BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGY

ST. LAWRENCE COLLEGE

Class of 2024

Thesis abstracts from the graduating class of

Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology

St. Lawrence College, 2024

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Introduction

Hello Readers,

The Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology (BPSYC) graduating class of 2024 would like to welcome you to this year's Behavioural Psychology Poster Gala event! This booklet contains a culmination of four years' worth of hard work by the BPSYC program and the thesis abstract for each student.

We would like to thank you all for the support and guidance that we have received throughout the past four years. We are especially grateful for the support we received from our college supervisors, agency supervisors, the BSPYC faculty, and our peers as we navigated through virtual learning and the many other challenges within our studies.

The BPSYC program at St. Lawrence College covers many aspects of clinical skills and advanced knowledge in Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Addictions, Behavioural Counselling, Corrections, and more. Over the four years, the students completed a total of three field placements in a variety of settings and with many populations, allowing the knowledge learned in class to be applied in the field.

On behalf of the 2024 graduating class, thank you for taking the time to review our abstracts and for supporting us on this four-year journey! Please feel free to ask us questions about our theses or related topics – we are eager to discuss our knowledge and experiences with all of you.

Sincerely,

The BPSYC Graduating Class of 2024

Addictions
and
Mental Health

Implementing Therapeutic Art Techniques and Visual Cues in Relapse Prevention Programming for Adults Engaging in Substance Use in Transitional Supportive Housing

Trinity Alliston

Addiction is a diagnosis characterized by an inability to discontinue substance use, despite the negative consequences, that approximately 21% of Canadians will meet the criteria for in their lifetime (CAMH, 2024). Many intervention techniques have been used in an attempt to overcome the rise in chronic substance use, but little research has investigated a multiple-intervention approach to relapse prevention. The purpose of this present study was to investigate the intersection of therapeutic techniques for adults actively engaging in substance use (including relapse prevention techniques, therapeutic art techniques, and visual prompts). A pre-test, post-test control group design was implemented with five participants recruited using convenience sampling, based on the transitional supportive housing they resided in and case management suggestion. They were asked to create a poster, with guidance from the student researcher, and were given different cues based on their inclusion in the treatment or control group. It was hypothesized that the individuals in the treatment group would report a subsequent decrease in substance use as compared to the control group who created an individualized poster without relapse prevention cues, which would be reflected on the Drug Assessment Screening Test (DAST-10). Due to the small sample size, a Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare the difference in group means. Results indicate that individuals in both treatment and control groups demonstrated a decrease in DAST-10 scores, though there was no indication of a between group difference. Despite the considerably small sample size, the consistency of improvement in DAST-10 scores across participants, suggests the value of varied interventions in the area of relapse prevention, though further rigorous studies are needed.

Group Art-Based Programming to Increase Self-Esteem in Adults with Schizophrenia and Developmental Disabilities

Breanna Poot

Therapeutic art interventions are a developing and innovative approach to therapy, which can involve a variety of components such as painting and drawing. Art based programming has demonstrated a great number of therapeutic effects such as providing participants with a form of self-expression, a different approach to communication, and to improve sensory and fine motor skills across a variety of client populations (American Psychological Association,2023). While art therapy interventions have been implemented in clinical practice for a number of years, research specific to brief group art-based programming for adults with developmental disabilities, schizophrenia, and dual-diagnoses is sparse, especially for art therapy to increase self-esteem. Thus, the goal of this study was to implement a 6-week group art-based program to increase self-esteem for adults with schizophrenia and developmental disabilities. This study incorporated psychoeducation, group discussion, and therapeutic art techniques to increase self-esteem. Self-esteem was chosen to target for this intervention, as low self-esteem has been associated with overall poorer quality of life, increased risk of suicide, abnormal behaviours, as well as anxiety and depression (Jung et al.,2022). Whereas people with high self-esteem often experience superior health outcomes, happiness, and greater satisfaction in interpersonal relationships (Jung et al.,2022). While it was determined that this study was effective for increasing all participant's self-esteem as evaluated by pre-and-post test scores on the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg,1965) it is recommended that future researchers use a larger sample size to improve the statistical significance. Additionally, themes derived from participants homework assessments included practicing positive self-talk, engaging in independent skills, and using art as a coping technique were described as contributors to higher self-esteem. Although, it is suggested that future researcher's analyze themes using a standardized tool to increase validity, and generalizability.

Emotional Well-Being Enhancement Through Walking Groups in Transitional Supportive Housing: A Community Mental Health Perspective

Catey McNeill

It is estimated that 1.3 million Canadians have experienced homelessness or insecure housing, showing a yearly increase in the homeless population (Blair, 2023). Homelessness has been linked to increased mental health issues (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2021) and reduced well-being (Ruggeri et al., 2020). Well accepted psychotherapeutic and behavioural interventions have been adapted to suit the needs of individuals within the homeless population. However, there appears to be a lack of research focused on behavioural interventions for the transitional supportive housing population, and specifically, a walking group. The goal of the current study was to identify the effect a structured walking group would have on participants emotional well-being. This study utilized a pre-and-post-test control group design, including five participants living in transitional supportive housing for a six-week intervention. The intervention group consisted of a structured walking group and the control group consisted of a psycho-educational chat group. Emotional well-being was measured using a mix of questions from two established standardized scales. Due to the small sample size, the results of this study were identified using a non-parametric t-test, along with descriptive statistics used to identify the mean and standard deviation pre-and-post-test for both groups. The pre-and-post-test means, and standard deviations of this study suggest an overall increase in emotional well-being amongst participants. Although the results were not significant, the findings of this study may be used as a pilot study for future research to explore emotional well-being in adults in transitional supportive housing. It is recommended that additional research is needed to explore behavioural interventions to improve well-being for individuals in transitional supportive housing.

Evaluating a Life Skills Group Offered to Male Adults in an In-Patient Addictions Residential Facility

Madisen Valyear

Individuals with a substance use addiction can be associated with having a deficit in life skills (Hadley, 2020). Furthermore, the process of recovering from a substance use addiction requires embracing a new view of life skills (Green Hill Recovery, 2021). A life skill is a tool that can support and assist individuals to function independently in society (Law Insider, 2023). The purpose of the current study is to facilitate and evaluate a life skills group that aims to improve the life skills of males in an addiction residential facility. The life skills group consists of four classes covering coping with stress, triggers, self-esteem, and finances/budgeting. The participants' life skills were evaluated through a pre-test post-test research design, with the administration of a life skills self-assessment using a Likert scale. The research hypothesis proposed that after the facilitation of a life skills group for individuals with a substance use addiction, the participant's life skills would show improvements through the post-test. Results from the study supported the hypothesis of an improvement in the participant's life skills, which showed a 30% average increase. However, the results were concluded as not statistically significant due to a small sample size; therefore, a statistical analysis was not completed. Conclusions from the study support that facilitating and bringing awareness to life skills in addiction treatment facilities can have improvements on individuals with substance use addictions. Therefore, future recommendations are to conduct further research that incorporates life skills with more individuals in the addiction population.

Evaluating the Efficacy of Sound Baths on Anxiety and Spirituality on Individuals with Substance Use Disorder

Amanda Ogar

This thesis investigates the potential therapeutic effects of sound baths on anxiety levels and spiritual well-being in individuals diagnosed with substance use disorder (SUD). The study utilized qualitative feedback to evaluate the efficacy of sound baths as a complementary intervention for this population. Participants were exposed to sound bath sessions over a period of two weeks, during which their anxiety related symptoms were assessed using self-report measures. The qualitative feedback was collected regarding their symptoms of anxiety, substance use cravings and perceived spiritual experiences. Findings suggest a reduction in anxiety levels following sound bath sessions and participants reported feeling enhanced spiritual connectedness and a reduction in substance craving. Ultimately, the study results highlight the effectiveness of sound baths as a holistic intervention for addressing anxiety and spirituality in individuals struggling with SUD, paving the way for future research and clinical application.

Investigating the Effects of Progressive Muscle Relaxation on Sleep Quality in a Homeless Shelter Population

Jarett Leroux

In recent years, the homelessness epidemic in Canada has grown to affect nearly a quarter of a million Canadians every night (Statistics Canada, 2023). The literature surrounding homelessness was examined through the biopsychosocial model in order to clearly define barriers and challenges faced by the homeless community (Engel, 1977). While the literature reveals that the majority of the homeless population faces sleep difficulties, there is a lack of research surrounding interventions for improving sleep quality in the population, despite the data showing that over 90% of homeless participants in sleep studies would participate in a sleep-improving intervention, if one was accessible (Gonzalez & Tyminski., 2020). The goal of the current study was to identify whether a Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) program would improve subjective measures of sleep quality in a local homeless population. The results of the study were not statistically significant due to both a short intervention period and low participant count (n=2). However, both participants did report enjoying the program, and found the PMR technique to be a useful distress tolerance skill. Although the results of the study were not deemed significant, the findings may be used as a starting point for future research into interventions for improving sleep quality within the homeless population.

A Mindfulness Workshop to Decrease Compassion Fatigue in Female Support Workers

Melanie Marie Clement

Social support workers who engage directly with clients face heightened risks of developing compassion fatigue, burnout, and elevated stress levels. The nature of their work exposes them to complex situations and potential psychological trauma, adversely affecting their mental health and overall well-being. This heightened vulnerability underscores the need for targeted interventions to alleviate the negative consequences on their mental health, such as decreased well-being and job satisfaction. The employees at the Mea Centre provide peer-based support to help clients make informed pregnancy decisions, while also offering free resources like clothing, food, and educational classes to the community. The study aimed to address compassion fatigue and enhance mindfulness levels with participants from the Mea Pregnancy Centre. Using a pre- and post-test design, seven tailored workshop sessions were developed and then delivered over the course of three weeks. The intervention incorporated psychoeducation and various evidence-based mindfulness strategies, including mindful breathing, meditation, mindful eating, and mindful journaling. The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) was used to measure participants' mindfulness levels, and the Professional Quality of Life 5th Edition (PROQOL 5) was used to assess participants' levels of compassion satisfaction. The pre-intervention mean MAAS score of 57.3 established a baseline for participants' mindfulness engagement levels. Following the intervention, there was a slight increase in the mean MAAS score to 61.1, indicating a positive impact on participants' mindfulness levels. Mean scores were also calculated for each participant across the measured variables of the PROQOL 5. The pre-intervention mean PROQOL 5 score for compassion satisfaction was 40. Following the intervention, there was a negligible decrease in the mean PROQOL 5 score to 38, indicating a decline in participants' compassion satisfaction. Due to the limited sample size, no statistically significant differences could be calculated.

