project could track the information you provide to the IP address of the computer from which you send it. However, your personal identity cannot be determined.

Your participation in this research study would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you in advance.

By clicking next, you are agreeing to take part in the survey.

This protocol has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Grand Valley State University (Protocol Number: 19-269-H).