

Kufanya Kazi Pamoja: Tuning Into African Practitioners' Perspectives on What Makes a Global Partnership Effective and Sustainable

Jackson Johnson¹, Peter O. Ndaa, PhDc², Delaney Batik¹, Jaime P. Muñoz¹, Anne Marie Hansen¹

¹Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States; ²University of Ghana, Korle Bu, Accra, Ghana

DOI: 10.5014/ajot.2022.76S1-PO162

Date presented: April 2, 2022

Primary Author and Speaker: Jackson Johnson, johnsonj3@duq.edu

PURPOSE: In many global partnerships that occur in the field of occupational therapy, African practitioners serve as hosts for their partners from the global north. Studies of these partnerships often collect data on these experiences from the perspectives of the American or European practitioners who are guests in these countries (Witchger Hansen, 2015; Njelesani et al., 2013). Some barriers to successful partnerships may include practitioners from the global north believing that they have solutions without appreciating the local healthcare context, being reluctant to share power or not fully understanding the occupational therapy epistemologies and practices in the host country (Guajardo et al., 2015). Key strategies for success in these partnerships, and missteps to avoid can be more completely understood when research is focused on the experience of the hosting practitioners (Tupe et al., 2015). The purpose of this study is to learn from African therapists by listening to the stories they share about successful and unsuccessful partnerships they have hosted. The results of this study may help practitioners from the global north identify key preparatory tasks, critical knowledge and reflexive approaches that improve opportunities for creating sustainable, global partnerships grounded in mutuality.

DESIGN: Qualitative exploratory, descriptive study.

METHOD: This research builds on previous research study focused on this topic. We sought more participants from a broader number of African countries. Data were collected using an online Qualtrics® survey. Survey participants could volunteer to complete a semi-structured interview conducted over Zoom/video platforms.

RESULTS: This ongoing study has received 39 responses from OTs in 9 African countries. Thus far, thirteen respondents have agreed to be interviewed. In preliminary analyses, African practitioners are identifying 3 common challenges; ensuring financial stability, maintaining long-term sustainability, and establishing equal power balance between partners. In qualitative interview data respondents provide experiences of negotiating resources when funding is scarce and of their difficulty in gaining trust and establishing effective communication with partners, often because of language barriers and/or cultural misunderstandings. An emerging theme in these stories reflects a lack of equity in resources and a power differential when deciding where resources are distributed. Participants are also identifying approaches and attitudes they believe can support a mutually beneficial partnership including openness to cooperative strategies that respect diverse perspectives, indigenous knowledge and that integrate interdisciplinary collaborations. Additionally, African practitioners are recommending activities for partners from the global north to complete prior to initiating a global partnership that can increase opportunities for success.

CONCLUSION: Data from this study reflect the way African occupational therapists perceive and experience their partnerships with practitioners from the global north. Findings may inform by not only identifying critical missteps to avoid, but also by identifying optimal ways to approach, implement, and interact within a global partnership based on the recommendations of African practitioners.

IMPACT STATEMENT: As our world and the field of OT practice increases its capacity for global communication, collaboration, and connectiveness the findings of this study may inform occupational therapists from the global north on ways they can learn from practitioners in the global south and increase the success of global partnerships they wish to initiate in the future.

References

- Guajardo, A., Kronenberg, F., & Ramugondo, E. L. (2015). Southern occupational therapies: Emerging identities, epistemologies and practices. *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(1), 3-10. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2310-3833/2015/v45no1a2>
- Witchger Hansen, A. M. (2015). Crossing Borders: A qualitative study of how occupational therapists develop and sustain global partnerships. *Occupational Therapy International*, 22(3), 152-162. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oti.1401>
- Njelesani, J., Stevens, M., Cleaver, S., Mwambwa, L., & Nixon, S. (2013). International research partnerships in occupational therapy: A Canadian-Zambian case study. *Occupational Therapy International*, 20(2), 78-87. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oti.1346>
- Tupe, D. A., Kern, S. B., Salvant, S., & Talero, P. (2015). Building international sustainable partnerships in occupational therapy: A case study. *Occupational Therapy International*, 22(3), 131-140. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oti.1407>