Prevalence of Holistic Admission Criteria Among Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Programs

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Health Sciences in Occupational Therapy degree at Augusta University

Objectives of Presentation: At the conclusion of this poster, attendees will:
1. Describe the difference between holistic admissions and academic metric-only procedures implemented by entry-level occupational therapy programs.
2. Discuss the relationship between implementation of holistic admissions criteria and entry-level occupational therapy program ranking.

Research Purpose: The purpose of this study is to compare the holistic admissions criteria used by the top fifty ranked entry-level occupational therapy master’s and doctoral programs to the fifty lowest ranked programs.

Methods:
• A retrospective cross-sectional cohort descriptive design was utilized.
• We selected the top fifty and bottom fifty occupational therapy programs from the 2020 U.S. News and World Report.
• Programs that were accredited through the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) and offered entry-level master’s or doctoral degrees were included in this study.
• Two groups were compared: OT programs in the top 50 ranking and OT programs in the bottom 50 ranking.
• Three measures were used to define ‘holistic’, which were:
  • An interview
  • A personal statement or writing sample
  • At least one letter of recommendation
• A program was considered holistic if it utilized all three measures in their admissions process.

Results:
• Results of the chi-square test suggested that the difference of the top and bottom fifty ranked occupational therapy programs were not significantly different regarding implementation of holistic admissions ($\chi^2 = 0.55, p = 0.46$).
• Out of the 111 programs, 61 (54.95%) were classified as holistic and 50 (45.05%) were classified as non-holistic.
• Of the 61 holistic programs, 25 programs (41%) ranked in the bottom half (in the range 58-93) and 36 programs (59%) ranked in the higher range (in the range 1-49).
• Of the 50 non-holistic programs, 24 (48%) ranked in the bottom half (in the range 58-93) and 26 programs (52%) ranked in the top half (in the range 1-49).

Implications:
• Implementation of holistic admissions criteria did not negatively impact program ranking in the 2020 U.S. News and World Report.
• Universities should consider implementing holistic admissions criteria, as it has been associated with increasing diversity in other health professional programs.3
• Future research should be conducted to discover the use of holistic admissions within occupational therapy programs, as
well as the relationship between holistic admissions and diversity of the student body.

References


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