

The use of occupation and activity concepts in Occupational Therapy: a systematic literature review¹

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Abstract: Introduction: The occupation and activity concepts are central for Occupational Therapy, and have been used diversely over time according to the country, culture and historical time. Objective: This study aims at contributing to the knowledge on the use of occupation and activity concepts in Occupational Therapy in the national and international literature. Method: We conducted a systematic literature review on the subject. Results: The literature research explored full articles published between 2003 and 2013, in total 19 articles were included in this study. The texts report the importance of the adequate use of terminologies in occupational therapy as a means to strengthen the profession, and promote the coherence in the Occupational Therapy research and practice. A few differences and similarities in the use of the terms activity and occupation in the national and international literature are described. We noticed that the term activity as the term occupation both refer to a practice that is able to influence the health and illness process. Conclusion: The concepts of occupation and activity are historically developing, and more research about that matter is necessary to deepen the knowledge in this subject.

Keywords: *Occupational Therapy, Review Literature as Topic, Concept Formation.*

O uso dos conceitos de ocupação e atividade na Terapia Ocupacional: uma revisão sistemática da literatura

Resumo: Introdução: Os conceitos de ocupação e atividade são conceitos centrais para a Terapia Ocupacional, e vêm sendo utilizados diversamente ao longo do tempo, conforme o país, a cultura e o período histórico. Objetivo: O presente estudo tem como objetivo contribuir para o conhecimento do uso dos conceitos de atividade e ocupação na Terapia Ocupacional, na literatura internacional e nacional. Método: Foi realizada uma revisão sistemática de literatura sobre o tema. Resultados: A pesquisa na literatura explorou artigos completos publicados entre 2003 e 2013, totalizando 19 artigos incluídos nesta pesquisa. Os textos relatam a importância de um uso adequado das terminologias na Terapia Ocupacional, como um meio para fortalecer a profissão e promover a coerência nas pesquisas e na prática da Terapia Ocupacional. São descritas algumas das diferenças e semelhanças na utilização dos termos *atividade* e *ocupação* na literatura nacional e internacional. Verificou-se que tanto o termo *atividade* como o termo *ocupação* se referem a um fazer que é capaz de influenciar os processos de saúde e doença. Conclusão: A conceituação sobre os termos *ocupação* e *atividade* estão em processo de construção histórica, e serão necessárias mais pesquisas sobre o assunto para aprofundar o conhecimento sobre o tema.

Palavras-chave: *Terapia Ocupacional, Literatura de Revisão como Assunto, Formação de Conceito.*

1 Introduction

The concepts of occupation and activity are central concepts for the Occupational Therapy, and they have been used over time and giving new meaning according to the country, the culture and the historical period. In this process, different countries have followed their ways, leading to different conceptual uses of these terms.

Since the beginning of the profession, the Western society had knowledge of appropriate ways of living and an important part of a healthy way of life was expressed through occupation (KANTARTZIS; MOLINEUX, 2011). In this sense, Ivarsson and Müllersdorf (2008) highlighted that one of the research objectives in Occupational Therapy is to discover the relationship between human occupation and health, which is a central assumption of the profession.

As noted by Pierce (2003, p. 13),

[...] Occupation and activity are two key concepts in Occupational Therapy, but their meanings have remained intertwined since the beginning of the profession.

In recent years, the terms occupation and activity have been theorized among occupational therapists. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably, and there is not always consistency in the way they are used (MÜLLERSDORF; IVARSSON, 2008). The therapeutic use of occupation and activity is considered a unique and central element of professional occupational therapy practice. However, there is still confusion on how these terms are used (GOLLEDGE, 1998).

When translating concepts, models, and evaluations developed in Western countries for languages other than English, these issues are more complex than the simple translation of language. In this sense, it is important to critically reflect on the different cultural emplacements that support the evolution of the concept of occupation (RUDMAN; DENNHARDT, 2008).

Brazil has a long history in the development of the concept of activity (LIMA; PASTORE; OKUMA, 2011) and, more recently, it has also dwelled on the concept of occupation term, as developed by Western countries (MAGALHÃES, 2013).

This study aims to contribute to the knowledge of the use of activity and occupation concepts in Occupational Therapy, in English and Brazilian literature. Thus, the guiding research question was: How have the concepts of occupation and activity

been defined and used in knowledge and performance of Occupational Therapy in recent years?

