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AN EXPLORATION OF UNDERGRADUATE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON OCCUPATIONAL BALANCE

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Scientiae in the Department of Occupational Therapy, University of the Western Cape

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KEYWORDS:

Occupational science

Occupational justice

Occupational balance

Occupation

Occupation Based Practice

Qualitative Research

Occupational therapy

Perspectives

ABSTRACT

Occupational justice empowers individuals, especially the previously disadvantaged, to have their basic needs met, as well as turn their potential into reality, through human rights and labour legislation, which provides access to equal opportunities. However, with the amount of different choices, in terms of occupational roles, facing the individual to fill their time with, effective management thereof to preserve one's health and well-being on a daily basis, is not necessarily guaranteed. Occupational science, and more specifically, occupational therapy education imparts the importance of occupational balance, a concept which denotes a balance between the person, their environment and their occupations, some of which are strenuous and others relaxing. Occupational balance can be achieved by adapting the physical, mental, social and rests occupations. However, there is little research on the application of occupational balance by students of the domain of occupational therapy, in their daily lives, within a South African context. Occupational therapy students' level of application of occupational balance could be affected by the load, structure and standard of their academic programmes, as well as physical activity, sleep patterns and leisure activities. The management of the aforementioned factors often relies on their perspective on occupational balance. Perspectives are points of view related to our understanding of and our attitude towards certain subject matter. Undergraduate occupational therapy students might, in fact; experience occupational imbalance, due to demands not only related to academic load and standard, but also in terms of emotional and social challenges. Therefore, having insight into undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives on occupational balance is a valuable source of information, to determine how effective this concept is taught and if it is adequately understood, to facilitate its implementation in the lives of students of occupational therapy. This study falls within the social constructivist paradigm, which is a qualitative exploratory-descriptive research design. Purposive sampling was utilised to recruit twenty-five participants to take part in the study. A series of eight individual interviews and four focus group

discussions with undergraduate occupational therapy students were used for data collection. The interviews and focus group discussions were analysed according to the six phases of thematic analysis. The study was peer reviewed to ensure trustworthiness, and ethics clearance was obtained from the particular institution of higher learning's Research Ethics Committee. Permission to conduct the study was requested from the Registrar and Head of the Department of Occupational Therapy at an institution of higher learning. Two themes were identified following the analysis of the data, namely: "Trying to find a balance between doing all the things that you need to do and all the things that you want to do" and "Huge adjustment".   The findings of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on occupational therapy education, and it may also assist educators in selecting or developing curriculum content on occupational balance that is more aligned with the students' level of comprehension.
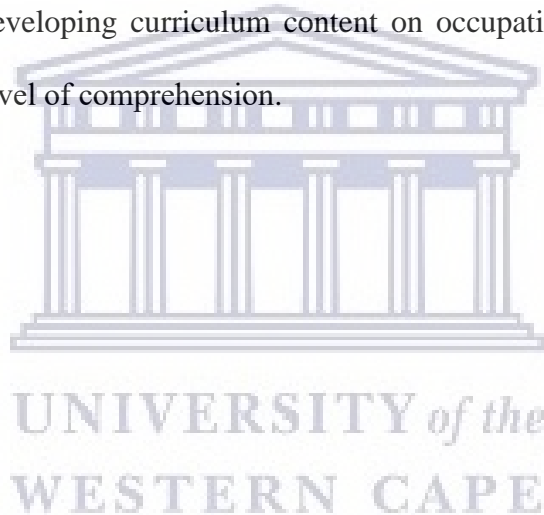
DECLARATION

I, Josephine Lizelle Apollis, declare that "*An exploration of undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives on occupational balance*" is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete referencing.

Full name:…….Josephine Lizelle Apollis…………….…….

Date:…………November 2019…………………….

Signed:…………………………………………………..
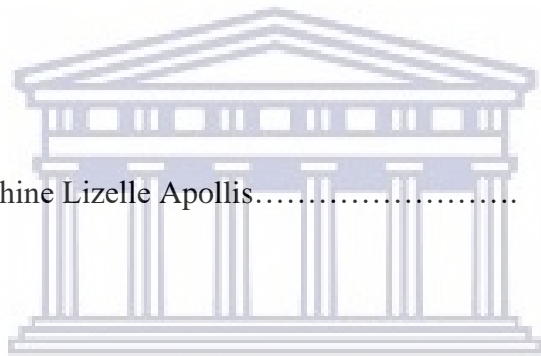
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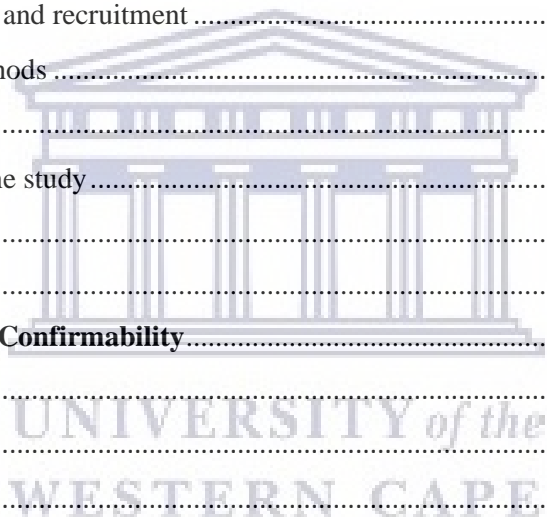
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

OT — Occupational Therapy

CMOP-E — Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement

EHP Model — Ecology Human Performance Model

UWC — University of the Western Cape

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Occupational Science is defined as a way of thinking that enables an understanding of occupation, the occupational nature of humans, the relationship between occupation, health and well-being, and the influences that shape occupation (World Federation Occupational Therapy [WFOT], 2012).

Occupational therapy (OT) is defined as a client-centered health profession, which focuses on promoting health and well-being through occupation. Enabling people to participate in activities of everyday life is the primary goal of occupational therapy. This is achieved by working with people and communities to enhance their ability to engage in the occupations that they want, need, or are expected to do, or by modifying the occupations or their environments to better support their occupational engagements (WFOT, 2012)

Occupation is referred to as "everything people do to occupy themselves, including looking after themselves (self-care), enjoying life (leisure), and contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities (productivity)." (Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, 2002, p.34).

Occupational balance is defined as a regular mix of physical, mental, and social occupations, of chosen or obligatory occupations, which can be strenuous and/or restful, and is considered important for health and well-being (Wilcock et al. 1997).

Occupational Justice is described as "the right of every individual to be able to meet basic needs and to have equal opportunities and life chances to reach toward her or his potential but specific

to the individual's engagement in diverse and meaningful occupation." (Wilcock & Townsend, 2009, p. 193).

Occupational perspective: is described as a way of looking at or thinking about "what individuals do every day on their own and collectively; how people live and seek identity; how people organize their habits, routines, and choices to promote health; and how systems support (or do not support) the occupations people want or need to do to be healthy'' (Whiteford & Townsend, 2001, p. 67).

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

This chapter provides a background to the study, the rationale of the study and the problem statement. Furthermore, chapter one also highlights the research question, aim and objectives. Lastly, in this chapter, the significance of the study, definition of key terms and outline of the study are presented.

1.2. Background to the study

Occupational science is described as the study of humans as occupational beings (Yerxa, 2000). It postulates that humans have the capacity to orchestrate daily occupations in their environments over their lifespans (University of Southern California Department of Occupational Therapy, 1987). The development of occupational science as a recognized domain of scholarly inquiry offers various benefits to the profession of occupational therapy (Clark, Parham, Carlson, Frank, Pierce & Zemke., 1991), such as contributing to new knowledge on occupation (Clark & Lawlor, 2009) which results in expanding our understanding of the central features of human existence (Clark & Lawlor, 2009) related to balancing one's occupations with one's health and well-being.

To effectively manage the range of daily occupations a person can have, in order to maintain or preserve one's health and well-being, it is essential that the concept of occupational balance is adequately understood and that an optimistic attitude towards such an effort is cultivated. Occupational balance is a prominent concept in occupational therapy education and plays a key role in the professional development of occupational therapy students. This concurs with the views of Meyer (1977, p. 639-642) and Rogers (1984, p. 47-49) who indicated, *"Occupational*

balance remains an important concept in occupational therapy and occupational science". Wagman, Håkansson and Björklund (2012, p.322), considered occupational balance as an "individual's perspective of having the right amount of occupations and the right variation between occupations". This assumption seems to correspond with the perception in the occupational therapy profession that engagement in meaningful and purposeful occupations, are enablers of individuals' health and well-being (Hasselkus, 2002; Stav, Hallenen, Lane & Arbesman, 2012; Rebeiro, 1998; Reid, 2008). Therefore, a variety of occupations may contribute to a well-balanced and fully functional lifestyle. In occupational therapy education, much emphasis is placed on the inclusion of occupational balance in the curriculum. This emphasis endeavors to facilitate an understanding of how to balance one's occupations in a manner that preserves one's health and well-being, as well as foster an optimistic attitude towards such an effort and facilitates that occupational balance theory becomes integrated with its practice. However, while it has been highlighted that occupational balance is frequently addressed in education, it remains a complex concept for students to entirely grasp and apply (Wagman, Håkanson & Björklund, 2012; Wilson & Wilcock, 2005).

