

Relationship between life satisfaction and role involvement in people with physical disabilities.

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Introduction

As Vause-Earland stated in 1991 "Occupations are considered to be the building blocks of roles, which contribute to people's self-identity and sense of mastery, and provide fulfilment through social and productive participation". There is some evidence of the relationship between psychological constructs and involvement in occupational roles. Eklund (2001) found that five out of eight roles correlated with quality of life in psychiatric patients, being the friend role the most consistent. Following this line of research, McKenna, Broome & Lidde (2006) found a positive relationship between occupational roles and life satisfaction. They found that friend and family roles were the more valued ones, regardless of time spent in them. Furthermore, people who had lost a big number of roles in a period of time, scored lower in life satisfaction.

Aims

Given that occupational therapists go with people with physical disabilities in change processes, the goal of this study is to assess the importance of involvement in different roles and specially in significant roles in a both physically disabled and healthy people sample

The hypothesis of this research is that people with a higher number of significant roles will have higher life satisfaction. For this purpose we needed:

- To design a method for evaluating a "significant occupational roles" variable. An occupational role is significant when the person gives high score to in two or three of the following aspects: level of importance, level of self-efficacy and level of enjoyment in the involvement of the role. This connects with the concept of volition of Model of Human Occupation.
- To analyze the relations between the number of occupational roles, the number of significant occupational roles and life satisfaction.
- To study the behaviour of physical disability in the relationship between occupational roles and life satisfaction.

Method

Instrument: Questionnaire, based on Role Checklist of Model of Human Occupation, with questions about the involvement in roles and the Live Satisfaction Scale by Diener.

ROLES
Student
Worker
Caregiver
Housewife
Friend
Family member
Amateur
Participant in organizations
Volunteer

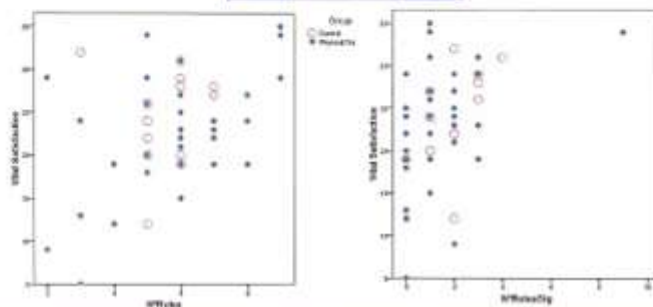
ROLES QUESTIONS
Time spent
Level of Importance (1 to 5)
Level of Efficacy (1 to 5)
Level of Enjoyment (1 to 5)



	Physical disabled group*	Control Group
N	30	14
Age (Mean)	43.2 years	35.7 years
Gender	18 Men and 12 women	7 Men and 7 women

*10 people with physical disabilities belong to an association of physical disability

Results



Correlation Analysis

		Number of roles	Number of significant roles
Physically Disabled Group	Spearman correlation	.301*	.265
	Spearman partial	.319	.061
Control Group	Spearman correlation	.470	.663**
	Spearman partial	.540	.607

Conclusions and Discussion

The correlation analysis shows that the number of roles correlates with the level of life satisfaction perceived by physical disabled group. In the control group, the correlation becomes significant when we create another variable: number of significative roles (roles with high score in two or three volitional components (value, enjoyment and efficacy)). We think that more research is needed in order to understand why in the case of people with physical disability the quantity of roles is enough to have high levels of life satisfaction. Maybe, the difficulty to participate in occupational roles in the society when you have a physical disability makes a difference. It would be interesting to increase the sample to continue studying these correlations.

These results are coherent with other research findings on the importance of volition for the occupation. In 1986 Smith, Kielhofner and Watts wrote that more research was needed when they found positive correlations between the degree of interest, value, and personal causation in occupation and life satisfaction in elderly patients. Another important finding was that the time spent in work and leisure was more highly correlated with high levels of life satisfaction than the time spent in daily life tasks and resting. Smith, Kielhofner and Watts wrote that "these findings indicate that occupational therapists may enhance the life satisfaction of their elderly patients by emphasizing interests, values, personal causation, work, and leisure in their treatment programs". Adding to these words, it is important to continue studying several aspects of the subjects' occupation in relation with health and well-being constructs in detail considering age, aspects of the diagnosis or disability and occupational patterns in order to find the best way a occupational therapist can go with people who are reconstructing their occupational identity.

References

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