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Katz School of Science and Health

Reducing Recidivism: An Occupational Therapy Supported Transition Employment Program

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ABSTRACT

Research shows high unemployment rates are related to increased recidivism rates (Ramakers et al., 2016, p. 15). Employment-based programs teach strictly vocational skills and do not incorporate the everyday skills needed to maintain long-term work and everyday life. The aim of this project, through the creation of educational modules, was to increase knowledge in recidivism reduction interventions and address implicit biases when working with this specialized population. This capstone project created an evidence-based 12-week program at the Afya Foundation that utilized an occupational therapy framework to help returning citizens secure employment and acquire the skills to succeed outside the penal system. Educational modules were created for Afya staff and occupational therapy fieldwork students to effectively deliver and ensure the program's sustainability. Outcomes of the capstone include a successful and attainable 12-week program and improvement of reflective abilities to reduce biases that would impact the interaction of the returning citizens participating in the program.

INTRODUCTION

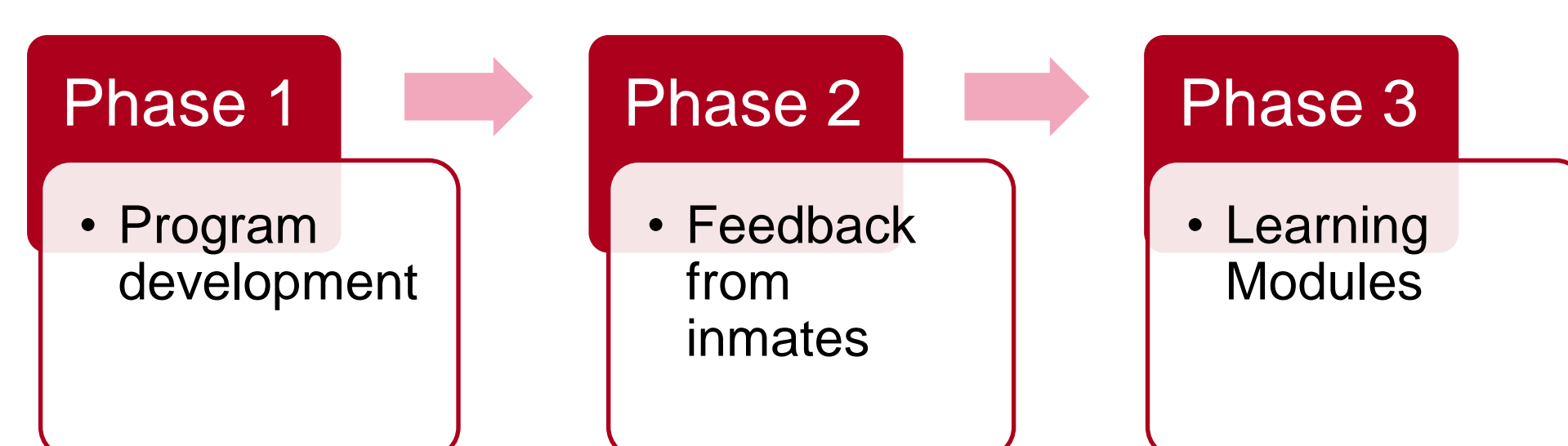
It is estimated that 68% of returning citizens were re-arrested within three years, 79% within six years, and 83% within nine years based on tracking over nine years (Alper et al., 2023). Research shows a direct correlation between high unemployment rates and increased recidivism rates (Graffam, 2014). However, strictly employment-based reentry programs do not work (Muhlhausen, 2018).

Gaps: Employment-based programs do not teach the soft and everyday skills needed to maintain long-term work and life outside of the penal system.

This project aimed to increase knowledge in recidivism reduction interventions through the creation of a 12-week supported transition employment program and to address implicit biases when working with this specialized population by creating training modules.

Supportive Transition to Employment Program (STEP) is a 12-week program that utilizes an occupational therapy framework to help returning citizens secure employment and create soft and hard skills to be successful outside of the penal system. STEP consists of two 1:1 sessions and one group session per week, focusing on instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), leisure exploration, and skills required to secure employment.

PROCEDURES



Phase 1: Program Development

Developed a 12-week supported transition to employment program (STEP) consisting of two 1:1 sessions and 1 group session per week focusing on IADLs, leisure exploration, and skills required to secure employment. The program will aid in money management, coping skills, resume skills, and job prep.