Therefore, Wilson and Wilcock (2005) suggested that increasing students' awareness and understanding of occupational balance may enhance their knowledge about human occupations and humans as occupational beings. Furthermore, generating insight into occupational therapy students' perspectives on occupational balance is a valuable source to determine how occupational therapy education could be altered or further developed to support students' application of the concept.

1.3. Rationale of the study

This study emerged because of my experience as an occupational therapy student between 2010 and 2014. Conversations among students at that specific point in time revealed that some found the occupational therapy program challenging, while others found it manageable. Students who found the program manageable were often natives of the province where they studied and thus had supportive networks nearby. Other factors that have surfaced amongst non-white students were access to financial aid and "white privilege". White privilege is a term used to describe unearned advantages granted to white people because of racial group membership (Adams, Bell, Goodman & Joshi, 2016). Additionally, McIntosh (2001) indicated that white privilege is normalised in such a way that the majority of whites are unaware of and take for granted the privileges or advantages they receive. These students felt that they were not as privileged as the "white" students as the "white" students did not have to worry about additional stressors such as sending money home to their families or make a living by having a part time job because their bursaries can't support both them and their families. These stressors placed pressure on some students. However, these students felt that they were not as privileged as the "white" students and therefore had more to worry about. Upon graduation, several students concluded that many of the challenges they had experienced during their study period could be attributed to the work load, structure and standard of the occupational therapy programme and time constraints that prevented them from managing their occupations effectively.

In this regard, as expressed by the non-white students, when referring to occupations, it included the added responsibility to taking care of themselves (performing self-maintenance tasks) and ensuring that their daily lives run smoothly (by performing work and productive activities) even though they didn't have supportive networks nearby. This concurs with Swanepoel (2014), who indicated that occupational balance among undergraduate occupational therapy students is influenced by demands related to their academic load, expectations, emotional and social

challenges. This means that undergraduate occupational therapy students could experience occupational imbalance. Given this, it indicates that the students may need support regarding the application of occupational balance on both personal and professional levels (Wagman, Håkanson & Björklund, 2012; Wilson & Wilcock, 2005).

For the purpose of this study, undergraduate occupational therapy students were chosen as the research subjects or interviewees and their perspectives on occupational balance were analysed, as limited research has been conducted on the topic of students' understanding of, and attitudes toward, occupations in relation to health and well-being.

1.4. Problem Statement

Occupational therapy education programmes (curricula), appear to be demanding, not only in terms of the academic load, structure and standard, but also in terms of the emotional and social challenges they pose to occupational therapy students (Swanepoel, 2014). Wagman and Håkansson (2019, p.538) echoed Wagman, Håkansson, and Jonsson, (2015, p.166) that the "individual's occupational balance affects and is affected by those around him/her". This means that occupational therapy students could experience occupational imbalance while engaging in their meaningful occupations and be influenced by other people's levels of occupational balance. Therefore, the occupational therapy students may require support and occupational adaptations in the application of occupational balance, on a personal as well as professional level. However, to date, limited research has been conducted with occupational therapy students regarding their perspectives of occupational balance. There is a gap in research on students' understanding of and attitude towards occupational balance and the management of occupations in relation to health and well-being. Goodman (2019) highlighted that students struggle to navigate the growing demands of university and personal life. This could potentially lead to occupational imbalance. In this light,

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the dearth of research seemed to highlight a need to enhance our understanding of and insight into students' perspectives on occupational balance in relation to their education and the application of the concept.

1.5. Research Question

What are undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives on occupational balance, in other words the management of occupations in relation to health and well-being?

1.6. Research Aim

The aim of the study is to explore undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives on occupational balance.

1.7. Objectives of the study

- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' understanding of occupational balance.
- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' understanding of the relationships between undergraduate related occupations and health and well-being.
- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' experiences of what they perceive to be their level of occupational balance.
- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' perceptions of barriers which might prevent them from achieving occupational balance.
- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' perceptions of facilitators who might influence their level of occupational balance.

1.8. Significance of the study

The exploratory-descriptive research design will allow for a better understanding of undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives on occupational balance and contribute to the body of knowledge of occupational science. It is envisaged that the study will make recommendations towards the alteration or further development of curricula, as well as the formulation of strategies to support, or supplement the support, provided for self-management of students in occupational therapy and possibly other disciplines.

1.8.1 Occupational therapy education

Given the paucity of research on occupational balance and its understanding by undergraduate occupational therapy students, this study has the potential to make contributions to occupational therapy education in the form of alterations to, or further development of curricula, in terms of the load, the way the load is structured and the impact of the aforementioned on their occupations inside and outside of their studies, while maintaining a certain degree of health and well-being. Studies related to "balance" or "life balance" have been conducted in the past, such as the research conducted by Wagman (2012), however; occupational balance, specifically relating to its understanding and application by undergraduate occupational therapy students is far from being exhausted as a research area.

Thus, the results of this study could also contribute to the improvement of occupational therapy students' understanding of the concept of occupational balance and support the importance of occupational science as a field of study. By increasing the awareness of occupational therapy students of occupational balance in occupational therapy education, it could potentially enhance the manner in which they provide occupational therapy services in practice as professionals in the future. In addition, it is possible that, as a result of this study, future occupational therapy students and graduates will be able to develop the capability to integrate occupational balance as

part of the assessment of, and appropriate intervention planning and implementation for, patients and clients.

1.8.2 Occupational therapy theory

Occupational therapy theory enables educators and students alike to have some understanding of occupational balance by drawing on existing occupational therapy models, but this understanding might improve when exiting theory is used in conjunction with the recommendations made by this study. The theoretical frameworks (Occupational Science, Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (CMOP-E) and Occupational Justice framework) underpinning this study provides insight into the learning experiences of occupational therapy students regarding occupational balance as part of self-management in terms of health and well-being. In essence, this study provides valuable evidence on the barriers that restrict, and the facilitators that enable, undergraduate occupational therapy students' experiences of their own levels of occupational balance.

1.9. Outline of the study

Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature consulted for this study. The chapter presents the CMOP-E and the Ecology of Human Performance and Symbolic interactionism as the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study. These frameworks are described, together with the occupational science and the occupational justice frameworks. This is followed by a review of the relevant literature on occupational balance, in other words the balancing of occupations in relation to health and well-being, and how it applies to undergraduate occupational therapy students.
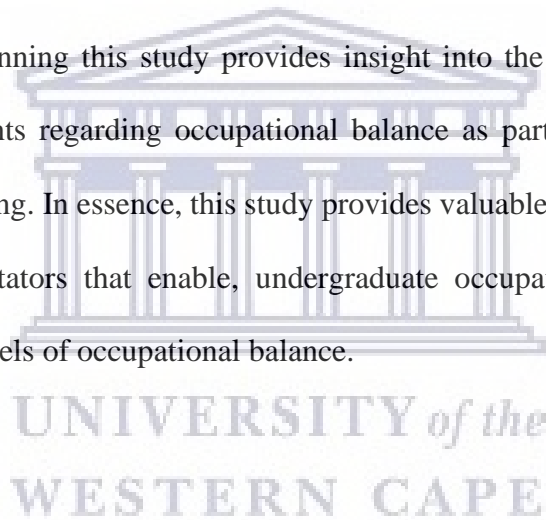
Chapter 3 describes this study's methodology. It outlines the research design, research setting, the selection of participants and sampling strategies, data collection and its related procedures, as well as review of data reliability and trustworthiness (credibility), data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 reports on the results of the study. It commences with an outline of the themes and categories that emerged from the data.

Chapter 5 begins with a discussion on the findings reported in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the study attempts to answer the research question and evaluates the findings against the relevant literature.

Chapter 6 presents a discussion of the limitations the study incurred, as well as the contributions of the study to the domain of OT, followed by the conclusion with final recommendations for future studies.

1.10. Summary of chapter

In this chapter, it was acknowledged that occupational science informs the development of the OT profession, as well as the occupational therapy students and professionals and that occupational balance is a prominent concept to understand, however; little is known about how occupational balance is perceived by undergraduate occupational therapy students. The answer to the research question might provide valuable insights into whether the curricula is effective at transferring this knowledge to students or whether it is necessary to develop a different approach.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge related to the four pillars of learning and education (which includes human occupation, OT, fieldwork and research), learning to be, and learning to live together. The literature review presented in the next chapter provides more information on the theories and models of occupational science, used in OT education, to transfer knowledge on occupational balance.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The reviewed literature presents the theoretical frameworks that promote an occupational perspective in OT in relation to human occupations. Furthermore, the literature review focuses on: (a) the practice of occupations in relation to health and well-being, (b) occupational balance and occupational therapy students, (c) spirituality in occupational therapy, and (d) the outcomes of occupational injustice.

