

Practicing OT in Africa: Perspectives of African OTs

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As a profession, occupational therapy was introduced to the African continent by practitioners who came from outside the continent (Crouch, 2010; Merwe & Rauch, 2019). Therefore, African occupational therapy practitioners must actively ensure that their practice is relevant in the various contexts they find themselves in (Iwama, 2003; Ramugondo, 2015). Also, occupational therapy practitioners who engage in international practice in African countries must embody cultural humility and sensitivity to ensure that their services benefit and respect the African people (Doughton, 2016; Agner, 2020). This study explored what African occupational therapists deemed essential in their professional practice to comprehensively understand their occupational experiences. This data is from an ongoing exploratory qualitative study with occupational therapists from African countries who have practiced in African settings. We thematically analyzed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) the verbatim transcripts of semi-structured interviews with 13 occupational therapists from 6 different African countries. From our preliminary data analysis, three key themes emerged. Firstly, understanding the culture is crucial, as many African regions are culturally diverse. Secondly, participants highlighted the significance of curiosity and continuous learning, emphasizing the value of experiential learning within the community. Lastly, engaging local experts was emphasized, stressing the importance of consulting with individuals and professionals familiar with the area's regulations, traditions, and culture. This study reveals insights from African occupational therapists, emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding, continuous learning through community engagement, and collaboration with local experts in the African context. These findings highlight the imperative for cultural humility and sensitivity in international occupational therapy practice within African countries.

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