

# Well-being of Early Childhood Intervention Service Providers



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## Introduction

- Service providers who support and improve the development of children with developmental differences are an integral part of macrosystems (Moody, 2016).
- The Texas Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program has 6,305 service providers who deliver life-changing therapies to 53,000+ infants from birth up to three years old (Texans Care for Children, 2017).
- ECI service providers spend extensive energy providing therapies, yet scarce research exists pertaining to their own well-being; however, for decades research has focused on caregivers' well-being (Yarrow et al., 1955; Lovell & Wetherell, 2016).
- Therefore, this study assessed the well-being of ECI service providers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Method

- Participants ( $n = 42$  years;  $M_{age} = 41.13$ ,  $SD = 9.35$ ; 100% female; 67% Hispanic/Latina and 33% White) were recruited from an ECI agency in South Texas. Specializations were early intervention specialists (EIS';  $n = 23$ ), speech-language pathologists (SLPs;  $n = 9$ ), occupational therapists (OTs;  $n = 6$ ), and management/leaders (M/Ls;  $n = 4$ ).
- Participants engaged in an hour-long virtual workshop with a developmental psychologist who provided effective strategies for improving and maintaining healthy physical and mental well-being (e.g., stress management; identifying signs of depression).
- After, participants completed an online survey through Qualtrics – self-reporting on their current physical well-being, mental well-being, how useful the workshop was, and how likely they were to recommend the workshop using a Likert scale from 1 (worst/least likely) to 10 (best/most likely). Lastly, participants responded to an open-ended question about what they learned during the workshop.

## Results

- Unequal sample sizes for service providers' groups did not allow for statistical group comparisons; however, descriptive statistics were conducted. See Figure 1 and Table 1.
- M/Ls reported the poorest physical well-being ( $M = 5.75$ ).
- SLPs and OTs reported the best physical well-being ( $M = 8.67$ ).
- SLPs reported the poorest mental well-being ( $M = 7.56$ ).
- M/Ls reported the best mental well-being ( $M = 8.25$ ).
- M/Ls found the workshop the most useful ( $M = 9.75$ ) and were the most likely to recommend the workshop to others ( $M = 10$ ).
- Participants also indicated what they learned during the workshop. See Table 2.

Figure 1. Report Identification Process

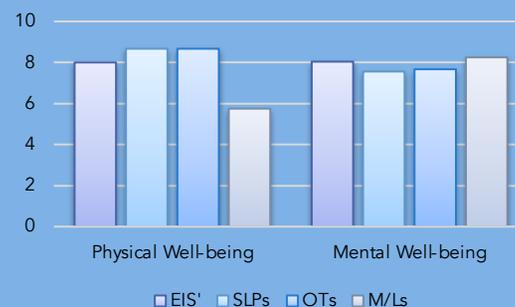


Table 1

Variables from Service Provider Survey

	Physical Well-being M (SD)	Mental Well-being M (SD)	Usefulness of Workshop M (SD)	Recommend Workshop M (SD)
Early Intervention Service Providers	8.00 (1.73)	8.04 (1.87)	8.70 (1.89)	8.65 (2.33)
Speech-Language Pathologists	8.67 (1.11)	7.56 (.88)	8.11 (1.97)	7.67 (2.69)
Occupational Therapists	8.67 (2.07)	7.67 (2.50)	7.33 (2.50)	8.33 (2.07)
Management/Leaders	5.75 (3.30)	8.25 (1.50)	9.75 (1.50)	10.00 (2.32)

Note. M = mean and SD = Standard deviation. Possible scores ranged from 1 (worst/least likely) to 10 (best/most likely).

Table 2

What Service Providers Learned During the Workshop

Example Quotes

- Participant 8: "The suggestions to do during anxiety"  
 Participant 9: "I love thinking about how others are dealing with everything that is going on"  
 Participant 10: "How different factors can predict amount of anxiety and stress levels"  
 Participant 18: "We often forget to take care of ourselves when trying to help others"  
 Participant 19: "It was really interesting to me that stress seems to be something we all go through, and talking about that with other coworkers may help reduce some of that"  
 Participant 23: "We need to maintain a good diet and exercise"  
 Participant 28: "People are not trained to cope with feelings well enough to become adults who cope effectively with stress"  
 Participant 37: "Stress, anxiety, depression, and family well-being play an active role in our effectiveness of our jobs"  
 Participant 38: "Feeling like I'm not alone and that stress, depression, etc. is fairly prevalent"  
 Participant 39: "We, as providers, often forget to take time for ourselves. I know this, but it makes me happy to know I'm not alone"

Note. This was the final survey item during which service providers responded to an open-ended question, "What stood out to you or what did you learn from this workshop?"

## Conclusions and Future Work

- This study was of the first to report on ECI service providers' well-being – especially during COVID-19.
- Findings indicated varying levels of well-being contingent on the service providers' positions (e.g., M/Ls = poorest physical well-being; SLPs = poorest mental well-being).
- From this workshop, ECI service providers learned the importance of self-care and the prevalence of mental distress – reminding them they are not alone during this pandemic.
- The well-being of ECI service providers should be further explored on a larger scale, beyond this moderate sized sample, especially in light of the continuance of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Efforts and conversations should cultivate improving their well-being given their tenacious work in children's lives and their contributions within macrosystems.

## Contact & Footnote

For more information regarding this research, please contact the PI, Dr. Jillian Pierucci, at [jpierucci@stmarytx.edu](mailto:jpierucci@stmarytx.edu). This poster was presented as part of the SSHD 2021-22 Conference Series on June 14, 2022.