2 Method

There was a systematic review held on the topic. The systematic review evaluates and summarizes the results of research in the literature, seeking to map all existing knowledge on a topic.

The systematic review was developed following the steps of building a protocol, defining the question that guides a research, pursuit of studies, selection of studies, critical evaluation of studies, data collection and synthesis of data (GALVÃO; SAWADA; TREVIZAN, 2004).

Recently, the systematic reviews were extended, and not only the studies with quantitative methodologies were incorporated, but also qualitative studies or mixed methodology studies, in the scope of the studies analyzed (GRANT; BOOTH, 2009).

The research in the international literature explored complete articles published in the last ten years (2003-2013) in peer-reviewed journals in English and Portuguese, indexed in the Journal Portal CAPES and the use of occupation and activity concepts in knowledge and performance of Occupational Therapy were investigated or addressed. The CAPES Journals Portal is a virtual library that collects and provides a significant portion of international scientific production.

Keywords have been used in the title: occupational therapy and activity and occupational therapy and occupation. The studies were selected through the title and reading the abstracts according to the following inclusion criteria: quantitative and qualitative studies; studies of the literature review; studies relating to all areas of activity in Occupational Therapy, and without limitations on the age of the population. Works not related to the theme were excluded, that is, did not use or did not refer to the concepts of activity or occupation. Nor were used editorials, letters, papers published only as abstracts or articles that did not have access to full text.

As the search keywords: occupational therapy and activity, and occupational therapy and occupation. The Portuguese version of the survey in English did not achieve significant results to the CAPES Portal, so it was decided to undertake the research in the national bibliography, from national journals, one by one.

The journals included in the survey were: *Revista de Terapia Ocupacional da Universidade de São Paulo*, *Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional da*

UFSCar, Revista do Centro de Estudos de Terapia Ocupacional (CETO), Revista Baiana de Terapia Ocupacional and Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional do GES.TO (Occupational Therapy Profound Study Group). They followed the same inclusion/exclusion used for international literature.

A spreadsheet was used to organize the localized studies as title, author, year, article production site, magazine in which the article was published, methodology, theme and age of the study population.

The search with the terms in English of occupational therapy and occupation resulted in 227 articles, and search with occupational therapy and activity terms resulted in 145 articles. Those that specifically dealt with the terminology or definition of occupation concepts and activities were selected for analysis, that is, 12 studies of English literature were selected (BAUERSCHMIDT; NELSON, 2011; CREEK; HUGHES, 2008; HAMMELL, 2009; HOCKING, 2013; IVARSSON; MÜLLERSDORF, 2008, 2009; KANTARTZIS; MOLINEUX, 2011; MÜLLERSDORF; IVARSSON, 2008; LARSON, 2004; MOLKE; RUDMAN, 2009; REED; HOCKING; SMYTHE, 2013; RUDMAN; DENNHARDT, 2008).

In the result of the search in the national literature, seven national articles were identified: three articles Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional da UFSCar, three articles in the Journal of Occupational Therapy Studies Center and one in the Revista do Centro de Estudos de Terapia Ocupacional e um da Revista

de Terapia Ocupacional da Universidade de São Paulo (BENETTON, 2008; LIMA; PASTORE; OKUMA, 2011, 2013; MAGALHÃES, 2013; MORAES, 2008; PIERCE, 2003; SILVA, 2013).

No article was included of the Revista Baiana de Terapia Ocupacional or Cadernos de Terapia Ocupacional do GES.TO.

Thus, the total was 19 articles published in the last ten years, which showed how to conceptualize and define the terms occupation and activity, as shown in Figure 1, a flow chart of the selection of references.

3 Results and Discussion

Some of the articles reported the importance of proper use of terminologies in Occupational Therapy, as a means to strengthen the profession and promote consistency in the research and practice of Occupational Therapy (BAUERSCHMIDT; NELSON, 2011; MÜLLERSDORF; IVARSSON, 2008; MAGALHÃES, 2013; PIERCE, 2003; LIMA; PASTORE; OKUMA, 2011).

The words used by a particular organization or subject, at a given time, reflect the common world view of its participants (BAUERSCHMIDT; NELSON, 2011). Moreover, the way the concepts are built influences how occupational therapists develop services and formulate research questions (RUDMAN; DENNHARDT, 2008).

