



# Facilitators and Barriers Affecting the Learnings of Occupational Therapy Interns Using Telehealth in Aruga UST OT Clinic: A Qualitative-Descriptive Study

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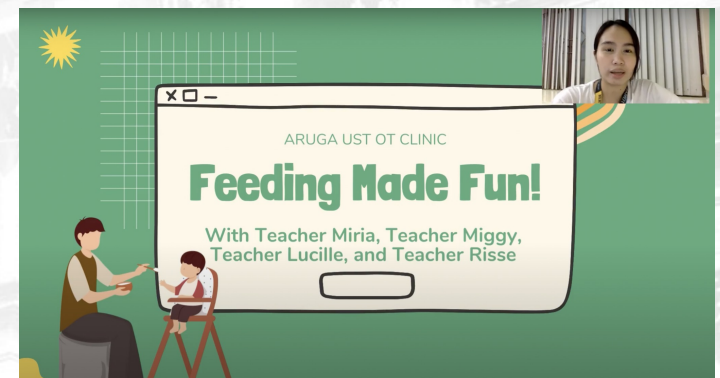
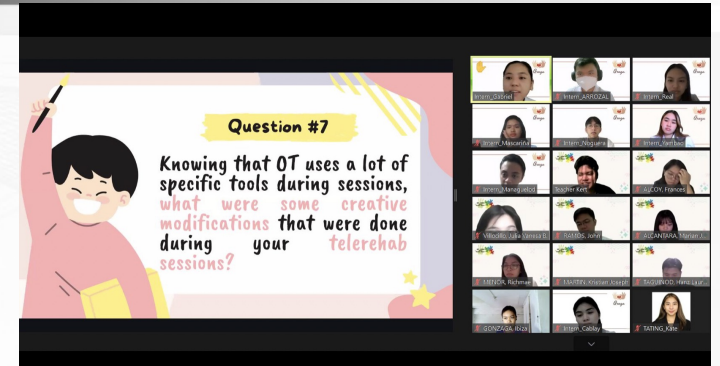
## Telehealth and OT Education



- Telehealth rapidly transformed OT education worldwide (Peart et al., 2022)
- Internship training shifted from in-person to virtual settings (Hynes et al., 2023)
- Telehealth is now embedded in contemporary OT practice

## Aruga UST OT Clinic

- **Aruga UST OT Clinic** is the training arm of the Department of Occupational Therapy, University of Santo Tomas
  - Established in 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Provides telehealth OT services to children, adults, and families
  - Serves as a clinical training platform for OT interns
  - Integrates service delivery, supervision, and professional formation



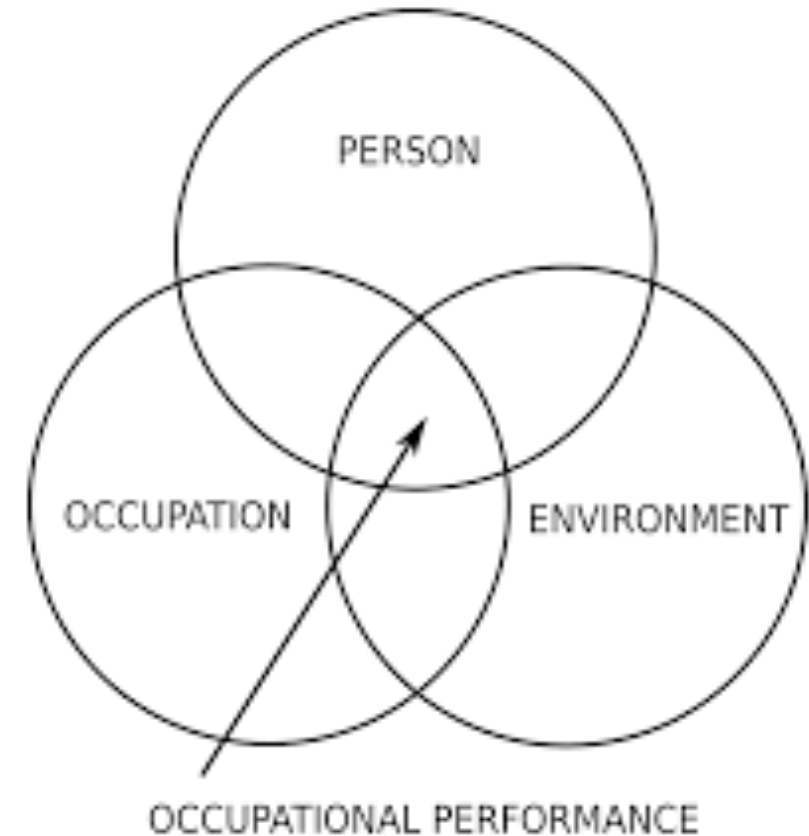
## Knowledge Gap

- Most studies focus on telehealth service effectiveness
- Limited evidence on intern learning experiences