2.2. Theoretical Framework guiding this Study

Occupational balance is one of the important outcomes of occupational justice, which is promoted through occupational rights (Chichanya, Joubert & McColl, 2019). Therefore, three theoretical frameworks were found to be useful to underpin this study: Polatajko, Townsend and Craik's (2007) Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (CMOP-E); Dunn, Brown and McGuigan's (1994) Ecological Human Performance; and Carter and Fuller's (2015) theory of symbolic interactionism. These frameworks were selected due to their applicability to interpersonal perspective on occupations that promote meaningful engagement and improved performance of individuals. Therefore, in the section to follow, these theoretical frameworks are explained.

2.2.1 Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement

Occupational science emerged in the 1990's as a scientific discipline that involves the study of, and provides an explanation of, humans as occupational beings (Clark et al., 1991). As a result,

occupational science constructs such as occupational balance and occupational therapy conceptual frameworks were developed to aid theory-practice integration.

One such framework is the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (CMOP-E) (See figure 1 below):
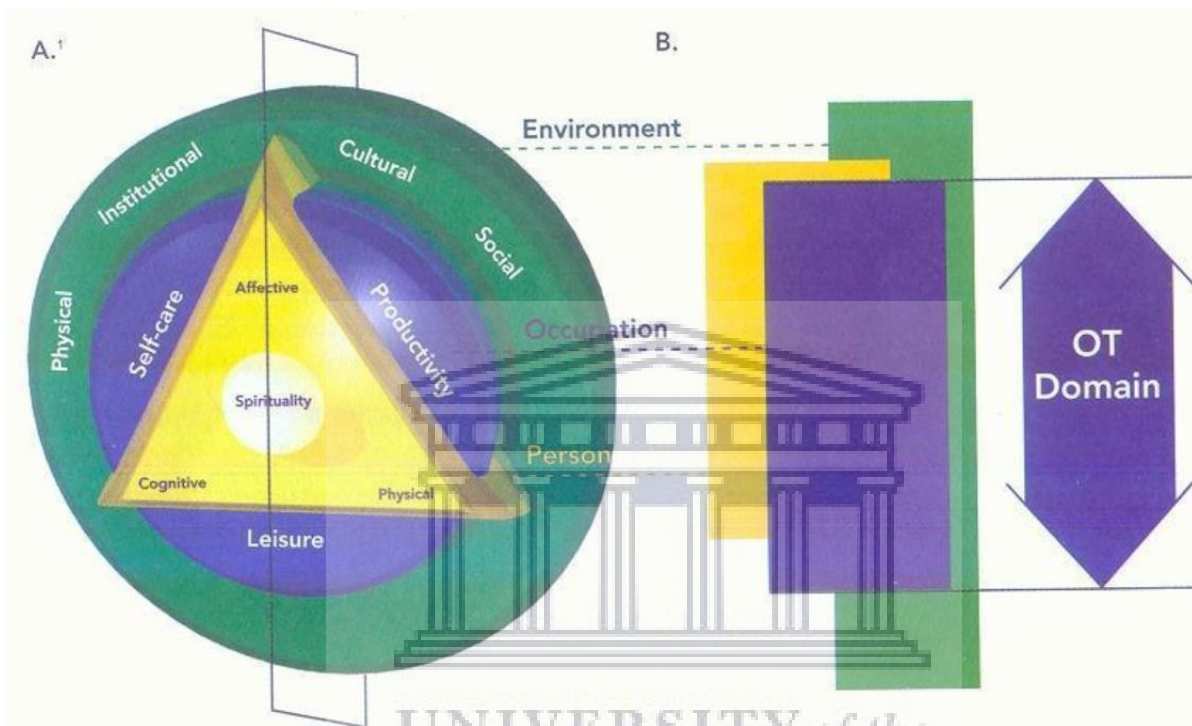
Figure 1: Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (CMOP-E developed by Polatajko et al. (2007).

The key assumption underlying CMOP-E is human occupation, which occurs in the background of the dynamic interaction between the person, the occupation and the environment (Polatajko et al., 2007). The model looks at the interaction and interrelationships between the person, their environment and the occupation performed by that person (Davis, 2006). The person (depicted as a triangle at the centre of the model) is made up of three components, namely: cognitive processes, affective and physical processes, with spirituality at the heart of the model (Davis, 2006). According to the model, spirituality refers to the uniqueness of an individual (Townsend,

1997). It is believed that spirituality is shaped by the environment and gives meaning to occupation (CAOT, 1997, p.33).

The model illustrates that the person is rooted within the environment (the outer circle), which suggests that each individual's life within various environmental backgrounds (cultural, institutional, physical, economic, political and social), provides for occupational possibilities. It should be noted that these environments have the potential to provide occupational opportunities and resources for occupational engagement and performance (Polatajko et al., 2007), but these same environments could also place constraints on meaningful engagements (Forsyth & Keilhofner, 2006). For instance, Hammell (2015) and Newfield et al. (2019) indicate that poverty appears to be one of the constraints that influence occupational engagement, especially in relation to health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. This indicates that individuals might experience difficulties to make occupational choices, due to limited opportunities and time, lack of resources, and a lack of awareness (Wilcock, 2006).

In relation to occupation, Wilcock (2006, p.xiv) refers to occupation as "all the things that people need, want or have to do" across the sleep-awake continuum. Therefore, in the CMOP-E, occupation is classed into three categories, also referred to as occupational purposes, and these are: self-care, productivity and leisure (Polatajko et al., 2007). The inner circle represents occupation and in the transverse sectional view, occupation is the core domain of concern to occupational therapists. It is through occupation that the person connects with the environment; therefore, occupation becomes the bridge between the person and the context. Thus, "occupation" is delineated as the link between the person and the environment, which implies that an individual impact on the environment through occupations and vice versa.

It has been highlighted that any adjustment in one of the components of the model may result in a disruption of the interdependent relationships between them. However, any disruption in one

component can result in an individual experiencing an occupational, performance or engagement dysfunction. In the CMOP-E, when there is a congruent interdependent relationship between the person, occupation and environment, the individual may experience a more balanced performance or engagement. Therefore, the model suggests that health, well-being and justice is attainable through occupational engagement and performance (Polatajko et al., 2007). This model is based on the assumptions and core beliefs of the OT profession, which is guided by the principle of client-centeredness. Additionally, CMOP-E is a valuable model in OT and occupational science to "address clients' occupational well-being, occupational performance and engagement" (Doble & Santha, 2008, p.188; Polatajko et al., 2007).

With regard to spirituality in the CMOP-E, Polatajko et al. (2007) highlights that it is a core element that directs individuals to engage in occupations that are meaningful, purposeful and satisfying. However, Duncan (2011) points out that spirituality is part of a person and is shaped by the environment within which the person lives, while engaging in a variety of occupations. Spirituality is perceived as an enabler that motivates people to engage in occupations, and connect with others (Mthembu et al., 2017).
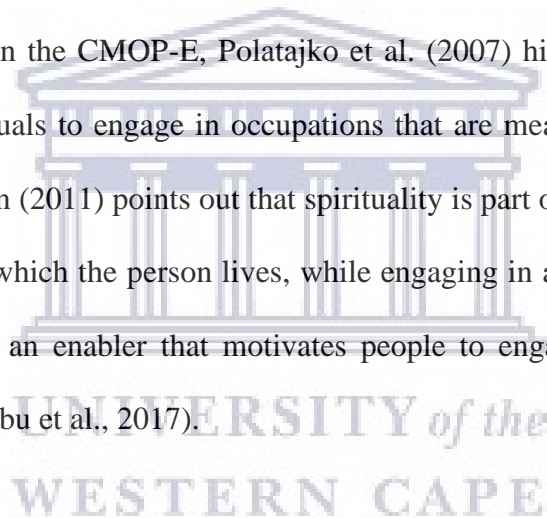
2.2.2 Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) Model