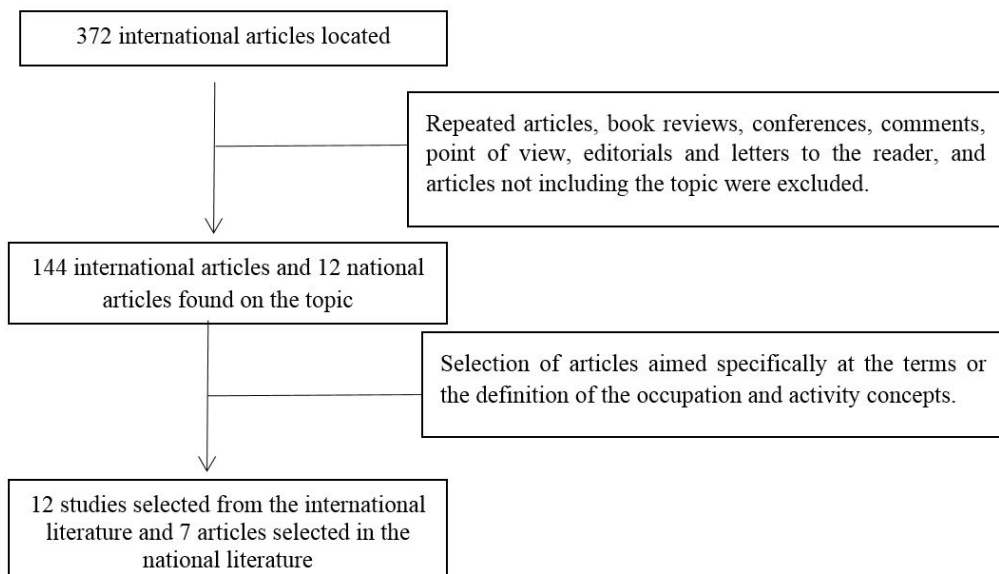


Figure 1. Flowchart of references selection.

However, as an old dilemma of the Occupational Therapy, there is a lack of clarity and cohesion in what constitutes the concept of occupation in our society (CREEK; HUGHES, 2008). Also, the terms occupation and activity vary from author to author and sometimes vary within the same work (BAUERSCHMIDT; NELSON, 2011).

Furthermore, the use of these terms varies from country to country, in the same way, that there are common themes among different languages and countries (NELSON; JONSSON, 1999).

Pierce (2003, p. 13) notes that the lack of differentiation between these concepts “[...] prevents research, reduces the confidence and effectiveness of professional and stifles the political voice of the profession.”

In the same perspective, Brazilian authors (LIMA; PASTORE; OKUMA, 2011, p. 69) pointed out that

[...] The diversity of experiences in OT, without clarifying their conceptual differences, and the use of different terms without an explanation of its understanding, hinder the discrimination of different theoretical perspectives within the area.

However, the definition and the use of these terms reflect the thinking of the Occupational Therapy. The terms occupation and activity are present from the beginning of the Occupational Therapy, and they are the primary concepts, which promoted the development of the profession.

The term occupation is filed in the literature by the founders of the Occupational Therapy: the purpose of the new profession was to advance in the occupation as a therapeutic measure. The occupation was described as so necessary to life as food or drink. It was believed that minds or sick bodies could be cured by the occupation (BAUERSCHMIDT; NELSON, 2011).

The term activity has also had a historical resonance in the profession. According to Bauerschmidt and Nelson (2011), Slagle used the term occupational analysis, but Fidler in his early writings refers to the analysis of the activity and, later, she uses the term occupation as an alternative to activity. In short, the evidence suggests that there is a transformation in the use of the terms occupation and activity over time in the history of Occupational Therapy.

Despite all the differences in the historical construction of the terms, generally, in English literature seems to be the focus of the term occupation as the one used in the profession origin, but this fact does not occur in the national literature. Thus, it

is perceived the central place that these terms have taken on the development of Occupational Therapy, guiding the paths to be followed by profession. Lima, Okuma and Pastore (2013, p. 244) pointed out that “[...] activities, actions and occupations include the center of the search for the theoretical definition of Occupational Therapy”.

Also, each country has its historical process, development and use of the terms in its social context and language, which lead to different ways of understanding the core concepts related to the profession (NELSON; JONSSON, 1999).

