PERSPECTIVES OF FIELDWORK EDUCATORS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY LEVEL II FIELDWORK SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

Emotional competence encompasses multiple skills and attributes that are essential to success of

occupational therapy level II fieldwork. Learning more about the relationship between emotional

competence and level II fieldwork success holds implications for occupational therapy students,

academic programs, fieldwork educators and recipients of occupational therapy services. The

Emotional Competence Theory of Mikolajczak (2009) guided the conceptual foundation of this

study. This qualitative study, using a phenomenological approach, explored the relationship

between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of fieldwork

educators. Purposeful sampling was utilized to recruit the three occupational therapists who

serve as fieldwork educators to fieldwork students. Data was gathered through semi-structured

interviews. Thematic analysis yielded two themes, one, an overarching theme, Emotional

Competence: The Crux of Occupational Therapy, which confirmed the centrality of emotional

competence to occupational therapy. The second theme, Critical Influential Factors Support or

Impede Success, illustrates the specific behaviors and attributes of emotional competence that

are essential to level II fieldwork success as identified by the participants. These behaviors and

attributes are represented by seven subthemes. Through data analysis, the themes and subthemes

informed three findings: (1) Emotional Competence is Essential to Occupational Therapy (2)

Dimensions of Emotional Competence Contribute to Success of Level II and (3) Emotional

Competence Should Be Cultivated. The results of this study support the importance of the

development of emotional competence throughout the academic and clinical careers of

occupational therapy students. Recommendations for the development of emotional competence to promote level II success are discussed.

Keywords: emotional competence, level II fieldwork, therapeutic use of self, fieldwork education

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Occupational therapy is a health profession that focuses on supporting individuals to achieve the highest quality of life possible by facilitating their engagement in meaningful occupations through training and adaptation. The historical roots of this profession date back over one hundred years when occupational therapists, first known as reconstruction aids, worked with injured soldiers of World War I (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2017). Using occupation as the primary mode of intervention, the reconstruction aids facilitated the recovery of the shell-shocked military. Following the war, occupational therapy served a primary role in the humane treatment of individuals with mental illness in settings such as institutions and asylums (AOTA, 2017). The profession then expanded to working with individuals with physical disabilities and developmental delays. Occupational therapists work with individuals of all ages across the lifespan in a variety of contexts such as traditional medical settings, schools, mental health facilities, and community practice settings (AOTA, n.d.). Over the past 100 years, occupational therapy has continued to rehabilitate individuals with disabilities using occupation as the foundation of practice.

According to the United States Department of Labor (2022), in 2020 there were 131,600 occupied and available occupational therapy positions in the United States; with a forecasted 17% growth rate. While the profession of occupational therapy is popular and in demand, competition exists to recruit students. There are currently 172 Master's and 63 Doctoral level programs in the United States (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education [ACOTE], n.d.). The number of occupational therapy programs in the United States accredited by ACOTE are plentiful. Retention and pass rates impact recruitment, a program's reputation,

longevity, and overall success. Academic programs for occupational therapy tend to be highly competitive and seek students who are high-achievers academically, have well-rounded applications with diverse experiences, and are leaders in the community (McGinley, 2020).

To become nationally registered and licensed in their respective states, aspiring occupational therapists are required to complete an educational program accredited by ACOTE (National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy [NBCOT] n.d.). They must also pass the NBCOT registration exam (NBCOT, n.d.). The minimum degree requirements to sit for the NBCOT registration exam is a master's degree in occupational therapy (NBCOT, n.d.).

Fieldwork is a vital component of all occupational therapy academic programs required by ACOTE. The intent of fieldwork is to promote the development of clinical reasoning skills and reflective practice, understand and apply the ethics of the profession, and develop competence in the clinical skills of the profession (ACOTE, 2018). Fieldwork is divided into two distinct levels including level I and level II fieldwork. All undergraduate occupational therapy programs are required to include both level I and level II fieldwork experiences in their curriculum.

The focus of level I fieldwork is to introduce students to clinical practice, begin to integrate content for the didactic portion of the curriculum, and develop the ability to understand client factors and needs (ACOTE, 2018). Students begin to develop rapport-building and interpersonal skills as these abilities are vital to the development of a therapeutic relationship between client and therapist. Level I fieldwork precedes level II fieldwork and can include simulated environments, standardized patients, faculty practice, faculty-led experiences, and supervision by a fieldwork educator in practice environments (ACOTE, 2018).

The intent of level II fieldwork, an essential component of an occupational therapy curriculum, is to provide students with the opportunity to develop competence by applying the knowledge acquired in the classroom to the clinical setting. The goal of level II fieldwork is to develop the clinical and interpersonal skills necessary to become an entry-level generalist (ACOTE, 2018). This critical portion of the academic preparation typically occurs toward the end of the curriculum following the bulk of didactic coursework (AOTA, 2016). Students must be prepared to meet the expectations of an entry-level licensed occupational therapy practitioner.

Definition of Key Terms

Academic Fieldwork Coordinator. A faculty member who is responsible for the development, implementation, management, and supervision of fieldwork education of an academic occupational therapy program (AOTA, 2018).

Emotional Competence. Emotional competence can be defined as the ability to identify the emotions of the self or others, understand what the emotions mean, and utilize our knowledge of this information to shape the experience (McKenna & Mellson, 2013). The terms Emotional Intelligence and emotional competence are used interchangeably throughout this study.

Entry-Level Occupational Therapist. The outcome of the occupational therapy educational and certification process; an individual prepared to begin generalist practice as an occupational therapist with less than 1 year of experience (AOTA, 2018).

Fieldwork Educator (FWE). An individual, typically a clinician, who works collaboratively with the academic program and is informed of the curriculum and fieldwork program design. This individual supports the fieldwork experience, serves as a role model, and holds the requisite qualifications to provide the student with the opportunity to carry out

professional responsibilities during the experiential portion of their education (AOTA, 2018). The FWE assesses the students' performance during level II fieldwork.

Level I Fieldwork. A clinical experience designed to enrich didactic coursework through directed observation and participation in selected aspects of the occupational therapy process and includes mechanisms for formal evaluation of student performance (AOTA, 2018).

Level II Fieldwork. A full-time 24-week clinical experience designed to develop competent, entry-level, generalist occupational therapists. The experience must be integral to the program's curriculum design and include in-depth experience in delivering occupational therapy services to clients, focusing on the application of purposeful and meaningful occupation and research, administration, and management of occupational therapy services (AOTA, 2018).

Occupational Therapy. A profession that assists individuals of all ages to achieve personal and meaningful goals through the therapeutic use of daily activities (occupations) to maximize health and improve the quality of life for individuals with injury, illness, or disability (AOTA, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Multiple authors identify the importance of the therapeutic relationship between therapist and client as being essential to the occupational therapy process (Andonian, 2013, 2017; Brown, et al., 2016; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2019). It is not surprising that because of the importance of interpersonal skills to the occupational therapy process, that a key component of fieldwork is developing an understanding of client needs (ACOTE, 2018). To develop an authentic relationship that promotes trust and communication of personal needs, an occupational therapist must possess the emotional

competence necessary to lay the foundation for the therapeutic partnership between client and clinician (Andonian, 2013, 2017).

The field of psychology has long been investigating and describing emotional intelligence and emotional competence. Emotional competence can be defined as the ability to recognize and understand one's emotional information and that of another (Mikolajczak, 2009). Emotional intelligence and emotional competence also encompass the ability to regulate one's behavior and respond to another's behavior to manage conflict and promote positive interactions (Kotsou et al., 2011; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mikolajczak, 2009; Petrides & Furnham, 2003). While it is understood that an evolutionary process has taken place with research over time, for purposes of this study, emotional intelligence and emotional competence are used interchangeably as both terms are utilized throughout the literature.

Occupational therapy literature shares the definition of emotional competence as it includes the ability to manage the emotions of the self and others to facilitate positive interactions and the development of effective relationships (Andonian, 2013, 2017; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013). Occupational therapy students must have strong emotional competence to successfully complete all requirements of the educational curriculum, including level II fieldwork (Yu et al., 2019).

Other health professions have investigated the importance of emotional intelligence/emotional competence cultivation in their professional academic studies (Carvalho et al., 2018; Opsahl et al., 2018). The field of nursing has explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and nursing education for the past decade with many investigations of the importance of emotional intelligence over the past five years. Dugué et al. (2021) examined the literature including the review of 57 studies executed between 2007 and 2021 exploring

emotional intelligence in nursing and found evidence to support the assumption that emotional intelligence is something that can be developed through the provision of learning opportunities or programs during the academic phase of clinical education. The dynamics examined in the various studies vary from analyzing the relationship between emotional intelligence and successful completion of clinical practice to using emotional intelligence as a predictor of success in the field. The field of occupational therapy shares some similarities; however, the availability of research does not explore the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success, specifically from the perspective of the fieldwork educator (FWE).

In 2019, .9% of master's students and .7% of doctoral students pursuing a degree in occupational therapy failed level II fieldwork; in 2020, .2% of masters and 3.3% of doctoral students failed level II fieldwork (AOTA, 2021). This failure rate is troubling as these students have successfully transitioned throughout multiple years of the curriculum having invested much time and financial resources only to fail within the last year of the curriculum. It is the responsibility of the academic program to support the development of students to ensure successful completion of the curriculum, however, as Evenson et al. (2015) point out, there is not much research exploring the best preparation methods for level II fieldwork students. It is inferred that the failure rate can, at least partially, be resulting from lacking emotional intelligence of level II fieldwork students.

Multiple investigators have recruited FWE to learn more about the skills and traits of students necessary for the successful completion of level II fieldwork (Campbell & Corpus, 2015; Evenson et al., 2015; Hanson, 2011; Mason, 2020; Nicola-Richmond et al., 2017). All of these studies validate the importance of effective interpersonal skills and professional behaviors in successful level II fieldwork completion. Frequently, the unsatisfactory areas of level II

fieldwork performance relate to interpersonal skills with the fieldwork educator and clients (Campbell & Corpus, 2015; Hanson, 2011; Mason, 2020; Nicola-Richmond et al., 2017). Interpersonal skills fall under the definition of emotional competence.

This research sought to address the gap in the literature regarding the relationship between the emotional competence of occupational therapy students and successful level II fieldwork performance from the perspective of FWEs. Successful completion of level II fieldwork is important to multiple stakeholders including students, academic programs, fieldwork educators serving as mentors, and recipients of occupational therapy services. While each faction has a different perspective on why level II fieldwork success is important, each rationale is valid.

Nicola-Richmond et al. (2017) explored the perspectives of FWEs regarding factors that contributed to student failure of level II fieldwork and found that communication and response to feedback were critical areas contributing to poor outcomes. Exploring the relationships between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the FWE will provide data to inform curriculum content to best prepare students for level II FW success.

Occupational therapy programs rely on FWEs to mentor students to meet the accreditation requirements for program completion. As Evenson et al. (2015) and Hanson (2011) illustrated, multiple factors contribute to the availability and willingness of FWEs to serve the role of mentor to level II students. While there are well-documented benefits to student mentorship, there are challenges and limiting factors. The lack of preparedness and insufficient interpersonal skills harm FWEs' willingness to serve as clinical educators (Evenson, 2015; Hanson, 2011).

As the most important stakeholder in the cultivation of prepared occupational therapists, clients or recipients of occupational therapy services are impacted by the lack of emotional competence of level II students. Deficits in interpersonal and professional behavior areas also impact the care of the client or recipient of services causing FWE strain (Hanson, 2011). The development of emotional competence is a vital component of the ability to establish the client-clinician relationship (Andonian, 2013, 2017).

All occupational therapy students deserve to have access to instruction and experiences that best prepare them for level II fieldwork, however, the best practice for doing so is not well known (Evenson, 2015). Students need to formally develop both clinical and interpersonal skills. Hanson (2011) called attention to the needs and expectations of fieldwork educators within the challenging context of healthcare. It was identified that FWEs were found to be frustrated by the deficit in students' communication skills impacting the FWE-student relationship and the student-client relationship.

Purpose of the Study

Multiple authors have established that the development of emotional competence is essential to effective occupational therapy practice (Andonian, 2013; 2017; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2019). Exploring the importance of emotional competence of occupational therapy students before engagement in level II fieldwork may contribute to the development of strong interpersonal skills that are vital to success in level II fieldwork and clinical practice. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the fieldwork educator.

Research Question

This qualitative phenomenological research study aimed to answer the research question: How do fieldwork educators describe the relationship between emotional competence and successful level II fieldwork completion? Answering this question by posing it to fieldwork educators is highly relevant to the field of occupational therapy education and practice, as emotional competence is an essential facet of the foundation and therapeutic skills inherent in the profession (Andonian, 2013; 2017; Yu et al., 2019). The profession of occupational therapy is built upon the ability of a therapist to authentically employ therapeutic use of self to establish and maintain relationships with clients and facilitate clients' goal achievement (Andonian, 2013; 2017; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2019). Data gained through interviews with fieldwork educators of level II students were gathered and analyzed to gain insight into the importance of emotional competence and identify other factors contributing to student success or lack thereof.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is built upon multiple constructs including the professional interest of the researcher, current literature, and the theoretical framework of emotional competence theory to explore the phenomenon of level II fieldwork success and emotional competence from the perspective of the FWE. A qualitative, phenomenological design utilizing interviews was used to explore and understand the essence of the participants' experiences with mentoring level II fieldwork students.

Deluliis et al. (2021) identified that fieldwork education is a key component of preparing occupational therapy students for future professional practice. It is the responsibility of ensuring the quality of preparation falls to the role of the academic fieldwork coordinator. It is the role of

the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC) to ensure that students have gained various clinical experiences through the completion of level I and level II fieldwork to contribute to their ability to enter the field as entry-level generalists. The AFWC frequently works with students throughout level II fieldwork, especially when students face difficulty in meeting the expectations of the clinical experience. Exploring the relationship between emotional competence and successful completion of level II fieldwork from the perspective of FWEs elevates the understanding of this phenomenon to enhance the ability to best support occupational therapy students and facilitate the best fieldwork experiences possible. Exploring the relationship between emotional competence and the success of level II fieldwork is essential to the role of AFWC to best support fieldwork students and FWEs.

The Tripartite Model of emotional competence by Mikolajczak (2009) serves as the theoretical framework for this study. Throughout this study, the terms emotional competence and emotional intelligence are used interchangeably although it is understood that research over the past decade had evolved to support the use of the term emotional competence. Multiple theories of emotional competence and emotional intelligence have developed over the past 30 years. Emotional intelligence "concerns the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought" (Mayer et al., 2008, p. 511). Daniel Goldman is credited with describing the five components of emotional intelligence including self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and motivation (Cherry, 2018). These five components play an important role in the practice of being an occupational therapist. Each of these components are vital to the development of a therapeutic relationship between the therapist and client. Without the formation of this relationship, a therapist cannot be fully effective.

Mikolajczak's (2009) Tripartite Model of emotional intelligence provides both a theory of emotional competence to better understand this phenomenon and a scaffolding to build effective interventions when moving forward to apply the insight gleaned from this study. This model is comprised of three levels: knowledge, ability, and trait. First, knowledge refers to the individual being aware of or having knowledge of emotional regulation techniques, however, this level does not include application of the techniques. Second is ability, which refers to an individual's ability to apply emotional regulation techniques. Lastly, the third is trait, which refers to the manner how an individual normally or typically responds to a situation requiring emotional regulation (Dugué et al., 2015; Laborde et al., 2016; Mikolajczak, 2009). It is proposed and supported in the literature that the Tripartite Model of emotional intelligence is a valid framework when seeking to understand the development of emotional competence within the context of the education of health professional students (Dugué et al., 2021).

