

Spirituality in Early Intervention: Unveiling the Impact on Clinician Self-Efficacy, Attitudes, and Current Practice

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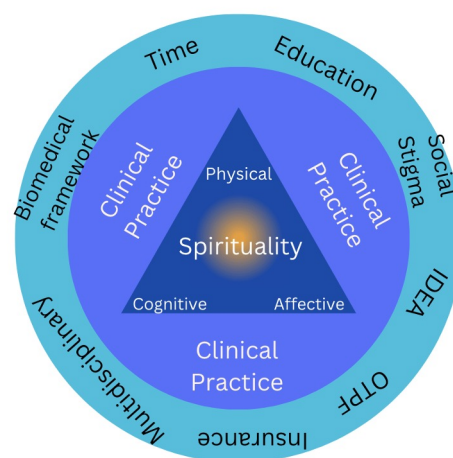
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BACKGROUND

Spirituality provides a framework for resilience by shaping how individuals understand their lived experiences and find meaning in adversity.

- Coping with end of life, Resilience in mental health disorders, Caregiver support of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Early Intervention (EI) is a transdisciplinary setting where providers empower caregivers to facilitate their child's participation in daily life (Muhlenhaupt et al., 2019).

The aim is to move toward a biopsychosocial-spiritual model such as the CMOP-E Model (Gang et al., 2022).



With varying definitions of spirituality, integrating meaning, purpose, and connectedness can significantly influence a family's overall well-being (AOTA, 2020, p. 51).

- Previous studies recognize the importance of spirituality within individual professions, but few have explored its role in early intervention practices.

Research Question

Do EI practitioners incorporate spirituality into practice and the rationales for why they do or do not?

METHODS

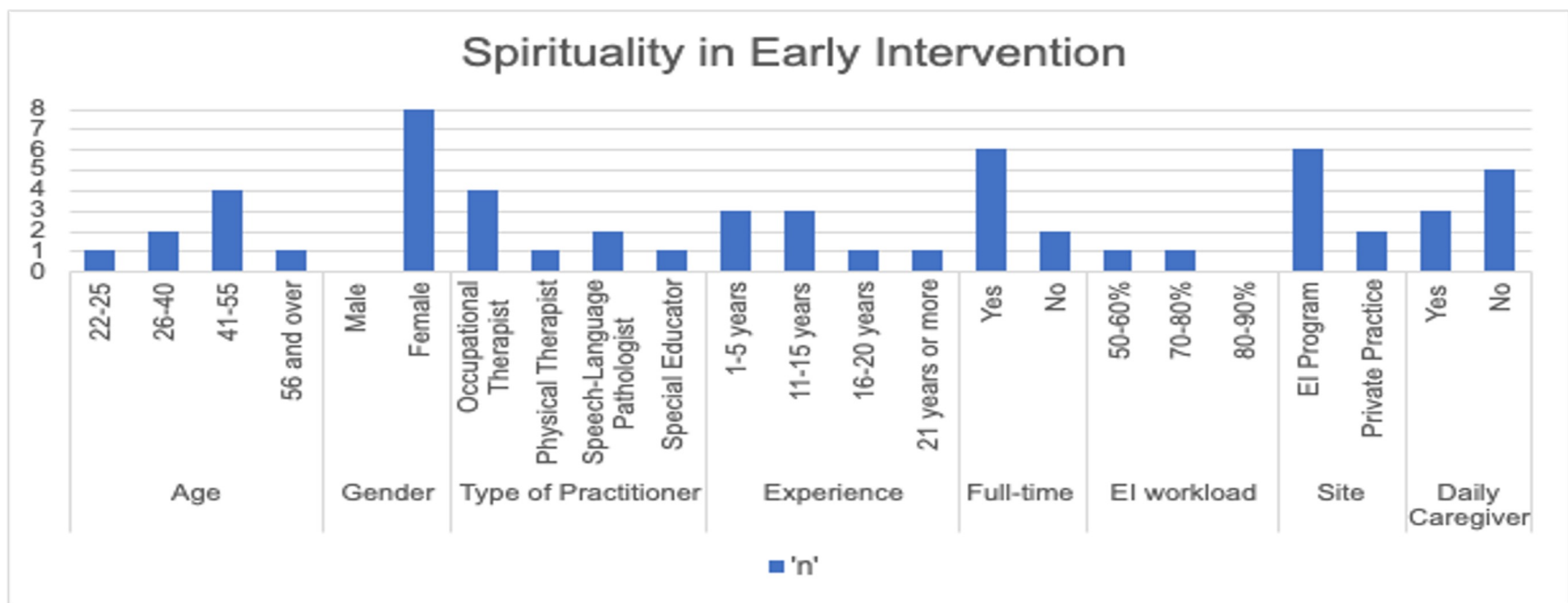
Demographic survey: Age, Type of practitioner, Years of experience, EI workload

Project Design: Two focus groups and member-checking interview with a semi-structured inquiry

