

How Competent are Occupational therapists in Working According to a Bio-Psycho-Social Model in Healthcare? The Current Status and Validation of a Scale

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Background: Over the past decades, there has been a paradigm shift from a purely biomedical towards a bio-psycho-social (BPS) conception of disability. However, there seems to be a gap between the rhetoric and reality of working within a BPS-model. It is not clear whether healthcare professionals show the necessary skills and competencies to act according to the BPS-model.

Objective: The aim of this study was to develop a scale to monitor the BPS-competencies of healthcare professionals, to define its factor-structure, to check internal consistency, test-retest reliability and feasibility.

Method: Item derivation was based on qualitative research with seven multidisciplinary focus-groups (n=58) of patients and professionals. In a cross-sectional study design, 368 healthcare professionals completed an online BPS-scale. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to determine dimensions. Statistical coherence was expressed in item-total correlations and in Cronbach's α coefficient. An intra-class-correlation coefficient was used for test-retest reliability.

Results: The qualitative study revealed 45 items. The EFA showed five dimensions labelled as: networking, using the expertise of the client, assessment and reporting, professional knowledge, and using the environment. The results show a strong homogeneity (item-total from 0.59 to 0.79) and a strong internal consistency (α from 0.75 to 0.82). ICC ranged between 0.82 and 0.93.

Conclusion: The BPS-scale appeared to be a valid and reliable measure to rate the BPS-competencies of the professionals and offers opportunities for an improvement in the healthcare delivery. Further research is necessary to test the construct validity and to detect whether the scale is responsive.