Phase 2: Inmate Feedback

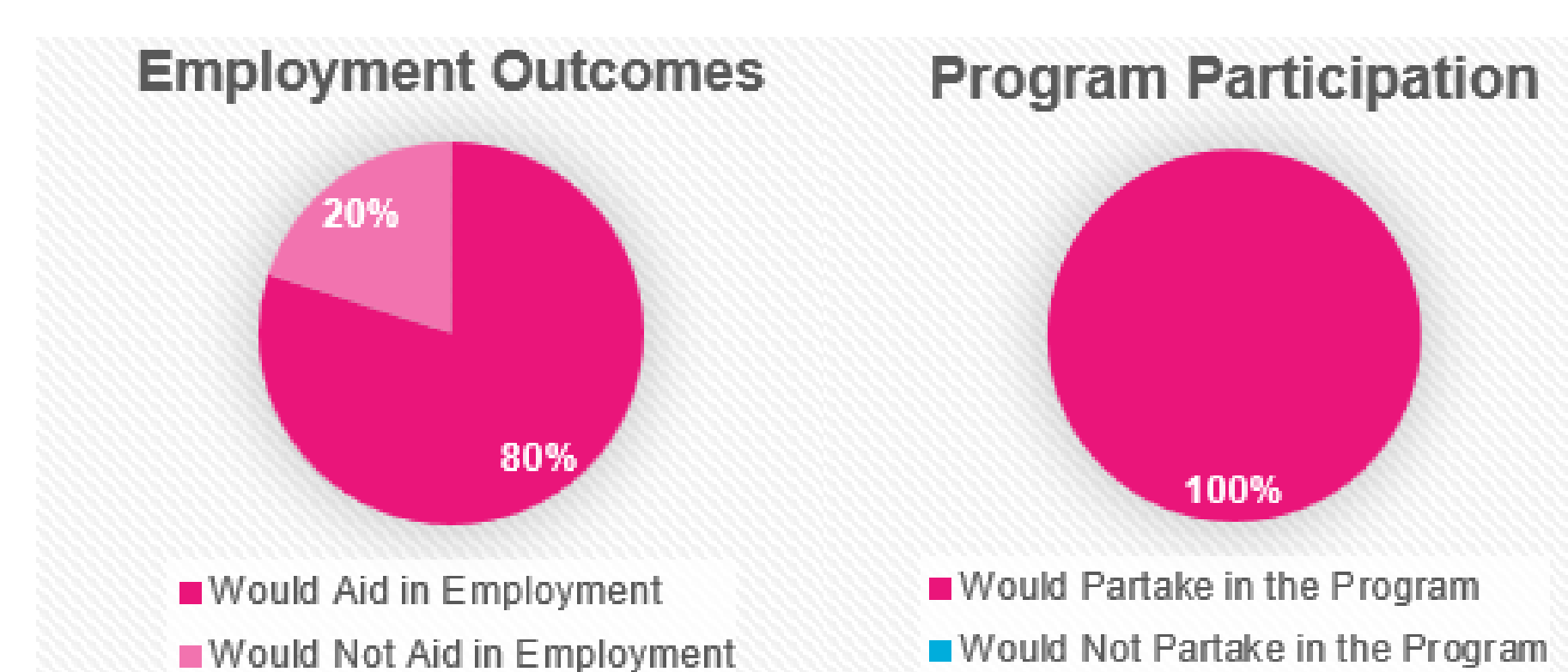
Five males completed a survey consisting of questions to gauge their willingness to participate in STEP and whether the inmate believes this will improve their chances of securing employment. It also asked what would motivate the returning citizens to participate, what they would hope to gain from the program, and the time frame in which they are interested in participating.

Phase 3: Learning Modules

Training modules utilizing PowerPoint, Google Form quizzes, and other resources were split into three sessions for educational purposes. These sessions included implicit bias training, program specifics, and the role of occupational therapy.