Evaluating the Level of Substance Use Through Family Education Using an Attachment Theory Lens

Rileigh O'Toole

Purpose: Individuals with addiction face increasing relapse rates, yet addiction treatment often neglects family involvement. Although attachment theory underscores the enduring impact of early experiences on adult behavior, incorporating family psychoeducation to promote secure attachment remains underexplored in addiction treatment. *Hypothesis:* It was hypothesized that enhancing family skills in promoting secure attachment would reduce substance use. *Method:* Employing a quasi-experimental, pre/post design, 11 participants (five clients aged 29-45 and six family members) were involved. Two self-reports were used; Comprehension and Confidence of Applying Skills Questionnaire (CCASQ) and Semi-Structured Level of Use Interview. Clients received Treatment as Usual (TAU) or TAU with Family Sessions (TAU+FS), while family sessions covered attachment styles, communication, trust, boundaries, and empathy over four weeks. *Results:* Results showed no significant difference in client scores between TAU+FS and TAU groups $t(3) = 1.80$, $p = .08$), but a significant difference in family member scores $t(5) = -9.18$, $p = .00$) on the CCASQ. Additionally, there was no significant difference among the experimental and control groups regarding the level of use as all participants started with a level 5 (use daily) and moved to a level 1 (no use) at a two-week follow-up post-treatment. While improvements were noted in family members' skills, no superior treatment approach emerged, suggesting the efficacy of both individual and family-focused interventions. Limitations include the study's duration and sample size, recommending future studies extend intervention periods and diversify samples for enhanced reliability and generalizability.

A Psychoeducational Workshop to Enhance Anxiety and Stress Management Skills for Adult Learners

Erica Algar

This thesis addresses the critical issue of stress management in low-income and rural communities, where stress is significantly more pronounced than other regions. Due to limited resources and a lack of education around mental health in smaller communities, stress and anxiety have potential to escalate into more significant challenges. One strategy for mitigating stress among adults is accessing mental health services. In this study, a community agency that prioritizes employment preparation and furthering education, is the setting for the developed stress management workshop. The primary objective was to create a resource for a community agency to effectively support clients reduce their stress through implementing coping strategies. The structured workshop, comprising three sessions, introduces definitions and sources of stress, educates on effective stress management strategies, and emphasizes providing practical tools applicable to daily life. Agency staff actively participated in a feedback process, and their input was incorporated to enhance the workshop content. The study revealed consistently positive shifts in Likert-scale responses across three development sessions. The completed workshop demonstrated increased effectiveness, indicated by both survey data and qualitative feedback, highlighting the potential efficacy of the intervention in enhancing stress management strategies for both staff and clients alike. This thesis responds to the urgent need for stress management resources in rural communities by offering a comprehensive workshop designed for practical application. Feedback from staff indicates the potential positive impact of the intervention for clients and staff. Future recommendations include implementing the workshop with clients to further assess its effectiveness in real-world settings.

Investigating the Efficacy and Implementation of Behavioural Interventions for Improving Patient Adherence to Rehabilitation Practices in Healthcare Settings

Kaia Boriotis

This thesis investigated the efficacy of three specific behavioural interventions in healthcare settings: goal-setting, motivational interviewing, and self-monitoring. They are recognized for improving patient behaviour; however, their comparative efficacy is less known. Thus, this thesis provides a systematic literature review of existing literature to reveal these interventions' practicality, patient-centeredness, applicability, and effectiveness. Insights were gained to fully comprehend the effects of the interventions and the patient's perspectives. The findings highlight self-monitoring's impact on motivation, goal-setting's noteworthy efficacy, and motivational interviewing's contribution to patient engagement. The study reveals a lack of longitudinal studies evaluating long-term adherence and significant gaps in comparative efficacy studies of behavioural approaches. The methodology involved analyzing 16 articles from PubMed, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, APA PsycINFO, EBSCO eBook Collection, and ProQuest, focusing on the efficacy of each intervention, patient adherence, and rehabilitation outcomes over the last 20 years. Inclusion criteria include peer-reviewed English-language studies on motivational interviewing, goal-setting, and self-monitoring interventions. Meanwhile, non-peer-reviewed studies and research on children are excluded. An empirical analysis table and PRISMA chart were used to simplify the findings. The study emphasizes how these approaches can significantly enhance patient satisfaction and treatment outcomes. This thesis emphasizes the necessity of behavioural approaches being integrated into routine healthcare practices and the need for customizable treatment options appropriate for a range of patient backgrounds. The findings recommend additional research concerning enhancing patient-centred care in rehabilitation and long-term adherence across cultural contexts.
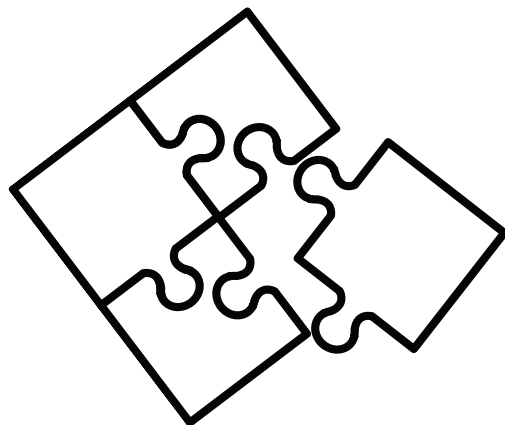
Autism Spectrum Disorder and Developmental Disabilities

Using Dialectical Behaviour Strategies and Art in a Group Based Workshop to Increase the Conceptualization of Emotion Regulation Skills Among Adults Diagnosed with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities

Caitlin Taylor LeBlanc

Emotion regulation is an important skill for adults diagnosed with an Intellectual or a Developmental Disability (ID/DD) to understand. This skill can foster independence, help them build or mend relationships, or even increase their ability to complete tasks (Boamah et al., 2023). Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the efficacy of using fabric art combined with dialectical behavioural strategies to increase the conceptualization of emotional regulation across adults diagnosed with ID or DD's. The participants' conceptualization of emotional regulation skills was measured across five subscales on the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-16). The five subscales included nonacceptance of emotional responses, difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour, impulse control challenges, limited access to emotion regulation strategies, and lack of emotional clarity (Bjureberg et al., 2016). High scores indicated more challenges within the respective subscale, whereas low scores indicated less challenges within the respective subscale. Therefore, it was hypothesized that both participants scores would decrease across all subscales once the five-week workshop was complete. Percentage of change for each participant was calculated across all subscales at the pre/post test. Using bar graphs, a visual analysis had been added to reveal both participants' pre/post assessment scores. Participant one decreased on three of the five sub scores, remained the same on one sub score, and increased on one of the sub scores. However, participant two decreased across all five subscales following the five-week workshop. One limitation to this research was only collecting the total time participants attended each session. Therefore, it was difficult to determine if it was the worksheets, the fabric art, or a combination of the two strategies that contributed to their scores on the post DERS-16 assessment. Additional research should be conducted to determine the efficacy of using fabric art combined with dialectical behavioural strategies to increase this populations conceptualization of emotional regulation skills.

Implementing Motivational Interviewing Training Sessions to Increase Perceptions of Compassion and Cultural Responsivity

Rhianna Lloyd

Canada is recognized for its diverse demographics; in fact, 92% of Canadians reported that cultural diversity is a core Canadian value (Statistics Canada, 2022). When considering the value of cultural diversity, it is staggering that recent research has found that approximately 82% of ABA professionals have not received training and education on how to provide compassionate and culturally responsive care (Beaulieu et al., 2019; O'Neill et al., 2023; Plattner & Anderson, 2023; Taylor et al., 2019). This absence of training and education has led the field of ABA to lack the interpersonal skills to serve diverse populations (Plattner & Anderson, 2023). With this, there is a significant need for research to discover ways to culturally adapt and respond to cultural diversity in the field of ABA (Jimenez-Gomez & Beaulieu, 2022). The purpose of this research study was to evaluate the impact a five-week motivational interviewing (MI) intervention would have on increasing the perceptions of compassion and cultural responsivity in applied behaviour analysis (ABA) professionals' and ABA recipient's caregiver's perceptions. This study implemented two pre and post self-report questionnaires to ABA professionals and ABA recipients. The results found that the diversity in ABA professionals is growing within the field and that both ABA professionals and recipients agree on the importance of compassion and cultural responsivity training. This study found that MI interventions can increase ABA professionals' confidence and knowledge in using MI skills. Lastly, after the MI intervention, 100% ABA professionals perceived MI to provide them with adequate strategies to engage with ABA recipients more compassionately. Overall, this study continued valuable research in the direction of addressing skill deficits within the field of ABA with the hopes that future ABA practices will hold compassion at the foundation of service delivery.

Key words: compassion - cultural diversity - cultural responsivity - motivational interviewing

Educational Perspectives on College Readiness Skills for Students with Developmental Disabilities

Chelsea Mann

The rising prevalence of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) attending postsecondary programs highlights the need for comprehensive support during the challenging transition to college (Berg et al.,2017). Limited literature exists on the transition process and the specific skills important and necessary to target success within these programs. This thesis had three aims: (1) to identify the college and independent life skills that learning specialists, teachers, and educational assistants (EAs) consider necessary and important for students with IDD transitioning into college programs; (2) to determine if there is correspondence or variation in participants' perspectives on the importance of these skills for college independence; and (3) to determine if the data collected from a survey can be used to identify important gaps and directions for increasing support for college readiness skills necessary for youth with IDD before enrolling in a supported college program. This thesis addresses this gap by investigating the perspectives of learning specialists, teachers, and educational assistants (EAs) on college and independent life skills for students with IDD through an online survey. Findings revealed varying importance and perceived challenges associated with safety, social, organizational, and navigational skills for college while emphasizing the need to prioritize skills and address unique challenges. The implications of this study extend to identifying support structures, targeting priority skills, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive college environment for students with IDD seeking greater independence.

Self-Monitoring to Improve Emotional Regulation in Student with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Kate Osborn

Youth diagnosed with both ASD and ADHD are more susceptible to emotional dysregulation in education settings. By learning strategies to combat strong emotions, youth can improve their ability to control their thought processes and express their emotions in a socially acceptable manner. It was hypothesized that implementing self-monitoring can improve emotional regulation among youth diagnosed with ASD and ADHD. This thesis utilized an ABAC research design to compare self-monitoring on its own versus with a regulation strategies cheat sheet to see which had a greater effect on emotional regulation. The participant was a 10-year-old female in a regular fifth-grade classroom. The intervention took place for the entirety of each school day over an eight-week period. Results determined that the combined use of the self-monitoring sheet and the regulation strategies cheat sheet was more effective than the stand-alone use of self-monitoring. Overall, the intervention provided evidence that the use of self-monitoring and a regulation strategies cheat sheet are effective in improving emotional regulation in youth diagnosed with ASD and ADHD.

