

Understanding Client and Caregiver Perspectives on Home Modifications to Improve Practice

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BACKGROUND

- With the increasing number of individuals aging in place or living with disabilities, effective home modifications are essential to support occupational engagement.
- Home modifications are evidence-based strategies that support safety, independence, and participation for people aging in place.
- Despite their proven benefits, these interventions are often underused in practice.
- Understanding client and caregiver perspectives is essential for connecting research to effective occupational therapy practice.
- Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance (PEOP) model**
 - Fueled the development of recruitment material and interview questions.
 - Provided a holistic perspective on home modifications.

OBJECTIVE

- To explore perceptions, awareness, and experiences of home modifications among individuals with disabilities and their caregivers.
- Study goal:** Improve understanding and acceptance of these modifications by identifying the factors that influence decision-making and satisfaction.

METHODS

Design

- A qualitative study using online semi-structured interviews.

Participants

- 11 individuals (7 people with disabilities; 4 caregivers).
- Inclusion criteria: age≥18, community-dwelling, either having a disability or serving as a caregiver.

Data Collection

- One 60-minute virtual semi-structured interview per participant.
- Interviews explored perceptions, awareness, and experiences with home modifications.

Analysis

- Inductive thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes.

FINDINGS

Major Theme	Subtheme	Participant Quote Example
 Safety, Function & Quality of Life	- Safety as a non-negotiable priority - Cost balanced with value - Independence in real-world spaces	"If you don't have a ramp and you can't get out of your house, it's isolation." (55 years old, Person with a disability)
 Envisioning the Future Self	- Aging in place goals - Early action as self-advocacy - Ownership of decisions	"Why wait until you've already had a problem?... They wait until there's an emergency... You can do this now or you can end up in a nursing home because you didn't do it preventatively." (44 years old, Person with a disability)
 Home as Identity & Resistance	- Fear of dependency - Protecting home meaning and appearance - Emotional unreadiness for support	"It's just a psychological thing... It would remind you that you were indeed handicapped in some way. I think that is just a huge negative [mentality]." (86 years old, Person with a disability)
 Navigating a Fragmented System	- Delays in service and funding - Financial and geographic inequities - Limited professional guidance	"There's very little medical support...the guidance from a healthcare provider was primarily from sources that were very, very overpriced." (58 years old, Caregiver)
 Bridging the Knowledge Gap	- Learning through experience - Clear information about options and funding - Technology expanding awareness	"Most people don't realize what a life changer certain things can be... Once you actually see [a recommended change or device] and experience it, then it's like, 'Oh, this might be kind of useful for me.'" (55 years old, Person with a disability)

DISCUSSION

- Our findings indicate that decisions about home modifications extend beyond physical need and are **strongly influenced by psychological, social, and informational factors**, including identity, future planning, system barriers, and access to knowledge.
- These factors help explain why evidence-based home modifications are often delayed or declined despite clear functional benefits.
- Understanding these influences provides insight into the gap between research evidence and real-world decision-making.
- Study Limitations:** This study is limited by a small sample size and reliance on self-reported experiences, which may limit generalizability.

References



Logic Model



CONCLUSION

- This study highlights a disconnect between research supporting home modifications and their implementation in everyday practice.
- Occupational therapists are uniquely positioned to bridge this gap by **addressing psychological, social, and informational factors early**, reframing **home modifications as proactive tools**, and guiding clients through **education, collaboration, and system navigation**.
- This approach can support informed decision-making, increase acceptance, and improve outcomes.

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