

4-8-2015

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Terry K. Crowe

Suzanne Duval

Julie A. Gutierrez

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Crowe, Terry K.; Suzanne Duval; and Julie A. Gutierrez. "Occupational Performance Goals of Mothers of Adolescents with and Mothers of Adolescents without Disabilities." (2015). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ot/3>

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Occupational Performance Goals of Mothers of Adolescents with Disabilities and Mothers of Adolescents without Disabilities

Terry Crowe, Ph.D., OTR/L, Suzanne Duval, Ph.D., Julie Gutierrez, MOTS

University of New Mexico (UNM), School of Medicine, Occupational Therapy Graduate Program

Background

- Mothering is a fundamental occupation for women that involves juggling various roles and responsibilities (Dunbar & Roberts, 2006; Larson, 2000), which can influence a mother's occupational choices, goals, and well-being (Chasteen & Kissman, 2000; Crowe & Michael, 2011).
- The time demands associated with childcare typically decrease as children enter adolescence and become more independent, often granting mothers more opportunities to participate in occupations of their own choice (Crowe & Florez, 2006; Crowe & Michael, 2011; Phares, Fields, & Kamboukos, 2009).
- Raising an adolescent with a disability is associated with greater temporal maternal demands in direct childcare activities that may endure longer, and become increasingly more difficult as the child grows physically (Crowe & Michael, 2011; Crowe & Florez, 2006; Schneider et al., 2006)
- This increase in childcare demands can limit mothers' participation in occupations outside of caregiving, such as self-care, socialization, work, and education (Donovan, VanLeit, Crowe, & Keefe, 2005; Peters & Jackson, 2008; Todd & Jones, 2005; Bourke-Taylor, Howie, & Law, 2010), and may affect overall well-being.



Image 1: www.wordpress.com

Objectives

To describe the occupational performance goals of mothers of adolescents with disabilities and mothers of adolescents without disabilities. The research questions used to guide this study are:

- (1) What are the main themes of occupational performance goals of mothers of adolescents with disabilities in comparison to mothers of adolescents without disabilities?
- (2) Is there a difference in the occupational performance goals expressed by mothers of adolescents with disabilities in comparison to mothers of adolescents without disabilities?

Methods

Research Design: Qualitative

Participants:

- Forty mothers of adolescents (between 13 and 19 years of age)
- Twenty mothers of adolescents with a disability
 - Twenty mothers of adolescents without disabilities

	Disability Group	Typically Developing Group
Maternal Age*	43.8 years (6.3)	44.2 years (6.4)
Maternal Education*	15.6 years (1.1)	16.2 years (3.1)
Maternal Work (No. of women)		
Not working (0-5 hours/week)	7	5
Part-time (6-34 hours/week)	9	11
Full-time (35-50 hours/week)	4	4
Maternal Ethnicity (No. of women)		
Anglo/White	9	13
Hispanic/Mexican American	5	6
Native American/Indian	1	0
Asian American	0	1
Other	5	0
*Mean values (standard deviation)		

Measures:

An author developed demographic survey was used to determine the characteristics of the participants (see Table 1).

The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (Law et al., 2005) was used to identify and prioritize the mothers' occupational performance issues with everyday activities based on their ability to complete the tasks and their level of satisfaction. The issues that were identified were then used to generate occupational performance goals.

Procedures:

Mothers participated in individual semi-structured interviews guided by the COPM to identify occupational performance goals. The narrative information obtained was compared between the two groups.

Data was qualitatively analyzed through a constant comparative method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and examined using grounded theory with thematic coding (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). Responses were transcribed, and divided into units of data by sentence clusters.

After the initial study, 11 mothers were recruited to participate in two focus groups (one for mothers of adolescents with disabilities and one for mothers of adolescents without disabilities) to ascertain the validity of the themes developed from the interviews of the 40 original participants.

Results

A total of 293 data units were transcribed from the 40 COPM interviews, 167 data units for the mothers of adolescents with disabilities and 126 data units for the mothers of adolescents without disabilities.