Teaching Emotional Regulation Skills in a Childcare Setting and Assessing for Generalization to Home with a Young Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Mariam Yassin

Children first learn emotional self-regulation skills by modelling after their parents at home. Emotional regulation is an essential development skill that children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) struggle with. Emotional and communicative challenges that children may face are frustrations with transitions and the inability to name and manage their feelings. The inability to self-regulate emotions can lead to emotional outbursts and poor relationships between the child and their school, social, and home life. The Zones of Regulation (Zones) is a curriculum developed for students with neurodevelopmental disabilities, such attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ASD, to teach emotional learning and emotional regulation skills. This study aimed to discover if the Zones curriculum can be used in a daycare setting to teach a young child with ASD emotional regulation skills when they experienced emotional outbursts due to transition demands. The study also aimed to discover if the skills learned could be generalized to home. The intervention consisted of teaching and practicing identifying emotions with the use of prompting and reinforcement. Results demonstrated that a child with ASD could learn and use emotional regulation skills when they had the opportunity to use them by observing and recording how often they engaged in emotional outbursts and if they used the newly learned self-regulation techniques to regulate their emotions. The present paper also discovered that generalizing the new emotional regulation skills to the home was unsuccessful, particularly since the tools were not readily available to the participant. Future research recommendations include more focus on the generalization phase of the intervention by adjusting the self-report measures to include intensity and duration of emotional outbursts as the data collection methods.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Workshop to Increase Relationship Knowledge for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

Stephanie McIlroy

This student assisted people with Intellectual Disabilities at the H'art Centre. As a non-profit organization, this center offers participants a mixed-ability approach to self-expression. During the placement, this student assumed the role of a teacher assistant offering assistance with leading and inspiring students in the classroom as well as handling conflicts. The student was able to work with a variety of Intellectual Disabilities and acquire skills that will help them in their future careers thanks to this placement. Studies indicated that people with Intellectual Disabilities value and desire relationships (Charitou, Quayle & Sutherland 2020). A barrier to establishing and sustaining relationships for people with Intellectual Disabilities was a lack of privacy and relationship education (Charitou, Quayle & Sutherland 2020). This highlighted the necessity of giving this group the skills and information necessary to identify, communicate with, and thrive in relationships. This thesis taught adults with Intellectual Disabilities about relationships and components through four workshop sessions with the aim of the workshops being completed in groups at the center. The interactive workshop sessions employed a teaching methodology. To find out how effective the sessions were, pre and posttest measures were used to gather data from the participants. The results showed a beneficial impact. Out of the three individuals, two obtained scores that were more similar to the target score. The results were not measurable for the third participant as they were absent from taking the post-test. It was advised that professionals working in the field focusing on Intellectual Disabilities keep creating more approachable and instructive materials that can be utilized to teach this population the interpersonal skills necessary to establish and preserve relationships.

Mindfulness Menu: Grief Within Direct Support Workers Supporting Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

Mackenzie Mountain-Thomas

Direct support workers are often the foremost frontline staff who support those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Staff may experience loss and grief when those they care for decline in health or pass away. Often, staff are referred to counseling services offered by their agencies; however, grief support is a more than one-size-fits-all approach. This study aims to evaluate if a grief support program, which includes a mindfulness menu, would increase participants' knowledge and ability to cope after experiencing grief. It is essential for those experiencing grief to have access to different methods to address their needs, especially when working in a high-demand environment. The study occurred at an agency which provides services and support to individuals with intellectual disabilities. The study consisted of a pre-post-survey and the delivery of a self-use mindfulness menu. The pre-post-survey contained two components to evaluate satisfaction with grief support and vulnerability. Both pre-and post-survey were open for two weeks. Staff were requested to review the package over two weeks and at least once before completing the post-survey. The menu contained education about grief, informal coping strategies such as social support, end-of-life planning, mindfulness coping methods and formal resources that staff can utilize during grief. The agency's scores from the pre-survey on the satisfaction questionnaire identified that staff are unaware of or unsatisfied with the agency's grief resources. Overall, a decrease in participants' vulnerability scores occurred after viewing the mindfulness menu, meaning participants had an increased ability to cope with grief and overall satisfaction with resources. The survey results further indicate a need to evaluate grief resources and staff's experiences with grief in agencies that employ direct support workers.

Using Acceptance and Commitment Training-Based Psychoeducational Resources to Increase Staff Psychological Flexibility Within an Autism Services Agency

Ashley Roy-Davies

Now more than ever, organizations are seeking solutions to increase employee productivity and well-being in hopes of preventing and reducing employee burnout. The current study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of ACT-based psychoeducational resources to increase psychological flexibility among employees working in autism services. It was hypothesized that the ACT-based intervention would result in a positive increase in the participants' psychological flexibility. A convenience sample of 14 employees working within autism services participated in an ACT-based psychoeducational intervention where a pre-test and post-test design was used to compare staff psychological flexibility. The CompACT Questionnaire (Francis et al., 2016) was used to operationally define and measure participants' psychological flexibility both pre-and post-intervention. The 15-day intervention included staff engaging with a total of seven online self-paced ACT video modules and corresponding screensavers as visual reminders on their work devices. All participants reported increased psychological flexibility when comparing pre-and post-test scores from the CompACT questionnaire. Further expanding upon the research gap of scalable, versatile, and malleable solutions for agencies to implement effective interventions, the current thesis contributes to the awareness, feasibility, and flexibility of implementing a virtual ACT-based psychoeducational intervention within the workplace with the primary objective of increasing staff psychological flexibility. Future research should seek to incorporate more comprehensive data collection methods not limited by a single measure pre-test post-test design solely relying on self-reported data.

Keywords: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), psychoeducation, Organizational Behavior Management (OBM), autism services, CompACT questionnaire.

Using a Parent-Child Arts-Based Manual to Promote Emotional Regulation in Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

Samantha Fenwick

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) falls into a wide range of neurodevelopmental disorders with children showing deficits in communication and social interaction. There is limited research on the positive effects of art-based interactive models on addressing emotional regulation with this clinical population. Such art-based models are very limited and prevent parents/guardians and autism treatment centers to access such resources that could benefit children presenting with an ASD. This thesis proposes a parent-child, art-based manual that aims to promote emotional regulation within these children. The manual uses art-based activities utilizing parent-child interaction to promote emotional regulation and social-communication skills. Activities that involve artistic expression are leveraged as a natural form of communication and self-expression within the proposed model. The 6-week manual includes interactive, parent-child exercises that focus on identifying emotions within self and others and enhance relaxation through grounding and mindfulness. Each session contains multiple 60-minute hands-on activities that are paired with sensory stimulating sounds or music, while providing an environment for emotional vulnerability and innovation. The current model was developed through collaboration effort with a multidisciplinary team at Thinking in Pictures Educational Services (TIPES), an Ontario Autism Program approved provider. As clinical data was not collected, future clinical trials are needed and recommended to address the testable hypothesis from the current manual. The thesis introduces an innovative service delivery model integrating it into the most naturalistic setting, the client home. Contributions to the field of psychology are noted with clinical implications for the parents/guardians as well as at the agency level.

Keywords: autism, manual, art, asd, emotional regulation, children, art-therapy, mindfulness, painting, music, drawing, sensory stimulation

Exploring Service Providers Coordination in Respite Care and Methods to Gather Comprehensive Information

Ella McFarlane

In recent years, there has been notable progress in enhancing best practices in care, including the integration of service coordination to facilitate respite care for children with developmental disabilities. Despite these recent advancements, a lack of research exists on employing service coordination with respite care. Research surrounding this topic showed importance, as without the information, children and families may struggle to access individualized respite. This thesis aimed to explore current service coordination methods in Ontario respite care and assess if using semi-structured interviews from parents and other service providers facilitates gathering comprehensive information on the child to plan respite services. Participants of this study included Ontario respite providers, and the parents and service providers of clients receiving respite care at the A. Britton Centre for Behavioural Studies. Respite providers participated in an online survey on the current status of service coordination in Ontario and use of a semi-structured intake interview. Parents and service providers took part in semi-structured intake interview. Responses on the intake interviews were compared for similarities, discrepancies, and additional information gained from the service providers. The online survey results revealed a notable utilization of service coordination methods within respite care across Ontario, and strong support for the incorporation of a semi-structured intake interview with other providers. Results indicated that further information can be gained using a semi-structured intake approach with multiple individuals, providing a comprehensive understanding of the clients, to facilitate respite care for children with developmental disabilities. Future research should be conducted to establish best practices for service coordination in respite care with diverse populations and explore the coordination practices' impact on the clients, their needs, and overall well-being.

Using a Modified PEERS Program to Increase Effective Conversations in Youth with Autism

Madigan Stacey

Social skills are a common skill deficit in youth, adolescents, and adults with autism spectrum disorder. Having effective conversations is just one component of social skills. For people with autism spectrum disorder, having conversations can be difficult. There is no single program that will work for everyone it is often a combination of approaches suited to how the client learns that will be most effective. This study aimed to determine if using a modified PEERS program combined with additional BST components will be effective in increasing effective conversations in a thirteen-year-old with autism spectrum disorder. This study utilized an AB research design. One week of baseline data was collected before the program was implemented to determine the number of effective and ineffective conversations the participant was engaging in. One participant, aged thirteen, diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder took part in the program. The participant took part in eight, half-hour sessions over four weeks with each session focused on one aspect of having a conversation. Each session included either a week from the PEERS content or an additional lesson that was added in combined with BST. Frequency data was used to analyze the effectiveness of the program. The baseline level of effective conversations was 16.21 times per day. After the program, this increased to 28.43 effective conversations per day. Similarly, the total number of ineffective conversations the participant engages in also decreased with the implementation of the program. One limitation of the program was that it was only able to be delivered over four weeks, instead of the initially planned six weeks. Further research into implementing this program in a group setting should be considered.

Utilizing Augmentative and Alternative Communication Techniques to Enhance Requesting Behaviour in an Adult Female Diagnosed with a Developmental Disability

Zoe Wyborn

This thesis focused on enhancing verbal requesting in an individual who has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder distinguished by fluctuations in social interaction, communication, and repetitive behavioral and interest patterns. The primary objective of this study was to utilize the picture exchange communication system (PECS) to increase the participant's verbal requesting behaviour. To establish the effectiveness of PECS in enhancing communicative behaviours, an extensive literature review was conducted. Various studies were reviewed to determine the best approach for implementing PECs into an individual's life. It was hypothesized that implementing PECS as an AAC strategy for an adult diagnosed with ASD and limited verbal skills will lead to a significant increase in the occurrences of requesting behavior. To investigate this hypothesis a single subject research design was employed, with data collected during both baseline and intervention phases. The study involved one participant who engaged in daily one-hour sessions over a period of two weeks, during which PECS was utilized to promote requesting behaviour. The initial stage of PECS was executed through this intervention, wherein the client was instructed to select a picture and pass it to the research student in order to express their desires or requirements. The results obtained from the analysis of baseline and intervention data were compared to evaluate the effectiveness of the study. Although the findings indicated some improvements in the participant's communication, the time restraint would impact the long-term effect of PECS on the client. As a result, the limited timeframe emerged as a limitation of this study however there was limited time to test for maintenance and generalization of this skill. Nonetheless, significant changes in the participant's verbal requesting behaviour were observed during the implementation of the intervention.