The EHP Model is another framework, which aids theory-practice integration. The foundation of EHP is that the interaction between the person and the environment affects human behaviour and performance; therefore, a person's engagement and performance cannot be understood without considering contextual influences (Dunn et al., 1994).
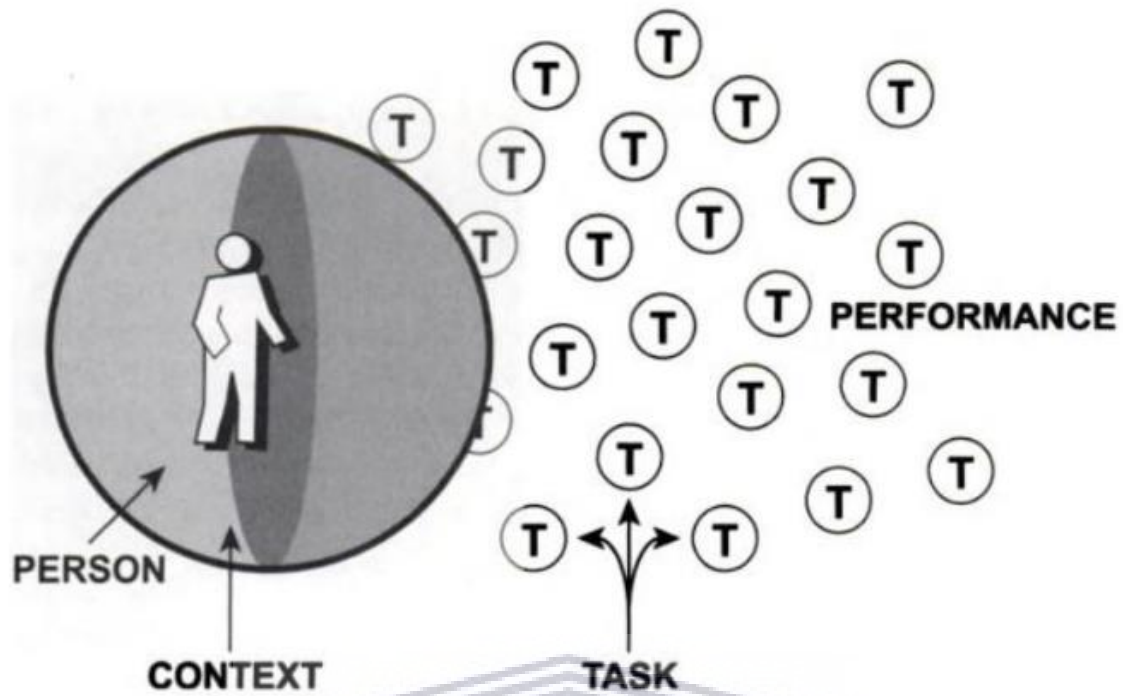
Figure 2: Ecology of Human Performance Model by Dunn et al. (1994)

The main components of the EHP model are person, tasks, and context. According to the EHP model, the person is comprised of all of one's sensorimotor, cognitive, psychosocial skills and abilities, as well as life experiences (Dunn et al., 1994). The elements of the person could be occasions when a student is expected to perform and execute certain components of the OT education effectively. Those could include practical demonstration of knowledge or their theoretical understanding of the knowledge, gained during a written test or examination.

The person and context are considered inseparable and the only way to holistically view a person and his/her abilities is through the lens of the context. Contextual factors that can influence a person's skills, abilities, and performance include physical, temporal, social, and cultural features. Contextual factors that affect an OT student's performance can include meeting specific deadlines, the fact that a student stays in a residence facility where the environment is not conducive to their study schedule, the demands of the OT programme etc.

There are five strategies that are considered in the EHP model, which promote occupational balance among clients of OT to address their occupational needs and demands, namely to establish/restore, alter, adapt, prevent and create occupations (Dunn et al., 1994). In explaining the strategies, Dunn et al. (1994) highlight that stabling/restoring the person's abilities and capacities to perform the occupations that are intentional, and fulfilling should be taken into consideration. OT students could learn to improve their personal skills and abilities needed to foster occupational balance.

Furthermore, *alter* as one of the strategies indicate that there is a need of some alteration within the context so that performance could be optimize. This could mean that OT students may be assisted to find ways to alter the methods that they use in their engagement in a variety of occupations.

The strategy of *adapt* deals with the contextual features, demands that may enable and prohibit participation in the purposeful tasks. This could mean that OT students should be assisted to use their abilities and skills to address their needs while coping with the demands of the occupations.

Regarding the *prevention* strategy, it is indicated that the person's task and context might result in maladaptive performance. Therefore, OTS should be equipped to recognize and acknowledge the health compromising situations and find solutions to prevent further difficulties in engagement in expected tasks.

The *create* strategy is important because of the enhancement in the person's abilities in order to promote participation in a conducive environment that assists in performance. It is envisaged that creating a supportive environment could assist OTSs to enhance their resilience capacity to find ways for promoting occupational balance in their lives.
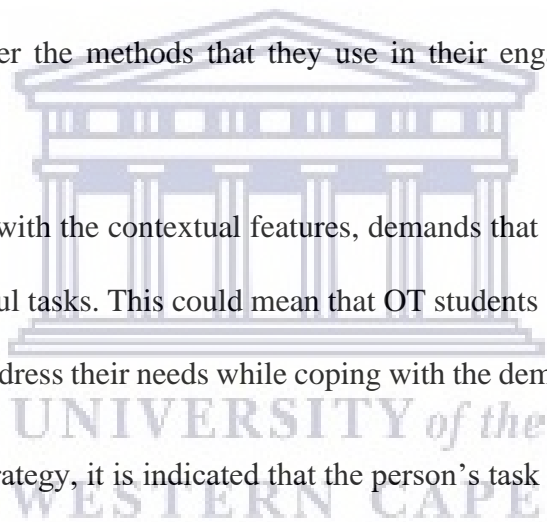
Therefore, these models concur that there is a relationship the human occupations and the environment where people live and work. Furthermore, both models (CMOP-E and EHP) indicate that the transaction between the person and the environment tend to be influenced by the occupational opportunities and resources needed for engagement and performance. An incongruence between the person, the occupation and the environment could result in occupational dysfunction and disruption.

2.2.3 Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective in sociology that addresses the manner in which individuals, groups and society is created and maintained through face-to-face, repeated, meaningful interactions among communities (Carter & Fuller, 2015, p.2016). Symbolic interactionism provides people an opportunity to learn from each other through the interactions with each other (Carter & Fuller, 2015; Schulz, 2014; Smith & Bugni, 2006). These studies accentuate that symbolic interactionism afford people to interpret and give meaning to the world where they live and work by means of their interactions with other people (Plunkett, 2012).

Evidence indicates that symbolic interactionism is the most extensively used theory for "self as much as a sociological and as psychological entity" (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Even though in occupational science, Wagman and Håkansson (2019) reverberated Wagman, Håkansson, and Jonsson, (2015) that interpersonal perspective of occupational balance is important. However, in OT body of knowledge, symbolic interactionism has previously been applied to other concepts but limited focus on occupational balance.

In line with the symbolic interactionism, role-taking and role conflict appear to be the key concepts (Carter & Fuller, 2015; Schulz, 2014). The theory of role emphasises that people's role expectations are embedded in a social structure where they belong. This could be connected with

the habituation component of Model of Human Occupation in OT model that promotes occupation-based through roles and routines (Park, Gross, Rayani, Norris, Roberts, James, Guptill, & Esmail, 2019). Therefore, by positioning occupational balance within the symbolic interactionism framework, this study will make contribution to occupational science about the social participation in promoting interactions while engaging in meaningful occupations.

Aligning social participation with the symbolic interactionism, it would enable occupational therapists, educators and occupational scientists to have deeper understanding of how occupational balance get negotiated in a social context among peers, families and communities. The symbolic interactionism acknowledges that human beings are influenced by their families and other roles of the people (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Therefore, Carter and Fuller's view of symbolic interactionism is that individual tend to view him or herself and others in a conversation that represent the social face and maintain the daily interactions. Symbolic interactionism recognises the role of social context and physical environments where people engage in a variety of actions related to occupational engagement and performance. It has been indicated that the symbolic interactionism promotes the mutual influence of physical environments and development of self (Smith & Bugni, 2006).

Relevance of symbolic interactionism, this framework supports social self and spiritual self, which are crucial in understanding how undergraduate occupational therapy students interpret and give meaning to their world about occupational balance. In other words, symbolic interactionism places emphasis on how people interact in their lives through symbols such as words (i.e., OT terminology, the way students address their peers by their use of language, how undergraduate students interact with their clients when they are doing their fieldwork block). In relation to the rules, the symbolic interactionism provides professional rules that are stipulated by the OT department in terms of how students should interact with their lecturers, rules in terms

of assessment methods during examination period, social norms. In OT and symbolic interactionism frameworks, the roles of being a student, friend, parent, daughter etc. come with role expectations and demands that one need to consider when engaging in occupational decision-making about the occupations to engage in at work or school (Parnell et al., 2019; Schulze, 2014).

