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## Occupational Therapy's Role in Cleft Lip and Palate Treatment

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# Occupational Therapy's Role in Cleft Lip and Palate Treatment

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Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program

## BACKGROUND

- Cleft lip palate (CLP) impacts occupations like feeding, eating, sleeping, leisure, and social participation (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2020; CDC, 2020).
- OT's current role in CLP treatment involves educating caregivers on compensatory and adaptive feeding techniques, scar massages, and reducing oral hypersensitivity (Korth & Maune, 2014)
- OTs can support all impacted occupations to improve mental health.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this proposed project is to advocate for the role of occupational therapy in the treatment of individuals with CLP through conducting a research study.

Research questions:

- What is the occupational impact of having CLP?
- What is OT's role in addressing occupational impacts?

## METHODS

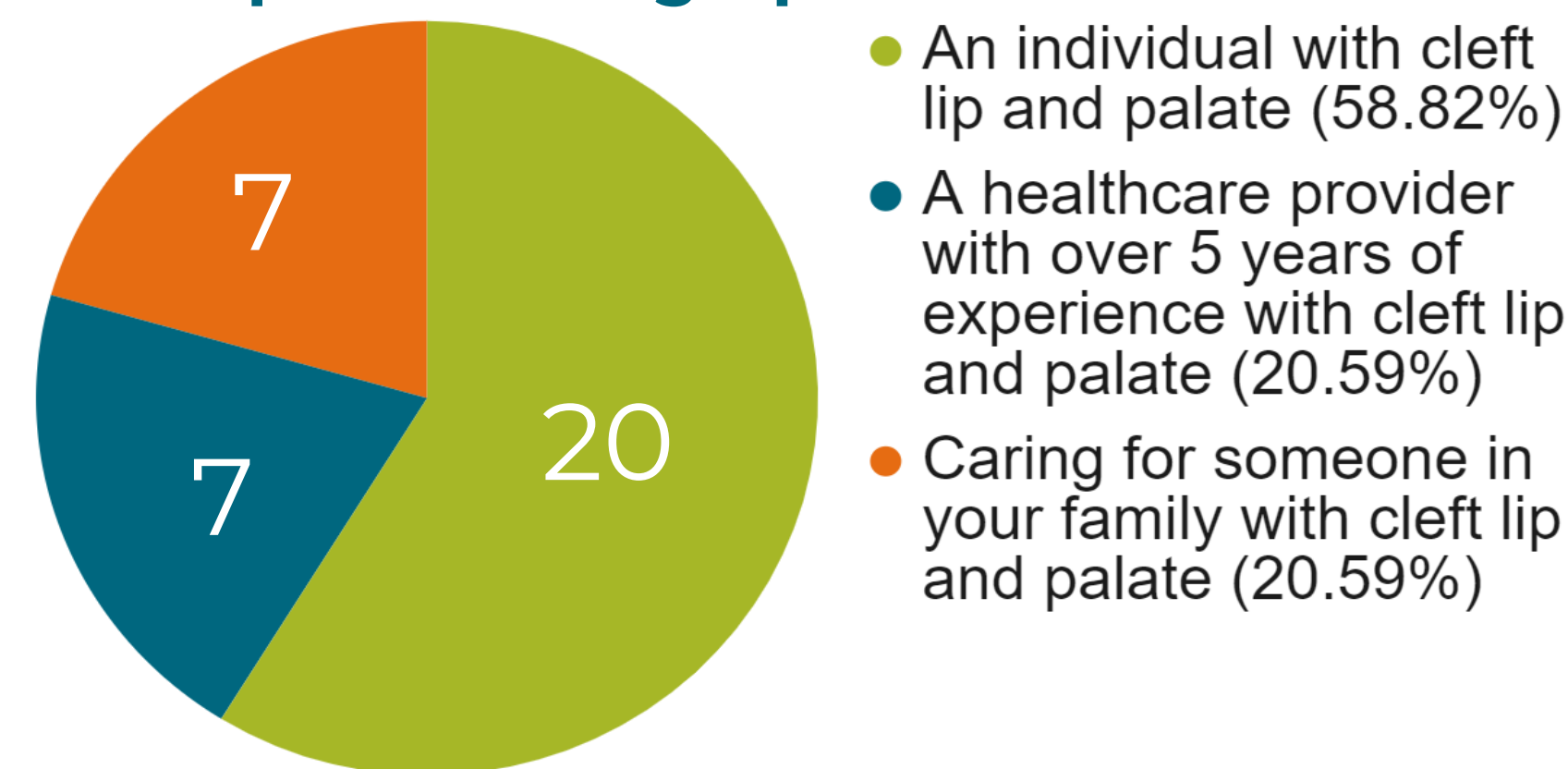
A **qualitative mixed methods research design** was utilized to gather information from individuals with CLP experiences. Participants included:

