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# The Development of a Well-Being Program for Occupational Therapy Graduate Students

## Abstract

High levels of stress among occupational therapy graduate students have led to the adoption of unhealthy coping habits such as poor nutrition, little exercise, and disrupted sleep. In response, many institutions have explored programming and even curricular changes to support student well-being. However, very few are built upon a strong theoretical foundation to address holistic well-being. Therefore, this paper describes how logic modeling was used to develop a student well-being program based on Facilitating Learning and Occupational Well-Being Using Research-Based Initiatives for Student Health (FLOURISH), a theoretical approach rooted in the Person-Environment-Occupation Performance Model. A well-being program delivered via a virtual community of practice for entry-level students at a Midwestern occupational therapy program was created to decrease stress and enhance overall well-being for the performance of learning. The program consisted of eight 50-minute sessions that met once per week and included topics of physical, mental, sociocultural, environmental, and occupational well-being. The student well-being program is one viable option that shows promise to empower students with a theoretical approach to address personal and professional well-being, which has the potential to translate into professional practice. In this article, we describe the well-being program and the theoretical approach in detail and illustrate how it can be used to improve occupational therapy student well-being.

## Keywords

Occupational therapy, student well-being, wellness, occupational balance, community of practice

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## The Development of a Well-Being Program for Occupational Therapy Graduate Students

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### ABSTRACT

High levels of stress among occupational therapy graduate students have led to the adoption of unhealthy coping habits such as poor nutrition, little exercise, and disrupted sleep. In response, many institutions have explored programming and even curricular changes to support student well-being. However, very few are built upon a strong theoretical foundation to address holistic well-being. Therefore, this paper describes how logic modeling was used to develop a student well-being program based on Facilitating Learning and Occupational Well-Being Using Research-Based Initiatives for Student Health (FLOURISH), a theoretical approach rooted in the Person-Environment-Occupation Performance Model. A well-being program delivered via a virtual community of practice for entry-level students at a Midwestern occupational therapy program was created to decrease stress and enhance overall well-being for the performance of learning. The program consisted of eight 50-minute sessions that met once per week and included topics of physical, mental, sociocultural, environmental, and occupational well-being. The student well-being program is one viable option that shows promise to empower students with a theoretical approach to address personal and professional well-being, which has the potential to translate into professional practice. In this article, we describe the well-being program and the theoretical approach in detail and illustrate how it can be used to improve occupational therapy student well-being.

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## **Introduction**

Graduate student mental health is a crisis requiring immediate attention. These students are likely to experience depression and anxiety six times more than the general population (Evans et al., 2018). More specifically, occupational therapy graduate students have reported stress levels that were 'above average' or the 'highest ever in [my] life' (Pfeifer et al., 2008, p. 221). Many students attribute these high stress levels to financial situations, time constraints, workloads, limited social support, and poor work-life balance (Evans et al., 2018; Grab et al., 2021; Oswald & Riddock, 2007). In addition, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has added a new layer of stress as students are forced to work from home and online for hours at a time (Son et al., 2020). Increased levels of stress are correlated with increased anxiety and depression in graduate students, which in turn correlates with a decrease in healthy behaviors such as sleep, nutrition, and physical activity (Melnyk et al., 2016). Graduate students are struggling to thrive.

Well-being is a holistic yet subjective view of health that is concerned with a sense of belonging and contentment in one's life (Baum et al., 2015a). Aspects of well-being can include, but are not limited to, finances, careers, physical fitness, emotions, community membership, spirituality, and quality of life. "Well-being" is sometimes used interchangeably with "wellness;" however, wellness refers to healthy behaviors such as eating balanced meals, exercising frequently, and having a consistent bedtime routine (Baum et al., 2015a; Rath & Harter, 2010). Graduate students are experiencing a decline in well-being due to the stress associated with either imbalanced or negative engagement in these aspects of life.

