



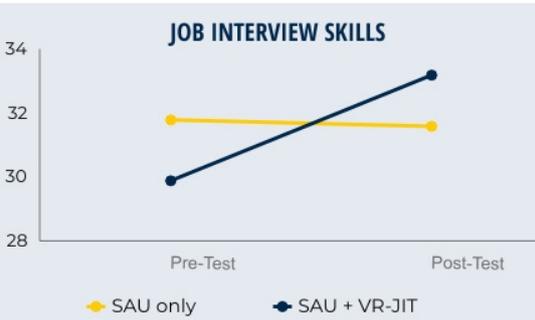
VIRTUAL JOB INTERVIEW TRAINING ENHANCES INTERVIEW SKILLS AMONG RETURNING CITIZENS

PRELIMINARY REPORT

PROJECT SUMMARY

Virtual Reality Job Interview Training (VR-JIT) is a computerized job interview simulator that was developed to address the gap in evidence-based practices used to facilitate job interview training within vocational services. Returning citizens struggle to obtain employment after release from prison and navigating job interviews is a critical barrier to obtaining employment. Implementing evidence-based interview training is a major gap in prison-based vocational services. We conducted a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the feasibility and initial effectiveness of Virtual Reality Job Interview Training within two prisons compared to employment readiness services-as-usual (SAU).

STUDY OUTCOMES FOR 44 MALE RETURNING CITIZENS



RETURNING CITIZENS FOUND VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TRAINING HIGHLY ACCEPTABLE AND USABLE

“I feel that it helped me to be better prepared for future job interviews.”

“Using the Molly training helped boost my confidence and make me better prepared when interviewing.”

QUOTES FROM RETURNING CITIZENS: “WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT THE VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TRAINING?”

“My favorite thing about the Molly training was how realistic it was, especially the questions.”

“I loved it all; it was an enjoyable experience and [I] highly recommend it to everyone.”

THE BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS REPORTS 44% OF PEOPLE RELEASED FROM STATE PRISONS ACROSS 30 STATES WERE REARRESTED WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR.

1. Unemployment is among the eight notable criminogenic risk factors related to recidivism.
2. Despite evidence suggesting that employment reduces recidivism, research suggests current employment ranges from 28% to 45% within one to four years after release.
3. Engaging in VR-JIT prior to release may help optimize employment after release.

RETURNING CITIZEN CHARACTERISTICS

Participants (ages 26-58) included 44 male returning citizens who were enrolled in two prison-based vocational rehabilitation programs. 46% Black or African American, 46% White, 7% Latinx, 4% more than one race, 21% with self-reported mental health disorder, 54% had a primary conviction that was a violent offense.

CONCLUSION

Results suggest VR-JIT is highly acceptable and highly usable among returning citizens. They adhered to and performed well with the training. Prison-based staff implemented VR-JIT with high fidelity after being trained by research staff. Results also suggest preliminary effectiveness of VR-JIT for prison-based services as trainees increased their job interview skills, reduced their job interview anxiety, and had greater odds of competitive employment within six months of their community re-entry, compared to returning citizens receiving services-as-usual.

CONTACT

Principal Investigator:
 Matthew J. Smith, PhD

Associate Professor
 School of Social Work
 University of Michigan

Email:
mattjsmi@umich.edu
 Twitter: @Dr_JobGetter
leveluplab.org