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Instrumentalism in Occupational Therapy: Development and Validation of a Philosophically Grounded Theoretical Conceptual Model of Practice

Moses Ikiugu

The University of South Dakota, Vermillion, South Dakota, United States

Introduction:

It has been argued that the philosophical foundation of occupational therapy is pragmatism (Breines, 1986; Cutchin, 2004; Ikiugu, 2001; Ikiugu & Schultz, 2006). Exploring ways of grounding practice and theoretical development on a framework derived from the principles, values, and assumptions of the philosophy of pragmatism could therefore help enhance the profession's unique identity. Ikiugu (2007, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c) developed a theoretical conceptual practice model for use by occupational therapists in which he operationalized John Dewey's pragmatic construct of instrumentalism for application in occupational therapy practice. He named the newly developed conceptual model "Instrumentalism in Occupational Therapy (IOT)".

Objectives:

In this poster, the following will be presented:

1. Development of the IOT theoretical conceptual model through type I applied scientific inquiry using Mosey's (1996) extrapolation method
2. Evidence based on preliminary type II inquiry of the validity of its theoretical propositions and its clinical efficacy

Description/report

Using Mosey's (1996) nine-step extrapolation method (see also Ikiugu, in press), the model was created to address the perceived problem of lack of clarity about the profession's unique identity. John Dewey's pragmatic construct of instrumentalism (notion that the mind is a tool for use by human beings to help them adapt to their environments) was operationalized for application in occupational therapy practice. Dynamical systems theory was used as the scientific framework for the model. A number of pilot studies (type II basic and applied scientific inquiry) have been conducted to test the validity of the model's theoretical propositions, validity and reliability of its assessments, and the clinical efficacy of its guidelines for intervention (Ikiugu, 2009; Ikiugu, Anderson, & Manas, 2008; Ikiugu & Ciaravino, 2006; Ikiugu & Rosso, 2005).

Conclusion

Results from the pilot studies indicate that the model's theoretical propositions may be valid. Its guidelines for intervention have promise as clinical tools to guide rehabilitation of adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD), and its assessments have the potential to have proven reliability and validity as occupational performance measurement instruments.

Contribution to practice of occupational therapy

The model offers occupational therapists a conceptual tool for practice that can be defended using a sound scientific framework and well established philosophical values, assumptions, and principles.