Teaching Cooperation Skills Using Token Economy for a Six-Year-Old Boy Showing Neurodevelopmental Symptoms

Sydney McLay

Based on current literature, children with symptoms of neurodevelopmental disorders can find it difficult to develop self-management skills. Token economy has proven to be a non-intrusive intervention that can be utilized to develop self-management skills by positively reinforcing cooperation behaviour of students; however, there is limited evidence on token economy for students with neurodevelopmental symptoms. Therefore, to minimize this gap in the literature, the current study examined whether token economy would increase cooperation skills through task completion in a six-year-old boy showing symptoms of a neurodevelopmental disorder. Token economy was implemented using an ABAB reversal design with token economy being introduced, removed, and re-introduced across conditions to demonstrate experimental control and maintenance. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and total completion of tasks, as well as visual analysis using stability lines, trendlines and the percentage exceeding median line. The results supported the hypothesis that implementing token economy would increase cooperation through task completion. The study's strengths included internal consistency through having one administrator for the intervention, which developed stronger treatment integrity. Limitations include purposive sampling which has low external validity; therefore, results cannot be generalized to the broader population. Further research is recommended to complete mediator training for a student, or teacher implemented intervention. Another recommendation is to explore self-mediated intervention with a student showing neurodevelopmental symptoms.

Child and Youth Mental Health

Implementing Art-Based Psychoeducation to Improve Social-Emotional Skills in Children Ages 8-9

Megan Ware

This study explores the potential of therapeutic art techniques delivered through small psychoeducation groups to strengthen social-emotional skills in children aged 8-9, particularly in the context of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on Ontario schools' existing social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, the study uses a quasi-experimental single-group design involving eight participants who engaged in nine workshops over three weeks. Utilizing pre and post-test measures, including the Social-Emotional Skills Interview – Semi-Structured (SESI-SS), Social-Emotional Self-Rating Measure (SESR), and the "How Did Yesterday Make Me Feel" Emotion Log, statistical analysis indicated not statistically significant results ($p=0.99$) likely due to the small sample size. However, thematic analysis revealed qualitative improvements across all five domains of social-emotional skills, demonstrating an increase in participant responses. The Social-Emotional Self-Rating Measure (SESR) indicated a 4.37 increase in average group ratings from the pre-test to the post-test. While quantitative outcomes were not statistically significant, qualitative findings suggest potential benefits of incorporating therapeutic art techniques within group psychoeducational models. Despite limitations, such as the small sample size, this study provides insights into the qualitative changes in social-emotional skills. Future research should explore more extensive and diverse populations, consider subgroup analyses and randomized control trials, and use data collection methods that minimize biases to further study the effectiveness of arts-based social-emotional delivery through group psychoeducation.

Key Words: Social-emotional learning (SEL), children's social-emotional skills, Ontario SEL curriculum, therapeutic art techniques, group psychoeducation, quasi-experimental design.

Using Dialectical Behaviour Skills Training to Increase Self-Esteem in Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Madison Giddy

Youth who are experiencing homelessness are a vulnerable population due to their mental health challenges and the trauma that they have experienced. All of the hardships that they have experienced often negatively impact their self-esteem which causes other issues in their lives such as attending school, finding a job, and securing housing. There are few resources that are available for the youth to access because they are often transient, they lack transportation, the stigma they face for experiencing homelessness at a young age, and waitlists for certain resources can be years long. It was hypothesized that the implementation of dialectical behavioural skills training sessions would improve scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale which would in turn increase the participants self-esteem. This thesis was a pre- and post-test design. There was one participant who was living at the Kingston Youth Shelter. There was a total of four sessions over four weeks that were 45 minutes long. The dialectical behaviour skills that were taught were mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness. A visual analysis was used to compare the pre- and post-test results of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The participant's score increased from 23 points to 27 points. The number of participants was a limitation. Although the participant's score was not considered a significant change it still showed an increase in their overall self-esteem. Future research should be conducted with more participants and more sessions to determine self-esteem growth over time. The study could also benefit from being longitudinal to follow up with participants to see how well they have been able to maintain housing, employment, and relationships.

Developing a Workshop to Increase Client Knowledge Surrounding Emotion Regulation at RNJ Youth Services

Mikeala Hughes

The ability to emotionally regulate is critical for any individual. Various literature and studies have illustrated that emotion regulation (ER) in youth is particularly crucial. The inability to emotionally regulate, or when youth become emotionally dysregulated, impedes youth well-being in many domains. Research shows that youth who are uneducated in ER or do not have ER ability are more likely to experience poor outcomes in their mental health, self-esteem, relationships, and academic success (Brinke et al., 2021) Further, the inability to emotionally regulate can also lead to the development of serious psychological problems and disorders and can increase crime and violent behaviour. While literature has highlighted that ER is imperative for the psychological development and overall wellbeing of youth, literature also shows that effective ER resources are limited. The current thesis study was designed to create an adaptive and feasible ER workshop for youth clients at a youth services agency to increase knowledge and ability pertaining to ER. This thesis study followed an AB pre-test post-test quantitative research design. This design was chosen to allow for pre-test and post-test data that could illustrate whether the ER workshop was effective in increasing youth knowledge and ability. Two measures were created to assess youth participant ER knowledge and ability; the thesis study included a quiz and questionnaire that participants completed at pre-test before participants had attended any ER workshop sessions, and at post-test when participants had completed all three workshops. Results from the study indicated that the ER workshops were effective in increasing youth ER knowledge as three of the four participants' ER knowledge quiz scores increased after the ER workshop sessions. Results also indicated that the ER workshop was effective in increasing participant ER ability as three of the four participants' ER questionnaire scores also increased at post-test. Due to a variety of inconsistencies and limitations pertaining to the implementation of the ER workshop sessions, it cannot be said definitively whether the participants' increase of knowledge and ability can be attributed to the workshops. A future recommendation for research is to examine the effects of an ER workshop over time to determine whether an increase in ER knowledge and ability among youth is retained over time.

Development and Implementation of Five Anxiety-Focused Workshops for Youth in a High School Setting

Jaide Rombough

This thesis aimed to decrease anxiety symptoms in high school aged youth using integrative anxiety-focused workshops. The workshops were CBT-informed and focused on psychoeducation and coping skills practice. This project included 2 youth participants that were chosen using convenience sampling by the agency. The workshops were administered once a week for five weeks. During this time participants were asked to fill out the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) and the Test Anxiety Questionnaire (TAQ) three times. Participants completed these measures pre-test, mid-test, and post-test to determine the effectiveness of the workshops themselves. A strength of this project was that the workshops were very easily administered and were designed to be easily understood by a range of knowledges. It was found that the workshops did not make a significant impact on the participant' anxiety symptoms based on the measures used. Although the results showed little impact, it is thought that a similar program with longer length may have more of an effect. Many factors outside of the workshop may have contributed to some limitations. Both participants experienced personal negative situations outside of school that is thought to have had an impact on the results. Another limitation for this thesis was the number of participants, this occurred due to issues regarding consent. The main implication of this project was the information gathered around gaining parental consent within high schools. This information could have a significant impact on future studies relating to projects within schools.

A Behavioural Science Technologists' Manual for Psychoeducational Group Therapy: Adolescents Experiencing First Episode Psychosis

Hannah Shurtleff

First episode psychosis plays a detrimental role on adolescent's overall well-being as it interrupts various developmental aspects of their lives. Though statistics for adolescent first episode psychosis are seemingly low, there is minimal knowledge surrounding best practices and effective resources regarding treatment for this clinical population. Despite these reported low rates, mental health professionals may lack adequate resources which may result in impacting the treatment they may receive. This resource gap was identified when researching best practices and resources for professionals involved in the care and treatment within child and adolescent psychiatry. The goal of the current thesis project was to develop a psychoeducational manual that provided information to Behavioural Science Technologist's to aid in the delivery of treatment to adolescent patients experiencing psychosis. The psychoeducational manual consisted of an overview, characteristics of adolescent psychosis, and group therapy topics surrounding anger management and emotion regulation. It was not possible to collect data for this thesis project. Therefore, to determine overall effectiveness of the manual, further research involving staff and patients through feedback would be informative. It is recommended that these frontline health care professionals, continue to develop and promote resources to support their profession. Overall, this would assist in supporting Behavioural Science Technologist's and the implementation of effective and ethical treatments for adolescents experiencing first episode psychosis.

Efficacy of Using Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Informed Strategies in Decreasing Anxiety and Stress Among Adolescents

Emerson Galloway

Purpose: Adolescents attending high-school are known to encounter many stressors within their academic lives. The purpose of this thesis is to explore how the use of DBT-informed skills, including mindfulness, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance, can help decrease perceived stress levels in high school students who participate in the DBT-informed skills workshop.

Hypothesis: It was hypothesized that implementing one-on-one DBT-informed strategies could improve participants' perceived stress on the Perceived Stress Scale.

Method: This study used a quasi-experimental design, with pre-and post-test assessments conducted using the Perceived Stress Scale. The participants consisted of five high school students who were chosen through convenience sampling by their teachers. Individual interventions were designed for each participant, considering their unique requirements such as timing, location, and content. The weekly sessions lasted 55 minutes with a 15-minute break. The intervention focused on developing the participants' abilities in mindfulness, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance.

Results: Due to the small sample size of five participants, examining the results in depth was not possible. As a result, no statistical significance was found for the Perceived Stress pre- and post-test scores.

Conclusion: Although the results of this thesis showed no statistical significance in perceived stress among participants, there were still some improvements for some participants with their Perceived Stress Scores. Future research should explore more sessions and more participants to increase generalizability.

The Impact of a Five Week Transition Support Plan Program for Youth Transitioning into Adult Services

Holli Claxton

This thesis focuses on the development of a comprehensive one on one program to support youth transitioning from youth to adult services. The program aimed to bridge the gap by offering a holistic approach with mentorship opportunities, life skills training, and access to mental health and social services. An extensive literature review was conducted, and studies focused on housing, employment, education, and mental health. The studies delve into the structured approaches to transitional programs and the difficulties faced by youth during the transition to adulthood. This thesis project focuses on one female participant who aged out of a youth community day program. It uses qualitative research exploring the participant's transitional experiences through self-reported data collected in structured sessions. The Outcome Rating Scale was used to gauge the participants perspective on change after each session, while the knowledge of Skill Inventory was created to assess knowledge and confidence in specified skills or goals. Procedures included self-report measures administered by the placement student, focusing on the identified primary areas of the participants life. The measurement results showed that the one-on-one transition support program effectively supported the participant's transition into adult services, through its adaptability and individualized focus. Positive and consistent improvements in overall well-being and confidence highlighted the program's success in addressing the challenges of the transitional phase. The study also has some limitations which include a small sample size, limited duration of the program, as well as limited generalizability. Future recommendations for research include expanding participant diversity, longitudinal studies, as well as incorporating peer support.

