

Understanding the Implications of Occupational Therapy Interventions for Adolescents with Mental Health Disorders: A Systematic Review

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Introduction

Mental health disorders can negatively impact the development of school-aged adolescents, specifically, altering the normative activities typical of this age group. It is important to identify interventions that improve health and well-being among school-aged adolescents with mental health disorders to understand the prevalence and negative factors associated with these conditions.

Research Question

Does occupational therapy decrease symptoms of mental illness in school-aged adolescents?

Methods

Following PRISMA guidelines, the process of this systematic review began with an online electronic literature search utilizing the following databases: PubMed, Academic Search Premier, Scopus, PsycINFO, and the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL).

Methods (continued)

Articles were included in this review if they met the following criteria: (1) study participants were aged 13–19 years; (2) participants were diagnosed with a psychological disorder (e.g., depression or anxiety); and (3) the study involved occupation-based interventions.

Results

Differing OT interventions were implemented to detect changes in symptom prevalence, occupational performance, cognition, satisfaction, distress, and/or behavior. Sensory integration therapy, animal-assisted therapy, and cognitive behavior therapy proved effective in decreasing symptoms of mental illness in school-aged adolescents.

Conclusion

This study provides information to address clinical treatment of symptoms of mental health in adolescents. The occupational therapy interventions reviewed were found to be effective for the targeted population, which is useful due to the prevalence of mental health disorders in this population. Implications for further practice need to be reviewed to further the advancement of occupational therapy interventions that benefit this population.

