

The effect of occupational performance, occupational overload and social support on health and satisfaction with life among mothers

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One of the founding assumptions underlying occupational therapy is the belief that there is a strong relationship between occupation and health and well being. It is assumed that poor occupational performance or occupational overload may cause a negative effect on health. Women juggling multiple roles experience occupational overload. Factors such as paid work, caring for children and lack of support have effects on women's health and life satisfaction.

The purpose of this study was to examine three possible theoretical models to explain mothers' health and life satisfaction from an occupational perspective.

The study included 150 mothers between the ages of 25-45, who at least one of their children is between the ages one to 10 years. Data was collected by means of eight questionnaires: Occupational Performance History Interview (OPHI-II); The Role Checklist; The Short Form Health Survey Questionnaire (SF-36); The Self Rated Health (SRH); The Satisfaction with Life Scale; Maternal Social Support Index (MSSI); Health behavior questionnaire and a demographic questionnaire.

The three models were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

The results show that the second model is the plausible, sufficient and parsimonious of the three models tested. The findings related to the goodness of fit of the alternative models teach that according to the second model social support has a direct effect on mothers' physical health and life satisfaction and indirect effect mediated through occupational performance variables: social support has positive impact on occupational settings, which positively effect occupational competence, which has a positive effect on mother's mental health and life satisfaction. Role overload on the other hand, does not affect mothers' health and life satisfaction.

The study results reinforce the belief that there is a strong relationship between occupational performance and health and well being. These results indicate that mothers can benefit from occupational therapy services even when their children do not have a disability. The results support the need to develop occupational therapy intervention among mothers from various sectors in the community. This unique intervention should emphasis improving occupational performance by strengthening the mother's occupational competence and adapting her environment to fit her occupational needs.