Therapy Orientation Packages for Adolescents in an Outpatient Eating Disorder Clinic

Lindsay Thoman

Eating disorders are severe mental illnesses that if left untreated can result in grave health implications, including death. Individuals diagnosed with anorexia nervosa (AN) and avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID) often experience difficulties garnering and sustaining the motivation necessary to recover from their illnesses. This lack of recovery motivation is linked to the high rates of treatment dropout experienced by individuals with eating disorders. The aim of this thesis project is to create therapy orientation packages that contain information and worksheets that will contribute to the recovery motivation and retention of adolescent clients in therapy at an outpatient eating disorder clinic. Thorough research of current literature was conducted to ascertain what information and resources should be included in, or excluded from, the orientation packages. The research reveals that psychoeducation is a key component that contributes to recovery motivation and therapy retention and was therefore the basis of the orientation packages. Therapy orientation packages that contain psychoeducation and resources curated specifically for adolescent clients with AN and ARFID were created. Hard copies of the orientation packages will be given to new clients of the eating disorder clinic by their psychotherapist during their first therapy session. Staff working in the eating disorder clinic reported positive reactions to the therapy orientation packages however, inferred effectiveness is unknown. If the orientation packages are found to be a successful aid in therapy motivation and retention it is recommended that that they be created for all eating disorder diagnoses and utilized in other clinics.

Evaluating the Impact of Age and Diagnosis on Acceptance and Commitment Training

Alexandria Hornbeck

The prevalence of developmental disabilities and mental health diagnoses in children and adolescents is on the rise. While acceptance and commitment training (ACTr) is increasingly being applied to children and adolescent populations, there is a lack of research regarding the rate at which individuals acquire skills while participating in ACTr. This research study aims to examine whether age and diagnosis significantly impact the rate of skill acquisition among participants who participated in ACTr sessions at Kingston Behavioural Therapy Centre. The research study employed a non-experimental correlation group design. Participants aged four to 18 years were categorized into two diagnostic groups, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and comorbid diagnosis including ASD and anxiety, ASD and sensory processing disorder, and ASD and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The results obtained through the Pearson correlation coefficient revealed a moderate correlation between age and the ASD group and the rate at which these participants acquired skills in an ACTr framework. Furthermore, the Pearson correlation coefficient revealed a low correlation between age and the comorbid diagnosis group and the rate at which these participants acquired skills through an ACTr-based lesson delivery framework. Overall, these results indicate that age and diagnosis do not have a significant effect on the rate at which skills are acquired within an ACTr-based lesson delivery framework. Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight a critical gap in the current literature, particularly about the use of ACTr-based interventions with children and adolescents with diagnoses such as ASD, ADHD, anxiety, depression, and comorbid diagnoses.

Keywords: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACTr), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), comorbid diagnosis, skill acquisition

Corrections and Justice Services

Creating Daily Routines to Help Improve Mental Stability of Previously Incarcerated Males

Madison Farrar

According to Bellamy (2019), mass incarceration has become a form of treatment for individuals living with serious mental illness (SMI), there has been no positive outcomes in regard to the mass incarceration of individuals with SMI's. When incarcerating individuals living with SMI's, they were not provided with treatment to decrease the likelihood of reoffending. If that is the case, creating a daily routine will then increase and stabilize mental wellbeing in formerly incarcerated individuals. The daily routine manual was created to aid Community Residential Facility (CRF) staff in supporting CRF residents to build daily routines. There have been very few studies completed regarding the stabilization of mental wellbeing in federal offenders, in creating a daily routine manual for individuals reintegrating into society. It is hypothesized that providing formerly incarcerated individuals with a daily routine will lower their recidivism rates. The daily routine manual has two versions, one for residents that includes motivational language (words/phrases such as improving your mental health, the power and ability to create a daily routine that will benefit you) and one for CRF staff which is written in professional language (word phrases such as after evaluating mandatory tasks that the residents must complete). Both versions of the manual were provided to CRF staff to ensure residents and staff had access to the daily routine manuals. It is recommended CRF staff encourage conversations with residents to determine if the daily routine is effective in stabilizing their mental well-being. Each manual reviewed the importance of following parole conditions (rules one must follow while on parole), and discussed how to incorporate the CRF rules, as well as the parole conditions into a daily routine.

Development of Staff Workshop: Enhancing Boundaries for Volunteers Working with Offenders

Alyssa Jones

This thesis focuses on the development of a workshop to enhance boundaries for volunteers and staff members working with offenders. Maintaining professional boundaries with offenders is important within the correctional setting, as a successful working relationship is established by displaying respect and professional integrity. The workshop was chosen as there are many advantages, including the ability to learn collaboratively and the opportunity to enhance critical thinking skills. A literature review was conducted to identify healthy boundaries and aspects of professionalism in the workplace with vulnerable populations. The workshop was developed using online resources, including articles with relevant search terms such as offender, boundaries, institution, professionalism, violations, manipulation, volunteer, prison, incarceration, authority, community, and power imbalance. The workshop was presented to staff members from a correctional institution and consisted of two components: a PowerPoint presentation and an informal discussion. The workshop was titled Awareness Training, which described important content of professional boundaries, positive rapport, and manipulation and included a case scenario and interactive questions. Participant thoughts, opinions, and suggestions were obtained to improve the workshop during the informal after-session discussion. Strengths and limitations were considered by evaluating the results of the project. The project was cost-effective for organizations to use when facilitating boundary training for staff and volunteers. The project highlights the importance of maintaining ethical relationships and professional boundaries when working with vulnerable individuals in the field of behavioural psychology. Future research recommendations include collecting baseline and intervention data and exploring diverse demographic populations of participants.

Constructing a Substance Abuse Intervention for Violent Adult Male Offenders in Structured Intervention Units (SIU)

Gabrielle Stevens

This thesis explores the creation of a substance abuse module blending Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) for adult male offenders in a maximum-security correctional institution's Structured Intervention Unit (SIU). The supporting goal of this thesis will address the gap in both the literature with respect to the lack of clinical research on SIU-specific substance use interventions and the absence of substance use interventions available to offenders in the SIU. Analyses of SIU offender case characteristics found SIU offenders to display negative attitudes towards the criminal justice system along with positive attitudes towards goal-oriented violence, impulsivity, low frustration tolerance, frequent aggressive acts, and gang/organized crime affiliations when compared to the mainstream population (CSC, 2021). These behaviours highlight the importance of increasing offenders' emotion regulation. The strong correlation found between positive emotion regulation strategies and decreased substance abuse demonstrates the need to include these strategies when creating an effective intervention technique aimed at decreasing substance use and violent behaviours (Blanchard et al., 2019). Databases such as PSYCINFO, Science Direct, Google Scholar and the CSC database, various textbooks, empirical articles and other online resources were utilized. Based on results from research, a substance abuse module can effectively be integrated into the current MMSIU as the 6th module containing 4 submodules comprised of 4 different DBT techniques: mindfulness, interpersonal skills (communication), emotion regulation and distress tolerance. These skills, effective in enhancing emotional regulation, suggest a potential decrease in substance use (Moore., 2022). Future research should explore the link between substance use and violence in correctional settings and evaluate SIU-specific programs compared to mainstream interventions.

Use of Individual Empathy Training Sessions to Increase Empathy in Youth Offenders

Abbey Hamilton

Empathy is the ability to understand another individual's emotional state (Baglivio et al., 2021, p.45; Cohen & Strayer, 1996, p.988). Low empathy is often associated with increased rates of offending and violent behaviour in youth (Baglivio et al., 2021). Despite this, current approaches to increase empathy are not aligned with the development of youth and their empathy levels (Cavanagh, 2022). Interventions including empathy induction, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), motive-based empathy interventions, life skills programs, prosocial video game interventions, and empathy training have been well researched within other populations, but the research is limited regarding the effectiveness of empathy interventions for the youth population. The purpose of the current study is to determine if empathy-based training sessions for youth involved with the law increases empathy awareness and skills. The study utilizes the Perth Empathy scale as a measure (PES). The study did not receive participants, however, baseline data of youth involved with a juvenile justice program was collected, and a manual was created. The manual consists of ten sessions, six that focus on the basic empathy aspects including empathy, emotions, self-awareness, understanding others, self-regulation, and concern for others. The four additional sessions contain individual-specific content focused on potential relationships that may be impacted by the participant's empathy level. This manual is intended to be utilized by agencies, parents, guardians, teachers, and other community facilitators. Strengths, limitations, multi-level perspectives, and contributions to the field of behaviour psychology are examined within this study. Future recommendations for research include clinical evaluation and implementation of the manual, and potential measures are provided.

Development of an Employment and Continued Education Resource Manual for Offenders Upon Release and an Introduction Workshop for Correctional Staff

Juliette Côté

Lack of education and employment are critical factors associated with recidivism (Ontario, 2023). While those incarcerated often have access to education and occasional employment programs, offenders are not consistently provided with resources once released back into their community. By providing offenders with a resource to aid them in obtaining further education or employment opportunities, the resource, in turn, could be used as a tool to help mitigate their risk of reoffending. This thesis explored the barriers that impact ex-offenders' ability to obtain employment or further their education and the relationship these barriers have with recidivism. An Employment and Continued Education Resource Manual was developed to assist correctional education departments and employment coordinators in providing offenders upon release with community support contacts. The manual provided resources for continuing education and employment agencies, as well as outlined methods to access these supports. Resources were provided for the Ottawa, Toronto, and Kingston areas. Employment coordinators and education department staff within a male correctional institution were provided with a workshop to introduce and discuss the manual. Participants of the workshop completed a Feedback Survey, and the results suggested that participants agreed or strongly agreed with the usefulness, appropriateness, and relevance of the resource manual and with the usefulness of the workshop. Future recommendations included expanding the research to incorporate more resources directed to help those within minorities.