Graduate student well-being has been a topic of discussion for the past few decades and, as a result, researchers have been studying student stress and well-being programming (Beck et al., 2017; Drolet & Rodgers, 2010; Gutman et al., 2020; Melnyk et al., 2016; Neely et al., 2009; Zollars et al., 2019). Several studies have implemented mindfulness programs and noted decreased levels of perceived stress in occupational therapy, physical therapy, and pharmacy graduate students (Gutman et al., 2020; Zollars et al., 2019). Zollars et al. (2019) even noted an increase in well-being post-intervention for pharmacy students. Unfortunately, there is limited literature surrounding holistic well-being programming for graduate students, and even less for occupational therapy graduate students. One of the few examples of wellness programming was developed at a Midwestern medical school and included a mentorship program, wellness committee, and annual workshops (Drolet & Rodgers, 2010). Though no objective data was gathered, anecdotal evidence showed the program was making a positive difference in the well-being of graduate students (Drolet & Rodgers, 2010). Based on these results, it is clear well-being programming should be studied and integrated into graduate level healthcare programs, whose primary purpose is to instruct students on improving the health and well-being of others.

Communities of practice (CoPs) are one method of program delivery that, to our knowledge, have not been used previously to address graduate student well-being specifically. Communities of practice are groups of people that share common interests that meet to exchange knowledge and resources. Many professionals have used this

approach for networking, sharing evidence-based practices, and developing practical skills (McLoughlin et al., 2018; Struminger et al., 2017). Communities of practice have also been used in academic situations to promote collaboration among students. One study found that after the implementation of a CoP within a graduate level public administration course, students reported higher levels of social capital, reporting participation in the CoP positively (Kapucu, 2018). With recent technological advancements and the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual formats are being utilized as an alternative to face-to-face meetings. Virtual CoPs operate much like their face-to-face counterparts but offer less time commitment due to reduced travel and help to decrease isolation amidst healthcare professionals who may work at a distance (McLoughlin et al., 2018).

Efforts must be made to address the well-being of graduate students to prevent further distress (Lewis-Kipkulei et al., 2021). In a virtual format, CoPs offer an approach to addressing this efficiently and effectively. This article describes a well-being program rooted in theory for occupational therapy graduate students with the ultimate goal of decreasing stress and enhancing overall well-being for the performance of learning. The Kellogg Logic Model was used to develop the well-being program (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). The essential strategy for the program was the use of Facilitating Learning and Occupational Well-Being Using Research-Based Initiatives for Student Health (FLOURISH), a theoretical approach that was created from the Person-Environment-Occupation Performance (PEOP) Model (Baum, et al., 2015b) specifically with occupational therapy graduate students in mind. We describe the well-being program and the theoretical approach in detail and illustrate how it can be used to improve occupational therapy student well-being. Additionally, we discuss preliminary program development and implementation.

### **Program Development**

Logic models are used to guide and to explain the process of program development. The *Logic Model Development Guide* (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004) was utilized to explain the development process of our well-being program initiative. There are six steps of the logic model that identify (a) the problem, (b) the community profile, (c) outcome measures, (d) influential factors, (e) implementation strategies, and (f) assumptions. Refer to Table 1 for an overview of the logic model developed.

#### **The Problem**

As mentioned, the need to focus on and improve graduate student well-being is growing and must be addressed to improve student academic success and quality of life. Graduate level programs could benefit from addressing student well-being. We identified a need for the well-being program from previous research at a Midwestern occupational therapy program that included entry level master's and doctoral students (Laposha & Smallfield, 2022; Lawrence et al., 2021; Yang & Smallfield, 2020).

**Table 1**

*Logic Model Guiding the Student Well-Being Program Development*

<b><u>Problem or Issue:</u></b> Decreased graduate occupational therapy student well-being			
<b><u>Goal:</u></b> To enhance occupational therapy student well-being for the performance of learning			
<b><u>Community Needs/Assets:</u></b>	➔ <b><u>Strategies:</u></b>	➔ <b><u>Outputs:</u></b>	➔ <b><u>Short-term Outcomes:</u></b>
Risk for decreased well-being: Rigor of program, tuition, transition	<b>FLOURISH approach</b>	Attendance	Increase awareness of the importance of well-being
Entry-level occupational therapy graduate students and faculty with knowledge of PEOP Model	<b>Virtual CoP</b>	Surveys	↓
Research intensive focus occupational therapy program: provided funding, resources, and faculty support	8-week program, 50 minutes 1x/wk	Resources	<b><u>Intermediate/Long-term Outcomes:</u></b>
			Decrease occupational therapy student stress to enhance learning
<b><u>Influential Factors:</u></b>		<b><u>Assumptions:</u></b>	
Ethical considerations for intervention strategies related to concerns about students serving other students Collaborative nature of CoP HIPAA compliant Zoom access COVID-19 pandemic		Engagement in meaningful occupations increases well-being CoP is effective and beneficial Participation in well-being programs enhances well-being and decrease stress Participants would be interested in well-being programing	

**Community Profile**

The population of interest for the well-being program was originally identified as the first-year entry-level master’s and doctoral level students at the occupational therapy program. However, due to low recruitment numbers, it was expanded to include second- and third-year students from the program, which was approximately 220 students. After further reflection, it was determined that the social benefits of incorporating students from various years in the program would improve the quality of the CoP, the sharing of resources, experiences, and knowledge.



