

Development and pre-test of a person-environment assessment tool for home-dwelling visually impaired adults

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Introduction: Many countries are challenged by the aging population and its increasing rate of permanent impairments such as visual impairment. There is however a lack in the literature of home-based assessment tools that have been validated with visually impaired adults and elderly on the basis of a conceptual framework. Occupational therapists need such an assessment tool to analyse the person-environment relationship at home.

Objectives: The goal of this research was to develop and pre-test the "Home Assessment of Person-environment interaction for Visually Impaired Adults (HOPE-Visual version)". This tool is based on the Model of Competence and on the HOPE, initially developed for a population with motor disabilities.

Methods: Two qualitative studies were conducted 1) Focus groups and semi-structured individual interviews were used for data collection with professionals, visually impaired persons, and informal caregivers. A list of codes, based on the Model of Competence, was used for content analysis. 2) The resulting assessment tool was pre-tested by two professionals and analyzed in extended audio-recorded discussions.

Results: 1) The initial assessment tool needs changes to be adapted for visually impaired adults. Professionals proposed content and formal changes in the assessment. Caregivers and visually impaired persons discussed about activities and problems at home. 2) The pre-test allows some clarifications in the guide and professionals involved are very enthusiastic about it. The final assessment tool objective is: i) to identify elements involved in the person-environment interaction at home, leading to competence situations or handicap creating situation; ii) to identify person's vision-related needs, from a person-environment interaction perspective. The assessment tool is divided in two parts: "Competence and Handicap Creating Situation Screening" and "In-depth Person-Environment Interaction Assessment".

Conclusion: HOPE-Visual version allows assessing issues like: story of incidents, adaptation to vision loss, characteristics disturbing competency situations, and perceptions and expectations regarding significant activities and roles of the person and caregiver.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy: By using an analysis structure based on a person-environment theoretical model, this new client-centered assessment tool fills scientific and clinical gaps, standardizes the evaluation process, and documents the intervention by providing an understanding of the home context.