Managing Personality Disorders: An Educational Manual for Staff Within a Correctional Setting

Carley Spence

In 2016, Canadian federal offenders exhibited a strikingly high prevalence rate of mental health disorders at 73% (Beaudette & Stewart, 2016). A significant number of these individuals undergo portions of their sentences in specialized healthcare and mental health support. However, a challenge lies in the insufficient resources available to equip the staff in these facilities with the necessary knowledge about mental health diagnoses. To address this gap, an educational manual focusing on the management of personality disorders within correctional settings was created. Developed with up-to-date and relevant information, the manual comprises eight chapters: Overview of Personality Disorders, Prevalence, Common Misperceptions, Interventions, Crisis Behavior, Support Strategies, Suicide/Self-Injury Prevalence, and Comorbidities. Feedback from staff was gathered through a survey featuring 13 questions. Employing a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), the responses highlighted the quality of the manual in terms of content, clarity, and construction. These positive ratings underscored a favourable experience among the participants, attesting to the manual's efficacy. Importantly, the survey results indicated agreement among the ten participants that the educational manual proved to be a valuable resource for staff within the treatment hospitals. Looking ahead, recommendations for this project include an assessment of staff usage over an extended period to glean insights into the sustained utility and application of the resource. A further recommendation would be to generalize the manual and make it accessible to general population correctional environments. Future endeavours should explore the creation of additional manuals focusing on various mental health diagnoses.

Exploring the Effectiveness of a Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Informed Healthy Boundaries and Relationships Group on Women who were Previously Incarcerated

Ashley Young

This thesis focused on the development and implementation of a four-week dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) informed group centered on healthy boundaries and relationships with previously incarcerated women. This population often faces many challenges when reintegrating back into the community. It is recognized that a prominent challenge relates to establishing strong boundaries and engaging in healthy relationships post incarceration. DBT is an evidenced based treatment to address emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness and the establishment of healthy coping strategies trans diagnostically. The healthy boundaries and relationships group was formulated and implemented based on extensive research and evidence-based practices and occurred at Elizabeth Fry Society Kingston over the span of four weeks. The group consisted of three adult participants, who have been previously incarcerated, and were residing at the agency's halfway house. The content centered on DBT mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness and emotion regulation skills building. Data was collected using a pre group emotional intelligence questionnaire that gave the facilitator information on where group members ranked in emotional competencies to further allow the facilitator to operate the group in a trauma-informed and inclusive manner. Then a post-group questionnaire was collected to gauge feedback from participants. Strengths of the study included the gradual approach of group content and the real-life application of themes discussed. Some limitations related to the small sample size, time constraints, and measurement of data collected. Implications to the behavioural psychology field and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Preliminary Examination of the Prevalence of Mental Health and Substance Use Issues in Male Domestic Violence Offenders

Mackenzie Littlefield

Domestic violence (DV) is an epidemic and threat to public safety with thousands being impacted in Canada each year. While victims are affected physically, psychologically, and socially, after working with perpetrators of domestic violence (DV) it was identified that they too suffer from psychological distress. The current study aims to identify the prevalence of the symptomology of mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder (SUD) in DV perpetrators. This preliminary examination is crucial for understanding these offenders' psychological profiles, improving treatment outcomes, and increasing victim safety. Thirty-three men from a 12-week DV psychoeducational program participated in the current study. Each participant completed the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II), and the Tobacco, Alcohol, Prescription Medications, and Other Substance Tool (TAPS) to assess their level of symptom severity. The current study's results were compared against the standardization groups of each measurement tool to analyze the DV perpetrators' symptom prevalence. The results indicated that anxiety symptoms were more prevalent in the standardization group compared to the current study's sample of DV offenders. Furthermore, the results indicated that symptoms of depression and substance use issues were more prevalent in the current study's sample of DV offenders compared to the standardization groups. Future studies may benefit from collecting pre- and post-data rather than conducting a cross-sectional research design. Additionally, it is recommended to utilize a more reliable and valid measurement tool when analyzing substance use symptoms.

Keywords: perpetrators, domestic violence, anxiety, depression, substance use
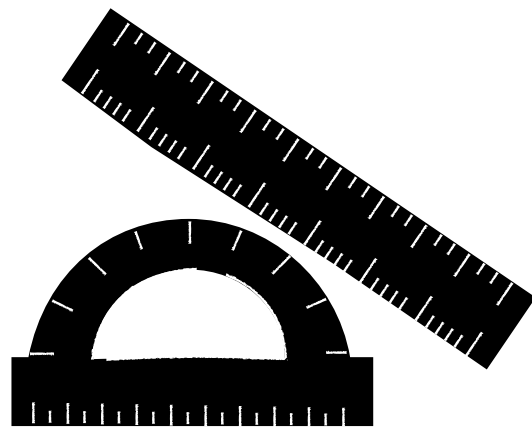
Education and Teaching

Exploring Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology Students' Awareness, Knowledge, Usage, and Attitudes Surrounding Generative Artificial Intelligence

Jordyn Cavanagh

As the use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) becomes more common in post-secondary education, policies and guidelines regarding GAI use are required. To effectively create policies and guidelines, educational institutions must first understand students GAI usage and perspectives. While research on GAI exists at other institutions, research pertaining specifically to St. Lawrence College (SLC) does not. This study focused on SLC's Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology (BPSYC) program, with an aim to uncover students' perspectives to tailor ethical and effective GAI integration strategies for the program. The study examined students' awareness, knowledge, usage, and attitudes surrounding GAI in education. Seventy-two students completed the anonymous online survey. The results showed that many students lack knowledge of GAI tools and their educational functions (69.5%), which explains the reported lack of confidence in using them (81.7%). Over half expressed discomfort with GAI's educational integration, citing concerns about ethical use, plagiarism, cheating, and decreased critical thinking. However, the findings show students' desire for faculty to introduce and provide resources for enhancing their ethical and efficient use of specific tools for educational purposes, including ChatGPT-3 (50.7%), Grammarly (59.2%), Dall-E2 (19.7%), Jasper (16.9%), Bing (19.7%), and Perplexity (18.3%). The thematic analysis revealed a nuanced perspective, with concerns about academic integrity, GAI imperfections, and the desire for comprehensive education, clear guidelines, and optional, ethically guided implementation within the program. This investigation contributed to informing GAI's effective and ethical integration into SLC's BPSYC program. This study recommends that SLC implement policies, guidelines, and hands-on training to address the benefits and drawbacks of GAI, provide a structured approach, guide ethical use, and offer clarity and support for students and instructors.

Evaluating the Efficacy of the Positive Spaces 2SLGBTQIA+ Workshop for Case Workers and Managers at a Non for Profit Housing Support Organization

Jesenia Alvarez

Black, indigenous, and People of colour identifying as 2 Spirit, lesbian, gay, transgender, intersex, or queer, (2SLGBTQIA+) were overrepresented in the homeless population of Canada. However, these individuals faced more systematic barriers, sought fewer social services, and were underrepresented in empirical literature, than heterosexual and cisgender identifying individuals. Key components of providing services to BIPOC 2SLGBTIQA+ populations included the ability to create a safe space, provide affirmative care, and demonstrate cultural humility. Results from research into hesitancies in providing 2SLGBTQIA+ education indicated a lack of confidence in educators personal knowledge and awareness of queer BIPOC experiences. Workshops that taught inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility, were shown to support leaders and their subordinates in providing affirmative care with cultural humility. The Positive Space workshop aimed to increase both personal knowledge regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ topics and experiences, as well as confidence in the ability to provide affirming spaces of caseworkers and supervisors of Homebase Housing. This was evaluated using a pre and post test that included two questions on a Likert scale. The pre and post test resulted in a 25% increase on average across groups on both the confidence and knowledge related questions. The PEM scores of both group's answers to the first question resulted in a 95% increase and a score of 75% on the second question. The first groups paired sample T-test resulted in a P value of 0.5 on question one and a 0.03 on question two. Lastly, the second groups T-test resulted in a p value of 1 on the first question and 0.5 on the second question. Based on the thesis presented, there is a need for research addressing the systematic barriers faced by this population, as well as ways to better serve this population with affirmative care and cultural humility.

The Application of Integrative Sensory Education Manuals to Increase Sensory Knowledge for Educators

Rachel Wilson

Integrating special needs students into mainstream classrooms is essential for accessing the same quality of education as typical students. To ensure these students benefit from an integrated classroom, resources in addition to educational assistants should be provided to the classroom teachers to ensure they can meet the advanced needs of special education students. This paper was hypothesized that developing and providing an extensive sensory education resource manual, titled the "Integrative Sensory Education Manual" (ISEM) and an accompanying infographic, educators' knowledge regarding the senses and sensory needs of special needs students will increase based on their measured responses on the "Sensory Education Knowledge Measure" (SEKM). This thesis used a mixed-method research design utilizing pre and post-test assessments to assess baseline and post-test levels of sensory knowledge. Participants were three elementary school teachers who were identified to have special needs students in their classrooms. The participants were given one week to complete the pre-test SEKM. Once these assessments were returned, the ISEM and post-test SEKM were distributed in PDF form through the school board's email portal. The post-test SEKM was collected one-week following dispersion. Using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, participant's pre and post-test SEKM responses were evaluated. The descriptive analyses demonstrated an increase in knowledge post-manual review with varying success between each participant. Limitations of this thesis include the small sample size, the use of an unvalidated measure, and the limited content of the manual. Although the level of knowledge acquisition drastically differs between participants, based on the descriptive statistics and thematic analysis the ISEM successfully introduced new knowledge regarding the senses and sensory behaviour for every participant.

Using a Workshop with Youth in Diversion Programs to Increase Knowledge of Safe Social Media Use

Alyssa Scott

In 2003, the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) was introduced, and diversion programs for less severe offences were implemented, which helped decrease youth engagement in crime and criminal court. At a non-profit organization specializing in youth diversion programs, there is an increase in youth being referred to diversion programs due to engagement in social media-related crimes. This increase went from ten referrals in 2022 to 31 referrals five months into 2023. This thesis aims to determine if participation in a three-week safe social media workshop would increase youth's knowledge and increase their confidence in their ability to use social media safely. It was hypothesized that youth's overall knowledge of safe social media use and their confidence in using it would increase if they participated in the workshop sessions. Three one-hour workshop sessions with facilitator notes were created pertaining to the topics of Safe Social Media Use, Cyberbullying and Human Trafficking and Catfishing. A pre-test and post-test research design was used to determine the intervention's effectiveness. A quiz and a questionnaire were developed to assess the participants' baseline knowledge and confidence in their knowledge of safe social media use and to determine any increase in knowledge or confidence after the workshop sessions. Results from both the quiz and questionnaire showed that participants' knowledge and confidence increased from the pre-test to the post-test. The mean scores from the quiz during the pre-test (M=52.5) were compared to the post-test (M=90), showing the increase in knowledge from the pre-test to the post-test. The mean scores from the questionnaire during the pre-test (M=64) compared to the post-test (M=90) show an increase in the participant's knowledge. These differences in mean scores indicate that the participant's knowledge and confidence in safe social media use increased after participating in the workshop sessions Upon the study's conclusion, it was noted, due to time constraints with the current study, that future research should consider the use of a longitudinal study to determine if these workshop sessions could effectively decrease youth crime rates over time. This could also allow the researchers to wait a more extended period of time before collecting post-test data to determine if participants were able to retain the knowledge gained from the workshop.