The Tripartite Model of emotional intelligence by Mikolajczak (2009) can be applied to occupational therapy clinical education to maximize a student's ability to authentically develop the skills needed to implement therapeutic use of self to maximize client successes and outcomes. Emotional intelligence and emotional competence can be described as the ability to identify emotions of the self or others, understand what the emotions mean, and utilize our knowledge of this information to shape the experience (Andonian, 2013, 2017; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013). The importance of discussing the relevance of emotional competence and occupational therapy is two-fold. First, vital to the practice of occupational therapy is the clinicians' understanding and valuing of the therapeutic relationship built between clinician and client. Secondly, the profession of occupational therapy is built upon the ability of a therapist to authentically employ therapeutic use of self to establish and maintain relationships

with clients and facilitate clients' goal achievement (Andonian, 2013, 2017; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017). Because emotional competence is essential to the genuine practice of occupational therapy, the application of this theory to the academic and clinical development of students is warranted.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

There are limitations inherent to the qualitative phenomenological design as described by Bloomberg and Volpe (2019). Application of the phenomenological approach calls for bracketing of the researcher's experiences, beliefs, and assumptions of the phenomenon being explored. Because of the difficulty bracketing holds, Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) recommend that the researcher identify how their experiences can be introduced to the study. In this case, the researcher disclosed their role of being an AFWC to the participants. In addition, the researcher engaged in reflective practice to raise self-awareness of the assumptions held before the interview process.

It is presumed that the participants met the inclusion criteria for the study by being an occupational therapist practicing in the United States who has mentored at least one level II fieldwork student. In addition, it is assumed that the participants were truthful in the accounts they provided and refrained from answering questions in a manner that perceived was most desirable to the researcher. It is an assumption that FWEs would identify emotional competence as being a significant aspect in level II FW success and identify interpersonal skills, specifically effective communication skills and ability to effectively respond to feedback, of the student participants.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), wide-scale generalizability is not the goal of the qualitative phenomenological design however understanding the particular experiences of the

is the goal. The goal of this study was not to produce results that can be generalized to all students, FWEs, treatment settings, geographical locations, and curriculums but to gain an understanding of the experiences of the participants. The relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success identified by the participants may not be reflective across all academic programs, students, and FWEs, but the goal was to provide a rich description of the phenomenon experienced gleamed from the FWEs who participated. It is hoped that the data gathered and analyzed provides the opportunity for others interested in emotional competence of occupational therapy students to gain insight by contributing to this area of practice.

The scope of the study was to explore the relationship between emotional competence and level II FW success from the perspective of FWEs. The study examined the data yielding insight into the experiences of the participants in their role of being FWE's who are preparing students to transition to clinical practice. The scope is limited to the experiences of the participants belonging to the Academic Fieldwork Coordinator/Fieldwork Educator Community of Practice who choose to partake in the study. This excluded the participation of FWEs who do not belong to this group. This also excluded occupational therapy assistants who mentor level II students and have valuable insights to share regarding this phenomenon.

Rationale and Significance

Interpersonal skills have been identified as a vital component of all communication across all disciplines and areas of life. Davis and Musolino (2016) defined interpersonal skills as "the ability to interact effectively with patients, families, colleagues, other healthcare professionals, and the community in a culturally aware manner" (p. 182). The ability to

communicate with clients of occupational therapy services is vital to the success of the therapeutic process and is a key component of emotional competence.

It has been determined that students have struggled and failed level II fieldwork (Nicola-Richmond et al. 2017). Failure of level II fieldwork is troubling as students have invested multiple years pursuing a career in occupational therapy only to be unable to achieve their ultimate goal. Students may not be aware of the importance of emotional intelligence or that emotional intelligence can be cultivated, however it is the responsibility of the AFWC and academic program to adequately prepare students for level II fieldwork and professional practice (ACOTE, 2018). Fieldwork Educators serve as mentors of level II fieldwork students and assess students' performance. Educating FWE of the importance of emotional intelligence can further enhance the development of emotional intelligence skills needed to practice client-centered occupational therapy. Exploring FWEs experiences of emotional competence and student success provides insight that has not yet been explored.

Summary

Level II fieldwork, and occupational therapy practice in general, requires the clinician to possess strong interpersonal skills to promote effective communication with clients and colleagues (Andonian, 2013). Emotional competence skills are essential to the development of a therapeutic relationship between therapist and client that is vital to facilitating goal achievement (Andonian, 2013, 2017). Learning more about the relationship between emotional competence and fieldwork success expands effective methods for best preparing students and future occupational therapists. Providing occupational therapy students with the opportunity to examine and develop emotional competence can mitigate deficits of emotional intelligence and promote success in level II fieldwork and clinical practice (Andonian, 2013).

The intent of this chapter was to provide an overview of the importance of exploring more about emotional competence and level II fieldwork. A description of this phenomenological study design and conceptual framework of emotional competence was introduced. This chapter provided a discussion of the key terms of the study, assumptions, limitations, and scope.

Chapter 2 of the study will provide a review of the current literature regarding the foundation of emotional intelligence /emotional competence and the relationship between emotional competence, occupational therapy practice, and student fieldwork experiences. Chapter 3 will present the methodology of this phenomenological study including a description of participant recruitment, the interview instrument and protocol that was employed, data gathering techniques, and data analysis. Chapter 4 will provide a discussion of the analysis method and present the results and findings of the study. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of the interpretation and importance of the results, implications, recommendations for action and further study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the fieldwork educator (FWE). Exploring this phenomenon by delving into the lived experiences of FWEs provides a unique and targeted perspective to expand the breath of available data. FWEs serve as the mentor to level II students and are charged with assessing their competence to determine if they have achieved the benchmark of entry-level competence for the field (Evenson et al., 2015; Hanson, 2011; Nicola-Richmond, et al., 2017).

Multiple authors have looked to fieldwork educators to explore factors related to student success and failure (Evenson et al., 2015; Hanson, 2011; Karp, 2020; Mason et al., 2020; Nicola-Richmond et al., 2017). Others have examined the relevance of emotional competence to occupational therapy practice and fieldwork (Andonian, 2013, 2017; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Gribble, et al. 2017, 2018). The relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success has not been explored from the perspective of the FWE by applying a phenomenological lens. Being that emotional competence is a central theme to both occupational therapy practice through therapeutic use of self and a key component of interpersonal skills that are at the heart of professional behaviors essential to level II fieldwork success (Andonian, 2013), exploring this topic was warranted. Throughout this study, the terms emotional competence and emotional intelligence are utilized interchangeably although it is understood that research over the past decade has provided an evolution in terms from emotional intelligence to emotional competence (Vaida & Opre, 2014).

The aim of this study was to explore the dynamics of emotional competence and student success on level II fieldwork from the perspective of the FWE. This chapter will present the

guiding conceptual framework of the study, discuss the theoretical framework including emotional intelligence/emotional competence and the tripartite theory of emotional intelligence /emotional competence. In addition, a review of the literature illustrating the connection between emotional intelligence and occupational therapy practice, factors impacting level II fieldwork success, and the perspectives of FWEs.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is comprised of multiple constructs including professional interest of the researcher, current literature, and the theoretical framework of emotional competence theory to explore the phenomenon of level II fieldwork success and emotional competence from the perspective of the fieldwork educator. Shoba and Stanley (2015), explain that, "phenomenology is about getting as close as possible to understanding what the thing 'is', its meaning, and not simply how it appears or what it seems to be" (p. 55). Using a qualitative phenomenological design, the aim of this study was to explore and understand the essence of the participants' experiences with mentoring level II fieldwork students.

Level II fieldwork is an essential component to an occupational therapy curriculum that has, as the focus, providing students with the opportunity to develop competence through the application of knowledge acquired in the classroom to the clinical setting (AOTA, 2016). The goal of level II fieldwork is to develop the clinical and interpersonal skills necessary to become an entry-level generalist (ACOTE, 2018). Preparing students to be successful in level II fieldwork is a central objective to the academic fieldwork coordinator (AFWC) role. Deluliis et al. (2021), using a convergent mixed methods research design, defined the roles and responsibilities of the AFWC role in domestic occupational therapy programs and explore the supports and barriers available to AFWC. Although there is much variability of role-specific

attributes and supports, Fieldwork education is at the core of the AFWC role and successful outcomes is of high importance to academic programs, students, and FWEs (Deluiis, et al., 2021). Student success during the fieldwork experience is of great importance to AFWCs. When surveying academic fieldwork coordinators of occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant programs, Stutz-Tanenbaum et al. (2017) discovered that AFWCs value the role of preparing students for successful outcomes in fieldwork and supporting student to that end is a gratifying aspect of the AFWC role. Exploring the relationship between emotional competence and successful completion of level II fieldwork from the perspective of FWEs will elevate the understanding of this phenomenon to enhance the ability to best support occupational therapy students and facilitate the best fieldwork experiences possible.

Level II Fieldwork Success from the Fieldwork Educator Perspective

A multitude of authors have explored student success in level II fieldwork from the perspectives of fieldwork educators. Mason et al. (2020) identified fieldwork educators as being a valuable source of insight regarding the skills level II fieldwork students possess or lack. Campbell and Corpus (2015) sought the perspective of fieldwork educators to learn more about the professional behavior attributes of level II fieldwork students. It was discovered that FWEs value clinical competence and communication; in addition, it was noted that empathy and creativity were identified by at least 85% of the participants (Campbell & Corpus, 2015). When using a convergent parallel mix method design, Mason et al. (2020) found that communication was identified as being both an essential professional skill and the most lacking technical skill in level II fieldwork students. Hanson (2011) examined the perspectives of fieldwork educators regarding level II fieldwork students by using a focus group approach. The participants in this study expressed frustration with students who lacked the communication skills necessary for

everyday interaction with clients. Fieldwork educators cited skills such as such as being able to communicate through evaluation and intervention process. This study identified that fieldwork educators who encountered students with sub-standard foundational communication, problem solving, and clinical skills were hesitant to mentor future students (Hanson (2011).

When examining the readiness of students to transition from the classroom to the clinical environment, Karp (2020), through a pilot case study of academic and clinical educators, found that both groups expressed communication, feedback, professionalism, and clinical reasoning ability as being key topics. Yu et al. (2019) sought to examine the association between occupational therapy student's listening and interpersonal skills and performance during clinical fieldwork experiences in Australia. The results of this study indicate that specific interpersonal skills are necessary for clinical practice. These skills need to be developed before the clinical component of the curriculum. The skill of having the ability to perceive, detect, and interpret the hidden meaning behind a conversation was found to be the highest predictor of student success. These interpersonal skills are key components of emotional competence (Yu et al., 2019).

Challenges on Level II Fieldwork

Multiple researchers have examined why students struggle with successful completion of level II fieldwork and clinical experiences as well as how at-risk students' performance can be predicted prior to failure so that supports can be implemented (Bonsaksen, 2015; 2016; Naidoo & van Wyk, 2016; Tal-Saban & Weintraub, 2018; Tan et al., 2004; Tanner, 2014, Thew & Harkness, 2018). Multiple studies aimed to predict indicators of student success in occupational therapy education, specifically fieldwork. Some factors that have been analyzed include Grade Point Average and Graduate Record Examination (Haber et al., 2015); levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Bonsaksen, 2015); sociodemographic, relationship, education, and work-related

variables (Bonsaksen, 2016); age, trait anxiety, completion of a pre-placement clinical course (Tan et al., 2004) and emotional intelligence scores through the clinical placement experience (Gribble et al., 2018). Nicola-Richmond et al. (2017) identified non-disclosure of health issues, communication difficulties, poor self-reflection skills, and difficulty with responding positively to feedback as factors predictive of failure on Level II fieldwork.

Students Struggling with Anxiety and Related Conditions

Recently, students are struggling to successfully complete their Level II fieldwork experience (Patterson & Levandowski, 2022). The programs of allied health professions worldwide have seen a dramatic increase in the number students with disabilities who are pursuing degrees in professions such as, but not limited to, occupational, physical, speech-language pathology, social services, nursing and medical school (Sharby & Roush, 2009). Shapiro et al. (2019) provide that psychiatric disorders are one of the most prevalent disabilities seen across higher education domestically. In a 2014 survey of 13,000 Norwegian students, 19% reported mental health complaints categorized as severe (Bonsaksen, 2015).

Anxiety as a formal diagnosis of anxiety disorder and situational anxiety has been established as a significant factor impacting the performance of students of all allied health majors, including occupational therapy (Bonsaksen, 2015; Tal-Saban & Weintraub, 2018; Tan et al., 2004). Several authors have either examined the role anxiety plays in academic and clinical struggles or the prevalence of anxiety as a trait of students who struggle in occupational therapy education (Bonsaksen, 2015; Tal-Saban & Weintraub, 2018; Tan et al., 2004). Tan et al. (2004) examined trait anxiety as a predictor of struggles in the clinical component of fieldwork. Tal-Saban and Weintraub (2018) found that students' anxiety related to clinical placements had a significant impact on their perceptions of competency and readiness for fieldwork.

Self-Efficacy and Self-Esteem

Bonsaksen (2015) found that measures of self-efficacy and self-esteem are noteworthy predictors of success in occupational therapy curriculums with the self-perceptions of females being identified as needing closer examination and monitoring. Females were identified as being lower on self-efficacy and self-esteem when compared to their male counterparts, posing a higher risk for anxiety and depression, having a negative impact on their academic pursuits in occupational therapy fieldwork (Bonsaksen, 2015). Anxiety and depression have a negative impact on one's ability to accurately identify and interpret the emotions of others therefore having an impact on the ability to effectively develop and foster a therapeutic relationship that is at the core of occupational therapy practice (Bonsaksen, 2015).

Generational Needs

According to Hampton et al. (2019), students belonging to Generation Z, individuals born after 1995, typically have difficulty with communication and social skills resulting from being technology driven with continual exposure to devices. Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018) caution against stereotypical blanket assumptions but also offer that individuals of Generation Z provide a unique challenge to interpersonal and social skills especially in the health science professions due to the constant use of electronic devices and social media. This challenge to interpersonal skills may have a direct impact on one's ability to form a therapeutic relationship with clients and colleagues during level II fieldwork and in general practice (Deluliis & Saylor, 2021). Communication and social skills are directly related to emotional intelligence (Davis & Musolino, 2016). Failure to develop these skills due to generational experiences subject students from this generation to delays in emotional intelligence competency development necessary for successful occupational therapy practice (Deluliis & Saylor, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the lens through which the problem of the study is viewed; it provides the scaffolding for the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The theoretical framework of this phenomenological study exploring the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success is the emotional intelligence theory, more specifically, the Tripartite Model developed by Mikolajczak (2009). This theoretical framework provides the foundation to understand what emotional intelligence is and how it can be developed. The framework also lends support to understanding the relationship between emotional competence and occupational therapy.

Emotional Intelligence Theory

There are multiple theories of emotional intelligence that have developed over the past 30 years. The first account of the term "emotional intelligence" dates back to the 1960's in a critique of a literary work, then 1966, in the field of psychiatry however this construct did not gain popularity until the 1990s (Mayer et al., 2004). Mikolajczak (2009) state Salovey and Caruso's 1990 originative definition of emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" (p. 25).

It is accepted that historically, there have been two main constructs representing the opposing perspectives of emotional intelligence. These constructs are ability theory and traits theory (Mikolajczak, 2009). These theories share the premise of understanding how individuals understand and manage emotions to facilitate personal effectiveness (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003).

The ability model of emotional intelligence

The ability model supports the construct that emotional intelligence is divided into four branches. These four branches, as defined by Mayer et al. (2004) are:

> (1) the ability to accurately perceive emotion, (2) the ability to access and generate emotions to assist thought, (3) the ability to understand emotions (i.e., their causes and consequences, and the relationship between them), and (4) the ability to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. (p. 25)

Ability emotional intelligence perspective views emotional intelligence as the alignment of emotion and intelligence or that intelligence moderates and modulates our emotion (Mayer et al., 2004). emotional intelligence is measured using tests similar in nature to intelligence tests. Emotional intelligence "concerns the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought" (Mayer et al., 2008, p. 511). According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence relies on understanding and utilizing the emotions of the self and others to facilitate change and problem-solve by regulating emotion.

The trait model of emotional intelligence

The trait branch of emotional intelligence theory is grounded in the believe that emotional intelligence is a group of skills and attitudes such as positivity, optimism, and teamwork (Andonian, 2017). The trait model postulates that emotional intelligence is more characteristic of personality; it is a set of personality traits and social skills (Bar-On, 2006). Dugué et al. (2021) provide that there are five dimensions of trait emotional intelligence including: intrapersonal skills (e.g., self-esteem, assertiveness, etc.), interpersonal skills (e.g., empathy), adaptability (e.g., flexibility, problem-solving), stress management, and general mood components. (e.g., optimism). Measures of trait emotional intelligence align with self-report and

self-assessment measures using personality type questionnaires. Dugué et al. (2021) cite Petrides and Furnham (2003) to distinguish between testing that ability tests assess a maximum performance whereas trait or mixed method tests asses a global performance.

