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The Future in Their Hands: The Perceptions of Practice Educators on the Strengths and Challenges of “Generation Y” Occupational Therapy Students

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The Future in Their Hands: The Perceptions of Practice Educators on the Strengths and Challenges of “Generation Y” Occupational Therapy Students

Abstract

Those born between 1982 and 2002 are termed “Generation Y”. This younger generation is thought to have unique characteristics, due to the societal and technological influences that they experienced in their formative years. In occupational therapy, this group has been found to have unique attributes that have impacted on practice education. This study replicated an earlier study to affirm or refute the existence of the Generation Y student in occupational therapy from practice educator perspectives. An Australian university previously developed and administered the survey tool. In this current study, the electronic survey was sent to all practice educators listed on the database of another Australian university. Of the 54 respondents, most considered that there is a Generation Y student. Using summative content analysis, categories were generated, which were collapsed into four main themes: (a) self-assured, go getters that are team players and easily bored; (b) demanding and motivated learners; (c) technologically savvy; and (d) no difference. Practice educators viewed Generation Y students as possessing unique attributes that may contribute significantly to the profession but that also present challenges in practice education. Acknowledgment of generational differences and the value of mentorship from older generations are indicated to maximize this generation’s potential.

Keywords

Millennials, Students, Fieldwork, Clinical education

Credentials Display and Country

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Several authors have reflected on the history of the occupational therapy (OT) profession by grouping decades of the profession's history to describe its evolution and identify key periods in its trajectory. For example, from the 1940s to the 1960s, there was a focus on cottage craft. Because of the influence of medicine in the 1970s and 1980s, there was an increased focus on therapy to improve specific skills and functions (Wilson & Gerber, 2008). Members of a family that includes three generations of occupational therapists have reported changes in OT approaches throughout their three careers as well as in their own individual professional journeys (Matuska, 2010). These reflections acknowledge the impact of the social, economic, and political influences of each time period, or "generation," in the practice of OT.

Generational theorists and social commentators consider those born to specific time periods as both shaped by and contributing to the shape of the cultural ideas, political processes, and physical environments that underpin the organization of any society (Twenge, 2006). German sociologist Karl Mannheim (1952) proposed the core tenets of generational theory and introduced the concepts of social class, location, and generation as the greatest determinants of knowledge. Generational groups in westernized countries include the "GI Generation" (1901 to 1924); the "Silent Generation" (1925 to 1942); the "Baby Boomers" (1943 to 1960); "Generation X" (1961 to 1981); "Generation Y" or "Millennials" (1982 to 2002);

and "Generation Z" (2003 onwards) (Pendergast, 2009). Pendergast (2009) explained that each generational group has shared a set of experiences during their formative years, including a particular set of social and economic conditions. Supporters of generational perspectives have argued that each generation's personality has a unique set of characteristics comprised of beliefs, values, attitudes, and expectations that influence their behavior generally and specifically in the workplace (Boudreau, 2009; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006). There is a wide variety of views on Generation Y characteristics and behaviors, which includes describing them as over-confident, independent, flexible, entrepreneurial, hard-working, proficient at multitasking, easily bored, demanding, self-focused, and needing constant feedback and praise (Crampton & Hodge, 2009; Kelly, 2010; Tulgan & Martin, 2001; Twenge, 2009). It must be noted, however, that many of these commentators are American, Canadian, and Australian, and therefore the Generation Y phenomenon may be unique to these continents or be culturally specific. Indeed, it has been argued that generalizations have led to a form of "moral panic" in universities as they try to accommodate these students (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008; Sternberg, 2012). These authors mention that the stereotype does little to inform universities of the needs of a student body that is varied in age, culture, and socioeconomic status.

Commentators report that the most common characteristic of the Generation Y group is their technological ability. It is argued that this

characteristic is due to the assimilation of new technologies, including computers, the internet, mobile phones, and social networking, into their lives from an early age (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Twenge, 2006). While people of all ages use technology, it is purported that this group has grown up with technology. Technology use, therefore, is not a change from a previous way of life but is as integral to their lives as breathing (Nimon, 2007; Tapscott, 2009). Their skills and confidence in using technology and engaging in multimedia online environments have led to claims that members of this group are skilled multi-taskers, have short attention spans, are easily bored, and prefer to work collaboratively in groups (Arhin & Cormier, 2007; Kelly, 2010; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Sandars & Morrison, 2007).