Enhancing Educators Support within a Class-wide Model with a Manual for Self-Regulation

Jaya Aduvala

This project focuses on developing a structured and eye-catching manual for educators to use to teach self-regulation to children in early childhood education classrooms. A literature review was conducted, aiming to support the information within the manual with past and current studies and facts supporting the teaching skills related to self-regulation. The content provided in the literature ranges from the importance of adult education in self-regulation to inform educators why they should become more knowledgeable of the subject, why children should learn self-regulation skills before entering elementary school, importance of an individual's emotional awareness to help with self-regulation skills, and what the social and academic outcomes could be without self-regulation skills in a child's life. Tools, strategies, and resources are incorporated into the manual to support early childhood educators in increasing self-regulation skills in their classrooms. These strategies include teaching calming strategies, ways to avoid behavioural outbursts, proactive measures to take during emotional distress, phrases to use when a child is feeling angry, and fun activities that can make self-regulation enjoyable for children. Currently, there is limited research on the use of self-regulation manuals in early childhood educational systems. A future recommendation includes increasing the creation of such manuals and research on manuals for self-regulation to identify whether the use of manuals is considered useful. Another recommendation for future research would be providing a feedback survey to educators of an early childhood classroom who have received this self-regulation manual. Providing a feedback survey to educators will provide information regarding the validity and reliability of the self-regulation manual, which can also be added to research on self-regulation manuals. Finally, the use of the self-regulation manual is not limited to early childhood education systems and may be explored by providing to students in kindergarten and up. This may be helpful to older educational populations by increasing their knowledge of self-regulation as well.

Determining the Prevalence of Vicarious Trauma Among Correctional Staff Through the Use of a Trauma-Informed Workshop

Maggie Clattenburg

This dissertation aims to determine the prevalence of vicarious trauma among correctional staff through the use of a trauma-informed workshop. A key point is that vicarious trauma is something that can arise over time, when exposed to the trauma of others (Matejko, 2022). In other words, it is a form of an indirect trauma exposure. For this study, a pre-workshop questionnaire was sent via email to all participants at the facility. The questionnaire was used to determine the potential prevalence rates of vicarious trauma and/or burnout among participants in a frontline helping profession. Following the questionnaire, a trauma-informed workshop was developed and delivered to participants on the topic of burnout, vicarious trauma, and integrating a trauma-informed approach into their work. Afterwards, a post-workshop feedback survey was sent via email to all participants to fill out based on their experience during the workshop. The results of the research were significant, in that 44% of participants displayed some signs or symptoms suggestive of vicarious trauma. Three major themes were demonstrated from the results of the feedback survey which include usefulness, professionalism, and comfortability in discussing this topic with other professionals. In conclusion, implications, limitations, and future considerations for research are discussed.

Developing Two Brief Intake Assessments using the Literacy and Basic Skills Initial Assessment for Numeracy, and for Reading and Writing

Sarah Kelly

This thesis documents the creation and validation of two assessments: Initial Skills Assessment – Short for Numeracy, and the Initial Skills Assessment – Short for Reading and Writing. These assessments have been created for the purpose of intake at a community agency. Both created assessments started from the Literacy and Basic Skills Initial Assessments for Numeracy and for Reading and Writing. These assessments are based on the Ontario Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) and are part of the Ontario program for adult and continuing education. The creation of the Initial Skills Assessments – Short was guided by responses from a panel of experts, observations from archived data, alignment with the OALCF, and trial runs by potential users. The final versions were tested to demonstrate that they were able to differentiate achievement levels as outlined in the OALCF.

Using a Cultural Systems Approach to Increase the Use of Reusable Containers Within a Community College

Taylor M. Rainville

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) created a synthesis report that states that increasing temperatures are on track to reach the tipping point, leading to increased natural disasters (IPCC, 2023). However, the world can reach a drawdown when levels of greenhouse gases stop climbing and start to steadily decline (Project Drawdown, 2024). One solution identified is to eliminate food systems wastage which currently creates 50% of greenhouse emissions. Thus, this solution would avoid 5.4 gigatons of greenhouse emissions by 2050. One way to reach the goal of reducing plastic production is through Cano Company. Cano has created an application to allow students on college campuses to earn points for using reusable containers and reducing disposable container usage (Cano Co, 2023). However, for the first six months of the app being used at a community college, the uptake of students using this application was 465, only 14% of full-time students. This research used a cultural systems approach to see if human behaviour could be shifted to the sustainable path of using the reusable containers at a cafeteria and increase the number of active users on the Cano application. The three interventions used to increase use were education, behavioural intentions, and staff reinforcement. Results indicated that providing free items through educational booths was the most effective way to modify human behaviour and significantly increased the number of active users. Behavioural intentions and staff reinforcement did not significantly change the use of Cano containers at a community college. This research project can assist future researchers in exploring variations of these techniques and other interventions to explore a cultural systems approach to address the climate crisis more systematically.

Cognitive Behavioural Techniques in Managing Workplace Stress for Child Welfare Workers

Stephanie Brooker

This thesis project focuses on the creation of a self-guided manual that incorporates cognitive behavioral techniques tailored to help child welfare workers in coping with workplace stress. Addressing the prevalent issue of workplace stress within child welfare agencies is crucial, as it can negatively impact the delivery of effective care to clients. While existing literature has implemented cognitive behavioral techniques to support staff in various fields, this project aims to focus specifically on the needs of the child welfare population. The manual was designed as a resource for participants to utilize during times of stress. It encompasses information on workplace stress, the child welfare profession, and incorporates five cognitive behavioral techniques. Each technique includes materials such as videos and templates to enhance participant understanding. The techniques included within the manual centre around changing negative thinking patterns and physical relaxation methods. Participants were provided with three weeks to review the manual and practice the cognitive behavioural techniques. Prior to reviewing the manual, the participants completed a Perceived Stress Scale as both a pre and posttest measure. Data from the posttest assessment indicated a decrease in the participant's perceived stress levels. Furthermore, participants provided positive feedback of the manual in a survey post-completion. The project's strengths and limitations were highlighted through a multilevel systems lens. Future research considerations include expanding to other agencies and teams to generalize the techniques within the manual to other environments.

Evaluating Trauma-Informed Care Education to Address LGBTQ+ Homelessness: Staff Training Presentation

Sarah Elizabeth Saddlemire

The focus of this thesis was to evaluate the current knowledge surrounding Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) measures, tailored to address the unique challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ homeless population. The LGBTQ+ community experiences a heightened risk of homelessness and victimization that can lead to trauma. Using a multi-level systems approach, the research analyzed existing literature on TIC and LGBTQ+ societal barriers to care, informing the development of a staff training program within a community social service. The secondary goal was to conduct Trauma-Informed Care training with staff members. The questionnaire assessed three topics, Knowledge on Trauma-Informed Care, Ability to Provide Services to Clients, LGBTQ+ and homeless clients, to gather qualitative data. Data was collected in the form of a Likert-scale questionnaire that was delivered both pre- and post-training. The student researcher hypothesized that the Trauma-Informed Care training would increase scores post training. The results showed staff indicated a need for more support regarding vicarious trauma, and a difference in baseline knowledge. The research also supported implementation from an organizational level to ensure a defined definition of trauma and organization-specific factors can be assessed for reliable change. The limitations of this study are a small sample size, no quantitative data was collected, and organizational factors of stress and burnout affecting participation.

Utilization of Educational Awareness and Relaxation Techniques Manual for Staff to Increase Medication Compliance

Amber Dafoe

The goal of the project was to develop a manual for Community Living coordinators, facilitators, and staff. Through educational awareness and relaxation techniques, this manual aims to increase medication compliance. Therefore, the manual developed potentially beneficial for those who are experiencing challenges when taking their medication. The implementation of the manual is guided by a facilitator who works with the participant practicing relaxation techniques and accessing relevant information related to medication. This includes a phone call with the pharmacist is to provide the participant with more information regarding their medication, in hopes to increase their comfort with taking it. Additionally, a number of online resources are provided in the manual to assist staff or participants with further information. The manual consists of ten chapters. It is hypothesized that the participant would be more likely to follow their medication regimen if they had more knowledge about their medication. The goal with the relaxation techniques is to decrease the amount of anxiety and uncertainty the participant may experience due to conversations about their medication, or increased medication intake, etc. In the manual, staff are instructed on how to use a relaxation technique with the participant during each session that takes place. The overall thesis includes relevant literature, methodology, strengths, limitations, ethical considerations, future research recommendations and contributions to the behavioural psychology field. Recommendations included expanding the amount of literature that exists which looks at medication compliance and personal determinants, and comparative effectiveness between educational awareness and relaxation techniques. For the manual developed, the next step is to implement the manual to receive feedback and to determine the effectiveness of the intervention the manual poses.

Use of Educational Training to Improve Trauma-Informed Care for Human Trafficking Survivors

Julie Darling

This research study sought to determine whether the implementation of an educational training presentation on the topics of trauma-informed care techniques and human trafficking would improve the levels of self-reported knowledge for service providers within Leeds and Grenville. Human trafficking is a complex crime that includes the exploitation of vulnerable people for profit. Trauma-informed care is an approach to providing services that are grounded in the understanding that trauma directly influences an individual's life and decisions. Service providers who may interact with human trafficking survivors should be well-educated and comfortable with providing appropriate and safe care. This research is crucial for the mental health sector as it demonstrates how educational training provides essential knowledge that service providers can implement within various levels of programming and policies throughout Canada. A quasi-experimental research design was used to collect pre- and post-test data. Nine participants completed questionnaires, that were created by the student researcher, which included Likert-type scales to rate knowledge of human trafficking and comfortability in providing appropriate and trauma-informed care. A paired samples t-test was used to analyze the data, which demonstrated a significant increase in knowledge and comfortability with the presented topics. The strengths and limitations of this research study are discussed in detail. This thesis adds to the current literature regarding training interventions for service providers within Canada.
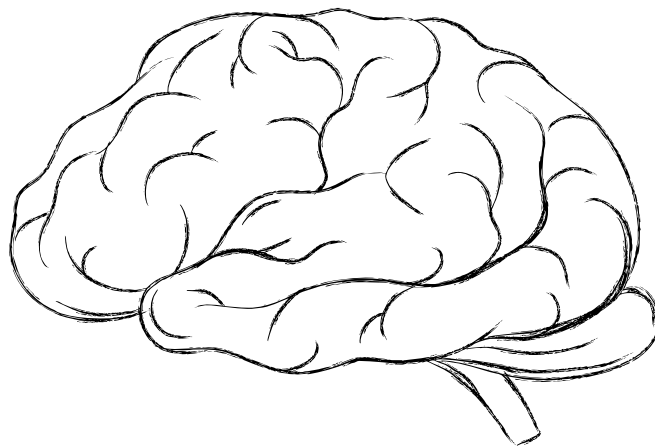
Gerontology and Dementia Studies

The Prospect of a Self-Guided Cognitive-Behavioural Resource for Informal Long-Term Caregivers

Erin Joe

The thesis investigates the prospect of a self-guided cognitive-behavioral resource for informal caregivers in long-term care (LTC). Informal caregivers care for another person without pay. Long-term care is a type of living facility that people stay in for long periods when they can no longer perform daily living activities and have complex medical/non-medical needs. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a type of psychological intervention effective in treating mental health problems. CBT emphasizes the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. CBT treatment is not a common approach to addressing mental health issues in informal caregivers in LTC. The cost of standard CBT treatment explains the absence of CBT. A detailed literature review found that the cost of standard Self-guided CBT reduces the cost of traditional CBT. The literature review also included an extensive review of the components of self-guided CBT programs. The current study evaluates the experience of mental health challenges by informal caregivers at a long-term care facility. Additionally, the study provided participants with a crash course in CBT. Finally, a relevancy survey regarding the CBT course evaluates the prospect of a similar resource offered in the future. Key findings of the study found that most participants have experienced mental health challenges related to their informal caregiving. Additionally, female respondents were more likely to report adverse impacts related to their caregiving. Existing literature on informal caregivers' experiences defines the thesis's strengths and limitations.