## Conceptual Lens

- **PEO Model:** learning shaped by person, environment, and occupation
- **Global Learning Qualifications Framework (GLQF):**
  - Knowledge
  - Engagement
  - Integration





## Study Objective

- This study aims to describe the facilitators and barriers affecting the learnings of OT interns using telehealth in Aruga UST OT Clinic.

## Methodology



**Qualitative  
Descriptive  
Design**



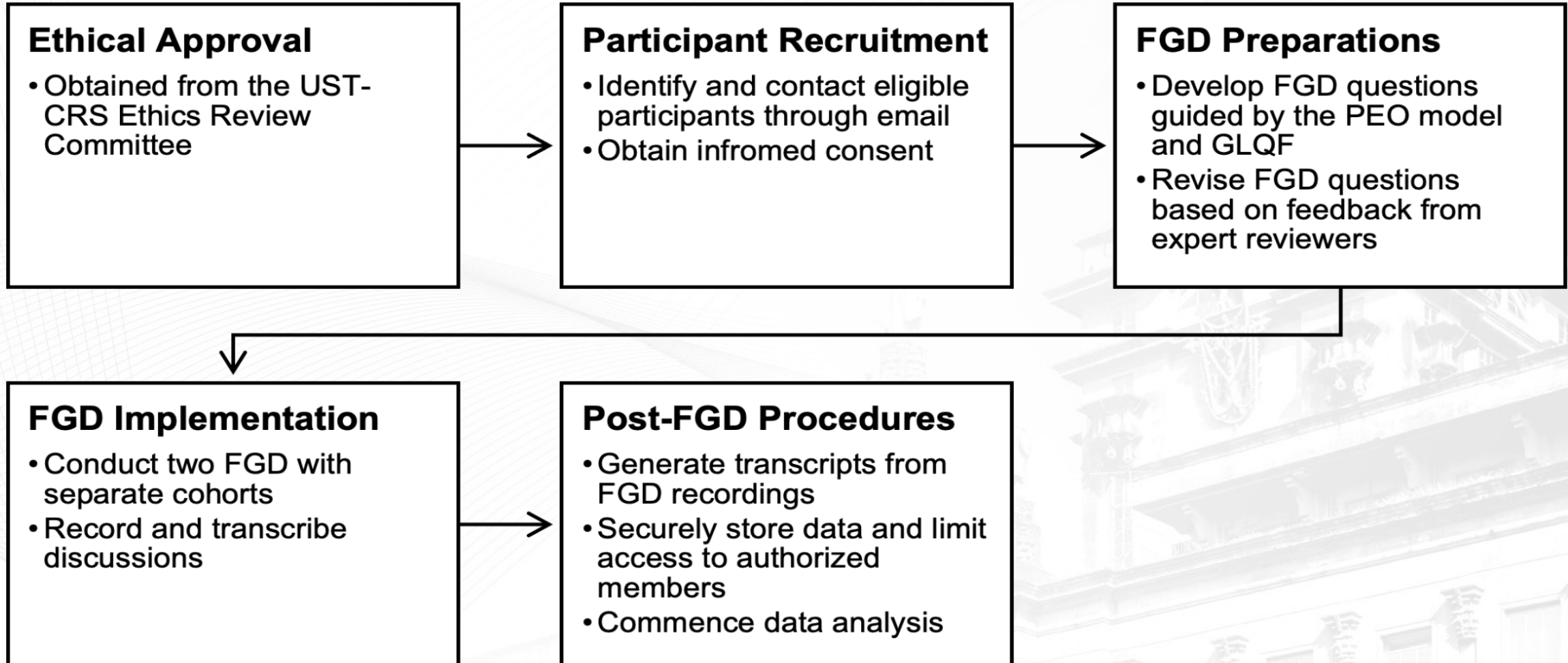
**13 OT Interns from Aruga UST OT Clinic**



**Inclusion Criteria:**

- 1. Graduates of the UST OT BSOT Program**
- 2. Completed a 1-month clinical rotation in Aruga**
- 3. Handled clients in Aruga thru Telehealth**