- Individuals over the age of 18 with CLP.
- Healthcare providers with more than 5 years of experience.
- Caregivers with children under the age of 18.

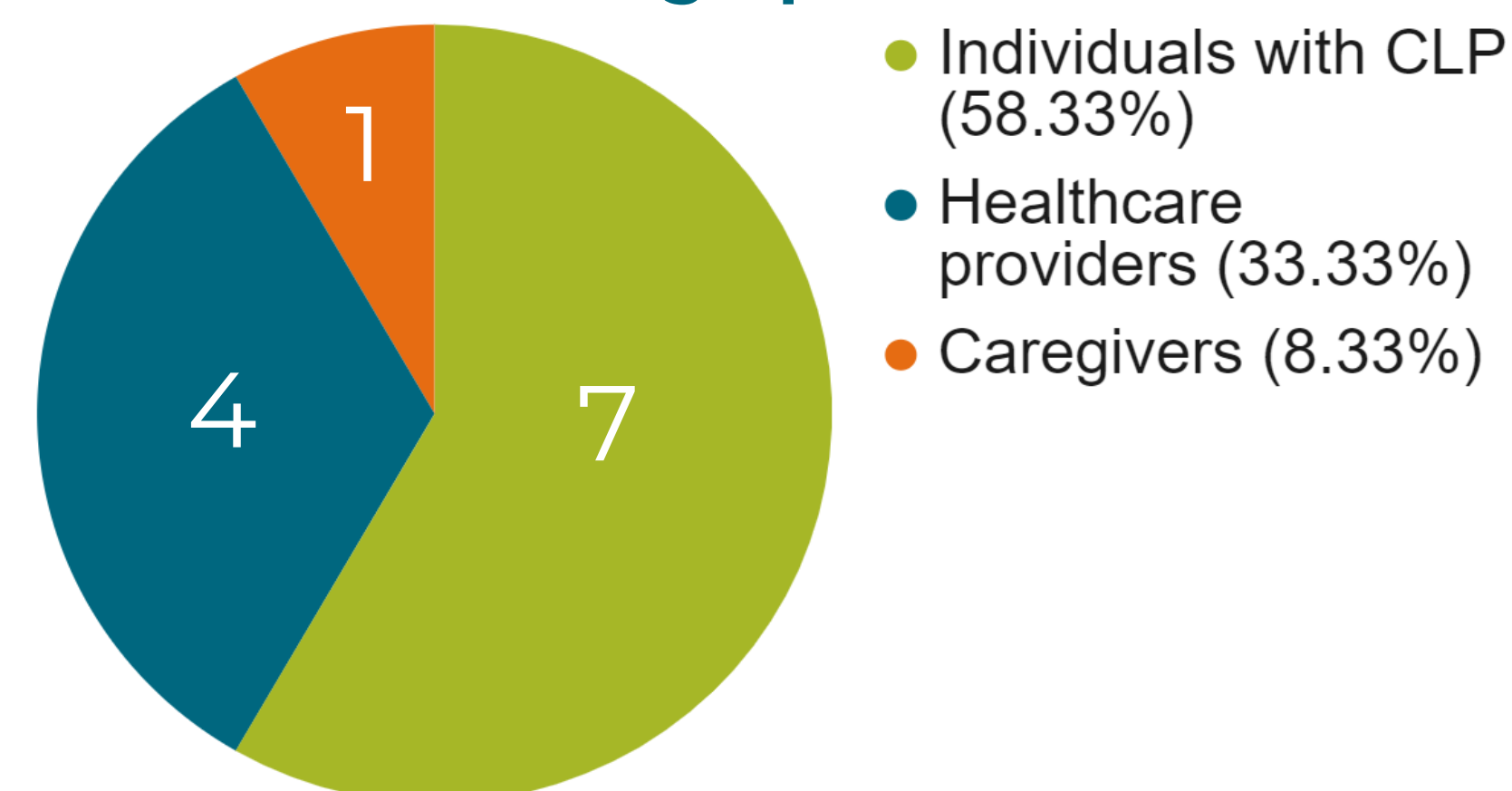
Using snowball sampling, participants were recruited through online communities such as Facebook and Discord.

