



# SATISFACTION WITH PEDIATRIC LEVEL I FIELDWORK

BAUGH, B., OTS, BROGLE, K., OTS, OLINGER, C., OTS, RICHARDSON, M., OTS, SMITH, S., OTS, WALTON, N., OTS, STREET, L., PHD, OTR/L, AND LADNER, M., DHA, OTR/L  
DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, SCHOOL OF HEALTH RELATED PROFESSIONS, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER, JACKSON, MS.



## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to investigate UMMC OT student perceptions related to the Pediatric Level I Fieldwork experience.

**Methods:** This descriptive study used a cross-sectional design to collect quantitative and qualitative data using an electronic survey. The survey included open and closed-ended questions related to preparedness, anxiety, settings, supervisor relations, expectations and suggestions to enhance the experience.

**Results:** Forty-four surveys were completed. Respondents who indicated prior experience with children felt it positively impacted their fieldwork (80%) but did not relieve anxiety prior to the experience. Most respondents (82%) who reported anxiety prior to pediatric fieldwork attributed it to their perceived ability to answer knowledge-based questions. While 68% of respondents indicated that they were neutral about their academic preparation, 23% felt that their prior coursework adequately prepared them for the experience. Implementing treatment techniques (86%), simulated patient interaction (52%), and behavior management (61%) were suggested as potential improvements to preparation. The primary theme in relation to a positive experience was good supervisor communication (N=36) and teaching methods (N=34). The majority (61%) of participants agreed that their Pediatric Level I Fieldwork experience influenced their Level II Fieldwork selection.

**Conclusion:** Future implications for the Pediatric Level I Fieldwork experience with the University of Mississippi Medical Center's Doctorate of Occupational Therapy program include course modifications to include patient simulations, treatment techniques, and prior contact with supervisor to enhance student confidence and ease anxiety.

## INTRODUCTION

Level I Fieldwork provides an early opportunity in the occupational therapy curriculum for students to apply and gain a deeper understanding of the didactic portion of the occupational therapy curriculum. There are positive and negative factors that impact learning experiences and perceptions. Extraneous factors such as low caseloads, supervisor absences, difficult workplace relationships and multiple patient cancellations also exist that may affect perceptions of the Level I Fieldwork. Although many studies exist to explain outcomes of Level I Fieldwork within the entire field of occupational therapy, limited information is available specific to the pediatric setting. There is no published research directly examining the perceptions of OT students' experience with Pediatric Level I Fieldwork.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this research study is to investigate UMMC student perceptions related to the Pediatric Level I Fieldwork experience.

- **PRIMARY AIM I:** Identify UMMC students' prior expectations of Pediatric Level I Fieldwork.
- **PRIMARY AIM II:** Identify factors that influenced the overall Pediatric Level I Fieldwork experience among UMMC students.
- **PRIMARY AIM III:** Determine how experiences during Pediatric Level I Fieldwork impacted the knowledge of occupational therapy practice among UMMC students.
- **PRIMARY AIM IV:** Discover how Pediatric Level I Fieldwork influenced students' plans for future employment.

REFERENCES ARE AVAILBLE UPON REQUEST.

## RESULTS

**Table 1. Sources of Anxiety (N=44)**

Source	n	%
Quizzed about my knowledge	36	81.8%
Writing a note	24	54.5%
Treating a client on the first day	24	54.5%
Interacting with parents, teachers, and other staff	20	45.5%
Completing an evaluation	14	31.8%
Ability to ask questions	14	31.8%
Working without a break	6	13.6%
Other	3	6.8%

**Table 2. Factor that had a positive or negative influence on Pediatric Level I Fieldwork experience.**

Factor	Positive Experience		Negative Experience	
	n	%	n	%
Hours of Work	40	93%	3	7%
Location	38	88.4%	5	11.6%
Perceived Preparedness	29	37.4%	14	32.6%
Previous Experience with Children	35	79.5%	9	20.5%
Overall Pediatric Experience	38	86.4%	6	13.6%
Relationship with Supervisor	36	83.7%	7	16.3%
Communication with Supervisor	36	83.7%	7	16.3%
Opportunity to Participate in Treatment	37	84.1%	7	15.9%
Supervisor Teaching Style	34	77.3%	10	22.7%
Freedom to ask Questions	39	90.7%	4	9.3%
Resources at Site	36	85.7%	6	14.3%

## METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study utilized a cross-sectional design to collect quantitative and qualitative data using an electronic survey. The survey consisted of 28 questions with several sub-questions regarding Level I Fieldwork expectations and perceptions following the experience. The 44 participants in the study were current students in the MOT or OTD class and graduates of the UMMC Occupational Therapy Class of 2019 all of whom who completed a Pediatric Level I Fieldwork. Quantitative data was analyzed from the completed electronic surveys using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0. while qualitative data was coded and analyzed to develop common themes in order to strengthen the quantitative information. Descriptive statistical analysis and crosstabulations were utilized to report information to generate a description of the perceptions of UMMC students related to the Level I Fieldwork experience.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the need for information examining students' Pediatric Level I Fieldwork experiences, a survey was developed, implemented, and results were examined for past and present UMMC occupational therapy students. Participants reported a desire for patient simulation, knowledge of treatment techniques, as well as student expectations prior to the experience. Anxiety was primarily driven by fear of being asked knowledge-based questions. Timely feedback, open communication, and explanation of rationale from the supervising therapist had the greatest influence on increased comfortability and a positive fieldwork experience. Negative experiences were often associated with individuals who had multiple supervisors, lack of communication, fieldwork grading discrepancies or a question of the supervisor's clinical competence. Future research studies should focus on the benefit of patient simulation and implementation of techniques prior to Level I Pediatric Fieldwork. Ways in which to communicate and establish student, as well as supervisor, expectations would also be beneficial.

## LIMITATIONS

- Potential recall bias
- Use of an original survey with possible unclear or ambiguous questions
- Potential non-response bias

## IMPLICATIONS

- Increase in course work on treatment techniques, behavior management, documentation, and pediatric medical conditions prior to beginning fieldwork may increase student's confidence in their knowledge and preparedness for the Pediatric Level I Fieldwork experience.
- By assigning fieldwork placements sooner, students will have time to develop a rapport with their supervisors. This can lead to a decrease in student's anxiety by understanding the supervisor's expectations of students' knowledge and desired level of treatment participation. Knowing the site's specific treatment techniques and common diagnosis treated may also decrease anxiety.
- Giving the students an opportunity to practice their skills through simulated patient scenarios may alleviate the general stress of first-time interactions with patients, patient's parents, and other professionals during Pediatric Level I Fieldwork.