



UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTH DAKOTA**  
SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Meaningful and Psychologically Rewarding  
Occupations:  
A Cross-Cultural Perspective

Moses Ikiugu, PhD OTR/L



# Background

- Occupational therapy is based on the premise that participation in meaningful occupations facilitates health and wellbeing (AOTA, 2014; Arbesman & Mosley, 2012)
- Ikiugu et al. (2016) found that there is a difference between:
  - Meaningful; and
  - Psychologically rewarding occupations (which cause good mood and a sense of wellbeing)



# Purpose

- The purpose of this study was to replicate a study by Ikiugu et al. (2016) with a larger, more culturally diverse sample
- Research questions:
  - Were occupations perceived as meaningful by study participants different from those that were psychologically rewarding (elicited positive mood)?
  - Were psychological rewards (as indicated by positive mood) predictive of perceived meaningfulness of occupations?
  - Were there differences between United States and South African study participants when compared on perceived meaning of participation in occupations and associated mood?



# Methods

- *Design*
  - Experience Sampling Method (ESM)
- *Participants*
  - 20 students, faculty, and staff from the University of South Dakota
  - 31 students from Stellenbosch University and one occupational therapist from Cape Town, South Africa



# Methods

- *Research Instruments*
  - Rewarding and Meaningful Occupation Identification Tool (RMOIT)
    - Part 1 – Occupational documentation
    - Part 2 – Brief Mood Introspection Scale (Mayer & Gaschke, 2013)
    - Part 3 – Rating occupational Type
    - Part 4 – Engagement in Meaningful Activities Survey (EMAS) (Goldberg, Brintnell, & Goldberg, 2002)



# Procedure

- Cuing by phone to elicit a response:
  - 5 times/day
  - 6:00 am through midnight
  - 7 days
- Data Analysis
  - Discriminant Analysis
  - Linear regression
  - Crosstab analysis
  - Independent samples t-test
  - Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)



# Findings

- Meaningful and psychologically rewarding occupations discriminated among types of occupations,  $\lambda=.78$ ,  $\chi^2=148.89$ ,  $p<.0001$ , partial  $\eta^2=.08$ ; and  $\lambda=.79$ ,  $\chi^2=228.77$ ,  $p<.0001$ , partial  $\eta^2=.08$ .
- Mood predicted perceived meaningfulness of occupations,  $F(1, 610)=156.97$ ,  $p<.0001$ , adjusted  $R^2=.20$  (S. Africa);  $F(1, 948)=131.53$ ,  $p<.0001$ , adjusted  $R^2=.12$  (S. Dakota).
- Differences between South African and South Dakota participants when compared on perceived meaningfulness of occupations and mood,  $t(1238.37)=-31.10$ ,  $p<.0001$  and  $t(1603)=8.86$ ,  $p<.0001$
- Participants in S. Africa chose different types of occupations compared to S. Dakota participants, Pearson  $\chi^2(df=6, N=1623)=35.00$ ,  $p<.0001$ ,  $L\chi^2(df=6, N=1623)$ ,  $p<.0001$ , Cramer's  $V=.15$ .



**Table 1.**

Frequency of participation in various types of occupations (N=1623)

Occupational Type	Percentage (%) of Total Participation within Group	
	<u>United States Participants</u>	<u>South African Participants</u>
Fun	<b>15.6</b>	11.7
Mentally stimulating	11.0	<b>11.8</b>
Physically stimulating	<b>6.7</b>	4.6
A way of passing time	<b>8.0</b>	4.4
Obligation	<b>36.9</b>	35.8
Connecting with others	11.9	<b>14.1</b>
Other	9.8	<b>17.7</b>

Notes: Bolded percentages indicate the occupations in which one group participated more



# Discussion

- Findings in this study confirmed what was found by Ikiugu et al. (2016)
  - Both types physically stimulating and connecting people to others
  - Meaningful occupations more mentally stimulating
  - Psychologically rewarding occupations more fun
- For South African participants, psychologically rewarding occupations were also the most meaningful – Perceived to connect one with others



# Conclusion

- A combination of both psychologically rewarding and meaningful occupations would be the best method of optimizing health and wellbeing
  - Participating in occupations that are: mentally and physically challenging, connect one with others, and are fun



# References

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