Generally, most students at this occupational therapy program are Caucasian, female, and entered the program immediately following their undergraduate education. Several factors of this program can put students at risk for a decrease in well-being. First, this program attracts students nationally and internationally due to its rigor and ranking which can increase student stress due to institutional and self-expectations. Second, students that travel to attend the program must make large transitions both literally and physically. Moving into an unfamiliar environment and community can result in social isolation or a loss of social support, leaving student well-being vulnerable. Lastly, the cost of tuition and financial aid in graduate school can add stress to an already difficult situation. These factors are not exhaustive, as other unique person and environmental factors can put student well-being at risk.

We also identified several community strengths, or assets. First, the occupational therapy program is housed in an academic medical center with a research-intensive focus. This provided the necessary resources and funding for the well-being program's development. Additionally, the occupational therapy program's faculty was in support of the development of the well-being program. Finally, the PEOP Model (Baum et al., 2015b) is a predominant theme of the occupational therapy program and therefore this theoretical knowledge is familiar to all students, including the research teams as members of this occupational therapy program community.

### **Outcome Measures**

According to the Logic Model, there are several levels of program outcome measures. These include outputs as well as short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). Output measurements are data that demonstrate program implementation. Short term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes are goals that are anticipated to be achieved in the next one to three years, four to six years, and 10 years, respectively. See Table 2 for specific outcomes related to the well-being program.

### **Influential Factors**

There were several factors that influenced the development of this student well-being program. When considering best intervention strategies to address this, several approaches were discussed. The occupational therapy program has several student-led clinics for underserved populations; however, this model of service delivery was excluded due to the unethical nature of students serving other students. Similarly, student or faculty led interventions such as traditional occupational therapy groups were also ruled out. Because CoPs are opportunities for those with similar interests to exchange resources, network, share evidence-based practices, and develop practical skills (McLoughlin et al., 2018; Struminger et al., 2017) and have been used to promote collaboration among students, we determined it would be a viable alternative to traditional service delivery options.

The COVID-19 pandemic also had an influence on the student well-being program. During the program's development, courses were held largely online due to the spread of coronavirus. We determined it was best to maintain the safety and comfort of program participants by using a virtual platform for program implementation. Additionally, literature suggests that virtual CoPs provide increased flexibility for participants, which also contributed to this decision (Hoffman et al., 2011). We were able to utilize a HIPAA-compliant Zoom provided by the institution as our virtual communication platform.

**Table 2**

*Outcome Measures for the Student Well-Being Program with the FLOURISH Approach*

**Output Measurements**

- Number of weekly presentations created for the program
- Number of participants that attended each session
- Number of total participants in the program
- Number of surveys submitted each week
- Number of resources compiled at the conclusion of the program

**Short-Term Outcomes: 1 to 3 Year Goals**

- Increasing participant awareness of the importance of well-being
- Determining program feasibility
- Demonstrating program effectiveness as measured by decreased stress and positive goal attainment in participants
- Determining the effectiveness of a CoP approach to well-being program delivery as measured by a program evaluation survey
- Demonstrating program effectiveness in enhancing participant well-being through participant satisfaction via participant self-report
- Participation of 20% of each class of students in the occupational therapy program by their third year in the occupational therapy program

**Intermediate Outcomes: 4 to 6 Year Goals**

- Demonstrating continued program effectiveness in enhancing participant well-being through participant satisfaction via participant self-report and objective measures
- Participation of 40% of each class of students in the occupational therapy program by their third year in the occupational therapy program

**Long-Term Outcomes: 10 Year Goals**

- Decreasing occupational therapy student stress to 'low' or 'moderate' as measured by the Perceived Stress Scale
  - Reshaping institutional culture of the occupational therapy program to be inclusive of well-being resources
  - Participation of 60% of each class of students in the occupational therapy program by their third year in the occupational therapy program
-

## **Strategies**

Theoretical conceptual models of practice are essential to the occupational therapy profession because they explain relationships between concepts and predict how change is created. They bridge the gap between research and practice by explaining the phenomenon of interest; a theoretical conceptual model represents one way of organizing knowledge. Theory serves to guide practice and predict outcomes.