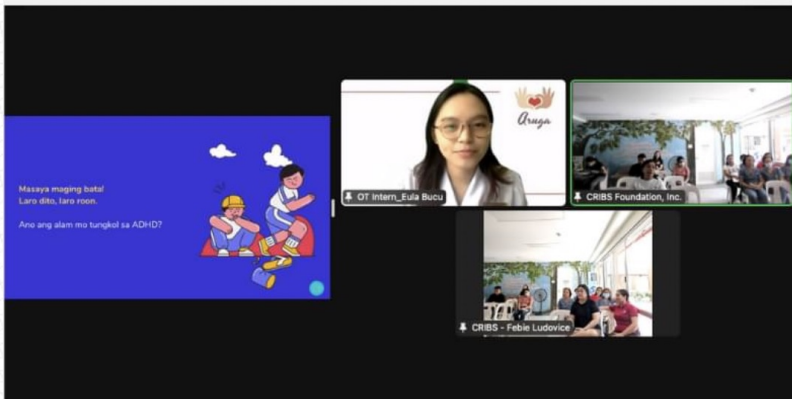
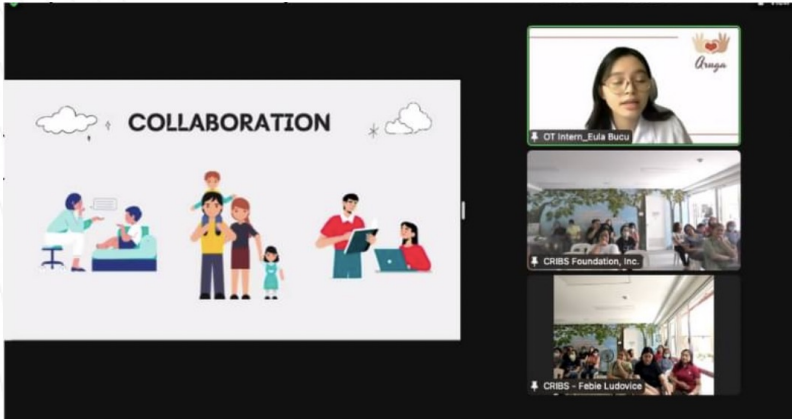
## Data Gathering Procedures



## Overview of Findings

Three interconnected themes influenced interns' learning:

1. Self-Directed Learning
2. Adaptation to the Telehealth Environment
3. Social Relationships for Learning



# Theme 1: Self-Directed Learning

## *Telehealth intensified learner responsibility*

### Facilitators

- Flexibility and adaptability
- Communication skills
- Ownership of learning

### Barriers

- Feelings of inadequacy
- Lack of confidence
- Mismatch with hands-on learning styles

## Theme 2: Adaptation to Telehealth

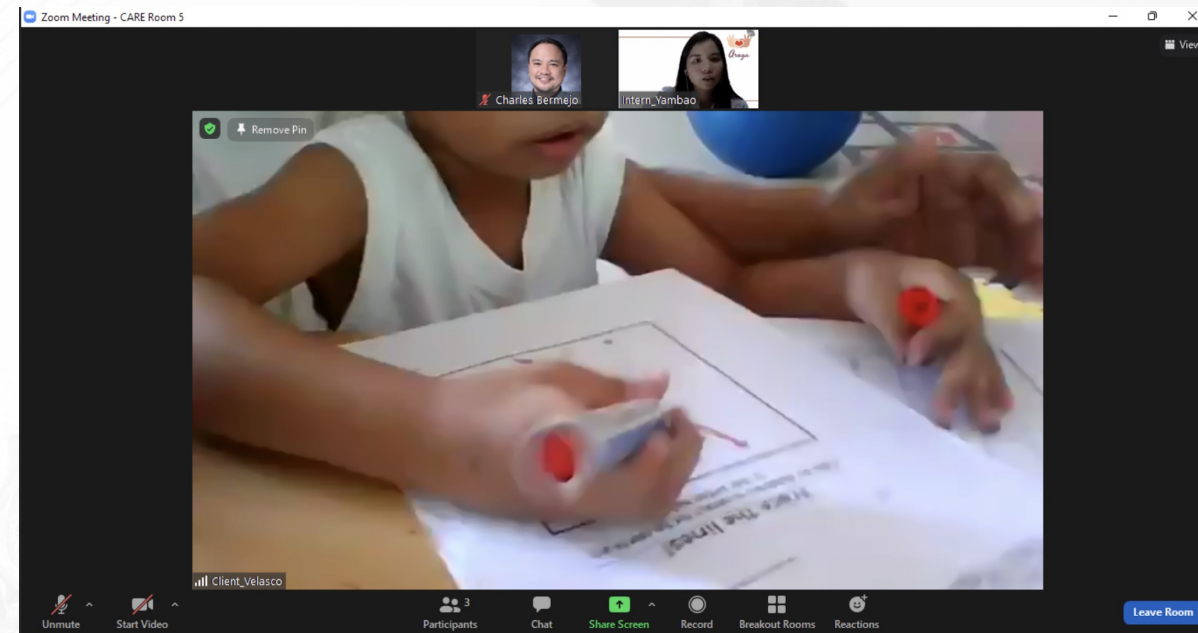
### *Learning shaped by technology and context*