A prominent American generational researcher, Jean M. Twenge (2006), has argued that in addition to their familiarity with technology, this generation's personality has been shaped by societal influences during their formative years, as this generation has experienced prosperous times. Twenge also contends that because of the introduction of legalized abortion, they are the most wanted generation of children of all time. As a consequence, the generational personality includes being optimistic but also self-focused and self-entitled. Furthermore, they have been raised in a society with threats of "stranger danger," and their lives have been micromanaged by their parents, termed "helicopter parents" (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007; Rickes, 2009; Wilson & Gerber,

2008). Conversely, they have also witnessed their parents working long hours, so they are ambitious and career minded but also family centered, with some suggesting they will choose family and friends over work (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Further, they have been termed the "trophy generation," as they have experienced educational and parenting approaches referred to as "praise for anything so everyone gets a trophy" (Crampton & Hodge, 2009). Researchers report that this has resulted in a self-confident and narcissistic generation (Twenge, 2006).

Of course, any stereotype is dangerous, and conventional wisdom has always acknowledged a culture gap between older and younger generations (Crampton & Hodge, 2009; Mackay, 2007). There is, however, growing evidence of the existence of Generation Y characteristics in health professionals (Borges, Manuel, Elam, & Jones, 2006; Jamieson, Kirk, & Andrew, 2013; Lavoie-Tremblay, Leclerc, Marchionni, & Drevniok, 2010). Hills, Ryan, Smith, and Warren-Forward (2012) found in a survey of OT practice educators (n = 62) from one Australian university that some aspects of the Generation Y attitudes and behaviors have been observed in OT students. In particular, over self-confidence in their skill level, being easily bored, and being casual communicators. Concerns were also reported regarding Generation Y students' standards of professional behavior, and practice educators reported they had observed this group as having shallow clinical reasoning. Additionally, in a survey of managers (n = 30) of occupational therapists in Australia, the respondents reported

that their Generation Y staff were hard working but needed positive feedback and demanded more professional development opportunities than staff from older generations (Hills, Ryan, Warren-Forward, & Smith, 2013). While a small convenience sampling limited this study, managers also considered that this group would be a challenge to retain in work positions, but that their "positive energy" was refreshing. The most positive attribute of Generation Y students and staff reported by both managers and practice educators in these studies was their confidence with technology.

Other OT authors have also discussed generational issues impacting the profession. Boudreau (2009), in Canada, raised issues of generational differences in the workplace. In the US, Kowalski (2010) identified some challenges of supervising Generation Y students on placements. In a British editorial, Gray (2008) challenged the profession to consider meeting this generation's preference for technology by developing new approaches to placement learning. These articles indicate that generational issues exist in current practice internationally, therefore warranting investigation into these contemporary issues.

Furthermore, Baptiste (2011) suggested that it is time to take stock of where the profession is in order to explore options for the future. Despite this, only one study has been completed on the existence of Generation Y OT students (Hills et al., 2012). This study, however, lacked external validity due to the local sample. As the future of the profession is in the hands of this

younger group of current and future therapists, this present study aimed to "take stock" of the younger students by replicating the Hills et al. (2012) study in another Australian university. The aim was to confirm or refute the existence of the stereotypical Generation Y OT student from the perceptions of practice educators, as well as to describe their attributes to the profession. The findings will inform university academics, practice educators, and employers on the issues, both positive and negative, that Generation Y students may bring to contemporary 21st century practice.

Method

Design

The pragmatic paradigm underpins this research. Therefore, the methods applied to this study focused on the practical approach to answer the research questions. Pragmatism supports the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods in the same research design. This research, therefore, replicated the mixed-method survey used by Hills et al. (2012). The rationale for this approach is that it is a basic requirement for scientific inquiry to replicate research. Surveys are also convenient for respondents as they remove interviewer effects and social desirability bias (Bryman, 2008; Burman, Reed, & Alm, 2010). Replication is a process of repeating a study using the same methods with different participants, thereby increasing the generalizability of findings. The reliability and validity of the original survey tool and its findings were reviewed using the "Integrative Framework" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Tashakkori &

Teddle, 2008). The inference quality and credibility was considered acceptable for a replication study. To ensure population transferability, the survey was replicated without amendments. The survey was conducted online to enable ease of dissemination and was divided into four sections.

Section 1. Demographic information.

This included a series of fixed-choice questions on the practice educators' demographics, including generation; age; qualifications; country of qualification; length of time in practice; area of practice; age groups of clients; models of supervision; whether a generalist, specialist, or expert practitioner; and number of students supervised by the practice educator in the past five years.