3.1 The use of the term activity in Brazil

Despite the plurivocity terms, the Brazilian Occupational Therapy, from a certain moment of the development of the profession, the concept of activity is universalized, covering issues related to daily life [and recreational, expressive and productive activities] (LIMA; OKUMA; PASTORE, 2013, p. 244).

The concept of activities had its roots in the history of the profession development process in Brazil, being the centralizer construct based on the theory and practice of the profession.

Initially, it was believed in the therapeutic power of activities that the doing had the potential to bring benefits to patients from occupational therapy and which, from a detailed analysis of the activity, it would be possible to indicate the most appropriate activity for a patient or a given population (LIMA; OKUMA; PASTORE, 2013).

However, in 1990, the text *The myth of therapeutic activity* of Beatriz Nascimento² was published producing a reference in the conceptions of Brazilian Occupational Therapy.

In this text, the author proposed to unmask - behind the easy and ideological link between activity and therapeutic - the named of therapeutic practices that serve to hide the violence in exclusion institutions (LIMA; OKUMA; PASTORE, 2013, p. 245).

Thus, through the publications and reflections of Brazilian occupational therapists, the tends to abandon the term therapeutic activity was verified. The literature shows that the idea that the activity enables to achieve certain health goals will gradually be replaced by the notion of human activity.

The activity is seen as an element that promotes the encounter and dialogue between

the subject, his social group, his historical time, his cultural tradition (LIMA; OKUMA; PASTORE, 2013, p. 246).

The CETO (Center for Studies in Occupational Therapy), which has been working on studies on the Dynamic Method area in Occupational Therapy, introduced the term “activities” as the paradigm founder of the profession, a specific instrument of Occupational Therapy, which creates room for health and enables construction in everyday life (BENETTON, 2008). The activities enable the relationships between the various doings and among the possibilities and abilities (MORAES, 2008).

With the activities, we

[...] Treat, educate, teach, organize, change the environment and include people in a system that allows them integrations and interactions (BENETTON, 2008, p. 29).

The activities,

[...] As an instrument have several objectives, including observation, information, analysis, education, treatment, the composition of stories and social inclusion. For this, the activities are welcome and signified in the triadic relationship (MORAES, 2008, p. 31).

More recently, activities have also been considered as a methodological possibility of the occupational therapist in conducting their research, according to Silva (2013, p. 464). Thus, the activities can be used in the analysis and interpretation of research data, “[...] enabling to consider more appropriately the subject, their context, their expressions, incorporating the demands of research”.

Thus, the greatest evidence term in Brazilian literature is the term activity and

[...] Different ways of conceiving and acting with the activities live in the contemporary, in various practices in OT, and terms like occupation, doing and action coexist in the literature with the term activity (LIMA; OKUMA; PASTORE, 2011, p. 69).

3.2 The use of the term occupation in the national literature

According to Lima, Okuma, and Pastore (2013), few articles in Brazilian literature use the term occupation, and when the term is used, it appears together with the terms of activities and action, without having to build a distinction between them.

Some authors use the term occupation to refer to a meaningless doing, a decontextualized doing that do not make sense in the history of the subject. Benetton (2008, p. 28), for example, says that we should not give patients “[...] mere occupations to fill the time or make crumbs and, above all, to pass the time”, and relates the term occupation to the medical paradigm, as a doing to avoid morbidity.

In this sense, it is possible to think of the hypothesis that part of the Brazilian Occupational Therapy performs associations between the concept of occupation and meaningless doing, used within the medical paradigm and institutional to ward off symptoms and organize time.

Some authors use the term occupation interchangeably with activity and another associate the term to productive occupational roles. However,

[...] The occupation is also determined with English-speaking authors reference, in which the term has other meanings, within the US or Canadian models of Occupational Therapy (LIMA; OKUMA; PASTORE, 2013, p. 249).

Thus, some Brazilian authors have begun to use the term occupation, as described in the Anglophone literature to support their research.

3.3 The term occupation in the literature published in English

The occupation is a basic concept for Occupational Therapy of English-speaking countries and its relationship to health has been adopted as a central element in the profession in English literature.