- 34 survey takers.
- 12 interviewees.
- Completed interviews through Zoom lasting 1 hour.
- Thematic Analysis was completed.

### Participant Demographics



### Interviewee Demographics



## QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Theme	Description	Quotes:
<b>Occupational deprivation out of the individual's control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals with CLP experienced occupational deprivation/disruption due to CLP.</li> <li>Impacted occupations:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leisure activities</li> <li>ADLs</li> </ul> </li> <li>Occupational disruption                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education</li> <li>Social participation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"I can't dive for more than deeper than half a meter.</li> <li>"[...] because of the physical side of it, the breathing, I love doing yoga and doing like exercises, but as I'm getting older, the breathing thing is an issue. So that's why I'm going to go have this surgery."</li> </ul>
<b>Psychosocial impact of CLP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychosocial impacts of CLP affected perception of self which had an affect on occupations.</li> <li>Mental health affected self affected occupations and opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"[...] very self-conscious about being perceived as either of a lesser intelligence or having some sort of like developmental difficulties simply because of the way I looked"</li> <li>"[...] Indirectly led to, you know, a lack of socialization and social skills. And that led to me being depressed."</li> <li>"[...] still affected me because of the bullying and all the trauma through childhood and into my working career."</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting contextual factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support factors helped individuals with resilience and meaningful relationships                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental support</li> <li>Support systems</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"I am in a discord group called cleft lip and palate community [...] a place where I can go to talk about my struggles [...] we're all just different people, and we have something in common that can bring us together, and that's a great thing."</li> <li>"My mom always told me that, like, Be brave. You're a brave kid."</li> <li>"[...] I think over time, my friends have realized how much CLP affects my life. [...] they've seen some of the hard things that I've gone through. And I've gone to them with some of the emotional issues I've had with it. I think I've had a pretty good support system."</li> </ul>



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## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

### Individuals with CLP

- 85% of individuals with CLP have stated they have experienced bullying.
- All individuals with CLP stated that their mental health had been affected by CLP.
- 59% of individuals with CLP have difficulties in making friends or maintaining friendships.