OUTCOMES

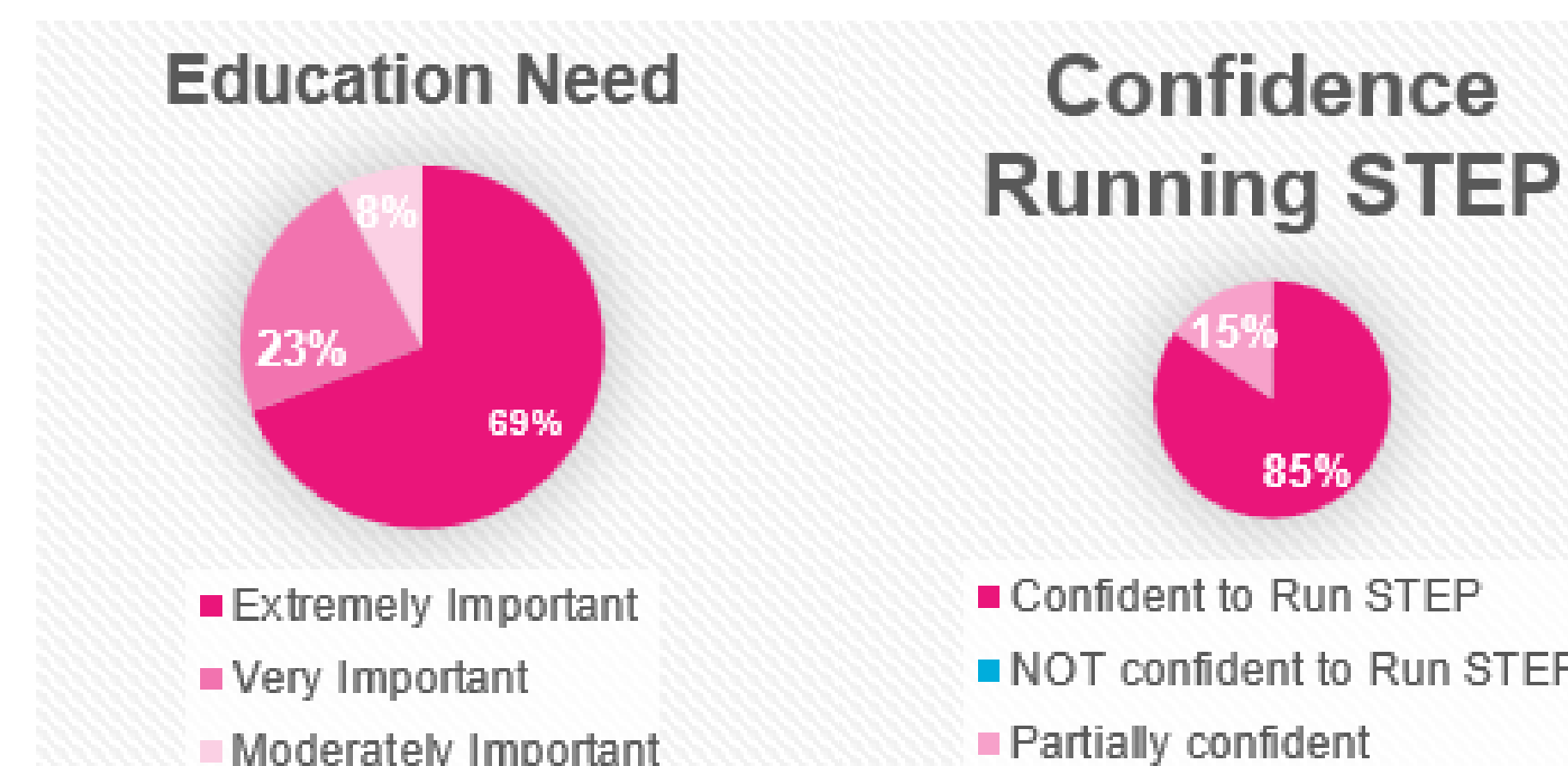
Inmates' Interest in STEP



4 out of 5 current inmates believe this program will improve their chances of employment.

5 out of 5 current inmates would partake in a 12-week program.

Efficacy of the Fieldwork Student's Learning Module



12 out of 13 believe it is extremely or very important to have training before working with this population.

11 out of 13 students believe these modules would have fully prepared them to run STEP.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Inmates believe that STEP would increase their chances of employment.
- Learning modules are essential to the success of running an occupational therapy-based reentry program.
- Limitations included a small group of responders for both the learning modules and the inmate population. Also, the inmates' reading comprehension level should be considered when administering the survey.
- **Recommendation:** Future research should be done to look at the efficacy of STEP. Future reentry programs should look into teaching real-life skills rather than strictly hard work skills to reduce recidivism.

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