The basic views of symbolic interactionism state that: (1) individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them (Carter & Fuller, 2015); for example, how undergraduate occupational therapy students view the OT programme and the requirements attached to successfully completing their studies. Interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects (persons), as well as situations, must be defined or categorized based on individual meanings (Carter & Fuller, 2015). In the context of undergraduate occupational therapy students, all students find themselves in different contexts for example some students have the benefit of staying at home while studying, and other students are living in residence on campus and therefore that is their context. Some students find meaning by being independent in this regard, while others find that their context provides a different type of experience in terms of their occupational role than another student. Meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society (Carter & Fuller, 2015). In connection to the current study, students interact with their peers, the lecturers, the staff members at their respective fieldwork placements – and each of these interactions holds different meanings for everyone. It is highlighted that meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interaction with others (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

2.3. Occupational science as a basis for occupational therapy

Occupational science is the systematic study of the things that people do which is their occupations (Hocking, 2013). Occupational science highlights the ability of humans throughout

the life span to actively pursue and arrange occupations (Clark et al., 1991).Therefore, occupational science is concerned about the people's transformation and growth which is influenced by the innate capacities that people possess. The innate capacities enable people to satisfy their needs of subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, creation and leisure (Max-Neef, 1991).

In the past, and more so now, the profession of occupational therapy sought to establish its identity (Segsworth, Sittler & Wilson, 2006). Segsworth et al. (2006) was of the opinion that occupational science provides a unique opportunity to explore the importance of occupation, as it is understood by occupational therapists. They further believed that the focus of occupational science will assist in de-mystifying concepts within the profession and make them explicit. Furthermore, they indicated that knowledge gained from research in occupational science will support OT interventions (Segsworth et al., 2006). Similarly, Wilcock (2007) thought that occupational science has an important potential function of bringing together evidence. In recent years, there has been an increased attention to the research being done under the umbrella of methodologies being employed, topics being explored, and directions that are vital for the discipline to survive and thrive (Clark, 2006; Hocking, 2000; Molineux & Whiteford, 2006; Molke, Laliberte, Rudman & Polatajko, 2004). Therefore, it is evident that there has been growing diaglogue concerning occupational science.

Many studies have highlighted the lack of understanding with regards to the OT profession. One factor that could be attributed to the lack of understanding could be the little consensus within the profession of OT as to the definition of occupation (Segsworth et al., 2006). Segsworth and colleagues (2006) further indicated that most outsiders are under the impression that the term "occupation" means "job" (Segsworth et al., 2006). While occupational therapists recognize the health benefits of meaningful occupation (Townsend & Polatajko, 2007; Wilcock, 2005), there is a gap between understandings and appreciating the theory of occupation and applying it in

practice (Fisher, 1998; Kielhofner, 2004; Molineux, 2004). It is thus important to look at different explanations of the term occupation, which will illustrate the magnitude of confusion.

Occupation is defined as a group of everyday life activities, which are goal-directed, with meaning and purpose for the individual, and is linked to their culture (Law, Steinwender & Leclair, 1998). These occupations may be associated with self-care, leisure, work, education and more. It has also been recognised as a source of life satisfaction and meeting intrinsic needs and interests and values, which, when met, improves perceived well-being. Furthermore, it is believed that through occupations, people can express and shape their identity, develop skills and gain satisfaction (Polatajko et al., 2007). Occupation is considered as a fundamental element of OT, and more so, it is believed that it is important for basic well-being (Argentzell, Håkansson & Eklund, 2012). While theory guides most occupational therapy students while studying, most qualified, occupational therapists struggle to integrate theory into practice.

2.4.   Occupational rights

In describing the occupational rights, Townsend and Wilcock (2004) propose four occupational rights that individuals have in relation to occupational engagement and performance which include (a) experiencing occupation as meaningful and enriching; (b) participation in occupations that foster development, health and social inclusion; (c) having choice in occupations, at individual or population levels; and (d) deriving fair privileges from participation in diverse occupations.

Townsend and Wilcock (2004) describe occupational justice as an individual's right to the choice and experience of meaningful occupations and the right to develop health and well-being through these occupations. Understanding of occupation, occupational balance and occupational justice may help determine how understanding these concepts can assist occupational therapy students

in coping with the demands of OT education (which can easily cause a student to experience dysfunction/ imbalance at times).

2.5.   Outcomes of Occupational Injustice

The notion of occupational justice currently binds together much of the thinking about OT, occupational science, human rights, and the possibility of political and social change (Frank & Muriithi, 2015). In this regard, studies of occupational injustice identify areas of social disadvantage and opportunities for advocacy based on its carefully differentiated areas of occupational deprivation, occupational alienation, occupational marginalisation, and occupational imbalance (Frank & Muriithi, 2015). Occupational injustices take place when people are faced with unemployment, poverty, lack of resources and unfavourable environment (Stadnyk, Townsend & Wilcock, 2010) which limits opportunities to engage in occupations of their choice.

In this regard, the focus of the current study is on occupational imbalance as one of the outcomes of occupational injustice. For example, occupational imbalance can manifest itself through students who comes from a disadvantaged background with parents living with low income and facing socioeconomic inequities (Newfield et al., 2019). It should be noted that students who come from an environment whereby their parents earn a low income they tend to deal with shame, stigma and social isolation that might influence their self-esteem and participation in cultural and social events (Newfield et al., 2019). A student could be the first person in the family to gain access to higher education, and the expectation is for the student to pass and pave the way for family members to follow. Often in these situations, these students carry the burden of making their family proud, caring for themselves (financially). Students are expected to cope with the demands of their studies, juggle all occupations and maintain a balance between these occupations. Occupational imbalance can take place when students are not able to maintain a

balance between their occupations (occupational balance). This also relates to occupational choice, whereby, students do not necessarily have a choice in the occupations that they are expected to engage in, which could also be seen as occupational injustice.

Occupational imbalance occurs when there is a lack of balance between the various occupational performances, which can be seen in underemployment or overemployment or having too little or too much to do (Wolf, Ripat, Davis, Becker & MacSwiggan, 2010). One factor that might influence the relationship between imbalance among occupations and well-being is related to the characteristics of these occupations. In this regard, structured occupations (well-organized and in one's control, easier to manage) reduce one's sense of imbalance while on the other hand, stressful occupations may lead to higher levels of imbalance as they are more complicated to manage (Anaby, 2009).

Occupational deprivation occurs when opportunities and resources necessary to engage in occupations are denied and there are external factors, inhibiting this occupational choice (Wolf et al., 2010). While occupational alienation can occur when individuals are required to take part in occupations, they find meaningless or with little recognition or reward (Wolf et al., 2010). In turn, occupational marginalisation can occur when individuals lack the power to exercise occupational choice and has to do with the systems or structures in place that prevent engagement in occupations deliberately (Wolf et al., 2010). These areas assist in clarifying the concept of occupational injustice and create a function within a human rights framework that is new and distinctive because of its focus on occupation. A great strength of the occupational justice approach is that it helps to bridge the discipline of occupational science with the profession of OT.

2.6. The relationship between occupations, health and well-being

The term occupational balance is often perceived as being similar to popular terms derived from other fields: work-life balance, work-leisure balance and work-family balance. Backman (2010, p. 233) believed that "occupational balance considers a wide range of occupations associated with all aspects of life, including caring for oneself and others, working, playing, learning, socializing and volunteering, to cite some common categories". Additionally, occupational balance does not necessarily refer to work or paid employment. In fact, some people try to balance occupations derived from non-work life domains, such as taking care of a sick life-partner and playing bridge. Thus, occupational balance, as opposed to closely related concepts, can be applied to broader populations who might not engage in paid employment, such as retirees, children, older adults and people with disabilities. While there are many definitions of occupational balance, several qualitative studies in the OT literature revealed that participants linked the concept of occupational balance to well-being and health (Håkansson, Dahlin-Ivanoff & Sonn, 2006; Wilson & Wilcock, 2005; Piskur, Kinebanian, & Josephsson, 2002).

Previous studies found that well-being is associated with engagement in occupations (Lovelock, Bentley; Wilcock, 1998; Wilcock et al., 1997). These studies reported that the relationship between occupational balance and health seemed to be important in OT. However, the World Federation of OT [WFOT] (2002) identifies a lack of knowledge in defining occupational balance from a personal view. It was identified that environmental factors such as family living arrangements and cultural norms seemed to influence occupational balance (Craik & Zaccaria, 2003) as well as time and money (Wilson & Wilcock, 2005).

Several studies have indicated that occupational therapy students have reported high levels of school-related emotional and psychological pressures due to high related academic expectations, rigorous class schedules, and integration of classroom and clinical learning (Wilson & Wilcock,

2005; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress, according to Khan, Altaf and Kauser (2013), is a part of a students' life, and it can impact a student's coping strategies. Furthermore, there is a strong link between stressful life events and reduced academic performance (Dusselier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley & Whalen, 2005; Misra & McKean, 2000). For example, educational programmes, especially in the medical and health science fields are geared towards producing skilled and competent graduates (Govender, Mkhabela, Hlongwane, Jalim & Jetha, 2015). However, whilst stress is regarded as unavoidable part of life towards personal development, not all students are able to cope adequately (Govender, Mkhabela, Hlongwane, Jalim & Jetha, 2015).