According to Bauerschmidt and Nelson (2011) and Bauerschmidt (2007), Kilhofner described a historical succession of three paradigms that marked the Occupational Therapy. The first paradigm, the paradigm of occupation began in the early twentieth century. However, a change in ideas in the medicine area, at the end of the 1940s, caused a crisis in occupational therapy, which led to the second paradigm, the mechanistic paradigm. Instead of focusing on occupational standards, occupational therapists sought to rehabilitate their patients, often with the help of assistive technology. However, as indicated by Bauerschmidt and Nelson (2011) and Bauerschmidt (2007), in the 1970s, the inadequacy of this model, which replaces the holistic ideas of the profession founding by reductionist ideas, created a new crisis, which led to the return of commitment with the concept of occupation and their therapeutic benefits.

Bauerschmidt and Nelson (2011) in their research of literature review found that the term occupation seems dominant in the 1920s, but seems to decrease in frequency in 1940, 1950 and 1960. The use of the terms occupation and activity, especially occupation, reappear in 2000. This information, in general, supports the theory of Kielhofner (BAUERSCHMIDT; NELSON, 2011).

In 1990, Yerxa and colleagues introduced occupational science focusing on the concept of occupation, related to what people do (MÜLLERSDORF; IVARSSON, 2008). With the advent of occupational science, the academic zeal for the concept of occupation was established, while the concept of activity starts to receive little attention (PIERCE, 2003).

The understanding of human occupation and their social, economic, political, cultural conditions, among others, as we try to show, is the main objective of the newly established occupational science (MAGALHÃES, 2013, p. 261).

In Anglophone literature in Occupational Therapy, the term occupation is associated with a meaning doing, a complex action, inherent in every human being.

The claim to a share of the market for the profession is supported by the definition of how occupation and activity give meaning to human life, and how there is a therapeutic power for recovery (PIERCE, 2003, p. 14).

The occupation is a basic human need, which provides meaning to life. The occupation is characterized by how it is performed; it can calm or accelerate the individual. The occupation is not something normative, but it depends on subjective experience, it is possible using movements, functions, and skills. The results of the occupation can improve the confidence of the person (IVARSSON; MÜLLERSDORF, 2009).

Reed, Hocking and Smythe (2013) emphasized that the occupation is not something that comes only from the individual but must be understood in the complex totality of the people in their environment. In this sense, the meaning of occupancy goes beyond a single meaning.

A central category in consideration of occupation are the dimensions because the what and the how, which are related to the occupation. The dimension which includes all human occupations, the context, and values that influence the occupation. In the dimension because it includes the reasons and the results that are described as the reasons to

perform the occupation. Moreover, the dimension as providing a description of the occupation. In the first dimension, the doing in the context includes all human occupations, from small obligations to the occupations that are held in society. The doing is influenced by values so that society and the individual value generate a large impact on occupational choice (MÜLLERSDORF; IVARSSON, 2008).

Furthermore, it is considered that the occupation can prevent, develop and provide pleasure and happiness, and influence the health and well-being. The occupation is considered a basic human need, of central importance to the health and well-being (RUDMAN; DENNHARDT, 2008; IVARSSON; MÜLLERSDORF, 2009; CREEK; HUGHES, 2008; IVARSSON; MÜLLERSDORF, 2008).

Pierce (2003) states that the occupation is an individual, unique and specific experience, personally built and unrepeatably. It is a subjective event, which takes place in a perceived dimension of space, time and social and cultural certain conditions.

“The occupations have a day, an hour, a duration, a rhythm and a sequence that will not be repeated in the flow of time” (PIERCE, 2003, p. 17). For the author, the fact that people and social contexts constantly transform, every time we do an occupation we have a different experience; so, each occupation is unique.

Moreover, the occupational articles refer to identity the occupation as an important aspect. Occupational identity is composed of multiple features like things that individuals consider themselves satisfied to do their social roles and their perceptions of what the environment expects them to do. The beginning of a disability can create a disconnect between occupational identity and competence; it is necessary to reframe the perceptions of the subject on itself to create a vision of the future as something possible (RUDMAN; DENNHARDT, 2008).

The occupational identity is the expression of various aspects of human nature in interaction with the environment, developed over the course of one's life through various occupations. It is a crucial means, from which people achieve meaning and purpose in life (RUDMAN; DENNHARDT, 2008).

