Occupational Therapist’s Roles in Addressing Bullying Against Students with Disabilities
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Introduction
Students with disabilities are four times more likely to be victims of school bullying than nondisabled students (1). School-based occupational therapists (OTs) provide a unique perspective in an interdisciplinary collaboration to address bullying against students with disabilities while encouraging full participation in their environment.

School Bullying:
· Any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths
· Involves an observed or perceived power imbalance
· Repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm (2)

Purpose
To understand occupational therapist’s roles in addressing bullying against students with disabilities.

Methods
Inclusion Criteria: School based OTs in the United States
Data Collection: Qualtrics survey software was used to administer a national electronic survey with 37 open and closed ended questions. The survey was distributed via; OT Facebook groups, American OT Association Forums, State OT organizations, school-based researchers, and faculty and fieldwork coordinators of OT schools.
Analysis: Descriptive statistics with open-ended questions were reviewed, and categories were developed that represented the responses.
Responses: 155 OTs across 39 states

Results
The results of this study indicate reasons for concern regarding OT’s current practices in addressing bullying against students with disabilities:
· The survey indicated that OTs believe they should be addressing bullying but do not feel that they have the necessary training or skills.
· School-based OTs may need to expand their current practices to include bullying prevention.
· Better training is needed to prepare OTs to address bullying against students with disabilities and enable them to decrease any barriers.

Implications for Occupational Therapy
· Bullying prevention needs to be included in the curriculum of entry-level OT programs and continuing education programs.
· OTs need to collaborate with students with disabilities and interdisciplinary team members to design inclusive school bullying prevention and intervention programs to better meet the rights of students with disabilities.
· Future research to be conducted on the role of occupational therapy assistants in addressing bullying.

Discussion

Figure 1: Type of School Setting
- Urban: 38.3%
- Suburban: 35.7%
- Rural: 23.5%

Figure 2: OT’s Perceptions of Bullying Against Students with Disabilities
- Are involved: 80%
- Should be involved: 70%
- Understand their role: 60%
- Experience: 50%
- Competence: 40%
- Want greater understanding: 30%

Figure 3: Barriers to OTs Addressing Bullying
- Funding: 10 responses
- Staff: 20 responses
- Time: 41 responses
- Payer system: 3 responses
- Evidence: 19 responses
- Detail for intervention: 27 responses
- Guidance: 39 responses
- Other/Unknown: 20 responses

Figure 4: Occurrences of Seen or Heard Bullying Against Students with Disabilities this School Year
- Yes: 72.2%
- No: 27.8%

Table 1: Number of Responses
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References