The Tripartite Model of Emotional Intelligence

A third theory of emotional intelligence, the tripartite model, was developed by Mikolajczak (2009). The Tripartite Model serves to unify the conflicting perspectives of the ability and trait model and provides a practical framework for assessment and focused development. Laborde et al. (2016) offer a description of the Tripartite Model of emotional intelligence /emotional competence as developed by Mikolajczak in 2009. This model provides a reasonable alternative to the trait versus ability debate of the previous theorists.

Mikolajczak's (2009) Tripartite Model identifies a three-phase framework of explaining the dynamics and ability to develop emotional competence. The first stage pertains to knowledge where the individual can identify a social or emotional challenge at the knowledge level. The second state pertains to ability where the individual has the ability to identify a strategy for addressing the challenge. The third stage is described by what the individual actually does routinely when encountering the challenge or applies the strategy to address the challenge (Laborde et al., 2016).

Over the past few decades, the role of emotional intelligence has been widely accepted as an evidenced-based theory in the fields of psychology, healthcare, education, business and management (McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013). Some disciplines have written on the application of the Tripartite Model of emotional intelligence to their fields (Dugué et al., 2021; Laborde et al., 2016). The fields of sports psychology and nursing offer arguments for the application of the Tripartite Model to emotional intelligence training. Laborde et al. (2016)

provide that the Tripartite Model aligns findings from both the trait and ability models offering a practical alternative framework to contextualize emotional intelligence. The Tripartite Model helps identify were the breakdown occurs in the system of best practice to help target the area that needs focus.

Dugué et al. (2021) investigated the awareness of emotional intelligence in nursing education by completing a system review of the current literature, a total of 57 articles published between 2007 and 2021, representing the countries of the United States, Spain, France, Canada, Egypt, Italy, South Korea, and Israel. The review resulted in the identification of four themes including: emotional intelligence and performance; Physical and mental health; emotional intelligence and Social Relationships; and emotional intelligence program (Dugué et al., 2021).

The most prevalent theme, linking emotional intelligence development to student performance, cited a connection between emotional intelligence and improved productivity and clinical performance. It was also discovered that there was a connection between emotional intelligence and academic success and performance (Dugué et al., 2021). Dugué et al. (2021) found that 12 studies linked emotional intelligence with higher mental and physical health of nursing students and holds potential to help identify at-risk students so that additional support can be provided preemptively. Two studies demonstrated a relationship between emotional intelligence and social relationships with a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and empathy, ability to communicate with their clinical instructor and patients as well as manage conflict with their clinical educator (Dugué et al., 2021). Eleven studies illustrated the intervention of implementing and emotional intelligence program to develop emotional skills in nursing education. While the format and design of the programs varied from study to study,

compelling evidence was discovered to support the argument that emotional intelligence can increase with targeting programs and enhance student well-being (Dugué et al., 2021).

Most importantly, Dugué et al. (2021) concluded that "high levels of emotional intelligence is beneficial to students…. emotionally intelligent students or health care professionals are more efficient, better managers of stress and emotions, have better health, and have better relationships with patients, families, and healthcare teams" (p. 8). In addition, applying the Tripartite Model of emotional intelligence to the development of emotional intelligence /emotional competence has proven to be a successful strategy (Dugué et al., 2021). Available research in the field of occupational therapy examining the development of emotional intelligence using the Tripartite Model is lacking.

Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Therapy

Andonian (2013) offers the assertion that some professions require more emotional intelligence skills than others with occupational therapy ranking in top third of professions specified. Other health professions occupied the highest ranks with occupational therapy. Emotional intelligence can be described as the ability to identify emotions of the self or others, understand what the emotions mean, and utilize our knowledge of this information to shape the experience (McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013). Self-awareness, self-management, management of emotional labour, and emotional competence are emotional intelligence abilities that can be developed in the occupational therapist and support the role of occupational therapy (McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013).

Andonian (2017) provides a meaningful description of how emotional intelligence relates to occupational therapy. The use of therapeutic use of self is paramount to occupational therapy practice. Therapeutic use of self is the ability of a therapist be able to read the feelings of the

patient and respond in a manner that supports the client or patient in achieving their goals. Andonian (2017) explains that there are skills that are common to both emotional intelligence and therapeutic use of self. Skills such as self-control, awareness and interpretation of social cues, and self-awareness, are common to both emotional intelligence and therapeutic use of self however there is a difference in the conceptualization of each construct (Andonian, 2017). Therapeutic use of self is utilized as a tool by the therapist to support the patient or client. This differs from emotional intelligence in that emotional intelligence is within the therapist; emotional intelligence indirectly influences the relationship with clients and others. emotional intelligence is separate, but informs therapeutic use of self (Andonian, 2017). Andonian (2017) describes four ways that emotional intelligence theory supports the use of therapeutic use of self. emotional intelligence theory states that emotional intelligence influences thinking. Within therapeutic use of self, occupational therapists utilize interactive reasoning which is based on the thoughts of the therapist (Andonian, 2017). The reasoning process is inherent to therapeutic use of self. The reasoning process is based on self-awareness and perception that influence clinical reasoning (Andonian, 2017). The process is also based on self-awareness and perception. Andonian (2017) offers that "self-awareness and perception inform clinical reasoning, collaboration, and decision making" (p. 304). Second, emotional intelligence theory provides a mechanism to assess the use of therapeutic use of self. Third, based on the historical, interdisciplinary background of emotional intelligence theory, it supports all roles of occupational therapy practice including clinician, manager, and leader (Andonian, 2017). Lastly, emotional intelligence theory provides an established approach to develop and foster emotional intelligence however more research is called for to determine best approach for emotional intelligence development in the field of occupational therapy (Andonian, 2017).

Andonian (2013) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and self-efficacy to fieldwork performance of occupational therapy students using a survey method involving an emotional intelligence self-assessment tool and the results of the fieldwork performance evaluation completed by the fieldwork educator. The results of this study support developing students' emotional intelligence skills to promote success during fieldwork.

Brown et al. (2016) examined the predictiveness level II student's emotional intelligence skills and personality traits on practice education, fieldwork, in Australia by utilizing a cross-sectional study. It was discovered that students' emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of fieldwork performance. The key skills identified included communication and professional behaviors (Brown et al., 2016). Brown et al. (2016) hypothesizes that developing emotional intelligence skills may help students with conflict management in appropriate ways and promote professional relationships with all stakeholders. Developing the emotional intelligence skills of students will have a direct impact on the development of practicing occupational therapists' therefore strengthening the profession (Brown et al., 2016).

Gribble et al. (2017) examined the changes in emotional intelligence of occupational, physical, and speech language pathology students in Australia over the course of clinical placements. Gribble et al. (2017) gathered data early and late during the clinical experiences by using the Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0. The results of this study showed that fluctuation of specific emotional intelligence skills occurred for various reasons however the assertiveness emotional intelligence score was the only skill with a significant change (Gribble et al., 2017). Gribble et al. (2017) calls for additional research into the aspects of the clinical experience and supervision and the impact of emotional intelligence skills to promote optimal student support.

Gribble et al. (2018), using a longitudinal study of occupational therapy and business students in Australia, tracked emotional intelligence and compared Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0 scores at three points during the academic and clinical careers. It was discovered that certain emotional intelligence skills fluctuated over the course of the program (Gribble et al., 2018). This study demonstrated that emotional intelligence skills are dynamic and can change; emotional intelligence skills should be practiced and facilitated by fieldwork educators and mentors to promote the continued development in preparation for the professional workplace (Gribble et al., 2018).

These skills are at the core of the profession of occupational therapy. The importance of discussing the relationship between emotional intelligence and occupational therapy is twofold. First, vital to the practice of occupational therapy is the clinicians understanding and valuing the therapeutic relationship built between clinician and client. The profession of occupational therapy is built upon the ability of a therapist to authentically employ a therapeutic use of self to establish and maintain relationships with clients and facilitate clients' goal achievement (Andonian, 2013; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017). Because emotional intelligence is essential to the genuine practice of occupational therapy, application of this theory to the academic and clinical development of students is warranted. Therapists with emotional intelligence competence in the components of self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and motivation have been shown to be more client-centered which is a hallmark of occupational therapy practice (Andonian, 2013; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013). Secondly, it has been stated that emotional competence, interpersonal skills, and effective communication are indicators of

student performance on Level II fieldwork and clinical experiences (Andonian, 2013; Brown et al., 2016; Hurley et al., 2020; Gribble et al., 2017, 2018; Yu et al., 2018).

Summary

Interviewing FWE about their experiences with level II students and the relationship between emotional competence and success during fieldwork may help define what stage of the system can be focused on to best support students and promote success. The development of strong interpersonal skills and attitudes facilitates a student's ability to effectively communicate and develop meaningful therapeutic relationships with clients (Davis & Musolino, 2016). According to Gribble et al. (2017, 2018) and Hurley et al. (2020), emotional competence can be developed through engagement in programing offered prior to engagement in level II fieldwork. Determining the need to assess and develop the interpersonal skills of occupational therapy students prior to level II fieldwork engagement is a necessary aspect of enhancing competence. Gathering the perspectives of FWE regarding emotional competence and its relevance to level II fieldwork performance at various stages of level II will facilitate identification of the need for student support and provide valuable information for program assessment, needed student support, and curriculum development.

Having the ability to develop strong therapeutic relationships supports the student's pursuit of the goals produced by intrinsic motivation. Mikolajczak's (2009) Tripartite Model provides a vehicle to help understand emotional competence and diagnosis where an issue is occurring to best strategize the solution. Being able to understand the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success provides direction to help support fieldwork educators when mentoring students and help students best prepare to work with their fieldwork educators and patients alike.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a discussion of the purpose, research questions, study design and population information. It also includes a description of the sampling method, instrument, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques employed in this study. Completion of this phenomenological research study exploring the relationship between emotional competence and successful completion of level II fieldwork serves to inform all stakeholders including students, fieldwork educators (FWE), and occupational therapy programs. Throughout this study, the terms emotional competence and emotional intelligence are used interchangeably. Examining this topic may help to facilitate student support by identifying the key indicators of success and failure of level II fieldwork. Soliciting the perspectives of FWEs provides an invaluable vantage point into learning more about the weight that emotional competence carries in student success. This study has the potential to inform the occupational therapy curriculums to best prepare students for level II fieldwork and successful clinical practice.

This study aimed to answer the research question: What is the relationship between emotional competence and successful completion of level II fieldwork from the perspective of the fieldwork educator? Exploring this relationship is highly relevant to the field of occupational therapy education and practice as emotional competence is an essential facet of the foundation and therapeutic skills inherit in the profession. The profession of occupational therapy is built upon the ability of a therapist to authentically employ a therapeutic use of self to establish and maintain relationships with clients and facilitate clients' goal achievement (Andonian, 2013; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017).

This study utilized a qualitative, phenomenological approach as the goal was to deeply understand the perspective of FWEs with regard to their experiences mentoring students. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), phenomenological research aims to describe the lived experiences or phenomenon shared across the participants. Through the role of FWE, occupational therapists help to prepare students for clinical and professional skill application within the context of fieldwork and entry-level practice. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), qualitative research answers both the "what" and "how" of a phenomenon. It was the goal of this study to provide insight to answer both of these questions as they relate to understanding more about the relationship of emotional competence and of occupational therapy students' success during level II fieldwork. The data that was gained throughout this study provides a rich description of the experiences of FWEs.

Following the procedural steps of Moustakas (1994) multiple steps needed to be followed to understand the phenomenon being explored. The research question of exploring the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the fieldwork educator aligns with the phenomenological approach. The goal was to understand the experience of the fieldwork educator and examine their shared experiences of this phenomena (Creswell, 2013).

Bracketing is the process of a researcher, or investigator, identifying and suspending their understanding of the phenomenon being explored to gain a true understanding of the meaning. Bracketing is a reflective process to develop curiosity (LeVasseur, 2003). The researcher of this study is both an occupational therapist and academic fieldwork coordinator (AFWC). Level II fieldwork success has been a focal point for the researcher in both of these roles. As a student, the researcher formally examined level II fieldwork success from the student's perspective while

earning a master of science degree in occupational therapy (Hughes et al., 1999). Currently, as an AFWC, student success in fieldwork is a primary concern inherit in this role. The researcher, as AFWC, has experienced multiple instances of student success and failures of level II fieldwork. Having this first-hand experience, lends to having an understanding of this phenomenon. The researcher believes that a strong, direct relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork student success will be identified by the participants. This belief is based on professional experience both as an occupational therapist and AFWC. These roles were disclosed to the participants and were reflected upon by the researcher prior to the interview and data analysis process.

Participants and Sampling Method

To understand the relationship between emotional competence and successful completion of level II fieldwork, the perspectives of those who determine success must be explored. The participants of this study were three occupational therapists practicing in the United States who have served as a level II FWE to at least one level II fieldwork student. It was important for the participant to be a practicing occupational therapist in the United States to ensure familiarity with the ACOTE requirements for level II students. It was important for the participant to have experiencing mentoring at least one level II student to ensure that they have experienced this role that is vital to the study. Participants were requested to review the transcript for accuracy and informed that lack of response to the request after five days would result in the acceptance of the transcripts as accurate.

Typical purposeful sampling was utilized to access a group of therapists who were most likely to meet the set criteria. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), typical purposeful sampling is exploring the phenomenon from the individuals from whom the most can be learned

about the topic. It was proposed that at least three participants were needed for the study. The

goal was to recruit at least 3 participants for the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018), provides a

rough estimate of 3 to 10 participants being satisfactory for phenomenological inquiry.

A listserv of members belonging to a Community of Practice (CoP) for Occupational

Therapy Fieldwork Education served as the targeted population. The CoP is a group of academic

fieldwork coordinators (AFWC) of occupational therapy programs across the United States with

a shared interest in fieldwork education. The group grew to also include OTs who serve as

fieldwork educators from across the country. The criteria for participating in this CoP is that an

individual is an OT who is an AFWC or an FWE. The listserv of the CoP is maintained by the

AFWC and FWE moderators.

The aim of the CoP is to explore topics related to fieldwork, engage in creative problem

solving to address challenges faced by the group members, offer support to one another, and

share knowledge for the betterment of the group and occupational therapy practice in general.

The CoP meets on a semi-regular basis, monthly or bi-monthly, via Zoom to discuss pre-

identified topics. The notice of the meetings is distributed via email by a moderator. The group

has two moderators, one who is an AFWC and the other, an FWE. The AFWC moderator has

provided informal written consent and agrees to forward call for participation email to members

of the CoP via the email listserv.

Following receipt of approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of

New England (see Appendix A), a call for participation developed by the researcher was

forwarded to the AFWC Moderator of the AFWC and FWE CoP for email distribution to

members of the listserv. The call for participation (see Appendix B) was included and

instructions for the participant to email the researcher to express interest in participating in the

study. The participant was requested to provide three scheduling options for the interview to take place at the participants' earliest convenience. The Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix C) was provided as an attachment to the email. A total of three recruitment emails were sent to the CoP members to recruit the minimum of three participants.

Three participants responded to the call for participation. Each participant who contacted the researcher was contacted via email to thank the participant for expressing interest in participating in the study. The time and date of the interview was confirmed. Zoom information including the link, meeting room number and passcode was provided to the participant. The Participant Information Sheet was included as an attachment to the email (see Appendix C).

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The instrument for this study was a semi-structured interview that was conducted individually with each participant. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend the development and implementation of an interview protocol to structure the interview. The protocol includes basic information about the interview, an introduction, the interview questions with probes, and closing instructions (see Appendix D). In addition to basic demographic information such as general geographical area, practice setting, longevity of career experience, and number of level II students mentored, open-ended questions were utilized to gain rich descriptions of the participant's experiences and feelings about the relationship between emotional competence and successful completion of level II fieldwork.

