

Exploring gender disparities and influences in Occupational Therapy Practice in Mauritius

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Introduction: The high number of women forming part of the Occupational Therapy (OT) profession in Mauritius leads to a gender imbalance in the profession leading to OT being a female-dominated profession. It is therefore important to understand the impact on such an imbalance on the profession and practice.

Objective: To explore the gender imbalance in OT profession in Mauritius and the way gender, gendered assumptions and expectations construct OT as a 'gendered' profession.

Methodology: A qualitative research paradigm using a phenomenological approach was used to collect data from 15 Mauritian Occupational Therapists. Interviews were conducted with each Occupational Therapist via Skype software. Responses were hand-written and audio-recorded with consent of practitioners. Content Analysis was used to analyze data collected and determine the perceptions of Occupational Therapists concerning gender imbalance.

Results: The participants agreed that OT is gender-dominated profession in Mauritius but supported the idea that the profession should be gender diverse. Results also showed that gender impacts recruitment and professional practices. However gender was not found to have influenced the practitioners' decision to choose OT as a profession or their motivation to exert in practice though it was identified as a barrier as well as an advantage in various circumstances.

Conclusion: While OT was clearly a 'gendered' profession in Mauritius, practitioners did not consider gender as a differentiating factor in effective and efficient practice. However it is important to further understand how external elements (employers or clients) perceive the gender imbalance and its possible impact on practice.