We used the FLOURISH theoretical approach as the strategy to address student well-being. The FLOURISH approach was developed from the PEOP Model (Baum et al., 2015b). We specifically developed it to describe how features of occupational therapy students, their environments, and their chosen occupations influence their learning and well-being. The PEOP Model provides a general description of how individuals, organizations, and populations engage in occupations (Baum et al., 2015b), while the FLOURISH approach provides specific guidance for occupational therapy graduate students.

The PEOP Model is an ecological-transactional systems model. It describes how an individual's person, environment, and occupational factors interact to express their participation, performance, and well-being (Baum et al., 2015b). It informs and guides occupational therapy intervention by illustrating how intrinsic (person) factors interact with extrinsic (environment) factors to influence overall occupational performance and participation through occupation. The interactions of these factors can have direct implications on well-being and quality of life. Personal factors included in the model are cognition, sensation, motor, physiology, psychology, and spirituality. Environment factors include culture, social capital and support, social determinants, physical and natural environment, technology, and education and policy. Occupations, tasks, and activities are unique to each person's roles. The PEOP Model was selected as the foundation for the FLOURISH approach as it is comprehensive, occupation-based, and applicable to the student population.

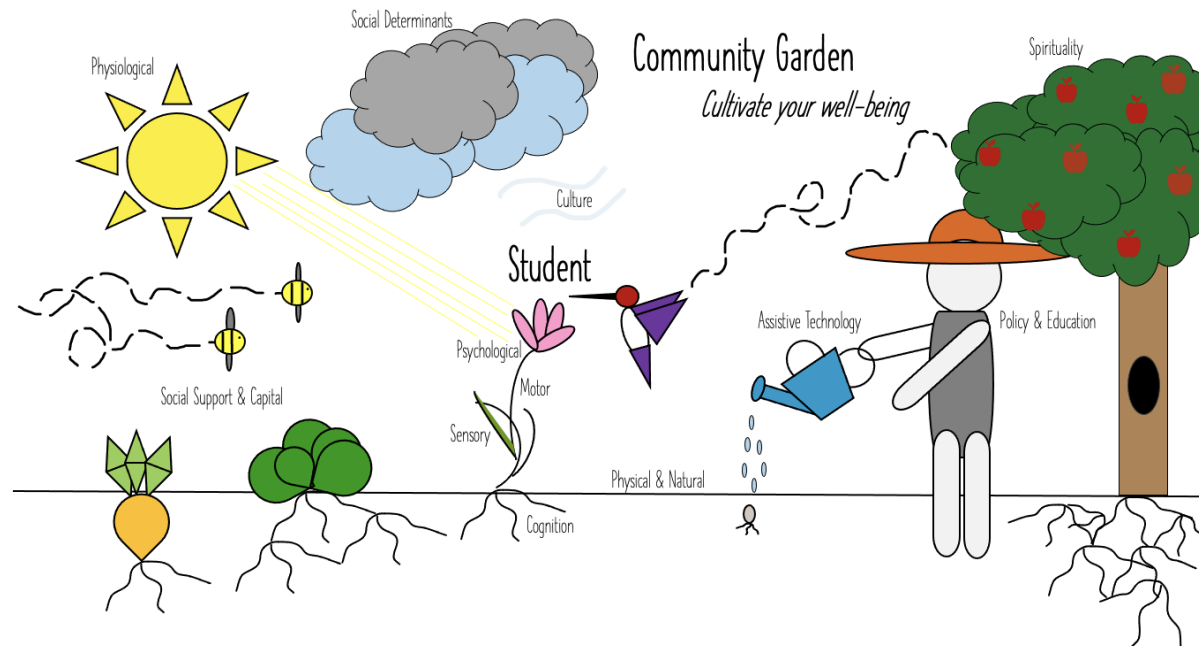
## **Process**

Development of the FLOURISH approach began in 2019 as the result of a doctoral capstone project on student well-being completed by Kathy Yang under the mentorship of Stacy Smallfield. To tailor this approach to occupational therapy student well-being, a literature search was completed to understand existing knowledge for each person, environment, and occupation factor from the PEOP Model. Knowledge was synthesized and connections were drawn between each factor and occupation for this population. These key points were outlined, and an iterative design process was used to create the visual representation as more was learned about the connections between factors. The comprehensive research and PEOP factors were integrated into a pictorial representation that describes how the components of the FLOURISH approach interact with each other. A community garden was selected as a useful pictorial representation of the factors due to its analogous relationship to graduate student well-being; both community gardens and graduate students can flourish under favorable circumstances. Just as academic programs consist of a variety of students, educators, and resources, a

