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Occupational Therapy and Human Trafficking Recovery: A Novel Educational Model

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Abstract

Background:

- Human trafficking encompasses labor, sex, and child exploitation.
- Current recovery programs inadequately address the complex needs of trafficking survivors, increasing susceptibility to re-enter trafficking.
- Occupational therapy (OT) has seen success with similar populations, making it well-suited to meet the needs of trafficking survivors.
- Despite this potential, there is a notable lack of awareness within the OT community regarding their significant role in human trafficking recovery efforts.

General Focus:

- Increase knowledge among occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) on their role in the successful integration of human trafficking survivors.

Site:

- The Cleveland State University Occupational Therapy Doctorate Program emphasizes accessible, high-quality education to students and the community that enhances knowledge and abilities through engaged learning.

Methods:

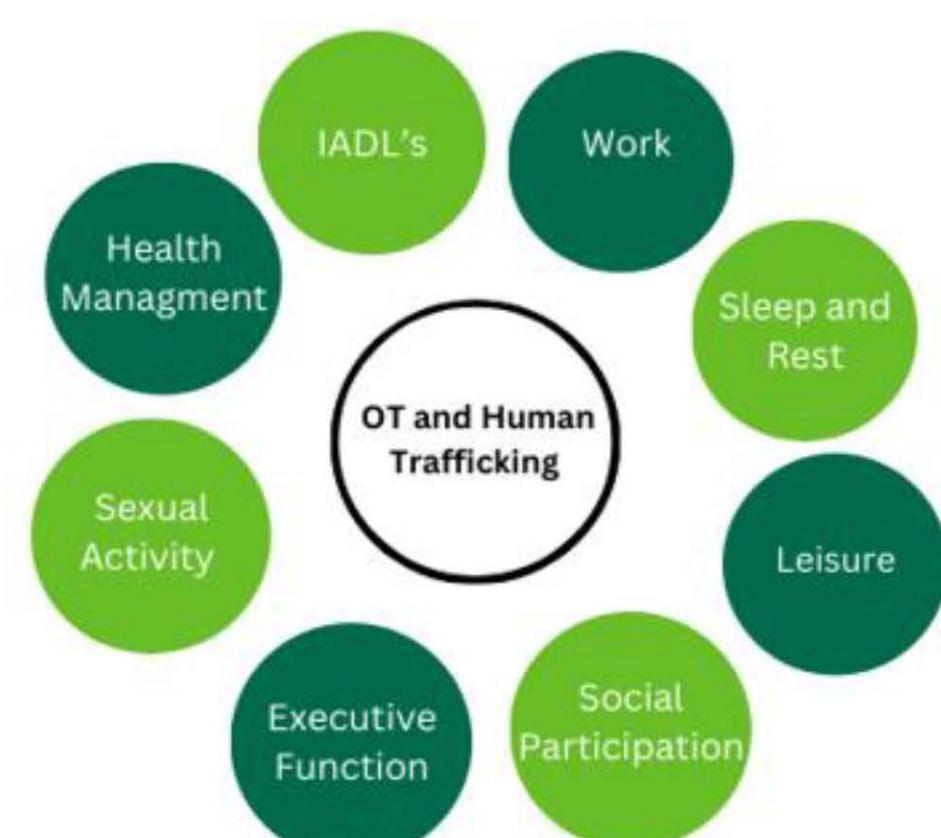
- Researched common deficits among human trafficking survivors and identified 8 key topics within the scope of OT practice: IADLs, work, leisure, sleep and rest, social participation, executive function, sexual activity, and health management.
- Limited evidence on effective OT interventions for this population prompted exploration of literature on similar groups like domestic violence survivors, homeless individuals, combat veterans, and more.
- Literature review revealed evidence-based interventions in these areas, which were adapted with a trauma-informed and culturally responsive focus for human trafficking survivors.
- Each of the 8 areas underwent research to identify interventions proven effective with similar populations and tailored for the unique needs of trafficking survivors.

Results:

- The development of an educational model rooted in trauma-informed care and cultural responsiveness to increase OTPs knowledge on human trafficking recovery has been completed.
- This model equips OTPs with the necessary skills and understanding to effectively support trafficking survivors in their recovery journey.