Reed, Hocking and Smythe (2013) also add that the current views on the occupation consider it central to the competence and identity of the subject, which influences how people use time and make decisions. Also, the occupations imply a sense of purposeful action and purpose and must be endorsed by the social and cultural group of the subject.

Another approach observed in some studies refers to the fact that the occupation can also be used in clinics, attention to subjects attended by occupational therapists (MAGALHÃES, 2013; LARSON, 2004), as occurred since the beginning of the profession. For Magalhães (2013, p. 261),

[...] Occupational therapists are faced with the extraordinary task of maximizing the occupational possibilities of individuals and groups with whom they work, from the recognition of the huge potential of the creative, meaningful and transformative occupation.

Larson (2004) argued that the occupational engagement can be considered as an emotional investment and cognitive disorders. The stimulus complexity and density of experience have a relationship with the skills of the subject to achieve the demands of the task. If a patient perceives an occupation as uninteresting, changes in cognitive or emotional involvement can produce a more enjoyable experience. If an occupation is experienced as too challenging, the occupational therapist can redraw the occupation reducing complexity and increasing patients' skills. It is important to create a certain level of challenge to the client. These changes have an impact on the perception of temporality and experience of occupation.

It is also important for research to have a clear understanding of the term occupation. In Sweden, for example, it has been discussed which term best expresses the concept of occupation used in English and not found consensus on how to translate "occupation" from English to Swedish. In Swedish, the word activity is most often used with the meaning of the occupation, in English. The word activity is the best term used in Swedish comparing the concept in English occupation (IVARSSON; MÜLLERSDORF, 2008).

The meaning given to the term occupation are complex and vary between different countries and different models of Occupational Therapy. Thus, it is pointed out the importance of future studies to deepen and clarify these differences and meanings.

3.4 The term activity in the literature published in English

In English literature, the term activity is often undervalued, with often a hierarchical relationship with the term occupation, which is prioritized in the terminology of the profession (MAGALHÃES, 2013; CREEK; HUGHES, 2008).

The expression activity has often been avoided or sidelined in the English language documents (MAGALHÃES, 2013). In recent decades, the occupation word has become the main area of the profession and has suggested that the use of the word activity, to refer to what people do, decreases and does not represent the profession (CREEK; HUGHES, 2008).

However, some authors, like Pierce, for example, conceptualize activity and do not draw value from the end of use. The author believes that the activity is a "[...] idea that is in people's minds and their shared cultural language", it is a general class of culturally defined human actions (PIERCE, 2003, p. 13).

An activity is a general notion; it will inform us about what to expect regarding sensations, cultural values, physical context and time. The cultural context influences the values of what is appropriate or not to do and what to expect from an activity (PIERCE, 2003).

However, the authors acknowledge the difficulty in using the terms developed in English, for other countries (MAGALHÃES, 2013).

In many countries, there is a move to strengthen the occupation paradigm, which involves distance from the medical model and look at the occupation as a knowledge base. However, questions arise about how these concepts fit the cultural contexts (RUDMAN; DENNHARDT, 2008). Even in English, the occupation expression presents dubious meanings, which cannot always be properly translated into other linguistic contexts (MAGALHÃES, 2013; BAUERSCHMIDT; NELSON, 2011).

Thus, while most influential theories in occupational therapy have been developed in urban areas of English-speaking countries in the Western world, these theories reflect, by definition, the view of a minority, because the author believes that the population of Western countries is a minority compared to the world population (HAMMELL, 2009).

3.5 Contemporary discussions around the concept of occupation

As described above, these principles of occupation cannot become a rule, something that imprisons the thinking in the area of Occupational Therapy. These principles should be questioned and reviewed frequently.

For example, the assumption that all individuals have the necessary conditions to improve their health is problematic, since it reveals its origin in an economically comfortable social class in the

western world. People do not always have a choice, control and opportunity to exercise their free will and transform their life. In fact, their actions can make little or no difference in the circumstances of their life, which are limited by discriminatory practices, such as patriarchy and sexism, or to factors such as plant closures, natural disasters and wars, which they are beyond the control of people (HAMMELL, 2009).

The health depends on having opportunities to develop their skills, and this is related to an enabling environment for the occupation. However, indigenous peoples, the poor, women, people with physical disabilities or illegal immigrants are among those who do not have the same freedom or opportunity to engage in occupations (HOCKING, 2013).