community garden has many plant varieties, many gardeners, and resources that contribute to growth, health, and well-being. The initial version of the pictorial representation then went through extensive peer review and revision to strengthen the connection between the visual and the PEOP factors. See Figure 1 for the pictorial representation of the FLOURISH approach.

## Figure 1

### *Pictorial Representation of the FLOURISH Theoretical Approach*



### **FLOURISH: A Theoretical Approach**

In the FLOURISH approach, a student is visually represented as a singular plant in a community garden among other plants. This represents an individual student in their community, engaging in various occupations amongst other peers. Components of the community garden represent the many person and environment factors, which support, or hinder, the activities, tasks, and roles of an individual.

### **Occupation Factors**

Occupations include the activities, tasks, and roles individuals engage in across the lifespan (Baum et al., 2015b). Occupations can vary depending on the stage of life and are typically context specific. Therefore, there are specific occupations unique to occupational therapy graduate students. Typical tasks and activities may include retrieving, studying, and applying knowledge, demonstrating skills learned, managing daily self-care, completing work or volunteer activities, socializing, and more. Roles include the various positions an individual may have. Typical roles of a graduate student may include student, roommate, employee, family member, and friend. Understanding occupations, and the balance between them, is the first step in using the PEOP Model (Baum et al., 2015b), as well as implementing the FLOURISH approach.

### ***Person and Environment Factors***

The person and environment factors of an individual can support occupational performance. After understanding an individual's occupations, occupational therapy practitioners and educators can assess person and environment factors for potential dysfunction. Person factors include cognition, sensation, motor, physiology, psychology, and spirituality (Baum et al., 2015b). Environment factors include culture, social capital, social support, social determinants, the physical and natural environment, technology, and education and policy (Baum et al., 2015b). See Table 3 for a description of these factors and how they are represented in the FLOURISH approach.

**Table 3**

#### *Person, Environment, and Occupation Factors of the FLOURISH Approach*

Element of PEOP Model	Corresponding Element of the FLOURISH Approach
<b>Person Factor</b>	<b>Component of the Plant</b>
Cognition	Roots of the plant
Psychological	Flowers of the plant
Physiological	Sun
Sensory	Leaves of the plant
Motor	Stem of the plant
Spirituality	Fruits of the plant
<b>Environment Factor</b>	<b>Component of the Environment</b>
Culture	Wind/Air
Social Determinants	Weather
Social Support and Capital	Other plants, pollinators
Education and Policy	Gardener
Physical/Natural Environment	Soil
Assistive Technology	Watering can

### ***Function Versus Dysfunction***

According to the FLOURISH approach, function occurs when a student is experiencing a balance of person, environment, and occupation factors. This occurs when a student cares for person factors, specifically, physiological factors such as nutrition, sleep, physical activity, or psychological factors such as anxiety and stress reduction. It also occurs when a student is situated in a community in which they feel belonging through social support, social capital, appropriate use of technology, and a supportive educational environment. The functions of these factors support activities, tasks, and roles, resulting in optimal occupational performance—or flourishing. Flourishing will look different for each student, depending heavily on person, environment, and occupation factors, as described above. Within the pictorial representation of the FLOURISH approach, evidence of function includes vibrant color of the plant, production of flowers and fruit, and resiliency against harsh conditions. A flourishing community garden will

contain plants that are growing in an optimal environment, with plenty of rain, sunlight, and fresh air. Each plant will have plenty of pollinators and protectors and deep, interconnected roots to share resources, promoting connection and support. It will have multiple gardeners working together to complete the gardening tasks.