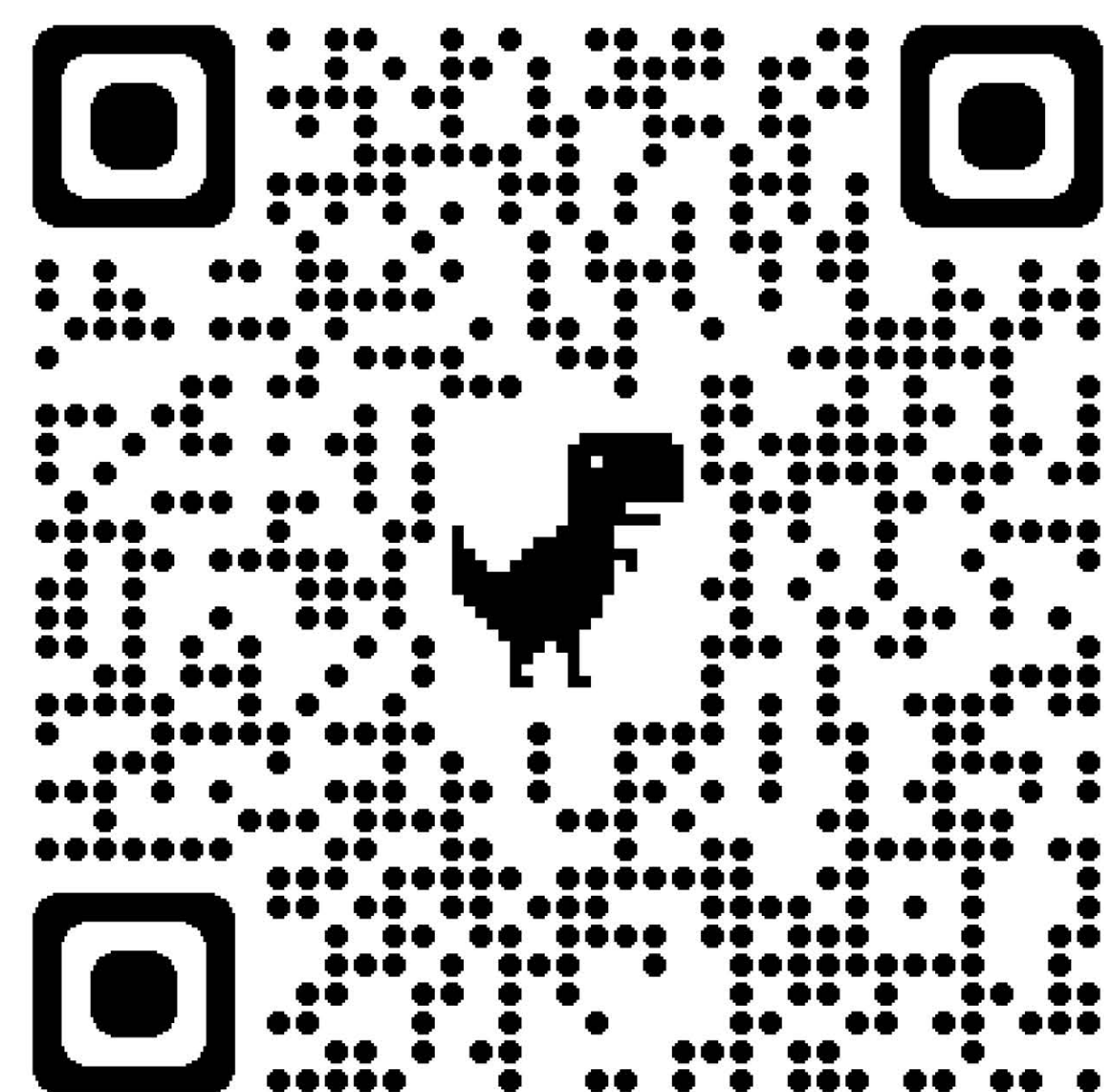
Conclusions:

- Occupational therapy is pivotal for human trafficking recovery.
- This model boosts OT community knowledge, advocating for their role in recovery.
- With greater awareness, therapists can better support survivors, aiding their successful rehabilitation and integration.



Brief bio

My name is Jackie, and I am an occupational therapy doctoral student at Cleveland State University. I received my Bachelor's at the University of Toledo, where I first was introduced to human trafficking. Through my graduate education, I recognized the pivotal role that occupational therapists could have in assisting survivors end the cycle of exploitation. I plan to utilize this knowledge to begin a program at local human trafficking shelters to continue advocacy for OT's role in this setting.



