

## **Zambian parents' perspectives on the occupational development of their children**

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Introduction: Research about children's development has principally been carried out in Western settings, derived from Westernized perspectives on childhood and development; accordingly, little is known about the development of children's occupations in a context that differs from a Western society. Given that our models of occupation all indicate that the environment is an important factor in human occupation, it follows that children's occupations do not develop according to a universal sequence of biologically pre-determined steps. Accordingly, it cannot be assumed that our Western knowledge of, and perspectives on occupational development apply outside that context. Therefore, there is a need to conduct context specific research of children's occupational development. Such research will not only further our understanding of children's occupational development but also contribute to our understanding of the nature of environmental influences on the specific activities of childhood and how to promote optimal development for children. Objectives: The purpose of this study was to explore what occupations the children of Zambia engage in and how their parents perceive the children's participation in these occupations. Methods: A naturalistic observational study was employed to study everyday occupations of 16-20 Zambian children. In addition, face to face interviews were conducted with 16-20 parents in their homes. Data analysis of both the observations and interviews consisted of thematic analysis as described by Braun & Clarke.<sup>1</sup> Results: Completing the aforementioned process enabled a framework to be constructed that explains the relationship between parents' perceptions and their children's occupational development. Practice Implications: Understanding of the contextual factors of occupation will enable therapists to provide services to children and their families that are culturally sensitive and relevant. Conclusion: This study provides some preliminary descriptions of the occupations of children in Zambia and how their parents perceive these. It also prompts us to critically reflect on the Westernized view of children's occupations and expand our thinking to understand the reasons that contribute to why, how, where, and when children engage in their occupations.

### Reference List:

- 1) Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.