#### Facilitators

- Digital tool mastery
- Creative use of resources
- Full participation in clinical processes

#### Barriers

- Internet instability
- Home-based distractions
- Physical and mental fatigue



## Theme 3: Social Relationships for Learning *Learning remained social- even online*



### **Facilitators**

- Supportive supervision
- Peer collaboration
- Diverse telehealth clientele

### **Barriers**

- Negative feedback approaches
- Limited peer connection

## Learning in Telehealth

- Telehealth amplified self-directed learning demands (Potvin et al, 2024)
- Strengths (flexibility, communication) → **accelerated growth**
- Weaknesses (low confidence, hands-on preference) → **learning barriers**
- Similar patterns reported in global OT fieldwork literature (Grenier, 2015; Bacon et al., 2022)
- Calls for intentional scaffolding, not assumption of independence

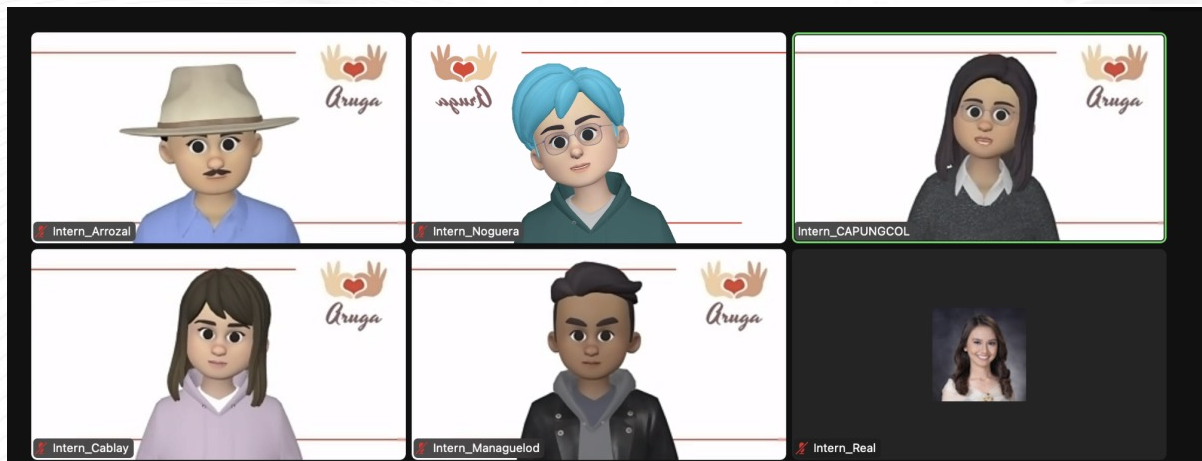
## Technology, Environment, and Well-Being Shape Learning



- Learning depended on (Muntz et al, 2021; Rao et al, 2022; Kazawa et al, 2022):
  - Digital tool mastery
  - Home-based learning environments
  - Physical and mental stamina
- Environmental instability (internet, space,) directly affected learning quality (Barrot et al, 2021; Costa, 2024)

## Learning Remains Social

- Supportive supervision → confidence, motivation, engagement
- Feedback approach mattered
- Peer connection mitigated isolation (Dzara et al, 2022)
- Diverse telehealth clientele enriched clinical reasoning



## Study Limitations

- Conducted in a single academic institution
- Context-specific telehealth internship model
- Retrospective self-reported intern experiences
- Focused on intern perspectives only



## OT Implication- Designing Telehealth Internships That Support Learning

- Prepare students explicitly for telehealth learning
- Scaffold self-directed learning early
- Train supervisors in tele-mentorship and feedback delivery
- Design telehealth placements as intentional learning environments, not emergency substitutes



## Key Messages

- Telehealth internships can support meaningful OT learning
- Learning is relational, contextual, and adaptive
- Quality supervision and preparation can determine success
- Well-designed telehealth training prepares future-ready OTs



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