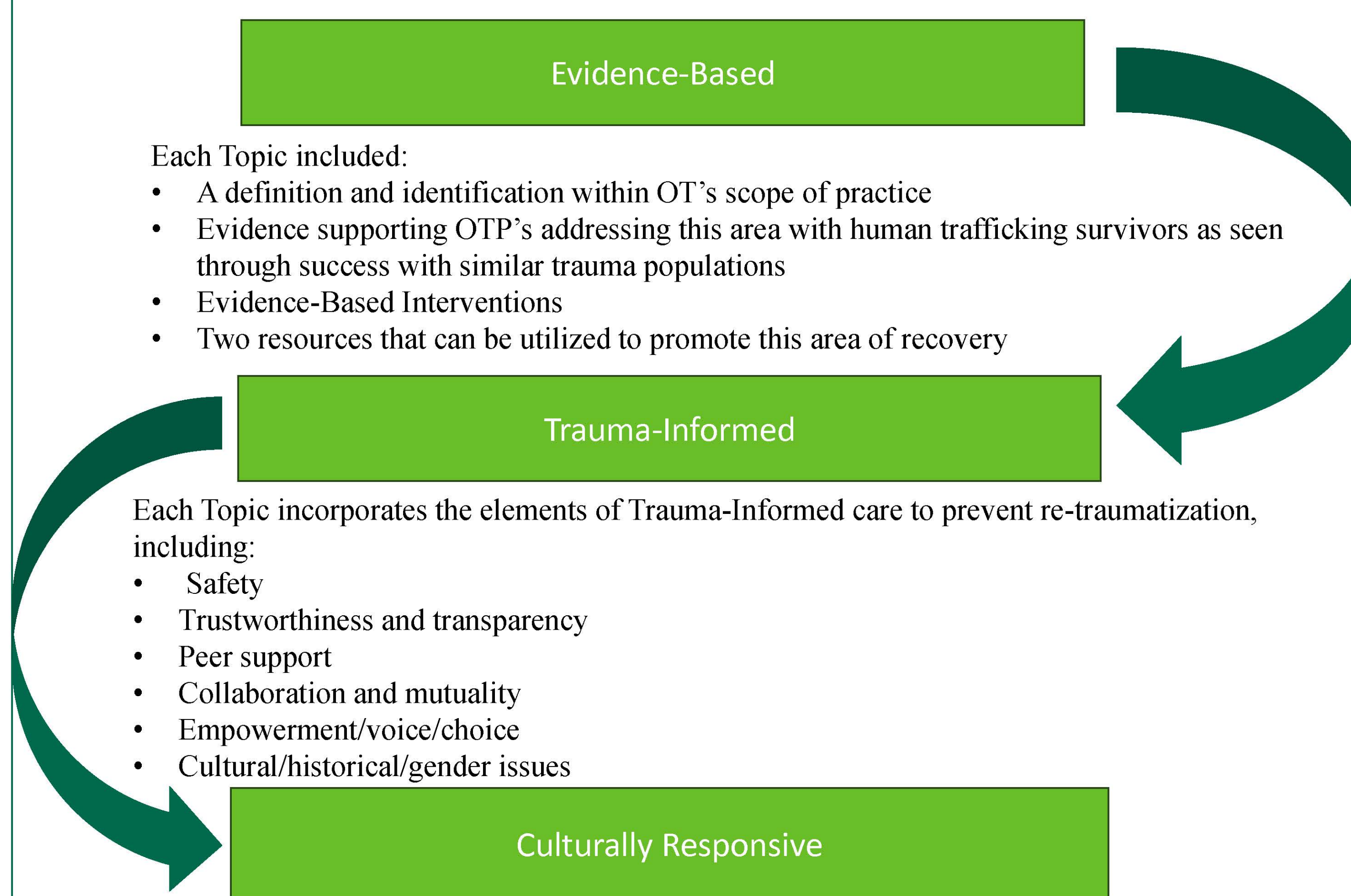
Capstone Experience and Implications

Literature Review and Annotated Bibliographies:

- In depth research was completed on human trafficking, trauma-informed care, and diversity/equity/inclusion:
- Identified 10 peer-reviewed journals for each topic.
 - Created an annotated bibliography of the literature.
 - Completed an updated literature review on the common gaps that leave human trafficking survivors susceptible to return to trafficking.

The Human Trafficking Recovery Model:

An evidence-based educational model was created with a focus on trauma-informed care and cultural responsiveness that addressed each of the 8 identified areas:



Key Takeaways:

1. OT has a pivotal role in the success of human trafficking recovery. OTPs are uniquely qualified to address the complex needs of survivors which often are unaddressed in the recovery process, leading to revictimization.
2. More education is needed to advocate for OTP's role in human trafficking recovery. As a new area of practice, many practitioners lack the knowledge of the impact they can have with this population. This capstone adds to the current knowledge supporting OT's work with human trafficking survivors and will hopefully contribute to the advocacy of OT within the recovery team.

Synthesis

Within OT literature, there is some evidence supporting OTP's role in the recovery of human trafficking survivors. However, there is very limited literature on specific interventions that can be effective with this population to successfully meet their needs. This capstone adds to OT literature by analyzing the evidence-based interventions that have success with similar populations and applying them to the human trafficking survivors using trauma-informed and culturally responsive strategies.

The results of this capstone project will increase OTP's knowledge on their role in human trafficking recovery, therefore supporting the increasing advocacy efforts for OT to be a member of the recovery team. Educating therapists about specific interventions that they can utilize when working with this population will bring more awareness to this area as well as empower therapists to become more active in ending the cycle of exploitation.