It was noted that there were different factors which appeared to increase the stress levels among students such as time management, financial matters, interaction with lecturers, personal subjective goals, social behaviour, adjustment in the academic culture and lack of a support system (Wilks, 2008). Students are expected to handle academic stressors, integrate academic and clinical workloads; manage personal stressors that involve 'juggling' the responsibilities of this phase of life and more general university-related stressors, like accessing resources and those relating to peers (Govender, Mkhabela, Hlongwane, Jalim & Jetha, 2015). Furthermore, educational programmes in the medical and health science fields are geared towards producing skilled and competent graduates; however studies (Kasayira, Chipandambira & Hungwe, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Shaheen & Alam, 2010; Carver, Scheier & Werintraub, 1989) suggested that varying degrees of stress experienced by students may affect their overall functioning and performance.

All of the above literature aimed to demonstrate the difficulty student's/ undergraduate occupational therapy student's (in higher education) experience with regards to their education, their lives and the stress that accompanies being a student. This implies that all these factors could potentially impact on a student's ability to maintain occupational balance.

Townsend and Wilcock (2004) further highlighted that occupational balance appears as an enabler for health, well-being and good quality of life. In relation to occupational balance, habits and routines are viewed as enablers that help people to organize their time and support occupational performance and engagement (Brown, Stoffel & Munoz, 2019). It has been highlighted that an imbalanced lifestyle tends to be related to excessive work and disengagement which may result in occupational dysfunction and occupational injustices (Håkansson, Dahlin-Ivanoff, & Sonn, 2006).

This coincides with Wilcock's (1998) primary view that occupational imbalance is the lack of balance between work, rest, self-care, and play/ leisure that fail to meet an individual's unique physical, social, or mental health needs, thereby resulting in decreased health, well-being or both. Wilcock (1998) further asserts that health and wellness tend to be related to people's choice, meaning, balance, satisfaction, opportunity and self-actualization.

Thus, occupational balance is an important concept in occupational science and therapy (Wagman & Håkansson, 2019; Wagman, Håkansson & Björklund, 2012). Although occupational balance seems to be significant in occupational science and therapy, the interpersonal perspective of occupational balance has not received much attention as highlighted by Wagman and Håkansson (2019). Therefore, it can be suggested that occupational balance should be considered as a balance of engagement in occupation that leads to well-being by valuing the interpersonal and social element of occupations. This might mean that the sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts should be taken into consideration when people engage in occupations that are perceived to be chosen and obligatory, strenuous and restful occupations (Wilcock, 2006).

2.7.   Occupational balance and well-being needs

Occupational balance is one of the integral components of occupational science and OT. Doble and Caron Santha (2008) highlight that people tend to experience occupational balance "when they are able to constantly meet their occupational needs" (p.185). The explanation of the occupational needs by Doble and Caron Santha (2008) seemed to resonate with Hammell's (2017) well-being needs. The occupational needs incorporate accomplishment, affirmation, agency, coherence, companionship, pleasure, and renewal (Doble & Caron Santha, 2008). These needs are presented in relation to well-being needs.

In relation to the need of companionship, Doble and Caron Santha (2008) argue that people engage in occupations with others which promotes the interpersonal perspective of occupation. This explanation of companionship needs relates to Hammell's (2017) well-being need to experience a sense of belonging and connectedness to families, friends, and communities, and perhaps also to the natural world, to cultural and spiritual traditions, and to ancestors and ancestral lands, and the intrinsic need and responsibility to care for and contribute to the well-being of these others (p.211).; the need to experience a sense of self-worth and positive identity, through feeling valued and valuable, capable and competent, responsible and respected. Both Doble and Santha (2008) and Hammell (2017) highlighted the need for both the ability and opportunity to experience and express pleasure, purpose, and meaning in life through engagement in roles and accomplishment of occupations that are individually and/or collectively valuable. However, Doble and Santha (2008) tend to differ from Hammell (2017) because they accentuate that accomplishment accommodate "individuals learning and utilizing new skills" (p.186).

The need for both the ability and opportunity to express choices and to experience control and empowerment in enacting one's choices (Hammell, 2017, p.211). This need of well-being echoes

Doble and Santha's (2008) occupational need of agency whereby people exert control in their valued occupational lives. It has been indicated that agency is important element that guides people in choosing what occupations they do, and how, when, where, how often and with who they perform occupations (Doble & Santha, 2008). In explaining the process, Parnell, Whiteford and Wilding (2019, p. 442) propose occupational decision-making as "a process that empowers people to be agentic, rather than passive, in meaningful occupational engagement over the course of a lifetime". This indicates that people should take an active role in developing routines for performing their occupations (Doble & Santha, 2008).

Doble and Santha (2008) concur that people's occupational identities develop through their engagement in occupations that relate to their values, personal desires and goals. These occupational needs seemingly relate to the need for a sense of hope and coherence through perceiving the possible continuity of one's valued roles and the possibility of experiencing meaningful occupational engagement in the future (Hammell, 2017, p.211).

2.7.1 Dimensions of occupational balance

Various studies focus on occupational balance as it is experienced from an individual perspective (Wagman et al., 2015) and its relation to the same individual's health (Wagman & Håkansson, 2019). However, it is also important to move beyond the focus on the individual (Dickie, Cutchin, & Humphry, 2006; Gerlach, Teachman, Laliberte-Rudman, Aldrich, & Huot, 2017; Laliberte Rudman, 2013). Stamm et al. (2009) focused on exploring 'the concept of occupational balance in people with rheumatoid arthtitis" (p.33). In Stamm and colleagues' study, they interviewed eight women and two men and discovered three dimensions of occupational balance, which were identified as important for the participants. The three dimensions included balance between occupations that were challenging and those that are relaxing; balance between occupations differing in who they are meaningful to, the individual or the context; and balance

between taking care of themselves and taking care of others. Many researchers also explored occupational balance but the following four angles or dimensions to occupational balance will be explored in the current study, namely: how people's occupations match their needs (Matuska & Christiansen, 2008); how one occupation affects another occupation (Anaby, Backman & Jarus, 2010), how time is spent in different occupations (Eklund, Erlandsson & Leufstadius, 2010) and people's satisfaction with their mix of occupations (Wagman, Håkansson & Björklund, 2012).

Christiansen and Matuska (2008) proposed that the extent in which people engage in configurations or variations of activities that address all these dimensions, will determine if they perceive their lives as more satisfying, and more meaningful, or balanced. This also relates to patterns of daily occupations which impacts bother occupational performance and engagement.

2.8. Occupational balance and undergraduate occupational therapy students

In a study done by Wilcock (2000), the question of whether OT education programmes reflect the profession's philosophical beliefs about the importance of occupation in the health of individuals and communities, were raised. The findings of this study revealed that OT education programmes have developed over time and continue to be influenced by the professional education experience of the academics (and their predecessors) who have developed curricula content (Wilcock, 2000). Therefore, there are newer ways of teaching which are often based on educational research (Wilcock, 2000). Furthermore, the study suggested that OT education and the teaching thereof should provide students with a living example of the effectiveness of an occupational perspective (Wilcock, 2000). It should be compatible with the theory that humans are occupational beings, because such philosophy must ensure that OT graduates have a clearer understanding of the distinctive beliefs that the profession holds about 'occupation for health',

and how this inform practice (Wilcock, 2000). This implies that OT education should be geared in such a way that undergraduate occupational therapy student's experience a sense of occupational balance and imbalance. By doing this, they would have a better understanding of the concept and be able to provide services in such a way that are beneficial to their clients. Several other authors agree with Wilcock's (2000) view. These authors believed that by incorporating occupational science in the teaching of undergraduate students, it will contribute to eradicating complex social issues (Zemke, 2016); that it would assist students to better understand the relationship between occupation, bodily structures and functions, as many occupational scientists tend to focus on the form, function and meaning of occupation. Dickie (2016) believed that by incorporating occupational science teaching in the curricula of undergraduate students, it could potentially have students realized that there are many ways of learning about occupation, and that occupation is more than an individual's experience.

