FOSTERING FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS THROUGH A LEISURE-BASED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM FOR HOMELESS ADOLESCENTS
Tiffany Burton, Page Dickson, Sarah Nashtut, and Patrick Rocero

ABSTRACT
This study was conducted to evaluate the efficacy of a leisure-based occupational therapy financial management program for homeless adolescents residing at a family shelter in San Jose, CA. Using goal attainment scaling (GAS) as their outcome measure and coaching methods to support participants, student researchers utilized a client-centered approach and therapeutic use of self to facilitate participant growth and goal achievement. Results supported the use of this intervention with homeless adolescents to improve money management skills.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE
Money management is an important life skill for growth and development, especially for adolescents (Aviles & Helfrich, 2006). There is evidence that there is a positive correlation among financial education, money management skills, adolescents, and the low income population (Zhan, Anderson & Scott, 2006). Although this is known, little research has been conducted on homeless adolescents and financial management programs. Homeless teenagers often lack the necessary resources for money management education compared to their peers who are not homeless. This lack of resources could potentially impede their chances for normal life skills development. Leisure has a motivation component (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003). This motivation component can help influence adolescent achievement in a money management program. Occupational therapists are ideal candidates to implement a financial management program for homeless teens as they provide a holistic and collaborative approach which appeals to youth.

RESEARCH QUESTION
What is the effectiveness of a leisure-based occupational therapy financial management program on fostering financial management skills for homeless adolescents?

METHODS
A pre-test post-test quasi-experimental design with no control group was used to determine the effectiveness of a leisure-based occupational therapy group focused on fostering financial management skills in homeless adolescents residing at a family shelter in San Jose, CA. Six residents ranging in age from 12 to 16 (mean age 13.16 years) participated in the study. Each participant completed the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) at their first session. Intervention was provided twice a week for eight weeks. GAS was used as an outcome measure. A visual display method was used to compare initial and final GAS scores.

RESULTS
The Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) scores indicated that each participant scored with only an average of 40% correct for the additional money management questions. This score indicates that as a whole, this group scored low for mastery of arithmetic and money management skills. Data analysis was conducted on three participants because they attended at least 5 sessions. These three participants reported a mean average of 1 for initial GAS scores, 1.5 for interim GAS scores, and a mean of 4.7 for final GAS scores. GAS scores increased significantly by 3.3 points, from interim to final scores. Results from initial and final GAS scores revealed that the majority of participants were able to accomplish their goals by the end of the study.
DISCUSSION

The quantitative study conducted suggests that a leisure-based financial management program is effective in fostering budgeting and money management skills in homeless adolescents. The utilization of coaching, therapeutic use of self, and client-centered therapy by researchers enabled participants to apply learned skills to prioritize spending and saving. Creating goals using GAS allowed the participants to bring awareness to objects they wanted to purchase, resulting in a focus on saving their money for that particular item rather than periodically spending small amounts of money on less meaningful items. Current literature indicates that financial curriculums are successful in improving the financial literacy of adolescents which correlates with the findings of this study. Participants of the leisure-based financial management program showed a steady increase in self-proclaimed GAS scores, which confirms the success of instilling money management techniques in adolescents. Studies have shown that adolescents who are educated in money management demonstrate better choices in shopping and are more likely to compare prices and wait until items were on sale to purchase which was also evident in this study. After being informed on financial management skills and tips, the participants of this study compared prices of items on their own will. Participants also searched for sales, and wholesale deals on materials needed for the various leisure group activities. The results of this study correlate with the results of current studies in regards to an improvement in money management skills in adolescents from financial management education.

REFERENCES

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