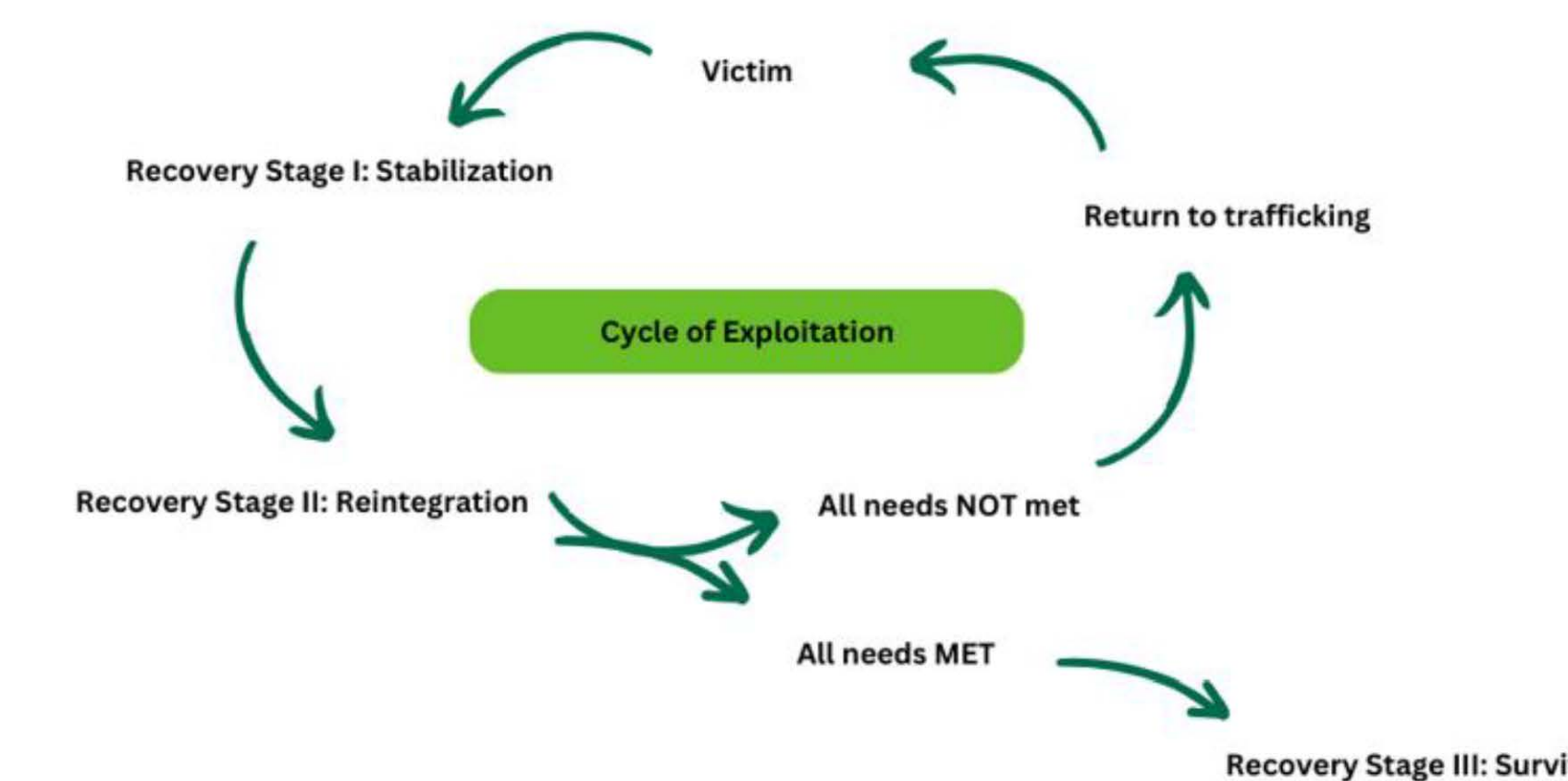
Challenges & Recommendations

Challenges:

- OT services for human trafficking survivors and similar populations are often overlooked compared to other groups like older adults or traumatic brain injury survivors.
- Limited literature exists on addressing specific occupations for these populations, requiring additional time and resources for research.
- Due to the high-risk nature of trafficking survivors, evaluating intervention effectiveness is challenging.
- Interventions based on evidence and successful outcomes with similar populations may vary in effectiveness for trafficking survivors.

Next Steps:

- Utilize this model to educate OTP's on this area of practice through a CEU seminar focused on human trafficking education.
- Utilizing this model to develop an occupation-based program for human trafficking survivors.
 - Eden House (New Orleans) is developing an OT program with the LSU OTD program. This capstone may contribute towards their program development.



Key References

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