

South African occupational therapists' perception on self-employment

Luther Monareng

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction: South Africa is faced with high rates of unemployment that increases annually. This issue is no exception to clients seen by occupational therapists. Due to low rates of return to work post injury and therapy, clients resort to relying on a disability grant as a means of financial income adding further to the burden on families and the government. Due to the nature of their training and a professional philosophy based on occupation, occupational therapists could assist clients in considering self-employment if they cannot return to work post injury.

Objectives: The objectives of the survey were to determine what occupational therapists 1) know about self-employment, 2) see as their role is in facilitating self-employment in unemployed patients with disability and 3) to determine how occupational therapists assess and identify potential for self-employment in unemployed patients with disability

Method: An electronic survey was sent to occupational therapists practising in South Africa registered with OTASA.

Results: Of the 85 respondents, 38% have had experience with assisting patients with self-employment while 82% felt this was the role of the occupational therapist. Only 7% of respondents indicated they felt adequately skilled to deal with identifying patients suitable for self-employment and guiding them in achieving their goal. Various barriers to assisting patients with exploring self-employment opportunities were described.

Conclusion: South African occupational therapists show a need for the profession to transform and align with the call from the South African government to consider self-employment as an avenue to combat unemployment.