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Scrutinizing the applicability of the dominant classification of occupations into self-care, productivity, and leisure in the context of the caste system in India

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Introduction: India's dominant Hindu society has traditionally used a 'caste' system to segregate people based on religion, ethnicity, geographical location, gender and language; and, most particularly, based on occupation. Although modern Indian society strives not to differentiate individuals based on this system, through the provision of caste-based exemptions for various educational and work-related ventures, occupational classifications informed by this system are still evident. Furthermore, this system has traditionally determined individuals' access to position, power, opportunities and privileges within Indian society. Occupational Therapists working in India must understand inherent caste-based inequalities and their impact on occupations. Further, examination of India's caste system provides a unique context for exploring the cultural relevance of occupational therapy's dominant occupational categories.

Objective: This presentation will help participants understand India's caste system and its implications for classifying occupations.

Approach: Using critical perspectives, this presentation scrutinizes dominant occupational categories - self-care, productivity, and leisure - and explores their relevance in the context of India's caste system.

Practice Implications: Occupational therapy's ideational framework is borrowed from Western contexts and transplanted into the Indian practice context. Many assumptions about occupation are portrayed as universal, yet the validity of these assumptions is rarely tested in diverse contexts. The categorization of occupation into three specific categories requires critical scrutiny, especially in an Indian context where the caste system still determines societal position, power dynamics, and role segregation.

Conclusion: The information derived from this presentation will aid in understanding India's caste system, its impact on occupation and its implications for occupational categories.