The data resulting from the semi-structured interviews was recorded via the Zoom platform. Each of the interviews was recorded in the cloud storage platform and auto transcribed through Zoom. The researcher reviewed the transcript while comparing the document to the recording to ensure accuracy. The recording was deleted from the Zoom platform upon receipt of

transcript approval by the participant or lack of response following 5 days. The transcripts were then organized and logged to allow for ease with locating specific transcripts. A log was developed by the researcher to identify ownership of the transcript to the participant. A simple numeric code was utilized. The transcripts were organized and logged to allow for ease with locating specific transcripts. To log the transcripts, the transcript of each participant was assigned a unique identification number to link the participant's email address and transcript. A key containing the unique identifiers and corresponding email addresses was developed kept in a location separate from the study data. The key referred to the participant by their unique identification number, not their name. Once all of the transcripts were verified for accuracy, the key containing the identifiers was destroyed via shredding. Following destruction of the key, the data was deidentified. The transcripts will be maintained for a period of three years per Institutional Review Board policy. After expiration of the three-year period, the transcripts will be destroyed confidentially via disposal in shredding system.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis approach utilized was based on the work of Moustakas (1994). This data analysis approach was selected because of the systematic manner it provides and alignment with the chosen paradigm. Member checking was completed by having the participants review the transcript of the interview and confirm content. Once the data was validated through the member checking process, it was analyzed by application of a multistep process. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommend that the data are taken apart and reassembled to understand the phenomenon being explored. The researcher reviewed the data to gain an understanding of the content provided by the participant.

According to Creswell (2013), a common approach to data analysis shared by psychologists and phenomenologists was applied. First, horizontalization was completed when the investigator reviewed each of the transcripts and highlights significant statements that provide an understanding of how the phenomenon was experienced by the participant (Creswell, 2013). Following the organization of data, the data was reviewed collectively to gain a general understanding of the ideas and concepts identified by the participants. The goal of this step was to gain a general, overall meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Notes were taken in the margin of the transcripts and general notes were written to express the researcher's overall thoughts.

Coding of data took place as the next step. The coding process presented in Creswell and (2018) was applied. First, each transcript was reviewed and the underlying meaning was noted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). One transcript was selected and reviewed. Second, the researcher used the prompt of "what is this about" and the answer was noted in the margin (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Bracketing or chunking of the data was employed to organize the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For each bracket or chunk, a word was written in the margin to represent the category (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Third, this process was completed for all transcripts then a list was generated of all of the topics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Fourth, the list of topics was used when reviewing the data again. The topics will be abbreviated as codes and written next to corresponding sections of text of the transcripts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This scheme was used to see if new codes emerged (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Fifth, descriptive wording of the topics was turned into categories. Like categories were combined. Sixth, each category was named (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Seventh, the data of each category was assembled in one document and a preliminary analysis completed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Eighth, the existing data was recoded as necessary (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The

next step in data analysis that was used was the generation of a description of the informants, setting, and themes. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), description involves developing a detailed depiction of the persons, places, or events in the setting. Codes were generated for these descriptions including labeling themes. Direct quotes were used to support the identified themes. The data was looked at across transcripts to identify the interconnectedness of themes of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Lastly, the themes were described using narrative passages to present the findings or lack thereof. This is the final stage of the data analysis technique that was utilized to explore and describe the phenomenon of the relationship of emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the fieldwork educator. The recommendation of Shoba and Stanley (2015) were used in that the participants' words were utilized when naming or labeling the themes to gain a true description of the meaning.

Limitations, Delimitations and Ethical Issues

Limitations

Creswell and Creswell (2018) have identified limitations of the qualitative data collection instrument of interviews. The information provided by the participant is gained in an artificial, virtual setting rather than the natural setting where the phenomenon takes place; the presence of the principal investigator or researcher may cause a bias for the participant, coloring the data that is provided; and variability may exist in the level of perceptiveness and articulation ability among the participants impacting the quality of the data. To minimize these limitations, the researcher implemented strategies to attempt to make the participant feel as comfortable as possible in the virtual setting to promote an authentic exchange of information. Allowing the participant to refrain from use of the camera function was provided to enhance comfort. The

researcher asked the participant to reflect on encounters with level II students to promote recall of specific details rather than generalizations of the topic. The researcher used follow up questions and probes to attempt to elicit the essence of the phenomenon. The interview protocol was used to promote consistency throughout the interview process.

Identification of researcher bias was necessary to maximize validity of the study. The researcher acknowledged the assumption that the participants may identify that there is a positive relationship between emotional competence and success during level II fieldwork. Identifying this assumption allowed the researcher to be aware of this bias throughout the research process.

Trustworthiness

Credibility

Analysis of the data gained throughout the interview process from multiple informants promotes the identification of a rich description of this phenomenon. According to Streubert Speizale and Carpenter (2003), a strategy to increase credibility is to spend prolonged period of time with the informant. To enhance credibility, the researcher planned to spend at least an hour with the participant to learn about their experience. The researcher did not terminate the interview if the participant wished to continue to share their experience. Having multiple sources of data, including the researchers notes made during the data analysis process, and verified interview and member checking process allowed for triangulation of the data to enhance credibility. Interviewing multiple participants to gather data from different informants provided triangulation of data and the use of the member checking process enhanced credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Dependability

Streubert Speizale and Carpenter (2003) state dependability is dependent upon creditability. If credibility does not exist, dependability cannot as well. Once credibility is established, the goal is to ensure that the results of the study are dependable. To enhance dependability, a clear description of the methodology and data analysis techniques of the study is provided. A detailed description of the data analysis technique utilized when completing the coding data was captured to ensure confirmability.

Confirmability

To enhance confirmability, the researcher reflected upon the identified biases throughout the data analysis process to ensure awareness. According to Streubert Speziale and Carpenter (2003), a strategy to increase confirmability is to leave an audit trail so that another can follow the steps in the process. To do this, the researcher clearly noted impressions and interpretations throughout the process when analyzing the transcripts.

Transferability

The goal of this study was not to produce results that can be generalized cross all academic programs or to all students but to provide a rich description of the phenomenon experienced by this specific group of participants. According to Streubert Speziale and Carpenter (2003), transferability refers to the likelihood that the results of the study having meaning to others who are in similar situations to the participants. It is hoped that the data gathered and analyzed provides the opportunity for others interested in emotional competence of occupational therapy students to gain insight by contributing to this area of practice. In addition, the strategies of triangulation of data, from various points including the interviews and member checking sessions promotes confirmability throughout the data analysis process.

Delimitations

The delimitations that were imposed in this study were the boundaries set by the researcher. These included the inclusion criteria for the participants. It was important to the researcher that the participants were practicing occupational therapists in the United States to ensure consistency. The researcher required all interviews to take place virtually.

Ethical Issues

The study underwent the University of New England's Institutional Review Board approval to commencement of the study. To protect the participants from ethical issues, full disclosure of the risks and benefits of participation in the study were disclosed in the Call for Participants. Each participant had access to review the Participant Information Sheet at multiple phases of the study as this information was included with the initial call for participants email. The Participant Information Sheet was shown via the share-screen feature of Zoom at the time of the interview and reviewed participants. The participants were asked if they had any questions regarding this document at the time of the interview. The participants had the ability to cease participation at any time without fear of reprisal.

Participants were not asked for their name throughout the process. The transcripts were then organized and logged to allow for ease with locating specific transcripts. A log was developed by the researcher to identify ownership of the transcript to the participant. A simple numeric code was utilized. The transcripts were organized and logged to allow for ease with locating specific transcripts. To log the transcripts, the transcript of each participant was assigned a unique identification number to link the participant's email address and transcript. A key containing the unique identifiers and corresponding email addresses was developed kept in a location separate from the study data. The key will refer to the participant by their unique

identification number, not their name. Once all of the transcripts were verified for accuracy, the key containing the identifiers was destroyed via shredding. Following destruction of the key, the data was deidentified. The transcripts will be maintained for a period of three years per Institutional Review Board policy. After expiration of the three-year period, the transcripts will be destroyed confidentially via disposal in shredding system. The results of this preliminary study can be utilized to lay the foundation for further research exploring the relevance of the development of emotional competence to support students during level II fieldwork and future clinic practice.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the fieldwork educator. Exploring the relationship of emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the FWE, the individual assessing student performance, provides needed insight into student preparation for this pivotal component of their professional development. The FWE possesses the ultimate position to assess students' interpersonal skills during level II fieldwork that are foundational and vital to the practice of occupational therapy. Deficits in emotional competence can have a negative impact on all aspects of occupational therapy practice.

Multiple strategies were utilized to mitigate ethical implications and ensure credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to contribute to the studies rigor. Research reflection and data triangulation by using multiple data sources contributed to the authenticity of the study. To ensure ethical practice, the University of New England's Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix A), and consent practices were followed as indicated. Data was

and will be maintained in compliance with all privacy and confidentially standards as stated in the IRB proposal.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship of emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the fieldwork educator. Exploring the relationship between emotional competence and successful level II fieldwork completion from the perspective of the fieldwork educator provides insight into the need for the development of emotional competence, a vital component to therapeutic use of self, and a primary factor of occupational therapy practice.

The phenomenological research question explored in this study was: How do fieldwork educators describe the relationship between emotional competence and successful level II fieldwork completion? Seeking clarity of this phenomenon by exploring the experiences of fieldwork educators is highly pertinent to the field of occupational therapy because of the centrality that emotional competence holds in the skill of therapeutic use of self, the crux of the profession (Andonian, 2013; 2017; Yu et al., 2019). Occupational Therapy, as a profession, is built upon the ability of a therapist to authentically employ therapeutic use of self to establish and maintain relationships with clients and facilitate clients' goal achievement (Andonian, 2013; 2017; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2019). The results of this study widely support this assertion. The theory of emotional competence and Tripartite Model of Mikolajczak (2009) informed the conceptual foundation and served as the theoretical framework for this study.

This chapter presents the findings identified through the qualitative analysis of the fieldwork educators' experiences related to emotional competence and level II fieldwork success. Each participant was an occupational therapist practicing in the United States, who served as a level II FWE to at least one level II fieldwork student, and had a willingness to complete the

interview and transcript review process. During the semi-structured interviews, each participant was asked to share their thoughts regarding eleven areas related to level II fieldwork student success and emotional competence as shown in Table 1. Table 1 lists the eleven concepts that were explored during the interviews with the participants. Each participant was asked to share their experience with level II students are it relates to the concepts identified in Table 1. The concepts started with more basic, overall concepts such as the attributes of students who were successful then transitioned into the more specific components of emotional competence such as the ability to identify, understand, express, manage, and use emotion. The participants were then asked about the concepts related to the relevance of therapeutic use of self and emotional competence in occupational therapy and, finally, recommendations for developing emotional competence of level II students.

Table 1

Concepts Related to Emotional Competence and Level II Fieldwork Success

Concepts
1. Attributes of successful students
2. Attributes of students who were not successful
3. Challenging areas of performance during level II fw
4. Student's ability to identify emotion
5. Students ability to understand emotion
6. Students ability to express emotion
7. Students ability to manage emotion
8. Students ability to use emotion
9. Emotional competence as it relates to occupational therapy practice

Concepts
10. Emotional competence as it informs therapeutic use of self
11. Ideas for supporting emotional competence development in students

Three calls for participation were disseminated through the Community of Practice leadership team consisting of the fieldwork educator lead and the academic fieldwork coordinator lead. The leadership team sent emails to the members of the Community of Practice list serve. The first call was issued on July 21, 2022 resulting in one participant expressing interest in participation in the study; the second call was issued on August 11, 2022 and did not yield any willing participants; the third call was issued on September 6, 2022 and resulted in two participants who were willing to participate in the study.

Each of the three interviews were completed using the Zoom platform and were recorded and audio transcribed. The interviews took place on August 11, 2022, 9/16/22, and 9/21/22. The first interview was 31 minutes 47 seconds; the second interview was one hour four minutes, and the third interview was 33 minutes 43 seconds in duration. After transcript verification by the researcher, the transcript was sent to the participant via email for review and verification. The participant was asked to review the transcript for accuracy. In the event of inaccuracies, the participants were asked to inform the researcher. It was explained that if the participant did not respond within five days that the transcript would be accepted by the researcher as accurate. All three transcripts were accepted as accurate as none of the participants emailed the researcher to express a discrepancy in the transcript. After the five-day wait period for the last interview ended, the researcher began to prepare the data for analysis. An organizational chart was prepared to organize data related to each concept identified in Table 1 to provide a comparison to

across transcripts. This step was added to prepare the data for analysis as this step provided the researcher a way of organizing the data to promote a clearer understanding of similarities and differences across the transcripts.

Analysis Method

The process of horizontalization was completed by the researcher to gain the general, overall meeting of the data. Key words or phrases were highlighted during the process and notes written in the right margins of the transcripts. After each transcript was reviewed, all of the transcripts were reviewed collectively to gain a general understanding of the concepts identified by the participants. After reviewing the transcripts collectively, each individual transcript was read again. The researcher formulated a summary of the underlying meaning of each of the transcripts. Table 2 provides the summary of the underlying meaning of each transcript.

Table 2

Underlying Meaning of Each Transcript by Participant

	Transcript of participant 1	Transcript of participant 2	Transcript of participant 3
Underlying meaning	Emotional competence is very important to level II fieldwork success. The process should start before level II fieldwork. Students should develop reflection and emotional development before level II.	A relationship exists between emotional competence and Level II FW success. Students who are motivated, reflective, communicate well and who are open and responsive to feedback are successful. emotional competence and therapeutic use of self are essential to OT;	OT students are typically strong in emotional competence. Students who have difficulty with feedback, self-motivation and self-reflection have difficulty achieving success. therapeutic use of self and emotional competence is vital to OT.

	Transcript of participant 1	Transcript of participant 2	Transcript of participant 3
	Challenges with developing relationships, communication and fear of investing the self are limiting factors for student success and therapeutic ability.	if you don't have them, go to another allied health profession.	Students develop skills needed by expanding experience with complexity and diversity.

Next, each transcript was reviewed while the researcher maintained the focus on answering the question of "what is this about." The answer to this question was noted in the left margin of the transcript. For each topic, words were written to represent the underlying meaning. After completion of this step for each of the three transcripts, a list of the topic categories was generated. The list of topic categories for each transcript was arranged in a table as shown in Table 3. Table 3 provides the topic categories found in each transcript when the researcher reviewed the transcripts to gain a clearer sense of what the transcript was about. The bolded topics are those words that appeared more than one time across the transcripts. The topic categories are arranged in the order that they appeared in the transcripts.

Table 3

Topic Categories

Transcript 1	Transcript 2	Transcript 3
Successful students= **initiative**	Professional behaviors	Success= **initiative**
prepared	safety	**motivated**
self-initiative	**self awareness &self-reflection**	ready to learn

Transcript 1	Transcript 2	Transcript 3
exposure to clients	motivated	**poor response to feedback**
success= maturity, m**otivated,** determined, team player	**confidence**	safety & decreased insight
didn't get to maximal level of performance	**empathetic**	poor generalization
mental health, emotional challenges, life experience	controlling emotions	excuses for failure to thrive to feedback
time management, behaviors, distractions	dismissive, disengaged, detached	acute environment challenges
communication has improved	**communication**	**communication** is a strength
Increased self-awareness	**manage emotions**	**self-reflection**= identify feelings
communication boundaries with sharing relationship	**confidence** & self-doubt fear of hands-on need for mentoring	understanding feelings simple to complex expressing is fine
communication	**self-awareness** & m**anagement** of emotions	managing is good
relationship range of emotion is impactful	**communication emotional competence=OT**	need experience **emotional competence is crux of OT**
ear is limiting	**therapeutic use of self- defines OT**	therapeutic use of self grows with increased ability to generalize and relate to others
emotional competence is important- team member	**confidence o**utside	
emotional competence- therapeutic use of self- vital to success	Trust the Process	
skills start before level II need counseling increased emotional support and learning	**receptive to feedback**	

Note. Bolded categories appeared multiple times data across transcripts

The three transcripts were reviewed again while keeping the topic categories identified in Table 3 in mind. When analyzing this data, these categories informed the two themes with multiple subthemes. The categories in Table 3 and all of the data were re-examined in depth. Themes and subthemes emerged as described in the remainder of this report, to fully describe the results of this study by providing deeper description and understanding of the participants' perceptions.