While a study done by Vermeulen (2012), on final year occupational therapy students' experience of supervision during community fieldwork practice was not necessarily focused on occupational balance, this study indicated the importance of OT educational programmes to consider how the OT curricula should change in terms of both the theoretical inclusion of occupation into undergraduate programmes, and how these changes are reflected and practiced in undergraduate OT fieldwork education. Additionally, this study provides a good idea of the importance of understanding the concept within OT education. Regarding occupational therapy students' understanding of occupational balance, previous studies indicate that occupational therapy students have common experiences of hectic life schedules like other students (Govender, Mkhabela, Hlongwane, Jalim, & Jetha, 2015; Douglas, 2006). In addition, a variety of factors including studying, part-time work, being a partner or parent seemed to influence students' occupational balance (Douglas, 2006). A study done by Janse van Rensburg in 2011 focused on how first year occupational therapy students construct and reconstruct themselves as

students in the field of higher education through "doing, being and becoming" (p. 8-13). This study described how students transitioned from school to university, how they positioned themselves socially and as occupational therapy students and what they perceived as challenges in the learning environment. Three themes emerged: academic literacy challenges, the challenge of balancing social life with academic demands and negotiating diversity and complexity in a new social world. Janse van Rensburg (2011, p. 8-13) reported on the findings, it became evident that the students were stunned that school did not adequately prepare them for tasks required at university. One student reported "*Psychology is the most referencing strict subject that I have ever heard of, because you know, you are still first year, you have no idea what referencing is, you still learning on referencing*". The same student indicated that teachers seldom valued content but mainly focused on the use of grammar and punctuation (Janse van Rensburg, 2011). The student further mentioned that they struggled with the Latin terms for anatomical concepts – *Anatomy is a language on its own. So, it's Greek, most of them are like Italian words and you have to get a way to separate the words and see what they mean. It's a lot of work…. They would say a word that is just foreign on its own*". Additionally, students experienced difficulty in adjusting to university. They felt that they had "too much freedom" and misjudged how much time they needed to manage the pace and load of their studies. One student attributed her social life as a contributing factor to the academic challenges she experienced. She reported the following: "*In Res, there is always something happening, always something to distract you. So, it was the balancing between partying chilling and social and the work…. Balancing, balancing varsity homework with social things*". Lastly, the students found it difficult to adapt to the new social milieu.

It is fundamental that occupational therapists could have a firm grasp of character and qualities of occupational balance (Wagman et al., 2012; Douglas, 2006; Wilson & Wilcock, 2005). Does this mean that occupational therapists should first experience occupational imbalance in order to

truly understand occupational balance? A study by Wilson and Wilcock (2005) explored the factors influencing first year occupational therapy students understanding of occupational balance. Wilson and Wilcock's (2005) built on previous research done by Wilcock (2003) that illustrated students as "occupational beings with different capabilities and abilities. This was in congruence with Meyer (1922) who introduced the idea of balance early in the philosophy of OT. These studies done by pioneers in the field of OT assisted my understanding of certain concepts (such as occupational balance) in the OT curricula. It's my understanding that once we as occupational therapists/ or occupational therapy students truly understand our own capabilities and abilities we are able to understand balance in our own contexts. For example, some students might be able to juggle both a social life and university work, while others only have the ability to focus on one area of their being at a time.

Wilson and Wilcock (2005) further revealed insights about the relationship between health and occupation. While it can be argued that first year occupational therapy students could be expected to have the ability to balance life roles in transition, it appears that it was not the case for majority of the students (Wilson & Wilcock, 2005). Many students involved in this study indicated at that point that they were "occupationally imbalanced" due to many barriers they identified (Wilson & Wilcock, 2005). Those barriers included personal and interpersonal influences within the social environment as well as time and money (Wilson & Wilcock, 2005). Furthermore, the "personal and interpersonal influences" were reported as lack of experience, restrictive beliefs and inability to complete tasks efficiently. The authors found that this was not surprising at all, given the fact that the students were very early in their professional education (Wilson & Wilcock, 2005).

It was further noted that psychological and emotional pressures were the main impediments to achieving occupational balance (Wilson & Wilcock, 2005). This was pertinent to highlight at that time, as it was reported by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2003), that there is an increase

in mental health problems in the student population. Douglas' (2006) study bears a close resemblance to Wilson and Wilcock's (2005) study, as it was aimed at exploring how new occupational therapy students use occupation while studying to support their own health and well-being. The study further evaluated the impact of occupational imbalance on first year occupational therapy students (Douglas, 2006).

Early indications showed that students' occupations changes depending on the demands placed on them (Douglas, 2006). Furthermore, it also appeared that understanding the concept of occupational balance and being aware of the need to juggle competing occupations gives students a feeling of being in control (Douglas, 2006). This corroborates with Wilcock's (1998) belief, that occupational balance should be introduced early in the students' career, as balanced occupations contribute towards health and well-being (Christiansen & Baum, 1997).

2.9.   Spirituality as part of resilience in occupational therapy education

Renewal is one of the occupational needs that is experienced when people engage in occupations that enhance a sense being, belonging, and becoming through doing something that has personal meaning (Doble & Santha, 2008). However, there are many factors that contribute or shape how individuals make sense of their world that they live in and work (Jones, Topping, Wattis & Smith, 2016). These factors include culture, religion and spirituality (Jones et al., 2016) and resources, other people, social norms and expectations (Parnell et al., 2019). Often these factors can be sources of comfort, strength and support in times of emotional stress, physical illness or when facing death or bereavement (Jones et al., 2016).

Spirituality has been considered as an important component of health care professions and their clients, including OT (Mthembu, Wegner & Roman, 2017). Spirituality is defined as the "aspect of humanity that refers to the way an individual seek and express meaning and purpose and the

way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to other, to nature, and the significant or sacred" (Puchalski, Vittillo, Hull & Reller, 2014, p. 646). While it is believed that there is a need to integrate teachings on spirituality in OT (Mthembu, Ahmed, Nkuna, & Yaca, 2015a), it poses various challenges. These challenges, or barriers, could include institutional- and educational-level barriers (Mthembu, Wegner, & Roman, 2016; Bingimlas, 2009; Schoepp, 2005). Reported studies on the barriers preventing the integration of spirituality in OT were mostly conducted in countries such as the United States, Britain, and Canada (Egan & Swedersky, 2003; Thompson & MacNeal, 2006). Therefore, little is known about the barriers preventing integration of spirituality in teaching and learning in OT education (Mthembu, Ahmed et al. 2015). This seems to be consistent with Lucchetti, Lucchetti, Espinha, De Oliveira, Leite and Koenig (2012) and Peach (2003) who indicated that occupational therapy educators and students struggle to integrate spirituality at an educational level.

Kiaei et al. (2015) reported that the key barriers to delivering spiritual care in health settings included busy work schedules, insufficient knowledge about spirituality, diversity of patients' spiritual needs, and low motivation. This corroborates with a study on barriers to integration of spirituality and spiritual care in OT education in a South African context. This study found that one of the main reasons for this (the barriers) is that occupational therapy students receive minimal teaching and therefore have little information related to spirituality (Mthembu et al., 2015a; Mthembu, Roman, & Wegner, 2015b). Therefore, it appears that there is a need for spirituality to be incorporated in OT education because a recent literature review study highlights that spirituality tend to enhance resilience capacity among people who are facing difficulties in challenging activities (Nerhus & Mooney, 2019). This is supported by studies of Mthembu et al. (2015) and Nerhus and Mooney (2019) which found that some of the people tend to be motivated to engage in activities that appeared to be challenging because of the strength that they gain from

God. Lastly, both spirituality and resilience inspired the people to persevere in various activities even though there are challenges.

2.10. Summary

This chapter began with a theoretical perspective on occupational science and its impact on the OT profession. Following this, the researcher attempted to provide a better understanding of occupational balance, by highlighting different definitions of the concept and looking at how it relates to health and well-being. This chapter also sought for a better understanding of the undergraduate OT students in the higher education environment and how OT students perceive occupational balance and how it relates to health and well-being. In this chapter, an overview of the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (CMOP-E) was provided, and occupational injustice and occupational imbalance were addressed.

In the next chapter, the research methodology used in the current study is presented.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1.   Introduction

The previous chapter presented literature relevant to this study. In Chapter 3, the methodological design and paradigm utilised in this study is presented. The chapter highlights the research approach, a description of the research setting, participant selection, data collection and analysis as well as the ethical considerations of the study. This study followed an interpretivist paradigm with a qualitative research methodological approach and a phenomenological design.

3.2.   Research Paradigm

The research paradigm used to position this study within the research landscape is the social constructivist paradigm. The social constructivist worldview assumes that every person experience situations differently (Creswell, 2009, p.8). It provided the researcher with rich and in-depth information regarding the students' perspectives of occupational balance and its relationship to health and well-being. In addition, social constructivism provided an understanding of and insight into occupational balance as a social construct from the perspectives of multiple participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Adopting social constructivism allowed the researcher to be directly involved with the study population while collecting data (Polit & Beck, 2006).

The three theoretical paradigms of positivism, interpretivism and critical theory, inform a specific methodological approach in a logical and coherent manner (Henning, 2004). To this end, an interpretivism paradigm would assume a qualitative approach, which is described as a multi-

method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

3.3.   Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach, which is mostly inductive in approach. This results in the production of new theories. It is further stated that the main aim of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of social action within a specific environment rather than attempting to generalize within a broader population (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; van Wyk, 2012).

In explaining the importance of a qualitative research approach, Frost (2011) emphasizes that the qualitative research approach seems to generate an understanding of individuals' unique perspectives and experiences regarding the world around them. It involves asking participants about their experiences of things that happen in their lives (Grove, Burns & Gray, 2013).