Section 2. Knowledge of the Generation Y phenomenon. This section included two fixed-answer questions on the practice educators' familiarity with the term Generation Y and practice educators' views on whether there is a Generation Y OT student.

Section 3. Characteristics of Generation Y. This section included a list of Generation Y characteristics created from the literature. The practice educators were asked to choose multiple characteristics that they associated with a Generation Y OT student. This list was followed by four open-ended questions asking for the practice educators' views on the most common positive and negative attributes that Generation Y students have brought to practice education and to the profession.

Section 4. Educating the Generation Y student in practice. This section included four open-ended questions. The first three asked for the practice educators' views on successful education strategies they have used and their main challenges in educating this group of students. The fourth question asked what they believe Generation Y students offer the future of the profession.

Participants

Using purposeful sampling, 66 invitations were sent to all of the practice educators listed as current main contacts for their organization on the university database. Snowball sampling was applied as main contacts were encouraged to forward the invitation to all practice educators in their service. The university granted ethical approval for this study. The participants gave implied consent when they completed the anonymous online survey.

Data Analysis

Fixed-choice answers were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This publication specifically focuses on the responses related to the following three open-ended questions:

- In your experience, what are the most positive attributes Generation Y students bring to the profession and/or practice education?
- In your experience, what are the most negative attributes Generation Y students bring to the profession and/or practice education?
- In your opinion, what do Generation Y students offer the future of the occupational therapy profession?

The data was then analyzed using qualitative content analysis, as this process quantifies content in a systematic and replicable manner (Bryman, 2012). Responses were coded into Generation Y (GY) and "Older Generations" (OG) based on the ages of the respondents ("Older Generations" included Generation X, Baby Boomer, and Silent Generation). Using summative content analysis as defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), the responses were initially coded in categories in an Excel worksheet to maintain frequency numbers. In developing these categories, it was ensured that: (a) each category was mutually exclusive, so that a single response could be coded into one category only; and (b) all responses could be coded into a category. The second cycle of coding included forming patterns and creating themes while retaining frequencies of responses. To ensure the validity of the categories, the second author reviewed all of the responses and full consensus was reached. This content analysis resulted in the development of four themes.

Results

The total number of responses was 54, indicating a response rate to the initial main contacts as 82%. This response rate cannot be confirmed due to snowball sampling. The majority of the respondents were female (83%) and OG (78%). Most of the respondents reported that their professional qualification was a degree (74%) or a degree with honors (9%); some reported having a master's degree (13%), and a few reported having a diploma (4%). Many had practiced for over 10 years (44%), a number had

practiced for 6-10 years (30%), and the remainder had practiced for 0-5 years (26%).

All of the respondents were very familiar (46%) or familiar (54%) with the Generation Y label. Of the Generation Y respondents, most (75%) did consider that there is a Generation Y student (see Figure 1). All of the respondents had taken students in the past five years: 0-3 students (42%), 4-6 students (29%), and over six students (29%).

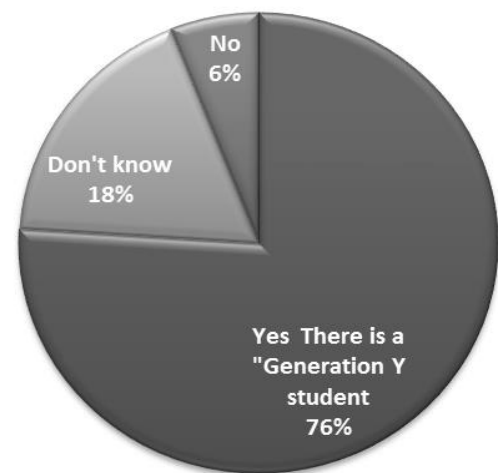


Figure 1. Respondents' views on the existence of a Generation Y student (n = 54).

In Table 1, a summary of the content analysis and resulting themes is provided. This numerical analysis quantifies the results by reporting on the number of responses in each theme. The corresponding percentages delineate the percentage of responses in each subtheme. This analysis provides a clear breakdown of the type and frequency of responses in relation to the corresponding theme.