The theme titles are derived from the words of the participants and align with the bolded words in Table 3. These themes serve to answer the research question of: How do fieldwork educators describe the relationship between emotional competence and successful level II fieldwork completion? The participants were asked to share attributes of successful and unsuccessful students in addition to their experience with level II student's emotional competence. The following definition of emotional competence was utilized: Emotional competence is the capacity to identify, understand, express, manage, and use one's own feeling and those of others (Mikolajczak, 2009). Each component of emotional competence was explored separately. Including the ability to identity, understand, manage, use or utilize the feeling of the self and others. The researcher continually returned to the question, "What does this mean?" to provide guidance when completing the data analysis process.

The themes that surfaced support the findings of this study to provide an understanding of the relationship is between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success. The themes are the specific traits and behaviors identified by fieldwork educators (FWEs), through their own words, that describe the interrelatedness of emotional competence and success of level II fieldwork. The elements of the themes, including the subthemes, such as specific traits and behaviors, directly relate to the components of emotional competence. These themes and

subthemes support the findings of this study, that emotional competence supports success of level II fieldwork.

Participants

The three participants of this study shared similarities and differences in gender, duration of time in practice, primary treatment setting, and number of students mentored. All three participants were female occupational therapist FWEs who have been practicing for more than a decade. These participants differed in demographic information including length of time in clinical practice, primary treatment setting, and number of students mentored as shown in Table 4. Table 4 provides a comparison of the demographic information of each participant. This information included the primary treatment setting, years in practice, number of students mentored, and number of students determined to be unsuccessful.

Table 4

Comparison of Participants Demographics

Participant	Primary treatment setting	Years in practice	Number of students mentored	Number of students determined to be unsuccessful
Participant 1	School-based	25-30	30	6
Participant 2	Veterans affairs	15-20	75	5
Participant 3	Health care system-acute care	15-20	6-8	2

To gain insight into this phenomenon, the researcher gathered information from each participant to learn more about their life experiences ranging from academic preparation, their level II fieldwork experiences, and practice settings. Gathering this information provided the

researcher with important information about the similarities and differences of the participants' experiences. Gathering this information from the participants also provided the opportunity for the participant to reflect on their experience with level II fieldwork supervision over the course of their professional career and the context in which they have served as a mentor.

Participant 1

Participant 1 is an occupational therapist who has practiced in the Midwest region of the United States for approximately 29 years. She has spent approximately 21 years in the school-based setting and roughly eight years in the early intervention setting. At the time of the interview, Participant 1 was primarily working with children with autism. In addition to pediatric practice, Participant 1 serves as an adjunct faculty member to both an occupational therapy assistant program and an occupational therapy program. She teaches pediatric practice. She holds a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy and a master's degree in healthcare services in addition to multiple specialized certifications such as American Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Educators Certification and Early Start Denver Model Certification.

When asked about her level II fieldwork experiences, Participant 1 expressed that her fieldwork experiences took place in the adult rehabilitation, mental health, and outpatient pediatric settings. Her fieldwork in adult rehabilitation was challenging and stressful. The supervision model was different than what she provides today when mentoring her students. "My supervision was more old school. They sat in the office, I was in the gym, working with patients. Then they check(ed) in and give critical feedback." Participant 1 described her experiences during second level II placement in the mental health setting very differently. "That was an amazing experience. It was very collaborative, supportive…" Lastly, her pediatric rotation served to be pivotal to her current practice setting. She stated, "I didn't even think that I wanted

to go into pediatrics until I did that rotation and fell in love." Participant 1 recalled having much support and receiving good feedback during her outpatient pediatric affiliation.

Participant 2

Participant 2 has a 19-year practice history of working in the Veteran's Administration (VA) Health System setting in the New England Region of the United States. She has a 15-year history of mentoring level II fieldwork students ranging in educational level from assistant to doctoral. Participant 2 has practiced in multiple settings within the VA system including both inpatient and outpatient. She has vast experience with diagnosis-specific clinics, specialized seating equipment assessment and training, and interdisciplinary pain clinics. Participant 1 holds leadership roles within the allied-health division of the VA setting in addition to her clinical responsibilities. She is responsible for the development of the student onboarding requirements and training programs on a national level to ensure that all students have the same baseline knowledge when completing clinicals in the VA system.

When discussing her academic background, Participant 2 shared that she was initially enrolled in a different allied health major. During a lab practical, she realized that this was not her calling. "It just hit me in that moment, this is just not what I am passionate about." When meeting with the dean of students following her abrupt departure from the lab practical, the dean contacted the occupational therapy department and sent her to interview for acceptance into the occupational therapy program. Participant 2 expressed that after making the transition to occupational therapy, she felt as though she was in the right career. She began her career first as an assistant then earned her bachelor's degree in occupational therapy.

When reflecting on her level II fieldwork experiences, Participant 2 shared that she completed her level II fieldwork experiences in the inpatient acute care hospital setting and a

state psychiatric hospital. Participant 2 expressed that her fieldwork educators were supportive. She credits one of her level II FWE with influencing her decision to practice in the VA setting. "He was a Veteran himself, so I think that he had a lot of understanding of mental health issues in general." Participant 2 spoke of a traumatic experience that she had when completing her placement in mental health setting. It was during this episode that her FWE provided tremendous support. He empowered her by facilitating her ability to engage in autonomous decisions making. She spoke positively of all of her FWEs when stating, "The three of them (FWEs) probably made the most impact on who I am as a professional and who I am as an educator. I find myself spewing their words more than not."

Participant 3

Participant 3 has a 20-year history of being an occupational therapist having worked in the settings of skilled nursing, acute care, and long-term acute care hospital in the New England Region of the United States. Participant 3 reported working in the long-term acute care hospital (LTACH) setting for the past 15 years. She also has a four-year history of serving as the clinical education coordinator for physical, occupational, audiology, and speech therapy students. She earned her bachelor's degree in kinesiology and master's degree in occupational therapy in 2002.

Participant 3 reported completing her placements in the inpatient psychiatry and LTACH settings. When reflecting on her first level II fieldwork experience in the inpatient psychiatry setting, she recalled that she enjoyed working with a small, supportive team that was very welcoming and mentored many students. She expressed, "I got the feeling that they wanted me there, and they liked me, and probably all OT students." She also stated that they allowed her to drive her own experience. Participant 3 found her second level II experience in the LTACH more challenging. "I think it was more difficult, just by the nature of the work to some degree." She

described her FWE at the LTACH differently than her first. She recalled that during her first week, her fieldwork educator expressed that she believed in a sink-or-swim approach. She described her second level II FWE's mentorship style as being very different than her own. Participant 3 stated, "My first week, she was like, 'Just go in and try an eval.' I'm like, 'What? What does that look like?' and I just didn't feel prepared." She expressed valuing the opportunity to work closely with different professionals, such physical therapists, during her second level II fieldwork because of the teamwork approach that it provided. She also recalled appreciating the warmness another occupational therapist who helped mentor her during her level II experience. "She was warmer, so if she had an interesting patient, she'd be like, 'Oh, let me pull you in on this one'." This gave Participant 3 the support that she needed and collaborative approach.

Presentation of Results and Findings

While the participants varied in primary practice setting, years in practice, and number of students mentored, they shared similar ideas when discussing the concepts related to the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success. One overarching theme, Theme 1: The Crux of Occupational Therapy: Emotional Competence, confirms the importance of emotional competence and sets the stage for understanding the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success. This overarching theme has a subtheme, Therapeutic Use of Self Enhances Connection, that explains the connection between emotional competence and therapeutic use of self in relation to success of level II fieldwork. A second theme, Theme 2: Critical Influential Factors Support or Impede Success, serves to provide what traits and behaviors are indicative of success, rooted in the lived experiences of the participants and recommendations to best prepare students. Both themes are comprised of

multiple subthemes that serve to best explain the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success.

The second theme, Critical Influential Factors Support or Impede Success, is comprised of seven subthemes. The subthemes include: Subtheme One: An Emotionally Competent Student Has Motivation and Initiation, Subtheme Two: An Emotionally Competent Student Is Self-Reflective & Self-Aware, Subtheme Three: An Emotionally Competent Student Has Confidence, Subtheme Four: An Emotionally Competent Student Is Communicative, Subtheme Five: An Emotionally Competent Student Self-Regulates Anxiety and Has Mental Strength and Resilience, Subtheme Six: An Emotionally Competent Student Responds to Feedback Appropriately, and Subtheme Seven: An Emotionally Competent Student Has Empathy.

Overarching Theme 1: Emotional Competence- The Crux of Occupational Therapy

The overarching theme, Theme 1: Emotional Competence-The Crux of Occupational Therapy defines the relationship between emotional competence and occupational therapy. Each of the participants identified that emotional competence is central to what we do as occupational therapists in all of the roles that we possess such as clinician and colleague, manager and mentor. When asked about how emotional competence informs occupational therapy practice, all three participants strongly articulated that emotional competence is central to our identity as occupational therapists and we do to help our clients. Participant 3 stated, "It is so important. To me, it is the crux of our profession, we really need to be able to connect with people because they have to have this relationship with us if we want to get them where they want to be." Participant 2 echoed a similar sentiment by stating, "that is what separates us from other disciplines."

Emotional competence is essential to the role of team member, or colleague. Participant 1 stated, "It makes a huge difference in the ability to work as a team member. I think that's when

I've had conflicts with coworkers and other OTs. It's because of emotional competence and lack of the ability to communicate what they're feeling, work through things, and have discussions. When there is not that emotional competence there to have a conversation with your peer and go to your supervisor instead, I think that causes unrest in the work environment."

Subtheme One: Therapeutic Use of Self Enhances Connection

Therapeutic Use of Self is vital to Occupational Therapy practice (Andonian, 2013, 2017). Each of the participants strongly articulated the magnitude of therapeutic use of self to the identity of occupational therapy. Participant 1 expressed that students who have emotional competence can understand and interact more effectively with clients. "I could see such as difference in the interactions with parents, what they're communicating with them, because they are able to identify their own feelings." Participant 2 became emotional when sharing her thoughts about therapeutic use of self. "I tell all of my students that the day that one of my patients with ALS dies and I don't cry, it's the day I shouldn't work in the clinic anymore…I think that (therapeutic use of self) is such a huge thing. If we can't use our therapeutic use of self, what are we?" Participant 3 supports the relationship between emotional competence and therapeutic use of self. Emotional competence informs therapeutic use of self and is relevant to student's ability to develop their ability to grow and develop their ability to treat complex patients. Participant 3 stating, " I think that is its easiest for our students initially to use their therapeutic use of self when they have an easier understanding of their patient….it takes some effort to move that therapeutic use of self to patient that really just don't look anything like them, that don't see the world the way they do….some of our students who struggled, that takes them a lot more time and effort, and mentorship. Participant 3 goes on to state that the expansion of students' therapeutic use of self is a "really good outcome from level II."

Each participant shared experiences to illustrate the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success highlighting the specific components of identification, understanding, managing, expressing, and utilizing the feelings of the self and others. These components, rooted in the dimensions of emotional competence, are central to the seven subthemes of theme two, Critical Influential Factors Support or Impede Success.

Theme 2: Critical Influential Factors Support or Impede Success

The participants of this study articulated multiple positive behaviors and traits that, in their experience, support success in level II fieldwork and define the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success. Through the analysis of the participant's words, the following subthemes were identified. These subthemes support the first theme, Subtheme One: Therapeutic Use of Self Enhances Connection. Each of the subthemes directly relate to a student's level of emotional competence and serve as a support or barrier to achieving success. Each of the three participants shared different strategies that they felt could potentially help support students to be successful during level II fieldwork when discussing the relationship between emotional competence and successful clinical completion however all recommendations share a link to the development or application of emotional competence.

Subtheme One: An Emotionally Competent Student Has Motivation and Initiation

When asked to describe the attributes of successful level II fieldwork students, the participants identified multiple qualities that help to understand the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success. All three participants, despite working in different treatment settings, identified the importance of being self-motivated, self-directed, and goal-oriented. Participant 1 stated, "They [successful students] come in clearly focused with goals and expectations for themselves, personal goals." The attribute of self-motivation was also

identified in the Veteran's Hospital setting. Participant 2 stated, "They are organized, they are motivated, they are self-motivated." Participant 3 also offered, "They communicate well, they're flexible, they're self-motivated, and initiate on their own." All three participants identified that successful students need to drive their own experience. Self-motivation is a component of emotional competence.

Subtheme Two: An Emotionally Competent Student Is Self-Reflective & Self-Aware

Multiple participants identified that self-reflection and self-awareness were two skills that contributed to student success during level II fieldwork. Being able to self-reflect and draw from past experiences to support current interactions as being very important to success. All of the participants identified a student's ability to reflect on past life experience with patients as a factor that contributes to student success on level II fieldwork. Participant 3 stated:

> Students draw from personal experiences then need to develop skills by working with patients/clients who are different from them; they need to develop interpersonal skills to advance their ability to work with patients who have complexities and differ in multiple ways from the student themselves.

Participant 1 and Participant 2 identified factors such as the ability to utilize previous experience that the student had, both life experience and fieldwork experience, as factors contributing to success. "The students that have had a level (II fieldwork), the most successful, I would say the students that have life experience like working…and if they had a level II before mine." Past experience contributes to a student's comfort-level with a specific patient population having a positive impact on their success. Participant 3 states "If a student isn't super comfortable with children or has had experience with children with disabilities, they may be less successful in the

sense that they're going to have to spend more time getting comfortable just being around children…"

In order for self-reflection to serve as a support, a student also needs to be able to be self-aware to be able to use the information gained from the practice of self-reflection. Self-reflection and self-awareness go hand in hand. Participant 2 identified that self-awareness can be challenging for level II students. "Self-awareness, I think, is so much trickier for these students to be able to identify. Do you see where your self-confidence is getting in your way? And they really don't have an awareness of it." Students who struggle lack the self-awareness and insight into their own limitations and the impact it has on their ability to perform and develop a strong therapeutic relationship with their clients.

To help promote the development of self-reflection and self-awareness, Participant 2 requires level II students to engage in a weekly check-in to facilitate a student's awareness of their performance. Instead of requiring students to formulate personal goals, she has implemented a "Hope and Dreams Section" of the check-in process to help students reflect on what is most important to them as a way of facilitating them to be able to do the same for their patients at a truly authentic level. She encourages her students to identify "whatever it is that is going to make your person better so that your clinical will be better" to promote students utilizing a more holistic view when self-reflecting.

Participant 3 also discussed the importance of self-reflection and self-awareness strategies she implements to facilitate this skill. Weekly meetings are held to discuss the student-identified areas that are the product of the student's self-reflection of performance. Participant 3 offered, "they do a self-reflection that they need to share with us every week…. I enjoy this time because it's really more thoughtful…" The weekly meetings help create opportunities for

discussions of how the student is feeling and frames the opportunity to discuss at appropriate times.

Subtheme 3. An Emotionally Competent Student Has Confidence

The participants identified that confidence could be a positive attribute that supported success or, when lacking or excessive, could be detrimental to the student's outcome. Participant 2 stated, "If you come in thinking you know everything or expecting that you should know everything, those are two big red flags for me." She also offered, "They are able to be independent thinkers while still balancing that out with being humble, and questioning themselves, not over-questioning. So, having that level of confidence without cockiness."

Lack of confidence can impact productivity resulting in challenges with performance. Participant 2 identified that students who lack confidence with their documentation skills tend to spend an exorbitant amount of time on documentation, making it impossible for them to meet the productivity standard. In addition, fear has a negative effect on students' confidence resulting in difficulty performing well. Two participants commented on fear as a limiting factor. Participant 2 found that being unsuccessful is typically not knowledge-based but based in fear. Participant 1 and Participant 2 discussed students' fear and lack of confidence with hands-on skills when working with actual patients. Participant 1 stated, "But some, when they stay in that fear place, makes it challenging for them (to utilize their emotions and that of others)." Participant 2 stated, "That fear of touching somebody, it's mind blowing. You went into this field knowing you would have to touch people. I'm not asking you to give them a foot rub. I'm asking you to do range of motion." Participant 2 went on to reiterate that the barriers to success are not rooted in knowledge, but in fear and emotional competence.

