

Occupation in context: A study of the everyday occupations of Ugandan children

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Introduction: Conducting research on children's occupations in their own environments is important given that children's occupations do not develop according to a universal sequence of steps. Therefore, rather than attempting to uncover 'universal' stages of children's occupational development, this research was guided by the belief that occupational development unfolds from a unique interplay of individuals, occupations, and environments¹; thus, the occupations of children within a Ugandan context had a strong potential to be different than those of other children. Objectives: The purpose of this study was to describe the outdoor occupations in which children in rural Uganda engage. Methods: A naturalistic observational study was undertaken to describe the everyday occupations of Ugandan children in a variety of outdoor contexts. The constant comparative approach was used for data analysis. Results: Observations of the children's occupations fell into three categories; play, work, and passing time, with each being comprised of a number of subcategories. Three common threads crossed all three categories of occupations: groups, having fun, and using environmental opportunities. In observing the children and developing familiarity with the culture in which they lived, there were many contextual factors that appeared to contribute to and offer an explanation of the categories and threads that underlined the occupations of these Ugandan children. These factors included resources and barriers within the physical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. Interestingly, there were also universals noted in the children's occupations that seem to transcend context. Practice Implications: It is important for therapists to understand the various factors, contextual and child specific, that need to be considered when examining children's occupations. Conclusion: The Ugandan environment affords occupational opportunities for children that are unique to their part of the world due to the social, cultural, economic, political, and physical contexts that differ from what one is accustomed to in Western societies.

Reference List:

(1) Davis, J. A., & Polatajko, H. J. (2010). Occupational development. In C. Christiansen & E. Townsend (Eds.), *Introduction to occupation: The art and science of living* (2nd ed.; pp. 135-174). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.