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## Workload Model in School-Based Occupational Therapy Practice: Administrators' Perspective

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**Title:** Viability of the Workload Model in School-Based Occupational Therapy Practice

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**Lay Synopsis:** This study provides insights into school administrators' perceptions and knowledge related to OT services, specifically the workload model, and avenues for advocacy for expanding this model's use, to reduce the alarming rates of burnout.

**Abstract:**

Background: School-based occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) experience alarming levels of burnout and poor work satisfaction related to excessive caseload (Garfinkel & Seruya, 2018; Stephenson, 2019). The workload model has the potential for positive results (AOTA, 2014), as it compensates an OTP for all tasks performed, not just student-facing time (Garfinkel & Seruya, 2018; Corley et al., 2023). However, this model, has been promoted by the American Occupational Therapy Association for more than a decade, is not widely used (Garfinkel & Seruya, 2018; Corley et al., 2023). The reasons for the slow espousal of the model are not yet understood, but school administrators, with their overseeing roles, are believed to be the linchpin to a broader use of this model.

Objectives: To understand school district administrators' perspectives on the factors influencing occupational therapy service delivery and compensation.

Design: A phenomenological study.

Method: A purposeful sample (n=7) of elementary school administrators was recruited and interviewed. Transcribed and checked interviews were analyzed deductively using multiple coders approach. Code data was read and interpreted into themes which were discussed and confirmed with two other researchers. Triangulation of data was conducted by collecting artifacts (i.e., school mission statements and job descriptions of OTPs) and then comparing the data to confirm or refute themes. An audit trail and reflexivity journal were maintained to ensure credibility and dependability of data interpretation.

**Results:** The analysis revealed three interrelated themes: external factors, administrator beliefs/ knowledge, and service delivery. Within these three themes, six subthemes emerged: finances, type of employment of OTPs, staffing and time, regulating guidelines, valuing OTPs, and administrator perceptions of the workload model.

**Conclusion:** School administrators unequivocally value occupational therapy. They identify external factors, and expressed beliefs and knowledge that impact OT service delivery in schools. Avenues for promoting workload model adoption are inferred.

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#### **Keywords:**

Occupational Therapy, School-Based Practice, Compensation, Administrators

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