The Participants identified multiple recommendations for students to help them be successful during level II fieldwork. These recommendations include fostering confidence, patience, being present, and flexible thinking so that students can learn and grow during their time on level II fieldwork. Participant 1 recommends that students have observation opportunities prior to level II fieldwork to boost confidence. Level II fieldwork is designed to progress gradually from basic to complex to best support students learning and professional development (ACOTE, 2018). Participant 2 urges students to "put forth the confidence on the outside" so that, "eventually, it will work on the inside." She also calls for students to "trust the process" as the experience is designed to scaffold learning to develop skills from basic to more complex and to remain in the moment instead of getting a head of oneself. She urges students to "slow down, taking your time" and really listen to the patient in addition to "being open to learning" and "demonstrate flexible thinking."

Subtheme Four: An Emotionally Competent Student Is Communicative

The skill of communication, both with FWEs and clients, is essential to successful level II fieldwork success. Participant 3 expressed feeling as though occupational therapy students, especially those that seek out the acute care setting for level II fieldwork, specifically have strong communication skills. "I find that most of the OT students that land with us in acute care have extraordinary communication skills. I think that's typically really a strength." Participant 1 has seen an improvement with communication skills over the past decade. "But I feel like years ago, maybe more than ten years ago, students were less competent with communication, initiating, and communicating their wants and needs, struggles, or their strengths and weaknesses. I think I have seen students coming in with a better awareness of themselves and sharing that more with me as their supervisor, what their learning styles are, what they need." Participant 1 also points

out that even though a student may have good communication skills, they can overshare, lacking professional boundaries leading to being less successful. Students may also fail to effectively communicate learning or support needs, presenting a barrier to successful completion of level II fieldwork. Both Participant 2 and Participant 3 call for students to be transparent when communicating how they are doing during level II fieldwork so that FWEs can best support their learning. Ironically, both participants also used the phrase, "fake it till you make it" but offered very different perspectives. Participant 1 calls for students to have confidence in themselves and recommending that students, "fake it till you make it" and identifying that confidence is the issue, not knowledge; whereas Participant 3 urges students to refrain from "faking it" by stressing the importance of being transparent following self-reflection to articulate their needs. Participant 3 stresses the importance of asking questions. "They need to drive the experience and communicate with the FWE where they need to go. We always want to know what they are thinking. We are teaching them to be good at self-reflection and that makes them better clinicians." Students need to communicate their clinical reasoning process so that the FWE has an understanding of their thought process.

The skill of communication is essential with working with clients. A student's ability or inability to communicate with a client is paramount. Participant 2 stated, "the inability to communicate effectively with patients is huge." "Just knowing appropriate questions to ask and don't just ask questions to fill the space…" Students need to be able to communicate with FWE and clients to be successful in level II fieldwork.

Subtheme Five: An Emotionally Competent Student Self-Regulates Anxiety and Has Mental Strength and Resilience

When discussing the attributes of students who are unsuccessful, the participants spoke of students being unable to manage feelings of anxiety, stress, and fear in order to reach the level of independence, confidence, and skill necessary for success during level II fieldwork. The majority of challenges targeted by the participants included behaviors that can be characterized as a sub-optimal level of emotional competence rooted in the ability to identify, understand, express, manage, and utilize their feelings and those of others. The various components of emotional competence were identified in multiple contexts when discussing success or lack thereof during the level II fieldwork experience.

Participant 1 expressed having the most challenging time working with students whom they suspected had a mental health diagnosis. "I don't know for sure, but I could maybe guesstimate that they had some other sort of mental illness or emotional challenges." Participant 1 went on to say:

> I think that emotional IQ, their emotional competence and life experience, it may or may not be related to age, I used to think, it's just (age)…they were in their early twenties, but I don't think it's really that. I think it's their life experience and emotional competence.

Participant 2 also stated, "I see a lot of students who get frazzled very easily, and it's those students that can rein that in on their own who are incredibly successful." Participant 2 also commented that students who are not comfortable sharing a disability such as a mental health diagnosis or learning disability sometimes struggle because of lack of support. "If they're not comfortable disclosing that to me, I can't accommodate for that."

Participant 1 articulated the need for emotional competence development prior to level II fieldwork by the University or academic program. Participant 1 compared the academic preparation of occupational therapy students to that of counseling students. In the counseling profession, you get counseling to become a counselor…" Participant 1 goes on to state:

> We do very similar work. I think it would be really helpful if there is more emotional support and learning that happens in education before they go so that they have the resources and know what they need before they're on fieldwork…

The field of occupational therapy addresses the behavioral, psychological and social factors that impact performance in occupation (ACOTE, 2018).

Subtheme Six: An Emotionally Competent Student Responds to Feedback Appropriately

Participant 3 identified that students who were unsuccessful had a difficult time being receptive to and responding to feedback. "Sometimes it is cognitive flexibility, and being able to modify [their] approach to accept feedback, and really take it in, and think about trying new ways to do it." In some instances, the student perceives the FWE being "too hard on me" when in reality, the student is not meeting the FWE's expectations and feel the student is capable of change. Participant 3 goes on to state, "Sometimes there is a relationship and a fit mismatch for sure, but I think it's this overwhelming…. they find other excuses for why they're not thriving." Participant 1 also identified a student's ability "to think things through" in response to feedback. She stated, "I used to think students who have been less successful did not achieve the higher-level skills that successful students do, such as program development and interdisciplinary education."

All three participants discussed a student's openness to feedback as being indicative of success and demonstrating defensiveness as a limiting factor. Participant 3 stated:

…one quality I found of my students who haven't been successful is they don't take

feedback well. It's almost like a defensiveness around feedback, and it's that lack of

insight into how their sessions are going…they don't see where they are struggling…if

they aren't 100% buying it, it seems harder to fix.

 Participant 2 expressed the importance of students asking for feedback to validate clinical

reasoning and expand understanding. Participant 2 stated, "The ability to think through the

problem, give me what you think this solution is, and then check with me to make sure that you

didn't miss anything."

Subtheme Seven: An Emotionally Competent Student Has Empathy

Multiple participants discussed the importance of empathy both in interpersonal

interactions but also communication. Participant 2 identified behaviors of students who are not

successful as being dismissive, disengaged, and lacking empathy. Participant 2 stated:

ALS clinic can be incredibly emotional, especially a first visit can be extremely

emotional because oftentimes, we are reaffirming to the patient that, 'yes, you have this

fatal diagnosis' and that should stir something inside of you. And when it doesn't…those

[students] tend to be the less successful students.

Unsuccessful students struggle with identifying, expressing, managing, and using the feelings of

others. Difficulty with professional behaviors can be a testament to a lack of empathy. Students

who struggle with professional behaviors lack the insight and awareness of what their patient is

feeling in response to their actions. All three participants identified professional behaviors as a

thread of both success and failure. Participant 2 stated:

…but those unspoken professional behaviors… Just inherently knowing when it's right

or wrong to look at your watch, pick up your cell phone, daydream, fall asleep. I had a

student fall asleep in front of a patient. I mean, come on.

Participant 2 went on to say, "Knowing what questions to ask of your supervisor in front

of a patient. Those little things that are really hard to put a word to."

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between emotional competence

and level II fieldwork success from the experience of the FWE. Exploring this phenomenon is

vital to occupational therapy practice. Emotional competence has been determined to be essential

to the practice of occupational therapy for a multitude of reasons including the relationship

between emotional competence and therapeutic use of self. Because level II fieldwork is a

crucial component of preparing future occupational therapists, gaining insight between the

relationship between these two variables from FWEs holds multiple benefits for all stakeholders

including students, therapists, academic programs, and, most importantly, recipients of

occupational therapy services.

The results of this study illustrated that there are multiple themes and subthemes that

describe the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success. The

themes and subthemes demonstrate that the development of emotional competence is essential

for an occupational therapy student's fieldwork success. To be successful in future practice,

occupational therapy students must continually be aware of and reflect on their own

performance. Ultimately this can and does lead to expanded emotional competence and

confidence which reduce student anxiety, promote communication, foster positive responses to

supervision, and ultimately help students display empathy to clients. Thus, these critical factors

promote positive student attributes which build emotional competence and enhance the student's

therapeutic use of self, establishing connections with clients, leading to optimal client

performance and satisfaction. Factors which impeded success, as explained by the interviewees,

include not taking the time to reflect, lack of response to supervision, poor communication,

inability to relate effectively to clients, and lack of empathy for client situations.

In addition, emotional competence informs therapeutic use of self, the subtheme of the

overarching theme. The subtheme, Therapeutic Use of Self Enhances Connection, identifies that

therapeutic use of self is informed by emotional competence and is necessary to build the

connection with clients in occupational therapy practice. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of

the interpretations and implications of the findings of this study, as well as recommendations for

action.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The goal of level II fieldwork is to develop the clinical and interpersonal skills necessary to become an entry-level generalist (ACOTE, 2018). In order to develop an authentic relationship that promotes trust and communication of personal needs, an occupational therapist must possess the emotional competence necessary to lay the foundation for the therapeutic partnership between client and clinician (Andonian, 2013, 2017). While it has been established that emotional competence is vital to the practice of occupational therapy, there is a gap in the literature exploring the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the fieldwork educator (FWE).

This qualitative phenomenological research study aimed to answer the research question: How do fieldwork educators describe the relationship between emotional competence and successful level II fieldwork completion? Three occupational therapy fieldwork educators who served as the participants of this study provided insight into their lived experiences to provide an understanding of this phenomenon. The participants shared their experiences from the vantage point of being both the mentors of students and assessors of level II fieldwork success.

Exploring this phenomenon, through the perspectives of FWEs, is highly relevant to the field of occupational therapy education and practice. The three participants differed significantly in demographics such as location and practice setting. Thematic analysis of the data reveals two themes, one overarching, and multiple sub-themes shown to be descriptive of relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success. These themes served to inform the findings of this study. This chapter presents the interpretation and implications of the findings and recommendations for action.

Interpretation and Importance of Findings

The results of this study are in alignment with current literature regarding emotional competence, level II fieldwork factors, and the importance of therapeutic use of self in occupational therapy practice. When exploring the relationship between success of level II fieldwork and emotional competence, the fieldwork educators who served as participants in this study solidified the interconnectedness of emotional competence and success. The themes identified in this study determined the three findings of this study. These findings hold value for the various stakeholders in the process of preparing students to become occupational therapists.

The relationship between the themes that emerged through data analysis and findings derived from these themes provide the answer to the research question: How do fieldwork educators describe the relationship between emotional competence and successful level II fieldwork completion? Table 5 presents the relationship between the overarching theme, subtheme and theme two and the three findings of the study. The overarching theme of Emotional Competence is the Crux of Occupational Therapy and Subtheme, Therapeutic Use of Self Enhances Connection serve to inform the first finding, Emotional Competence is Essential to Occupational Therapy. The second theme, Critical Influential Factors Support or Impede Success, serves to inform the second finding, Dimensions of Emotional Competence Contribute to Success of Level II Fieldwork as well as the third finding, Cultivation of Emotional Competence is Essential to Level II Fieldwork Success. Table 5 shows the alignment between the themes and findings of this study. A thorough discussion of each of the findings follows table 5.

Table 5

Resulting Themes and Finding

Themes	Findings
Overarching theme (1) emotional competence is the crux of occupational therapy and Subtheme (1): therapeutic use of self enhances connection	(1) Emotional competence is essential to occupational therapy
Theme (2) critical influential factors support or impede success	(2) Dimensions of emotional competence contribute to success of level II fieldwork
Theme (2) critical influential factors support or impede success	(3) Cultivation of emotional competence is essential to level II fieldwork success

Finding 1: Emotional Competence is Essential to Occupational Therapy

As stated by multiple authors including Andonian (2013, 2017), Brown et al. (2016), and McKenna, 2007; McKenna and Mellson, (2013), Raphael-Greenfield et al., (2017) and Yu et al., (2019) emotional competence is essential to the practice of occupational therapy. This study reaffirmed that emotional competence is crucial to the practice of occupational therapy. Each of the participants expressed that emotional competence informs therapeutic use of self and that being able to apply therapeutic use of self to best support our clients in achieving optimal outcomes. This premise is in alignment with Andonian (2013, 2017). therapeutic use of self is utilized as a tool by the therapist to support the patient or client. According to Andonian (2017), This differs from emotional intelligence in that emotional intelligence is within the therapist; emotional intelligence indirectly influences the relationship with clients and others. emotional intelligence is separate, but informs therapeutic use of self. For purposes of this discussion,

emotional competence and emotional intelligence are used interchangeably. When asked about the dynamic of emotional competence informing occupational therapy practice, all three participants described how emotional competence is central to who we are and what we do. Therapeutic use of self is vital to occupational therapy practice. Each of the participants strongly articulated the magnitude of therapeutic use of self to the identity of occupational therapy and being part of the interdisciplinary team. Each participant shared experiences to illustrate the relationship between emotional competence, therapeutic use of self and level II fieldwork success highlighting the specific components of identification, understanding, managing, expressing, and utilizing the feelings of the self and others.

Finding 2: Dimensions of Emotional Competence Contribute to Success of Level II

The positive attributes of self-directed learning, self-motivation, drive, and self-initiation surfaced multiple times when identifying traits of students who are successful during level II fieldwork. When reflecting on the key components of emotional competence, self-motivation is a trait related to Dugué et al. (2021) dimensions of trait emotional intelligence, best aligning with intrapersonal skills. Students who are self-directed take an active role in their learning and seek to gain as much as possible from the experience. This can also relate to the dimension of general mood components with framing all experiences as positive and learning opportunities during the fieldwork experience. Students who are successful are driven to experience as much as possible and achieve as much as they can during their level II fieldwork experience.

The concepts of self-awareness, self-reflection, and being able to draw from past experiences to support current interactions are prevalent findings throughout the study. These abilities are central to the very definition of emotional competence. Mikolajczak (2009) state Salovey and Caruso's 1990 originative definition of emotional intelligence as "the ability to

monitor one's own and other's feelings, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action" (p. 25). This definition is synonymous with the ability of self-reflection. According to Cherry (2018), Daniel Goldman originally described the five components of emotional intelligence including self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and motivation. These five components, identified by the participants in this study, play an important role in the practice of being an occupational therapist. Each of these components are vital to the development of a therapeutic relationship between the therapist and client. Without the formation of this relationship, a therapist cannot be fully effective.

Students who have the ability to reflect and objectively review their performance then utilize this information to inform positive growth is key to success on level II fieldwork. Students who lack the skill of self-awareness and self-reflection struggle with both identifying and making positive changes to support success. Nicola-Richmond et al. (2017) identified difficulty with self-reflection skills as a predictor or failure on level II fieldwork.

The trait of confidence relates to Dugué et al. (2021) dimensions of trait emotional intelligence aligning with intrapersonal skills. As identified in the study, confidence could be a positive attribute that supports success or, when lacking or excessive, could be detrimental to the student's outcome. Dugué et al., (2021) discovered a prevalent theme that linked emotional intelligence development to student performance, cited a connection between emotional intelligence and improved productivity and clinical performance. The participants' responses in this study confirm this assertion by identifying that lack of confidence impacts productivity resulting in challenges with performance. Bonsaksen (2015) found that self-efficacy and self-esteem were good indicators of student success. The connection can be drawn aligning deficits in self-esteem and self-efficacy with lack of confidence. If students lack the confidence in their

skills, regardless of type of clinical skill, it will have a negative impact on time management and can contribute to failure. Fear was also identified as a limiting factor of student success. Fear contributes to self-doubt which impacts confidence. Lack of confidence has a negative impact on the patient-therapist relationship and ability to implement therapeutic use of self.

The skill of communication, both with FWEs and clients, is essential to successful level II fieldwork performance. While the data suggests that students who are successful demonstrate strong communication skills, and that, typically, occupational therapy students possess these skills, it is also identified that students who struggle, lack the ability to effectively communicate. The finding that effective interpersonal skills, specifically communication, is a pivotal factor in successful level II performance or that deficits in this skill are grossly detrimental to success is supported by multiple authors including Nicola-Richmond et al. (2017), Evenson et al., (2015), and Hanson (2011).