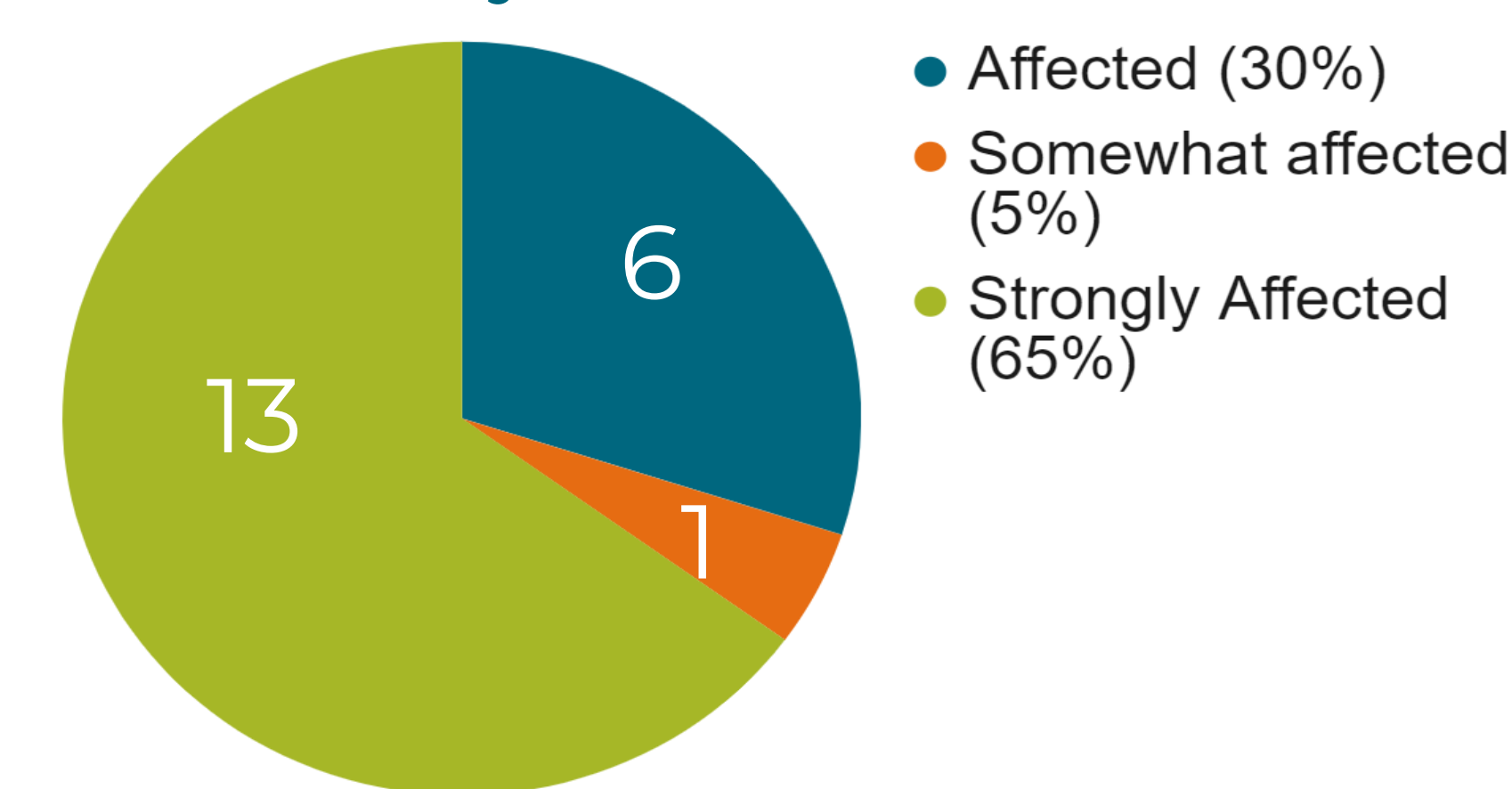
### Caregivers

- 6 mothers and 1 father took the survey.
- 50% of caregivers stated their mental health had been somewhat affected by their child with CLP.
- 50% of caregivers said their child's mental health is somewhat affected by CLP.