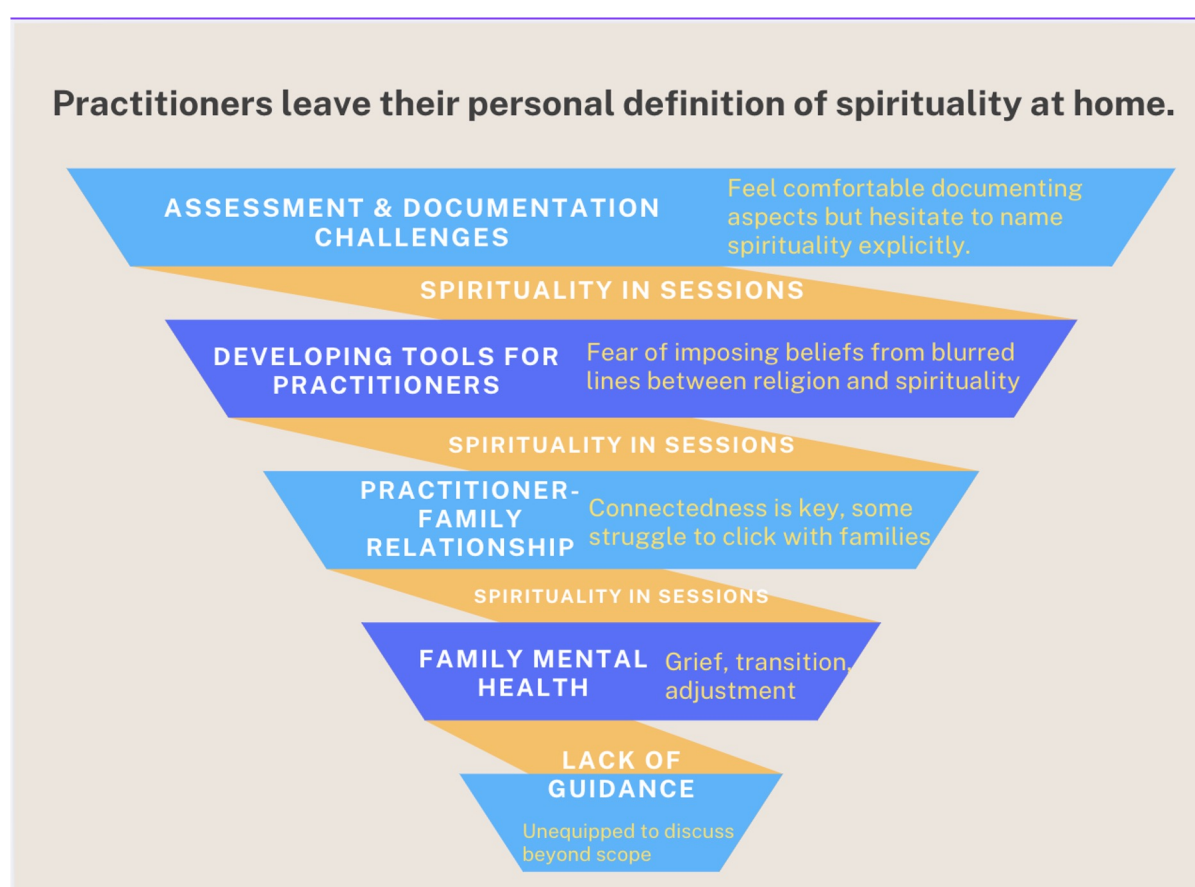
Analysis: Inductive and iterative process describing and categorizing transcriptions

Participants: n = 8 (4 OTs, 1 PT, 2 SLPs, 1 Special Educator), 5-15 years working in EI, majority working in EI programs, 1 in private practice

RESULTS



Categories/Themes	Supporting Quote
Personal vs. Professional Identity	<i>"I draw a very big line between what I say to the families and how I communicate with the families... I never openly state any of that."</i>
Ethical & Professional Concerns	<i>"A tug of war is not what I'm trying to say, but that's what it feels like... Is it religion? Is it spirituality? Am I not respecting what they want to do as a family?"</i>
Spirituality in Sessions	<i>"Yes, when it comes up... it shows itself immediately, in routines right? Then we can discuss it and continue to work with the family with whatever they want to work on with it."</i>
Strategies for Integration	<i>"Our role as practitioners is helping and supporting the family in those different ways or avenues and so one of those things that I think about is maybe... spirituality can be integrated from that standpoint working with the family"</i>
Finding Meaning in Practice	<i>"He was almost in his own world... but just to see him stop, and just kind of like snap into reality and realize that he accomplished something on his own, I think just made it all more meaningful to me."</i>
Practitioner-Family Relationship	<i>"Being able to be reflexive in your practice is something that really supports you in being able to be connected to a family."</i>



DISCUSSION

- Studying spirituality in EI practice is rarely examined.
- Findings suggest practitioners engage in spirituality-related conversations but hesitate to label spirituality as such.
- More research is needed to define spirituality's role in EI practice and determine best practices for integration.

Future Directions:

- Discussing therapeutic use of self as it relates to spirituality in larger settings
- Exploring how educational curricula can support spirituality in practice
- Identifying evidence-based approaches to documenting and discussing spirituality with families
- Developing a theoretical framework to guide EI clinicians in spirituality

Spirituality is in the room—just not by name.

(Fear, uncertainty, and lack of clarity keep it unspoken.)



Should spirituality remain implicit, or be central to practice?

How would supervisors and mentors perceive documenting about spirituality?

Are we addressing family well-being holistically or only in routines?

Ask yourself this...

How does spirituality fit into coaching and reflective questioning?

How is therapeutic use of self defined and applied in practice?

How can spirituality be framed as a tool for well-being, not belief?

Acknowledgement

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References