Table 1*Themes Generated from Practice Educators' Views of Generation Y Students*

Subthemes		
Total responses n = 79	→	Theme 1
Enthusiastic and articulate: 37%		
Self-focused and easily bored: 30%		Self-assured “go-getters” that
Self-assured, assertive, confident, team players: 33%		are team players but easily bored.
Total: 100%		
Total responses n = 54	→	Theme 2
Ambitious, quick learners: 46%		
Eagerness to try new things: 26%		Demanding, motivated learners.
More demanding with high expectations: 28%		
Total: 100%		
Total responses n = 57	→	Theme 3
Skilled with technology: 53%		
Confident in evidence-based practice: 31%		
Creative use of technology: 16%		Technologically savvy
Total: 100%		
Total responses n = 16	→	Theme 4
It is personality not generation: 25%		
They are all individuals: 37%		No difference
Generation Y traits not seen: 38%		
Total: 100%		

Theme One: Self-assured “Go-Getters” that are Team Players and Easily Bored

In this prominent theme, the respondents considered that Generation Y students are enthusiastic, go-getters, and team players that have the potential to bring new ideas to the profession. Students were seen as innovative, adaptive to change, and willing to try new things. The respondents also reported students as articulate, assertive, and confident, who will both defend and develop the profession. For example, one respondent described Generation Y students as having “energy, enthusiasm, and passion; an ability to drive change” (OG 49), and another respondent described them as “keen and ambitious—keen to raise the profile of OT” (GY 9).

Conversely, some respondents reported the students as over confident, easily bored, and arrogant. Some concerns were expressed about professional behaviors, including being casual communicators, wearing inappropriate or casual clothes, and only acting proactively in areas that they deem important. For example, one respondent wrote that the students are “easily bored and can be a bit self-focused, i.e., more focused on their own needs rather than on those of the organization; more likely to ring in sick, etc.” (OG 10). The Generation Y students also are seen as having difficulty with time management and understanding that the requirements of the service override their own personal needs. This includes managing part-time work with study, as students need a higher income to survive.

The respondents reported that these attributes could create an impression of being self-entitled. The respondents also reported that the students are energetic, innovative, ambitious, and career driven, wanting promotion or leadership roles early. Some concern was expressed that they may have more than one career in their lifetimes.

Theme Two: Demanding, Motivated Learners

In Theme Two, the respondents reported that students were self-directed, motivated, fast learners who were good at multi-tasking. Their approach to learning was seen to indicate that they wanted to be an expert too quickly, that they did not want to slow down and learn gradually and engage in deep learning. They were seen as goal-orientated solution seekers with a preference for a hands-on approach to learning. For example, one respondent wrote that the students seem to “like tasks that can be completed quickly and can be seen” (OG 42); another viewed the students as “not always wanting to slow down and learn gradually. Prefer to jump in and 'do' straight away” (GY 40).

The respondents also commented on a skimming approach to information gathering, a lack of effective clinical reasoning, and poor reflection. The eagerness for learning was perceived as demanding, as they have high expectations of both themselves and their educators. The respondents interpreted this as a lack of respect for their educators. For example, one described them as “demanding, self-focused, and don’t show enough respect to their teachers or gratitude” (OG 25). The respondents also

reported that students have difficulty accepting criticism and feedback, and that they lack attention to detail.

Theme Three: Technologically Savvy

This theme related to the students' familiarity with and confidence in using technology in various formats. The respondents quoted various examples of the application of the students' skills with and knowledge of technology in OT practice, such as data management, documentation, use in therapy, IT systems, use in training, database searching and research, assistive technology, use for communication purposes, sharing information, and networking. For example, a respondent noted the students' "greater use of technology in both direct client care, study/further learning, and networking" (OG 5).

In particular, a commonly reported positive consequence of these technological skills was the participation in research and the application of evidence-based practice. Also, many respondents commented that another benefit of the students' use of technology was participation in worldwide collaborations and creatively applying new technologies with clients. For example, a respondent identified "Creativity. An appreciation of technologies that could be applied to assist patient care" (OG 27).

However, the respondents also commented on associated challenges that arise from the students' use of technology, including a reliance on Internet sources, as well as the inappropriate use of mobile phones and Internet at work. For example, "social etiquette relating to the use of mobile phones, i.e., using when not an appropriate

time to do so" (OG 32). Further challenges reported were the students' poor documentation or writing skills as a result of reliance on technology for communication.

Theme Four: No Difference

While most of the respondents (76%) indicated quantitatively that they think there is a Generation Y student, a relatively small number of qualitative comments were received indicating that Generation Y traits have not been seen in students, and that students are all individuals. For example, one respondent noted that "students are all individuals—some have some of the characteristics you have described above, but not all" (OG 8).

Some of the respondents reported that characteristics, such as confidence, were more attributed to students' personality traits, rather than a generational persona. For example, "I think individual personality traits and characteristics are as diverse and prevalent in Generation Y as in preceding generations. It is very difficult to characterize any of these traits to the generation. We have had some outstanding, self-motivated, well-rounded and caring individuals and some vice-versa (OG 49).

