

## **Perceptions of authentic leadership development by occupational therapy students participating in a pilot national leadership camp in South Africa**

Fatima Hendricks, Susan Toth-Cohen

*Thomas Jefferson University, Pennsylvania, USA*

**Introduction:** Twenty-three years into democracy, deepening concern exists in the OT profession of South Africa that little progress has been made related to diversity OT leadership within the profession.

**Method:** This study is discovery-oriented in the area of authentic leadership development amongst primarily Black OT students attending a pilot OTASA National Student Leadership Camp and seeks to ascertain their perceptions on leadership. A qualitative descriptive study utilizing in-depth interviews with 12 OT students from six university OT programs in South Africa was deployed. Thematic content analysis was used.

**Results:** Four categories of participant perceptions on the authentic leadership development journey emerged: 1) Perceptions of self in relation to leadership - narrative, self-awareness, self-control, psychological capital 2) Perceptions of others - moral crisis, continued inequality, insincerity, greed, selfishness 3) Goals & aspirations 4) Effects of leadership on the system.

**Conclusions:** Recommendations for future practice include the promotion of story-telling as a means to sense-making about leadership journeying and experiences, and focused investment in camping for student leadership development.