Conversely, dysfunction within the FLOURISH approach occurs when there is an imbalance of person, environment, and occupation factors. This may occur when a student is not properly managing person factors, evidenced by poor nutrition, inadequate sleep, and difficulties with stress management. Additionally, if a student lacks social support, appropriate technology use, or educational support, dysfunction can occur within their environment. Occupational performance will decline if these factors are out of balance. Evidence of dysfunction includes the presence of weeds, lack of water, sunlight, nutrient-rich soil, pollinators, and protectors. Plants may wilt, lose their color, and lack the ability to bloom or produce fruit. Additionally, they may lack deep, interconnected roots, illustrating lack of connection and overall support.

### **How Change Occurs**

In the FLOURISH approach, change occurs through an intentional student well-being CoP. Communities of practice involve sharing of resources and knowledge to benefit all group members (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). In general, CoPs can occur either in-person or virtually, with both options resulting in similar outcomes (Hoffman et al., 2011; McLoughlin et al., 2018; Weaver et al., 2019). Like a community garden, CoPs allow knowledge to come from many individuals, widening the breadth of well-being knowledge for all involved. The purpose of the CoP is to increase well-being through individual and collective growth in knowledge and skills related to the person, environment, and occupation factors that contribute to well-being. Through discussions, sharing of goals, peer accountability, and the exchange of resources, participants can gain the knowledge and skills necessary to improve person, environment, and occupation factors. This, in turn, can result in greater occupational performance, an increase in occupational balance, and enhanced well-being.

We determined the length and duration of the well-being program after analyzing current research with similar aims, outcomes, and positive results. Eight-week mindfulness programs by Beck et al. (2017) and Gutman et al. (2020) showed a decrease in stress for communication and science disorder students and occupational therapy and physical therapy students, respectively. These sessions ranged in duration from 20 to 50-minute sessions once a week (Beck et al., 2017; Gutman et al., 2020). As previously discussed, virtual sessions were identified as the safest and best platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this evidence, and after careful deliberation, we determined that the well-being program would consist of eight 50-minute virtual sessions that met once per week.

### **Assumptions**

Several assumptions were made during the development of the student well-being program. First, occupational therapy theoretical concepts led us to assume that well-being could be enhanced by engaging in meaningful occupations and addressing the quality of person, environmental, and occupational factors within the PEO Model (Baum et al., 2015b). Second, the effectiveness of a CoP approach on increasing social capital and sharing of resources led us to assume it would be a beneficial method of delivery for our well-being program (Kapucu, 2018; McLoughlin et al., 2018). Third, positive evidence for mindfulness exercises in decreasing perceived student stress led us to assume this strategy could show similar effects within our well-being program (Beck et al., 2017; Gutman et al., 2020; Zollars et al., 2019). Fourth, literature supporting student goal setting, academic performance, and well-being led us to believe that incorporating these components into the FLOURISH approach would positively influence participants' well-being and classroom performance (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999; Moeller et al., 2012). In addition, we assumed from the findings of a previous focus group study, that students would be interested in a well-being program at this Midwestern occupational therapy program (Lawrence et al., 2021). Ultimately, we presumed that a virtual community for students to share and engage with well-being resources, create new and supportive relationships, and practice well-being habits, would decrease stress and increase overall well-being, resulting in student "flourishing."

### **Program Implementation**

After the FLOURISH approach was developed, we implemented the student well-being program in the fall semester of 2020. Occupational therapy students, under the direction of occupational therapy academic faculty, led 50-minute well-being sessions held once a week for eight consecutive weeks. Each session, aside from the weeks dedicated to the introduction and conclusion, was presented in a similar format for cohesiveness, structure, and clarity. At the beginning, the study coordinator provided a brief outline of the topics and activities that would be covered during the session. Following this, participants broke into small breakout rooms to discuss progress on the well-being goals set during the first week. After the discussion, participants engaged in an interactive activity in preparation for the week specific microteach. The weekly microteach content was derived from the various components of the FLOURISH approach to better describe holistic well-being, as seen in Table 4.

During the first week students were asked to draw a garden that depicted their current well-being, with the FLOURISH approach as a guide. Students also set a well-being goal, e.g., put phone away 30 minutes before bed four days a week, for the duration of the well-being program and checked in each week with the CoP for accountability. Discussion-based questions were heavily integrated throughout with the use of a virtual CoP implementation method to encourage personal growth through shared experiences. Takeaway points were highlighted at the conclusion of each session, as well as a preview of the next session's topics. Following each session, participants were asked to take a survey to track their goal progress. In addition to weekly goal tracking surveys, participants were asked to complete a pretest survey for demographics and

baseline data prior to program implementation as well as posttest and 12-week follow-up surveys to address program evaluation. At the end of each session, students were asked to take a brief survey to track their goal progress. During the final week of the program, students were asked to reflect on their well-being by redrawing their garden, again using the FLOURISH approach as a guide.