The challenges for students who struggle with communication include knowing how much to share or lacking boundaries, identifying appropriate content to share with FWEs or patients, articulating their understanding or lack of understanding, and appropriately expressing oneself in a professional manner. These findings are supported by Karp (2020) who found that the academic and clinical educators identified the skills of communication, feedback, professionalism as key topics essential to successful transition from classroom to clinic.

When discussing the attributes of students who are unsuccessful, the participants spoke of students being unable to manage feelings of anxiety, stress, and fear in order to reach the level of independence, confidence, and skill necessary for success during level II fieldwork. The majority of challenges targeted by the participants included behaviors that can be characterized as a sub-optimal level of emotional competence rooted in the ability to identify, understand,

express, manage, and utilize their feelings and those of others. Participants expressed having the most challenging time working with students whom they suspected had a mental health diagnosis. Anxiety and emotional challenges are highly prevalent in students, impacting performance on level II fieldwork. This finding is widely supported in the literature (Sharby & Roush, 2009; Bonsaksen, 2015; Tal-Saban & Weintraub, 2018; Tan et al. 2004). The ability to manage stress and emotions is a good indicator of success per participants of this study.

Reluctance or failure to disclose emotional and mental health challenges may impact a student's ability to receive the support needed to be successful. This finding was also identified by Nicola-Richmond et al. (2017). Nicola-Richmond (2017) found that non-disclosure of health issues and communication difficulties were predictive of failure on level II fieldwork.

Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018) and Hampton et al. (2019) asserted that allied healthcare students belonging to generation Z struggle with communication skills, interpersonal skills due to the abundant use of electronic devices. The impact of age was questioned, however, discounted in this study. Two of the three participants expressed experience contrary to this stating that, traditionally, occupational therapy students have strong communication skills and did not relate age to communication deficits of students who struggle.

Communication barriers and the inability to understand, express, and manage feelings were identified as barriers to success. It was identified that students who were unsuccessful had difficulty with being receptive to and responding to feedback. All three participants discussed a student's openness to feedback as being indicative of success and demonstrating defensiveness as a limiting factor. This issue was supported by Nicola-Richmond et al. (2017) who discovered that difficulty with responding positivity to feedback as a factor predicative to level II fieldwork

failure. Karp (2020) also identified the challenge of positively accepting feedback an indicator singling difficulty with the transition from classroom to clinic.

Multiple participants discussed the importance of empathy both in interpersonal interactions but also communication. The importance of empathy in occupational therapy students during level II fieldwork is well documented in the literature supporting this finding. Karp (2020) found that academic and clinical educators identified empathy as a predictor of clinical readiness and success. Campbell & Corpus (2015) found that 85% fieldwork educators studied noted the importance of students having empathy as valuable and necessary in practice.

Finding 3: Emotional Competence Should Be Cultivated

Each of the three participants shared different strategies applicable to academic programs, fieldwork educators and students that they felt could potentially help to support all stakeholders who have a vested interest in level II fieldwork success. Each of these recommendations hold merit and support the need for development and application of emotional competence. Mikolajczak's (2009) Tripartite Model of Emotional Intelligence provides both a theory of emotional competence to better understand the phenomenon of emotional competence and a scaffolding to build effective interventions when moving forward and applying the insight gleaned from this study. The Tripartite Model is comprised of three levels: knowledge, ability, and trait. First, knowledge refers to the individual being aware of or having knowledge of emotional regulation techniques and identification of when use is needed, however, this level does not include application of the techniques. Second is ability, which refers to an individual's ability to apply emotional regulation techniques. Lastly, third, is trait, which refers to the manner in which an individual normally or typically responds to a situation requiring emotional regulation (Dugué et al., 2015; Laborde et al., 2016; Mikolajczak, 2009). It is proposed and

supported in the literature that the Tripartite Model of Emotional Intelligence is a valid framework when seeking to understand the development of emotional competence within the context of the education of health professional students (Dugué et al., 2021). The Tripartite Model provides structure to both develop and identify where a deficit exits so that the area can be cultivated. This information can be applied to guide academic programs, students, and fieldwork educators in preparing for the level II experience.

Participant 1 articulated the need for emotional competence development prior to level II fieldwork by the University or academic program and called for the implementation of professional counseling for students prior to level II fieldwork as counseling students do. Because the field of occupational therapy addresses the behavioral, psychological and social factors that impact performance in occupation, this is a valid point. This information is helpful for the structure and design of curriculums in preparation for level II fieldwork. This also supports the inclusion of evidence-based emotional competence assessment and emotional competence development programs.

Implications

According to the data, the findings of this study hold implications for stakeholders of the occupational therapy process including students, academic programs, FWE and recipients of occupational therapy services. Emotional competence is vital to successful completion of level II fieldwork and authentic occupational therapy practice. Based on the Tripartite Model of Emotional Intelligence of Mikolajczak (2009), emotional competence can be cultivated to best support students, academic programs, FWEs, and most importantly, recipients of occupational therapy services (Kotsou, Nelis, Gregoire, and Mikolajczak, 2011). The following

recommendations, based on the findings of this study, aim to benefit all stakeholders in the occupational therapy practice.

Implications for Students

Being able to predict challenges in specific areas of emotional competence can save occupational therapy students the financial burden of working through a five- or six-year curriculum only to be unable to achieve success once on level II fieldwork. Having insight into three very different treatment contexts also provides targeted information about performance skills necessary to hon to promote success.

Students have the opportunity to gain insight into the attributes, skills, and behaviors of students who have been successful from the perspective of the three FWEs who participated in this study. Because of the consensus among the participants representing different treatment contexts when identifying the importance of level II students being self-motived, driven, having self-initiation, and the skill of self-reflection, effective communication skills, and balanced emotional and mental health, students have an excellent source of information to help them take responsibility to prepare themselves for level II fieldwork. Having the opinions of seasoned FWEs who confirm each other's viewpoints is essentially providing future level II students with a checklist of the skills to focus on in order to best prepare for level II.

Implications for Academic Programs

The information gained from the perspectives of FWEs provide academic programs with key information regarding the preparation of students for level II fieldwork by identifying specific skills that are essential to success as well as some of the pitfalls that customarily result in failure of level II fieldwork. Because there is data supporting the ability to cultivate emotional competence with specific, evidence-based interventions, academic programs can provide training

tailored facilitate high levels of emotional competence to best support students during fieldwork and clinical practice.

The interpersonal skills of effective communication, as well as the intrapersonal skills of self-motivation and self-reflection can be facilitated with all students prior to level II fieldwork. These skills can be screened for and focused on throughout the academic curriculum to give students the best opportunities for development and ultimately success. These skills can also help serve as indicators to help students identify if a future career in occupational therapy is the best option for them considering how they respond to the development of these traits. By maximizing the development of emotional competence in occupational therapy students, programs may also be able to improve retention and pass rates factors that contribute to academic program reputation and sustainability.

The recommendation of implementing stronger self-reflection and mental health evaluation and treatment for students, similar to the preparation of counseling students, provides academic programs with ideas to further strengthen students' emotional and mental health not only to promote their well-being but also better equip them to support their future clients. The field of occupational therapy addresses the behavioral, psychological and social factors that impact performance in occupation (ACOTE, 2018). Because this is an area of focus of occupational therapy practice, occupational therapists need to be well-positioned to address deficits in the areas of behavioral, psychological, and social well-being as they relate to the unique scope of practice of the profession.

Implications for Fieldwork Educators

The results of this study may hold benefit for FWEs. The participants provided multiple best practices and strategies that they have found beneficial when mentoring students. All three

participants discussed the importance of promoting self-reflection and regular, periodic check-ins to facilitate student self-awareness, ownership of the experience, and opportunities for growth. In addition, the participants spoke to the importance of scaffolding learning and progressing student's experiences from basic to complex to help develop both clinical reasoning and emotional competence needed to work with complex patients.

Implications for Recipients of Occupational Therapy

The results of this study hold great promise for the recipients of occupational therapy services provided by future clinicians. Students who are prepared for level II fieldwork and have had the opportunity to cultivate emotional competence will be better suited to support their clients and help them achieve their goals. Developing the intra and interpersonal skills of fieldwork students will enhance their ability to develop authentic relationships with their clients and support their ability to implement therapeutic use of self.

Recommendations for Action

It has been established that emotional competence can be developed through evidence-based, prescribed interventions (Gribble, et al., 2007, 2008; Hurley et al., 2008; Kotsou et al., 2011; Gregoire et al., 2008). When exploring the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the FWE, the FWE participants identified specific traits and skills that successful students possess as well as traits and skills that unsuccessful students lack.

Essential dimensions of emotional competence are the positive attributes of self-directed learning, self-motivation, drive, and self-initiation. These concepts surfaced multiple times when identifying traits of students who are successful during level II fieldwork. When reflecting on the key components of emotional competence, self-motivation is a trait related to Dugué et al. (2021)

dimensions of trait emotional intelligence, best aligning with intrapersonal skills. Many of these skills, such as intrapersonal skills including self-esteem, confidence; interpersonal skills including empathy, flexibility, and communication; stress management, such as mindfulness and self-regulating, and mood components such as positive, receptive attitude have surfaced as themes throughout this study.

In addition, the participants identified specific strategies to help cultivate student's emotional competence and success that can be implemented at the different stages of the student's journey to become an occupational therapist. The stages can be identified as preparatory, or during academic preparation; and ongoing, or during the Level II fieldwork experience.

Preparatory Stage

Strategies to promote student well-being and success begin with the preparation developed by the academic program. Components that can be implemented include formal counseling for students to assist them in developing the introspective skills and healthy coping mechanism when working with clients during level II fieldwork and future practice. The development of strong communication skills needs to take precedence throughout the academic preparation process to ensure effective skills during level II fieldwork. The results of this study support the need for continued opportunities to address various types of communication and the targeting context-specific situations to help students best prepare for this essential skill. Teaching students that communication needs to be transparent, authentic, and professional is warranted to best prepare them for level II fieldwork and occupational therapy practice.

Opportunities for direct observation and interaction with clients need to be a part of the preparation for level II practice to assist students in maximizing comfort-level and confidence

while reducing fear and delays in the experience caused by needing time to become comfortable. Kotsou, Nelis, Gregoire, and Mikolajczak (2011) found that the implementation of a pre-determined intervention program targeting individual's ability to improve their self-awareness and response to emotional triggers had a positive impact on the psychological and physiological status of adults. Targeted, evidence-based programs to assess and develop emotional competence in students need to introduced early in the curriculum to provide the necessary structure and time to cultivate the skills necessary to successful.

Ongoing During Level II Fieldwork

The FWE participants identified strategies to continue to develop emotional competence throughout the level II fieldwork experience. Multiple participants shared the value of requiring formalized self-assessment, self-reflection, and communication regarding student status on a regular basis. Another strategy that aligns with best practice for level II fieldwork is the scaffolding of learning from simple to complex. This pedagogy should be applied to all performance components and of level II fieldwork as well as levels of patient complexity-medically, socially, and emotionally.

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Recommendations for Further Study

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The qualitative paradigm using a phenomenological approach was utilized to capture the essence of the fieldwork educators who participated in this study to gain an understanding of the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success. While there is a multitude of approached that can be applied to investigate this topic, the qualitative paradigm provided a mechanism to gain a colorful description of the experiences of the FWE participants. Future researchers may choose to adopt a different methodology, within the qualitative paradigm, such as a case study method, to capture the experience of a FWE and student. The

implementation of a mix methodology, blending both qualitative and quantitative approaches, would provide researchers the opportunity to explore different facets of emotional competence in relation to level II fieldwork success.

It is recommended that researchers interested in exploring the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success implement strategies to minimize the limitations inherit in this study due to design and instrument. The data gathering method took place virtually, utilizing the Zoom platform. While this method holds multiple benefits of enhancing efficiency and reducing geographical location barriers, it also is an artificial environment that poses additional challenges in gaining the true and full essence of the participant and their experience. Subtle changes in demeanor, body language, and personal connection can be more easily lost. Conducting the interviews in person provides the researcher with the opportunity to gain a more robust understanding of the context in which the informant lives. The interview process took place at one point in time. Streubert Speizale and Carpenter (2003) recommend spending prolonged time with participants to increase credibility. Initially, having an hour to meet with participants seemed to be a prolonged time. In retrospect, having the ability to interact with the participants over a period of time and for longer durations, as two of the interviews took less than 40 minutes, would allow the benefit of self-reflection to potentially gather additional data or confirm the meaning of the data.

Purposeful sampling was utilized by recruiting participants who are members of the CoP of Academic Fieldwork Coordinators and FWEs. While utilizing this group of clinicians provided a pool of experienced and dedicated FWEs, recruiting from a public forum may have yielded different results. The CoP is comprised of occupational therapists who are highly invested in fieldwork education, evidenced by participation in this group beyond the typical

requirements of professional practice. Exploring the experiences of therapists who are not part of this group may provide different results and may be reflective of the larger community of practitioners.

While having three participants is considered an acceptable number of participants for a qualitative, phenomenological study according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), having more participants may have yield additional data that could have been used to expand the understanding of this phenomenon. Three practice settings or treatment contexts were represented in this study. Having three different practice setting represented provided insight of the experience of FWEs working in these settings, however, expanding the number settings beyond those represented may yield results that reflect the vastness of treatment contexts in which occupational therapy is found.

It is recommended that future researchers implement data analysis software to complete the coding process instead of relying on manual coding along. While manual coding provided an immersive experience for the researcher, the addition of data analysis software compliant with the qualitative paradigm would provide an additional layer of validity in the interpretation of the results. Employment of data analysis software may also detect relationships in the data that went unnoticed by the researcher, resulting in a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

Conclusion

The therapeutic relationship between therapist and client being essential to the occupational therapy process has been illustrated by many authors (Andonian, 2013, 2017; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna, 2007; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2019). Interpersonal skills are so important to the occupational therapy process that a key aspect of fieldwork is the ability to develop an understanding of client needs (ACOTE,

2018). Occupational therapists need emotional competence to develop an authentic relationship that promotes trust and communication of personal needs by clients in order to lay the foundation for the therapeutic partnership between client and clinician (Andonian, 2013, 2017).

Emotional competence is defined as the ability to recognize and understand one's emotional information and that of another- it encompasses the ability to regulate one's behavior and respond to another's behavior to manage conflict and promote positive interactions (Kotsou, et al., 2011; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mikolajczak, 2009; Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Occupational Therapy literature echoes the definition of emotional competence and stresses the ability to manage the emotions of the self and others to facilitate positive interactions and development of effective relationships (Andonian, 2013, 2017; McKenna & Mellson, 2013). Occupational therapy students must have strong emotional competence to successfully complete all requirement of the educational curriculum, including level II fieldwork (Yu et al., 2019). The importance of emotional competence has been investigated by other health related professions to promote the development of necessary skills to foster well-being and success of their students. While occupational therapy shares some similarities with the pursuit of knowledge in this area, the profession lacks research that explores the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success, specifically from the perspective of the FWE.

Occupational therapy students are failing level II fieldwork due to challenges that align with deficits in emotional competence. Academic programs have the responsibility to best prepare students for all aspects of occupational therapy practice and being that emotional competence is a cornerstone of what occupational therapy does and how it is done supports the need to address this gap in the literature. This research sought to address this gap as successful completion of level II fieldwork is important to multiple stakeholders including students,

academic programs, fieldwork educators serving as mentors, and recipients of occupational therapy services.

Occupational therapy programs rely on FWEs to mentor students to meet the accreditation requirements for program completion. The lack of preparedness and insufficient interpersonal skills have a negative impact on FWEs willingness to serve as clinical educators (Evenson, 2015; Hanson, 2011) potentially creating a void of a much-needed resource. This study provides recommendations to better prepare students and lessen the burden on FWEs. Clients or recipients of occupational therapy services are impacted by the lack of emotional competence of level II students and need for academic programs to do better in preparing their students for clinical practice. The development of emotional competence is a vital component of the ability to establish the client-clinician relationship (Andonian, 2013, 2017). All occupational therapy students deserve to have access to instruction and experiences that best prepare them for level II fieldwork. Students need to formally develop both clinical and interpersonal skills to meet the specific role that occupational therapy fills.