Discussion

This study contributes to our understanding of the characteristics and challenges of Generation Y OT students as perceived by practice educators from one Australian university. Overall, the findings are strongly comparable with the Hills et al. (2012) study conducted at another Australian university, with a similar number of respondents (62

respondents in the Hills et al. study and 54 in the current study). The majority of the participants from both universities was female and from older generations, with more Generation Y participants in the Hills et al. study (32% compared to 22%). The majority of the respondents from both universities reported their professional qualification as a degree in OT, having qualified in Australia and having practiced more than 10 years.

Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data provides evidence of similarities in the findings obtained from both universities. Similar themes arose from the independent analyses conducted at both sites. First, the majority of practice educators at both universities (76% in the Hills et al. [2012] study and 70% in the current study) indicated quantitatively that they perceive the existence of a Generation Y student. Again, similar findings between the studies were found in that a small number of the respondents reported that, in their experience, there is no difference between students and that characteristics that may be found in individual students cannot be generalized to a Generation Y cohort. Second, all four themes that emerged from this current study were reflected in the previous study. Practice educators at both universities identified many positive attributes and challenges of Generation Y students.

While homogeneity is never present in any generation, it is important to have an awareness of the challenges that could be attributed to this cohort of students, but it is also essential to view each student as an individual and to adopt a

customized approach. Nevertheless, practice educators viewed this younger population of students as possessing a unique set of attributes that in turn may contribute significantly to shaping the future of OT practice. However, the extent to which practice educators' views have been influenced by the media and popular culture, especially as most were familiar with the Generation Y stereotype, is unclear.

A prevalent positive characteristic reported by practice educators at both universities was this younger generation's level of comfort with, and expertise in, the use of technology. Gray (2008) reported students' skills in technology as a particular strength of Generation Y. Information technology is changing the world and its use is becoming integral to the everyday occupations of all age groups (Brown, 2011). In this current study, students are reported to be proficient in its daily use in the workplace in a range of relevant practice tasks. The practice educators also reported on students' use of technology in areas such as research and evidence-based practice. Nonetheless, practice educators reported some frustration with this younger group's inappropriate use of mobile technologies, especially their mobile phones. It must be acknowledged that methods of communication in society are changing, and mobile phones have become integrated into 21st-century living. Mobile technologies may become an important aspect of 21st-century practice since there is some evidence in literature of mobile technologies, including Apple iPad applications, being used in rehabilitation, health promotion, and everyday

living programs (Hyzny, 2010). With this in mind, practice educators may need to consider the opportunities of integrating mobile phones and technologies into daily practice, as they give the opportunity to access immediate information relevant to student learning. Furthermore, with the use of blogging and social networking for students in practice education, it seems a logical progression to permit professionally appropriate mobile technology use as an important aspect of support for professional development (Wiid, McCormack, Warren, Buckley, & Cahill, 2013). In addition, authors Kashani, Burwash, and Hamilton (2010) have suggested that new technologies, including social media, are opportunities to establish communities of practice and further the profession. They also have the potential, when used ethically, for inclusion in client interventions, and therefore may be a mechanism of innovation for occupational therapists.

While the use of technology is a reported skill of Generation Y, the participants in this study raised concerns about poor documentation skills, which may be a consequence of changing societal expectations related to communication due to technology use. This concern was supported by the Hills et al. (2012) study. Gleeson (2007), writing in a physical therapy journal, stated that this generation needs to be taught how to write in a professional manner, as less emphasis is placed on accurate grammar and punctuation in social media. Despite this, it is important for the profession that OT documentation capture the full scope and effectiveness of the profession;

therefore, documentation skills may need to be targeted by university programs as an essential competence requirement of practice (Clark, 2012).

The participants of the study also praised Generation Y students for exploring the effectiveness of interventions using evidence-based practice, which adds to our understanding of the attributes of this new generation of students. This was a new finding from the original study and may be due to a number of factors, including a difference in content of university curriculums. With information being more portable, accessible, and interactive than ever before, the immediacy of information via the Internet, used wisely and judiciously, is a contemporary reality (Clark, 2012). This attribute, therefore, could be a significant benefit to the profession if they apply research evidence in practice. Gleeson (2007), on the other hand, advocated that it is important to balance the contributions that the new generation of therapists bring in evidence-based decision making, while acknowledging the foregoing generations' knowledge and wisdom developed through work or clinical experience. In contradiction to this positive attribute, practice educators also criticized this generational groups' over-reliance on Internet resources.