Challenges and Barriers of Transitioning Alternate Level of Care Patients with Dementia to Community: A Systematized Review

April McQuay

In Canada, there is an apparent lack of clear pathways of care for individuals living with dementia due to the complex and progressive nature of the disease. As a result, there is a consistent backlog of seniors living with dementia inadvertently residing in hospitals as alternate level of care (ALC) patients for extended periods. The purpose of this literature review was to identify the multilevel barriers and challenges to effective service implementation for seniors with dementia across care settings in Canada. It further sought to explore the state of proactive strategies and interventions in dementia care to inform the growing integration of designated behavioral support staff in the treatment and management of BPSD. The methodology entailed screening academic articles and grey literature retrieved from five major databases. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram was used to retain 25 academic peer-reviewed journal articles and five grey literature records for review. Quality analysis was conducted by creating two comprehensive empirical article analysis tables for the different streams of research, studies highlighting the challenges and barriers to care, and studies evaluating proactive strategies and interventions. Thematic analysis was used to synthesize the results using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program. There were four key themes developed based on the results of the literature review: Perceptions versus patient and family's reality, Complex dementia care needs, Varying capacities for behavioural support, and Micro and macro levels of care provision. It is recommended that comprehensive research is conducted regarding the intricate relationships between and within systems, institutions, professionals, caregivers, and families to meet the complex needs of people living with dementia in Canada across different stages of the disease progression.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Java™ Group Programs in a Long-Term Care Home

Liz Baker

An evaluation was conducted on the implementation of the Java™ Music Program (JMP) at the Kingston Long-Term Care Home (KLTCH). Java™ Group Programs (JGP) are standardized peer support interventions designed to reduce rates of depression and loneliness among older people. Although JGPs are widely used, there is very little research on their effectiveness. At KLTCH, the Life Enrichment Department received a federal grant to implement the JMP with the requirement of an end-of-project report. An empowerment evaluation approach was used to engage staff participation in developing (a) two program logic models (PLMs), one for all JGP programs and one specific to the implementation of the JMP at KLTCH, (b) and an evaluation plan that included (c) an evaluation of the implementation of the JMP on two floors. To assess perceptions of program implementation and outcomes, interviews were conducted with 3 JMP participants and 2 staff facilitators. Interview responses were transcribed, and a thematic analysis was conducted on them to interpret staff and resident experience with the program. The findings showed that the JMP had positive effects on residents in the program. Staff were satisfied with the program and suggested improvements to the training materials provided by JMP. At KLTCH, future evaluations of the JMP should incorporate lower-functioning residents. More research is needed to assess the impacts and effectiveness of JGPs generally.

Messages of Congratulations

Patrick Egbunonu, MBA, MSc.Eng, M.A(Econ), FLMI, AIAA, ACS
(He/Him/His) Dean – Faculty of Business & Community Services (Interim)

As you stand on the precipice of this significant milestone in your academic and professional journey, I want to take a moment to recognize and celebrate the perseverance, talent, and innovative spirit each of you has contributed to this project. The Gala booklet is not just a compilation of research; it is a testament to your collective commitment to advancing the field of Behavioural Psychology and making a meaningful impact in the lives of individuals and communities.
Your efforts symbolize not only the culmination of your studies but also the beginning of a promising path forward, where your knowledge, skills, and insights will contribute to the betterment of society. As you move forward, remember that your journey is a beacon of hope and a source of inspiration for future generations of students who will follow in your footsteps.
Congratulations on this remarkable achievement. I am confident that you will continue to excel and make significant contributions to your field. Well done to you and your peers for setting such a high standard of excellence.

Patrick Egbunonu

Jamie M. Belec, Associate Dean, Community Services

I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible effort you have all put into your culminating project for this Poster Gala abstract booklet. As you continue to embark on this exciting journey, remember that the contents within the pages of this booklet mark a stepping stone in your respective field of Behavioural Psychology. This is a significant marker that illuminates your passion, potential, and commitment to make a difference in the lives of those you touch.

Well done!

Jamie Belec

Marie-Line Jobin – Program Coordinator

Dear Graduating Class of 2024,
Congratulations on reaching this significant milestone in your academic journey!
As Coordinator of the program, I am filled with immense pride and joy as I reflect
on the growth, dedication, and accomplishments each of you has demonstrated
throughout your four years with us.
Your journey has been marked not only by academic excellence but also by your
exceptional work on your thesis projects. The dedication and innovation
showcased through your thesis posters at the Poster Gala 2024 are truly
remarkable! The skills you have honed – from research methodologies to critical
thinking to compassionate communication – are invaluable assets that will
undoubtedly serve you well in your future endeavours.
But beyond the academic achievements, I want to celebrate the individuals you
have become – compassionate, empathetic, and insightful. As you step out into
the world, remember the lessons learned within these walls and continue to
approach every challenge with the same resilience and determination that brought
you to this moment. May your future be filled with endless possibilities,
meaningful connections, and continued growth!
"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." - Helen Keller
Marie-Line Jobin, Faculty and Coordinator yrs.2-4

Stacey Dowling

Congratulations on your graduation and sending you best wishes for the future
ahead.
I am proud of each one of you as you have persevered through the challenges of
the pandemic and met the obstacles with determination and commitment. Take
this time of accomplishment and reflect on the hard work and sacrifices that made
this possible. Celebrate and remember "you did it!".
Congratulations and shine bright in the journey ahead.

Best wishes,
Stacey Dowling

Pamela Shea

Dear Graduates of the Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology Class of 2024,
Congratulations on the successful completion of your challenging degree program! As a professor in behavioural psychology, it is truly gratifying to witness your dedication and intellectual growth throughout this journey. The field of behavioural psychology equips individuals with a profound understanding of human behaviour, and your accomplishments mark the beginning of your impactful contributions to society.

Your role as future professionals in behavioural psychology holds great significance, as you now possess the knowledge and skills to make a positive difference in the lives of others. The privilege of helping vulnerable populations is an honor that comes with immense responsibility. Your commitment to this cause will undoubtedly shape a more inclusive and compassionate world.

As you embark on your careers, I encourage you to embrace a lifelong commitment to learning. Continual self-reflection and a dedication to staying abreast of advancements in the field will enhance your effectiveness as practitioners. Regularly checking in with those you serve is essential, fostering a genuine connection and ensuring that your interventions are tailored to individual needs and that you are providing culturally responsive and compassionate care. Furthermore, recognize the power of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) in promoting positive behavioural change. ABA's scientific foundation provides a robust framework for evidence-based practice, reinforcing the importance of precision and objectivity in your interventions. Regardless of the profession that that you chose, incorporating the foundation of these techniques will help you to be effective and to provide the best possible care. Also please ensure you embrace all professions and to continue with the synergy of a powerful interprofessional team.

Once again, congratulations on your remarkable achievement. May your future endeavors be filled with continued success, growth, and meaningful contributions to the world and do keep us informed of your future successes.

Sincerely,

Pamela Shea, M. Ads., BCBA, CALC

Chris Trimmer

Dear Class of 2024,

Congratulations on crossing the finish line! And in one piece! It's pretty inspiring to witness your cohort's overall perseverance and positivity despite the numerous and significant challenges that have come your way in four years (that's not even taking into account a global pandemic). You've demonstrated that you have the tenacity and you've acquired the skills to make a real difference in peoples' lives as you embark into the various helping professions. I know you'll bring compassion and dedication to every person you work with.

As you find your new paths, I hope you carry with you the memories, the friendships, and the belief that no matter how daunting the obstacles may seem, you have the strength and resilience to overcome them. I'm really glad to have been a part of your academic journey, and I can't wait to see all the incredible things you will achieve.

All the best,

Chris

P.S. May you always think of Statistics whenever you hear a Drake song!"

Kimberly Mask

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to each and every one of you on this momentous occasion. The poster gala marks not only the culmination of your hard work and dedication but also the beginning of an exciting new chapter in your journey towards becoming skilled practitioners in the field of behavioural psychology.

You have exhibited a remarkable level of commitment, passion, and resilience while delving into the intricacies of human behaviour, and exploring research and methodologies, increasing your knowledge and skills needed to excel in your chosen field.

As you embark on the next phase of your journey, I encourage you to continue to utilize your knowledge and experiences to strive for excellence in all that you do. Remember, the knowledge and experiences you have gained here at St. Lawrence College will serve as a solid foundation upon which to build your future successes. Once again, congratulations, Class of 2024! Your achievements are a testament to your hard work, dedication, and perseverance, and I have no doubt that you will continue to accomplish great things in the years to come. Go forth and make a difference!

Kimberly Mask BAA MACP RP

Conclusion

The graduating class of 2024 would like to express our appreciation to students, faculty, and guests for taking the time to organize and attend the BPSYC poster gala. We hope you enjoyed reading our thesis abstracts and that we have furthered your insight into the many avenues of clinical research within the field of behavioural psychology in some way.

In September 2020, we embarked on our educational journey with many uncertainties amid a global pandemic. Thanks to the support of our peers, faculty, and professors, we managed to persevere through two years of virtual learning and finished off strong with two great years on campus. This experience has greatly strengthened our ability to remain positive and open-minded in the face of adverse learning circumstances.

This journey has illuminated not only the complexities of human behavior but also the profound empathy and dedication that characterize those drawn to professions in behavioral psychology. It is evident that the 2024 graduates entering this field possess a unique blend of compassion, understanding, and a genuine desire to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

Moving forward, we carry with us an abundance of inspiration and knowledge gained through our education and by working with diverse and unique populations in a variety of community settings. These experiences will help to guide our journey through independent pathways immersed in the field of behavioural psychology.

Congratulations, Class of 2024!