**Table 4**

*Weekly Topics in the Student Well-Being Program with the FLOURISH Approach*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Topic covered</b>
1	Introduction	FLOURISH approach and goal setting
2	Physical well-being	Sleep, nutrition, physical activity
3	Mental well-being	Emotional intelligence, stress management, mental well-being
4	Sociocultural well-being	Culture, diversity, inclusion, belonging
5	Environmental well-being	School resources, health applications, physical/natural environment
6	Occupational well-being	Performance patterns, healthy habits, occupations
7	Occupational balance	Leisure and taking breaks
8	Wrap up	Goal progress and recap

### **Discussion**

Occupational therapy is a profession that is deeply rooted in theoretical concepts, such as the PEOP Model, to ensure a client's personal, environmental, and occupational needs and wants are met. After reviewing the existing literature surrounding occupational therapy student well-being programming, it was clear that very few were built upon a strong theoretical foundation to address holistic well-being. Therefore, a well-being program delivered via a virtual CoP format using an occupational therapy theoretical approach (FLOURISH) was created, utilizing the Logic Model Development Guide (W.K. Kellogg, 2004) and PEOP Model (Baum et al., 2015b), to elicit curricular changes to benefit the student population.

Preliminary data shows that students reacted positively to the well-being program, specifically to the accountability, sense of community, and work-life balance that was promoted. This aligns with previous data related to well-being programming for students and use of CoPs within academia (Drolet & Rodgers, 2010; Gutman et al., 2019; Kapucu, 2018; Zollars et al., 2019). Overall, these findings support well-being program implementation for occupational therapy graduate students and may serve as a foundation for future student well-being program design.



By addressing well-being early in one's professional career, it is believed that professional burnout, compassion fatigue, and overall dysfunction can be reduced or avoided (Grab et al., 2021). Therefore, implementation of this student well-being programming using the FLOURISH theoretical approach not only aligns with evidence-based practice, but also with client-centered care that reflects the core values of the occupational therapy profession. Future research is needed to further explore the usefulness of this approach.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations to this research. First, there is limited literature describing student well-being programming for those enrolled in health care professional degree programs, especially for our intended population of occupational therapy graduate students. Previous student well-being programs have focused more on singular components of well-being such as mindfulness. This made it more challenging to develop a holistic well-being program due to lack of existing exemplar well-being programs. Additionally, FLOURISH is a novel approach. It was recently developed and its application has not been studied previously. Although it was modeled after PEOP, students participating in a well-being program may lack knowledge about how components of the model can impact their well-being.

### **Future Research**

Future research regarding the FLOURISH approach and well-being programming for occupational therapy graduate students is necessary. These future iterations should make necessary modifications to increase appeal and attendance of programming. This could be accomplished by exploring other delivery methods, such as integrating the well-being program into occupational therapy curricula. Future research should also evaluate the effectiveness and student understanding of the FLOURISH approach.

### **Implications for Occupational Therapy Education**

Graduate level occupational therapy programs must take responsibility in maintaining and enhancing student well-being. The FLOURISH approach is one way of organizing knowledge and evidence, assessing the supports and barriers, and identifying the tools, knowledge, and resources to fill in these gaps. By using the FLOURISH approach to guide student well-being programming, students and educators alike will have an opportunity to flourish academically and personally. Additionally, empowering students with a theoretical approach to address personal well-being will assist them in using theory to address the well-being of future clients.

### **Conclusion**

Occupational therapy graduate students are experiencing high amounts of stress leading to decreases in well-being that are not being adequately addressed programmatically. As occupational therapists understand the complex interaction between person, environmental, and occupational factors, and well-being, it is within our scope of practice to address graduate student well-being. Therefore, an occupational therapy student well-being program, rooted in theory, was created and implemented to

increase awareness of the importance of well-being and to decrease student stress to allow for enhanced learning. In all, occupational therapy graduate students must recognize and practice the importance of well-being maintenance to enhance professional practice and care of future clients. The well-being program created using the FLOURISH approach is one viable option that shows promise to address this.

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