With regard to being career driven, the practice educators reported that this generation focuses on their career development, wanting promotion early, and therefore they have a penchant for professional development. This concurs with the views of OT managers reported by Hills et al. (2013) in their Australian survey. The practice educators in this current study

identified that this generation's need for rapid career development may result in them ultimately leaving the profession. This may indicate a need to consider this thirst for advancement positively by facilitating professional development opportunities in practice education and in work. To this end, Greene (2005) recommended employers of nurses implement mentoring and training programs for new graduates as a serious attempt at staff retention rates. Clark (2012) recommended that the OT profession needs to have an "attitude adjustment" and not view "power" as a dirty word. The profession needs movers and shakers, leaders and advocates, political voices, and innovators. According to the practice educators' views in this current study, this generation, with their energy, enthusiasm, and confidence, may have the characteristics to meet this challenge. The challenge in managing this generation on placement and in employment, therefore, may be to accept their need for self-development and support their progress while providing them with the wisdom of older generations in order to facilitate their passage within the profession rather than career progression elsewhere.

Nevertheless, concerns were identified in both studies regarding the depth of students' clinical reasoning and self-reflection, their poor communication skills, skimming work, and preparation for sessions. Christiansen, Jones, Edwards, and Higgs (2008) suggested that the development of reasoning in health professionals is based on the "luck of the draw," as not all students benefit from educators who can make

their reasoning explicit for students. A substantial body of literature exists to provide guidance on the facilitation of clinical reasoning, including the study by Mattingly and Hayes Fleming (1994); however, it may be that these understandings and strategies may need to be adapted for this new generation's learning and reasoning styles. Further research is therefore warranted on the optimum educational approaches for the development of these essential practice skills and how practice educators can ensure that students complete work to the required depth. In the meantime, university programs may need to focus on students' preparedness to self-reflect and reason in practice and on effective feedback to students on their performance.

Feedback is fundamental to the effective education and supervision of students. At both universities, practice educators reported that this younger generation does not easily accept critical feedback and this characteristic has been documented in generational literature as well as in allied health literature (Gleeson, 2007). In a recent Australian study of four health science disciplines, including OT, more than 55% of students reported that feedback should be timelier and there should be more of it (Strong et al., 2012). Given that practice educators report that this generation does not easily accept critical feedback, further research is needed to build our understanding of how best to accommodate their feedback preferences while ensuring effective learning on placement.

Both universities' practice educators reported the challenges of these students having

an informal communication style and casual dress code, being overly confident, being easily bored, having inadequate time management skills, experiencing difficulty with managing commitments, and disliking mundane tasks. These challenges have been reported as Generation Y characteristics by generational theorists and researchers such as Twenge and Campbell (2008). Generational theorists would advocate that these characteristics are due to their “Generational personality,” which is comprised of a different skill set and work style, as well as different values, from that of the older generations. Equally, though, these characteristics could be attributed to the reality of youth and may be a normal part of their life stage. Nonetheless, one agreement between generational theorists and non-generational supporters is that history has shown us that we influence and are influenced by societal, economic, and political changes. For this reason, regardless of the Generational Y stereotype, the future of the profession is dependent on this younger generation, and this current research suggests that they certainly have the attributes of being self-confident, energetic, and enthusiastic to expand the scope of the profession—especially in regard to the use of technology and evidence-based practice.

Limitations and Future Research

Recommendations

The results of this study should be considered in light of certain limitations. The sampling size was limited to educators on the

database of one university and some selection bias may have been present. The study is limited to providing findings on the perceptions of practice educators, and their perceptions may be strongly based on their experiences of specific students. This study provides a snapshot only of the current cohorts of students and practice educators at the time the studies were conducted. Further research into the feedback preferences, as well as effective strategies for providing feedback and facilitation of clinical reasoning, is recommended.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore practice educators’ views of Generation Y students by replicating a study from another university. Overall, the findings concur with the findings of the original study by Hills et al. (2012), adding the use of evidence-based practice to their documented set of attributes. While some challenges were identified, the identified strengths far outweigh the reported challenges, and it is believed that, similar to other new generations entering the profession, Generation Y will benefit from and uniquely shape the future of the profession. The challenge may be for older generations to mentor these future leaders of the profession and to maximize their potential to advance the profession through using evidence-based practice combined with global connectivity and entrepreneurial endeavors, so that the traditional values of OT are retained for future service users.

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