Six themes that describe the occupational performance goals of mothers of adolescents were then developed from the data, five of which were shared between both groups with only minor differences in content and the number of goals identified. The last theme was identified only by the mothers of adolescents with disabilities group. Within each theme, subtopics were also identified. The six major themes were:

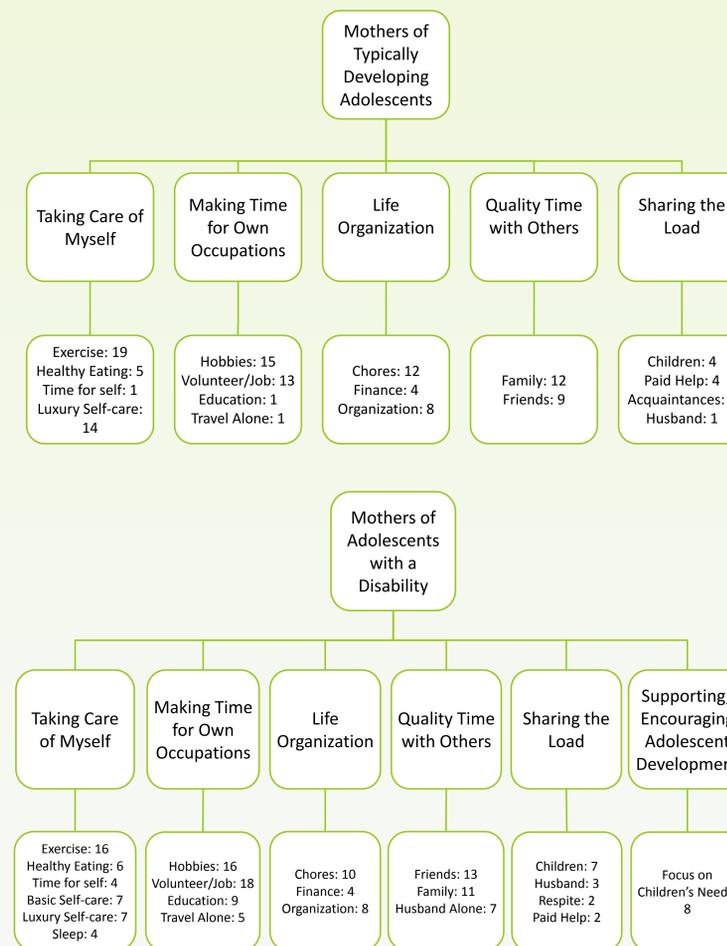


Image 2: www.shutterstock.com

Discussion

The major findings of the study indicate that mothers of adolescents with disabilities and mothers of adolescents without disabilities share many similar occupational performance goals. While many of the goals were shared among both groups, there were several notable differences. Those differences include:

- Mothers of adolescents with disabilities discussed more occupational goals overall, and more specifically in the theme/subthemes "Making Time for Own Occupations" and "Education". Examples of goals that mothers of adolescents with disabilities identified within this theme included:
 - Find more time to read books*
 - Volunteer for 10 hours a month*
 - Get my associates degree*
- Mothers of adolescents with disabilities discussed spending time alone with their husbands seven times, while there was no mention of this in the group of mothers of typically developing adolescents. Examples of goals that were centered around spending time with their husbands included:
 - Go on a date with husband*
 - Take a vacation and/or day trip with husband, without kids*
 - Go on a couple's vacation*
- The theme "Supporting/Encouraging Adolescent Development" was only evident in the responses from the mothers of adolescents with disabilities. Examples of goals in this theme included:
 - Spend individualized time with son with disabilities*
 - Find reliable post-high school day program*
 - Learn how to transfer daughter without pain*

Implications for Professional Practice

Professional practitioners can use this information to:

- Understand and better support all mothers in participating in activities that they need to do, want to do, and are expected to do
- Understand and better support mothers of adolescents with disabilities in participating in activities that they need to do, want to do, and are expected to do
- Assist mothers of adolescents with disabilities in supporting/encouraging their adolescents' development

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the mothers who generously donated their time to participate in the initial study and the focus groups. Their voices gave meaning and depth to this study. We also thank all the individuals who assisted in conducting and carrying out the study.