Molke and Rudman (2009) addressed that as a community, occupational therapists should reflect on their technologies and occupational beliefs and try to find as they work to promote the social, moral and ethical individual. Often, productive human occupation is created and prioritized, as are prioritized individuals who can engage in socially recognized as relevant occupations. This speech does not give attention and takes the emphasis of the wide variety of human occupations, excluding the occupations that make possible interdependencies.

Thus, it will be difficult to reach a universal definition of occupation, but it is important to look for concepts and cultural perspectives that include the theoretical production of the south (MAGALHÃES, 2013).

3.6 Similarities and differences between national and international literature

The differences and similarities are perceived in the use of terms activity and occupation in the national and international literature.

Both the term activity as the term occupation refers to a doing that can influence health and disease and the subject's well-being. To refer to a significant cause for the subject, which makes sense in his personal history and his life, the national literature uses the term activity and international literature uses the term occupation. The same is true when contextualizing, which is related to an environment, culture and social context. The activity in Brazil is also considered as something individual, unique in the subject's life, affinity to what Pierce (2003) describes the concept of occupation.

The discussion of the terms of activity in national literature, and occupation, in Western literature, different ways, also raises questions about how these concepts and how the practice of Occupational Therapy can serve and strengthen the capitalist system and its institutions. International literature questions the concept of occupation that overestimates the job and places the well-being as an option of the subject - without question that individuals do not always have options - and the national literature questions the concept of activity in many institutions, to silence the subject and keep them in a situation of exclusion (LIMA; OKUMA; PASTORE, 2013; HAMMELL, 2009; HOCKING, 2013; MOLKE; RUDMAN, 2009).

However, these similarities between the concepts do not mean that the term occupation can be translated as activity in Brazil, as occurred in Sweden, as these terms have a historic building and different meanings in national and international contexts.

The term occupation appears broadly in the international literature, covering reflections little studied in Brazil and little influence the concept of activity, such as the design of occupational identity, the reflections on the occupation of temporality or about creating the appropriate challenge level for each subject.

In English literature, the term occupation is linked to the transformative potential in the life of the individual due to the potential and significance of doing to the subject. However, in the national literature, the transformative potential, related to the concept of activity, occurring in life and the social context of the subject also appears in the therapeutic relationship, in doing occupational therapy process.

Thus, the activity and occupation concepts have similarities and differences, built in different historical processes in different countries.

4 Conclusion

It is understood that this study included its objective to contribute to the understanding of the definition and use of concepts of activity and occupation in Occupational Therapy in English and national language literature. These differences and similarities in the literature have an impact on professional practice, meeting the English language literature focused on the occupation and the national literature focused on the process developed in the attention to the subject. However, it is noted as a common reference to occupational therapists, the concern to understand the person assisted in

occupational therapy as a historical subject, inserted in a particular culture and experiencing limitations or social opportunities.

As a limitation of this study, there is the literature review of the last ten years, as these concepts have been studied since the beginning of the profession and was produced in the last century. Moreover, the literature has an important national production published in books or reflection articles, for example, not included for analysis in this article; studies that could make important contributions to the concept of activity, which were absent in this discussion. Thus, it indicates the need for studies with other methodologies, which allow the inclusion of these studies and others that may be available in other databases that have not focused here.

The conceptualization of the terms occupation and activity promotes a dynamic transformation process and is continually developing. Thus, it will be needed further reflection and more research on the subject to deepen knowledge on the subject. In this context, this article is not intended to bring finished definitions of the terms, but contribute to the process of reflection and concern the use of terms in the national and international context. It is expected with this article, take a step in the long journey to reflect, conceptualize and use these terms for the profession, and that further research can continue this journey.

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Author's Contributions

Mariana Moraes Salles carried out the elaboration of the research project, the collection and analysis of data, the discussion and the writing of the article. Thelma Simões Matsukura participated in all stages of the study and performed critical review of the text. All authors approved the final version of the text.

Funding Source

FAPESP - Foundation for Research Support of the State of São Paulo - Case nº 2011 / 23424-5.

Notes

¹ This article is part of the postdoctoral research entitled "Daily life and mental health: contextualizing occupations and time use of psychosocial care centers patients", developed in the Post-Graduation Program in Occupational Therapy, Department of Occupational Therapy, Federal University of São Carlos.

² Nascimento (1990).