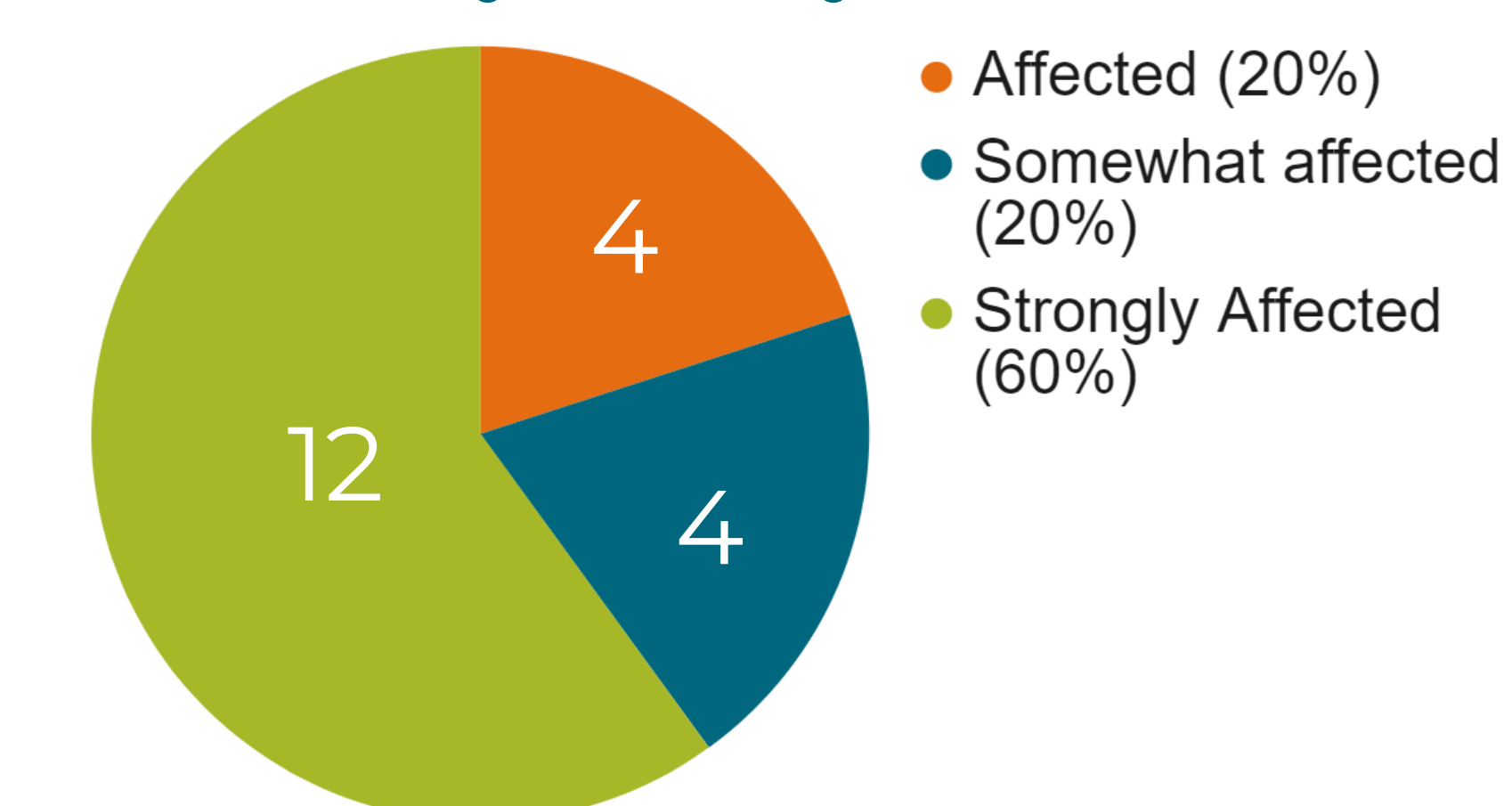
### Healthcare providers

- 6 out of 7 healthcare providers stated that they address mental health with individuals with CLP and that their clients have alluded to struggling with mental health or building relationships with others.
- All healthcare providers believe this population has a mental health need.

### Has CLP affected your mental health?



### Has CLP affected your ability to socialize with others?



## DISCUSSION

- Most participants in this study were individuals with CLP, and all individuals with CLP expressed various occupational impacts due to CLP.
- Individuals with CLP have difficulties with interpersonal relationships, low self-esteem, and low self-confidence, and have higher rates of anxiety and depression, consistent with multiple research findings (Hlongwa & Rispel, 2018; Nicholls et al., 2018; Potemra et al., 2020; Zeraatkar et al., 2019).
- Most individuals with CLP have difficulties in social participation, leisure, sleep and rest, and ADLs.
- Healthcare providers have similar ways of referring to mental health practitioners and believe that mental health services are lacking.
- Limitations include small sample size, participants not responding to emails and follow-ups, and only 1 caregiver interview.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR OT

- Further research may examine intersectionality and how that may also impact individuals with CLP and occupations.
- OTs can facilitate and provide social participation opportunities for individuals with CLP.
- OTs can raise awareness about mental health and bullying for individuals with CLP or other craniofacial differences to promote social participation.
- CLP impacts different occupations, and future research is needed to examine what services OTs can provide in accessing specific occupations.

## CONCLUSION

This study contributes to occupational therapy by identifying occupations that individuals with CLP have difficulties. Occupations have been impacted, and future research and occupational therapists can create a new area of practice for individuals with craniofacial differences.

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