Multiple authors have established that the development of emotional competence is essential to effective occupational therapy practice (Andonian, 2013; 2017; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2019). Exploring the importance of emotional competence of occupational therapy students prior to engagement in level II fieldwork may contribute to the development of strong interpersonal skills that are vital to success on level II fieldwork and clinical practice. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship of emotional competence and level II fieldwork success from the perspective of the fieldwork educator.

This qualitative phenomenological research study aimed to answer the research question: How do fieldwork educators describe the relationship between emotional competence and successful level II fieldwork completion? Answering this question by posing it to fieldwork educators is highly relevant to the field of occupational therapy education and practice, as emotional competence is an essential facet of the foundation and therapeutic skills inherent in the profession (Andonian, 2013; 2017; Yu et al., 2019). The profession of occupational therapy is built upon the ability of a therapist to authentically employ therapeutic use of self to establish and maintain relationships with clients and facilitate clients' goal achievement (Andonian, 2013; 2017; Brown et al., 2016; McKenna & Mellson, 2013; Raphael-Greenfield et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2019). Data gained through interviews with fieldwork educators revealed insight into the importance of emotional competence and identified other factors contributing to student success or lack thereof.

The findings of this study hold valuable information for all stakeholders of occupational therapy including academic programs, students, fieldwork educators, and clients. The results of this study confirmed the relevance of emotional competence to occupational therapy and the ability to utilize therapeutic use of self to best support clients of occupational therapy services. This study confirmed that student anxiety and mental health challenges are impacting student performance on level II fieldwork and need to be addressed for the benefit all stakeholders. Consistency was seen in the traits, skills, and characteristics of both successful and unsuccessful students compared to the five components of emotional intelligence including self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and motivation, originally identified by Goldman. Based on the Tripartite Model of Emotional Competence, there is potential to improve the skills deemed essential to success by the fieldwork educators in the study and an evidence-based plan

for how to accomplish this task. Students would benefit from efforts to maximize emotional competence throughout their academic and clinical journey to become an occupational therapist, from admission to completion of level II fieldwork.

It is recommended that further research explore the outcomes of implementing the strategies discussed in the findings of this study to determine the effect on student success. It is also recommended that students have the opportunity to engage in a formalized emotional competency development program that is integrated throughout occupational therapy curricula. Lastly, it is recommended that occupational therapy students have routine engagement in mental health assessment and treatment to help them best prepare to help others through their role of occupational therapists.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

Institutional Review Board Julie Longua Peterson, Chair
Biddeford Campus 11 Hills Beach Road
Biddeford, ME 04005
(207) 602-2244 T
(207) 602-5905 F
Portland Campus 716 Stevens Avenue
Portland, ME 04103

DATE OF LETTER:	July 21, 2022
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Kathleen Hughes-Butcher
FACULTY ADVISOR:	Anellio Trotta, EdD
PROJECT NUMBER:	0622-08
RECORD NUMBER:	0622-08-01
PROJECT TITLE:	The Perspective of Fieldwork Educators: The Relationship Between Emotional Competence and Occupational Therapy Level II Fieldwork Success
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Exempt Project
SUBMISSION DATE:	6/29/2022
ACTION:	Determination of Exempt Status
DECISION DATE:	7/21/2022
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Exemption Category # 2(ii)

The UNE Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the materials   submitted in connection with the above referenced project and has determined that the proposed work is exempt from IRB review and oversight as defined by 45 CFR 46.104.

Additional IRB review is not required for this project as submitted. However, if any changes to the design of the study are contemplated (e.g., revision to the protocol, data collection instruments, interview/survey questions, recruitment materials, participant information sheet, and/or other IRB-reviewed documents), the   Principal Investigator must submit an amendment to the IRB to ensure the requested change(s) will not alter the exempt status of the project.

Please feel free to contact me at (207) 602-2244 or irb@une.edu with any questions.

Best Regards,

Bob Kennedy, MS
Director, Research Integrity

APPENDIX B

Call to Participate Email and Flyer for Distribution to Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC)

Community of Practice (CoP) Listserv

The following email containing the Call to Participate Flyer will be sent to fieldwork educators belonging a Community of Practice (CoP) of Academic Fieldwork Coordinators and Fieldwork Educators practicing in the United States. The moderators of the CoP will forward this email containing the flyer to the members of the group. The Participant Information Sheet will be attached to this email (see Appendix B).

Dear Fieldwork Educator,

I hope this email finds you well. I am an Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC) for a fully-accredited entry level master's program in Northeastern Pennsylvania. I am currently a doctoral candidate pursing a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at the University of New England. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study as part of my dissertation.

Being an AFWC, student success, throughout the fieldwork process, is very meaningful to me. I am interested in exploring the relationship between emotional competence and successful completion of level II fieldwork from the perspective of the fieldwork educator. To study this phenomenon, I would like to invite fieldwork educators to share their perspectives during a semi-structured interview. To participate in this study, you must be an occupational therapist currently practicing in the United States who has mentored at least one level II student. Your participation is totally voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time throughout the process.

The interview will be completed via virtually and will be audio recorded and transcribed via the Zoom platform. The principal investigator will confirm transcript accuracy using the

audio recording. All interviews will be deidentified to ensure anonymity. Upon completion of the transcription process, the transcript will be forwarded to you via email for your review. You will be asked to confirmation accuracy of the transcript and notify the principal investigator of such via email. All transcripts and recordings will be reviewed by me and may be reviewed by my research team consisting of my lead advisor, second advisor, and affiliate member.

The audio recordings will be deleted following your validation of accuracy. The transcripts and all other data obtained throughout this study will be maintained for a period of three years per University of New England Institutional Review Board (IRB) Policy. This data will be stored electronically on a password protected device owned by the researcher then delated following the approved holding time. Upon completion of the retention period, all data will be destroyed fully and confidentially in compliance with IRB Policy.

Participation in all research studies poses potential risks and benefits. The potential risks of participation in this study is that an FWE may reflect upon an unpleasant supervisory experience that may result in emotional discomfort. There may be no benefits gained through participation however you may experience a feeling of satisfaction from contributing to the available research regarding emotional competence and level II fieldwork. Participants will be provided with access to review the completed dissertation following completion.

To express your willingness to participate in this study, please email the principal investigator, Kathleen Hughes-Butcher at khughesbutcher@une.edu. Please include 3 options of days and times to complete the interview at your earliest convenience. The principal investigator will respond back to you via email with information regarding the scheduled interview time and the Zoom link. Please note, use of the camera and name function in the Zoom platform for completion of the interview is optional. You will be provided with the necessary meeting

information such as Zoom link, meeting ID and passcode. The interview is expected to take no longer than one hour to complete. You may revoke your participation at any time throughout the process.

Thank you for your consideration. Please review the attached Participant Information Sheet for details regarding this study. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at khughesbutcher@une.edu

Call for Participants

Fieldwork Educators Needed!!!!

Help us learn more about emotional competence and level II fieldwork success by sharing your experience!
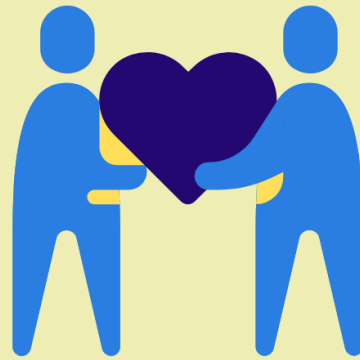
Please volunteer to participate in an hour-long interview via zoom!

How you can help

About The Study...

This research is part of a doctoral dissertation in Educational Leadership through the University of New England (UNE). This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of UNE. Participant's identity and information will be protected.

Questions can be directed to the principal investigator at khughesbutcher@une.edu.

1 Make sure you meet the inclusion criteria...are you an OT currently practicing in the US who has supervised at least one level II student? If yes, move on to step 2!

2 Review the attached "Participant Information Sheet" for all of the details about the study. If you are in agreement, move on to step 3!

3 Send an email to khughesbutcher@une.edu to express interest in participating in an hour-long zoom interview to share your experience.

4 In your email, please include 3 options of days and times before April 22, 2022 that would work for you to be interviewed by the principal investigator. Please be sure to note your time zone.

After receipt of your information, the principal investigator will respond to your email and provide the zoom information for the interview. Please note, you DO NOT need to have your camera on or display your name during the interview.

APPENDIX C

University of New England Participant Information Sheet Draft

Participant Information Sheet

Information Sheet Version Date:	3/12/22
IRB Project #:	TBD
Title of Project:	THE PERSPECTIVE OF FIELDWORK EDUCATORS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY LEVEL II FIELDWORK SUCCESS
Principal Investigator (PI):	Kathleen Hughes-Butcher
PI Contact Information:	*Email: khughesbutcher@une.edu Phone: (570) 406-0200*

INTRODUCTION

- This is a project being conducted for research purposes.
- The intent of the Participant Information Sheet is to provide you with pertinent details about this research project.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions about this research project, now, during or after the project is complete.
- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- The use of the word 'we' in the Information Sheet refers to the Principal Investigator and/or other research staff.
- If you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw from this research project at any time without penalty.
- If you opt to withdraw from the study, your data will be permanently deleted and omitted from the study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT?

The purpose of this research project is to explore the relationship between emotional competence and occupational therapy level II fieldwork success. Exploring this topic is important for optimal student preparation, success on level II fieldwork, and skill development that is needed for future clinical practice. The results of this study will also inform academic programs to help refine student preparation and may help fieldwork educators successfully mentor students.

The primary principal investigator is an Academic Fieldwork Coordinator (AFWC) for a fully-accredited entry level master's program in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The principal investigator is currently in the dissertation phase of earning a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at the University of New England. Being an AFWC, student success, throughout the fieldwork process, is very meaningful to the principal investigator. The principal investigator is interested in exploring the relationship between emotional competence and successful completion of level II fieldwork from the perspective of the fieldwork educator. To study this phenomenon, the principal investigator would like to invite fieldwork educators to share their perspectives during a semi-structured interview.

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT?

You are being asked to participate in this research project because you are an occupational therapist practicing in the United States that has served as a mentor to level II fieldwork students. Your perspective of the relationship between emotional competence and student success during level II fieldwork is valuable as there is a gap in the current research regarding this specific topic from the FWE perspective.

To participate, you must be an occupational therapist practicing in the United States who has mentored at least one level II student during your clinical career.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT?

To express your willingness to participate in this study, please email the principal investigator, Kathleen Hughes-Butcher at khughesbutcher@une.edu. Please include in your email at least three days and times as options for scheduling the interview. The principal investigator will respond back to you via email with information regarding scheduling a time to meet to complete the interview process at your earliest convenience. You will be provided with the necessary meeting information such as Zoom link, meeting ID and passcode and all pertinent study

information. The interview is expected to take no longer than one hour to complete. The use of

the camera option in the Zoom platform during the interview is optional. You may keep your

camera and name function off during the interview.

The interview will be conducted with the principal investigator and completed via virtual

methods using the Zoom. Please consider completing the interview from a private location and

using headphones to enhance your privacy. The interview will be recorded and transcribed

through the Zoom platform. All interviews will be deidentified to ensure anonymity. Upon

completion of the transcription process, the transcript will be forwarded to you via email for your

review. You will be asked to confirm the transcript for accuracy and inform the principal

investigator of such via email. The audio recordings will be deleted following confirmation of

the transcript. The transcripts will be maintained will be reviewed by me and may be reviewed

by my research team consisting of my lead advisor, second advisor, and affiliate member

All remaining data obtained throughout this study will be maintained for a period of three years

per University of New England Institutional Review Board (IRB) Policy. This data will be stored

electronically on a password protected device then delated following the approved holding time.

Upon completion of the retention period, all recordings and documents will be destroyed fully

and confidentially in compliance with IRB Policy.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS INVOLVED FROM BEING IN THIS PROJECT?

Participation in all research studies poses potential risks and benefits although participation is

this study are minimal. The potential risks of participation in this study is that an FWE may

reflect upon an unpleasant supervisory experience that may result in emotional discomfort. You

have the right to skip or not answer any question, for any reason. There is the risk of a breach of

confidentiality should the password protected device of the principal investigator be compromised however all safeguards will be taken to minimize this risk.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS FROM BEING IN THIS PROJECT?

There are no likely benefits to you by being in this research project; however, the information we collect may help us understand the relationship between emotional competence and level II fieldwork success more clearly. You may experience a feeling of satisfaction from contributing to the available research regarding emotional competence and level II fieldwork. Participants will be provided with access to review the completed dissertation following completion.

WILL YOU BE COMPENSATED FOR BEING IN THIS PROJECT?

You will not be compensated for being in this research project.

WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY?

We will do our best to keep your personal information private and confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Additionally, your information in this research project could be reviewed by representatives of the University such as the Office of Research Integrity and/or the Institutional Review Board.

The results of this research project may be shown at meetings or published in journals to inform other professionals. If any papers or talks are given about this research, your name will not be used. We may use data from this research project that has been permanently stripped of personal identifiers in future research without obtaining your consent.

The following additional measures will be taken to protect your privacy and confidentiality. To maintain your confidentiality:

- Use of a participant assigned pseudonym to reduce the likelihood of discovered identity

- Use of a numeric coding system to organize and identify the transcripts; the decoding log will be kept in a locked door of the principal investigator 's locked office.

- Transcripts will be maintained on a password protected device owned by the researcher until completion of the study then permanently destroyed

- Any participant personally identifiable information (e.g., name, e-mail, physical address, etc.) obtained for recruitment purposes at the earliest opportunity during the project (e.g., after all transcripts have been verified for accuracy).

To maintain your privacy:

- The principal investigator will be conducting the interview in a private setting and utilize headphones to ensure others cannot hear your conversation.

- Participants have the option to keep their camera and name function off throughout the interview.

- Participants are encouraged to complete the interview in a private location and use headphones to maximize privacy.

- Participants have full control over what information is disclosed to the principal investigator and providing consent for disclosure of information.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research project. If you have questions about this project, complaints or concerns, you should contact the Principal Investigator listed on the first page of this document.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT?

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Office of Research Integrity at (207) 602-2244 or via e-mail at irb@une.edu.

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

Basic Interview Information:

Interview #: _____

Date: _____   Time: _____   Duration: _____

Title of Interview Recording: _____

Verified permission to record the interview via the Zoom platform. _____

Introduction: As you know, the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between emotional competence and successful level II fieldwork completion from your perspective as a FWEs. I am interested in learning about what your thoughts are about emotional competence. I can offer the following definition of emotional competence: Emotional competence is the "capacity to identify, understand, express, manage, and use one's own feeling and those of others" Mikolajczak, (2009). I am interested in hearing about your thoughts. First, I'd like to know a little more about you.

1. **Opening Questions:**

    a. What can you tell me about yourself?
        i. How long have you been a practicing OT?
        ii. What geographical areas have you practiced in?
        iii. What settings have you practiced in?
        iv. What is your educational background?
        v. Tell me a little about your level II fieldwork experiences.

2. **Content Questions:**
    a. What can you tell me about emotional competence? What is your definition of emotional competence?
    b. What can you tell me about your experience been with supervising level II students?
    c. How many level II students have your mentored?

      d. What type of supervision model do you use?

      e. What can you tell me about students who have been successful? What attributes do successful possess?

      f. Have you had students who have struggled or been unsuccessful?

      g. What areas do you think students find the most challenging?

      h. What are your thoughts about emotional competence of students during level II fieldwork?

      i. What are your thoughts about emotional competence as it relates to OT practice?

      j. Do you have any ideas for helping students develop emotional competence during fieldwork?

3. **Examples of probing questions that will be utilized to facilitate elaboration of answers.**

      a. Can you please tell me more about…..

      b. Can you please give me more detail about…

      c. Is there any additional information that you would like to share with me about this topic?

Closing instructions: I would like to thank you for taking the time to talk to me to discuss this topic. I am grateful for your insight. I will review the recording of our meeting and the transcription. I will send a copy of the transcription of our interview to you via email for your review. Please respond to my email with any changes, questions, or comments. If I do not receive your verification of the transcript, your data will be excluded from the study. Once the study is complete and I defend my dissertation, I will forward a copy of the manuscript to you via email. Thank you again for sharing your experience.