It enables researchers to obtain insights into what it feels like to be another person and to understand the world as other experiences it (Austin & Sutton, 2014; Grove et al., 2013). Qualitative methods are concerned with how human behaviour can be explained, within the framework of the social structures in which that behaviour takes place (Flick, Von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004). Therefore, the qualitative approach was used to gain an understanding of and in-depth insight into occupational therapy students' perspectives of occupational balance. Qualitative research was therefore best suited to this study as the focus is on the perspectives, views and experiences of undergraduate occupational therapy students regarding occupational balance, health and well-being.

3.4.   Research Design

In this study, an exploratory-descriptive research design was used to conduct the study (Grove et al. 2013). In explaining exploratory-descriptive research design, Grove et al. (2013) highlight that the exploratory-descriptive research design is used to address a problem in need of a solution and understanding of a phenomenon. In relation to the exploratory design, it is indicated that an exploratory design seeks to find out what is happening, especially in a little understood situation and asks questions, generates ideas and new insights for future research (Robson, 2002). The exploratory research design tends to be useful in addressing a subject of study when very little is known about the phenomena such as occupational balance among occupational therapy students.

In contrast, a descriptive research design is used in the qualitative approach to provide an accurate and well representation of factors pertaining to the research question (van Wyk, 2012). The motivation to conduct this study was to explore the undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives of occupational balance. Babbie (2007) referred to the exploratory design as a strategy, which leads to new insights into a topic. This corroborates with Robson's (2002) view on the exploratory design. This approach allowed for the exploration of the individual's own perspectives and the descriptions that characterise their experiences on the topic of enquiry, without the control or manipulation of the participants involved (Denzin, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants in order to understand the personal experiences and challenges they faced. In the current study, the participants were asked to describe their perceptions and experiences of occupational balance while studying OT. The qualitative methodology provided the opportunity to explore the participants' experiences in detail through one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions. It enabled the researcher to uncover and reveal the deeper meanings of the experiences of the participants.

3.5.   Research Setting

This study was conducted at the Department of OT in one of the institutions of higher learning in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. Within the OT programme, there were 189 registered undergraduate students in 2018. The OT programme only selects a very limited number of students each year. In addition, the undergraduate OT education is made up of the four pillars: Human occupation, OT, fieldwork and research as essential parts of the curriculum from first to fourth year level. The current study focuses on the human occupation pillar which includes occupational balance as a construct of occupational science and occupational justice. The construct is incorporated in the OT programme through student-centered learning as an important pedagogical approach within the OT education. This approach is adopted as part of the OT education because students are given the opportunity to take full responsibility for their learning.

3.6.   Participant Selection and recruitment

For this study, occupational therapy students who were registered to study at one of the universities in the Western Cape Province were considered as eligible participants. Purposive sampling was utilised to select and recruit the participants of this study, because the sample had features and characteristics which enabled detailed exploration and understanding of the topic. Purposive sampling refers to an intentionally chosen sample according to the needs of the study (Cormack, 2000).

De Vos, Strydom, Fourie and Delport (2005) state that the sample that is used should compose of the elements that contain the most characteristics, representatives or typical attributes of the population. According to Sandelowski (2000), purposeful sampling allows the exploration of common and unique manifestations of a target audience of a target phenomenon across a broad

range of phenomenally and/or demographically varied classes. The researcher approached the lecturers at an institution of higher learning in the OT Department to assist with the invitation of all the undergraduate occupational therapy students who were registered at the time. Only twenty-five undergraduate occupational therapy students (across all year levels of study) agreed to be participants of the study. The students were given an information sheet (see Appendix 3) and consent form (see Appendix 4) before the commencement of the study. The participants were selected according to the following criteria:

Inclusion:

- Participants who were registered occupational therapy students from first to fourth year
- Participants who are male and female
- Participants of different races.

Exclusion:

- Postgraduate occupational therapy students

Of the twenty-five students (who were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five) who agreed to be a part of the study, fourteen participants were white (of whom one were from the Gauteng Province and the rest was from the Western Cape), six participants was coloured (all participants from the Western Cape) and five participants were black and originally from the Eastern Cape.

Those undergraduate occupational therapy students who met the criteria, were and were contacted with assistance from the lecturers. The researcher had agreed on a suitable time and date where all the information was explained to them and then invited to participate in the study. A total of twenty-five students that met the criteria were selected as participants in the study.

3.7.   Data Collection Methods

A variety of data collection methods tend to be used in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). The data collection methods might include documents, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and/or observations to collect data (Creswell, 2009). However, for the purpose of this study semi-structured interviews were used, followed by focus group discussions (FGDs).

3.7.1. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are used for a variety of purposes and can be used as a primary data gathering method to collect information from individuals about their own practices, beliefs, or opinions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Interviews can also be placed on a continuum of structure, from "unstructured" to highly "structured" (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). For this study, semi-structured interviews were used to interview eight participants (two participants per year level of study in OT) at the OT Department at a university in the Western Cape Province, to gain a better understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences on occupational balance. These interviews lasted up to 45 minutes per interview depending on the quality of information provided by the participants.

Semi-structured interviews guide conversation but allow participants to provide information that is important to them (Seidman, 1998). Furthermore, Seidman (1998) stated that through semi-structured interviews, "we can come to understand the details of people's experience from their point of view" (p. 112). He further noted, "We can see how their individual experience interacts with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context in which they live and work, and we can discover the interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context" (p. 112). It is understood that the participants' points of view and allowing their voices to be heard requires qualitative methods, specifically interviewing, to be utilized to answer the research question (Seidman, 1998).

The reason for using semi-structured interviews is to ensure focus on the topic of enquiry while interviewing the participants, but at the same time gathering in-depth information on the participants' beliefs, perceptions, and experiences and meaning they attached to this study (De Vos et al. 2005).
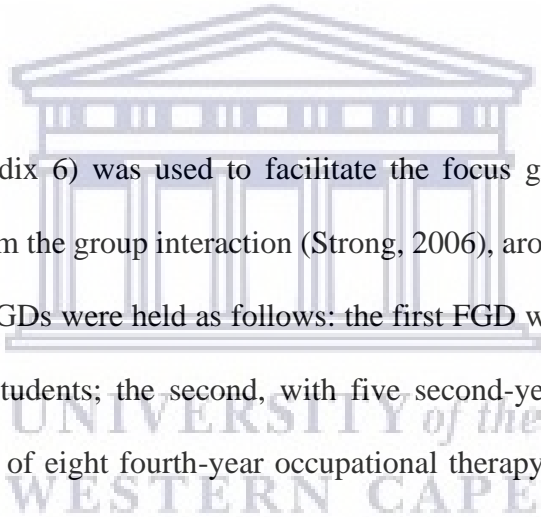
During the semi-structured in-depth interviews, a set of interview questions (Appendix 6) was used to guide opportunities to explore the students' perspective of occupational balance. The interview questions allowed the participants to describe and explain their understanding of occupational balance, how they understand the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being, also, it indicates which factors can prevent or enable occupational balance. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of how students experience occupational balance and how it was introduced to them in the OT education programme. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with two participants per year level of study. All interviews were conducted in the OT department, which lasted approximately 40 to 45 minutes. Many probing questions were asked to ensure that data saturation was reached.

3.7.2. Focus groups

According to Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005, p. 76), a focus group discussion is a qualitative method "with the primary aim of describing and understanding perceptions, interpretations, and beliefs of a select population to gain understanding of a particular issue from the perspective of the group's participants". Similarly, Holloway and Wheeler (2002) describes a focus group discussion (FGD) as an in-depth discussion amongst a group of people led by a moderator or facilitator who introduces the topic and facilitates the debate. According to Kelly (2006) and Morgan (2007), FGD promotes both inter-subjectivity and social interactions in order to gain

access to understanding the differences between participants, whom we might previously have thought of as a homogenous group. Rabiee (2004) further asserts that FGDs could provide information about a range of ideas and feelings that individuals have about certain issues and illuminating the differences in perspective between groups of individuals.

The particular aim of the FGDs conducted was to obtain the insights and understanding of the undergraduate occupational therapy students on occupational balance and how it related to health and well-being. Four focus group sessions (one session per year level of approximately 1 hour to 1hour 30 minutes) were conducted with 5-8 participants per session in the institution of higher learning.

An interview guide (Appendix 6) was used to facilitate the focus group which assisted the researcher to collect data from the group interaction (Strong, 2006), around their perspectives of occupational balance. The FGDs were held as follows: the first FGD was held with seven first-year occupational therapy students; the second, with five second-year occupational therapy students; the third consisted of eight fourth-year occupational therapy students and the fourth group consisted of five third-year occupational therapy students. Issues concerning confidentiality and consent were sought from the students before conducting the FGDs. Each participant was provided with an information sheet, which explained the research aims and objectives. The use of the FGDs allowed the researcher to obtain an in-depth account of experiences and perceptions regarding various topics such as the OT programme, fieldwork, and occupational balance and how it relates to health and well-being, facilitators and barriers to occupational balance and many more. In this regard, the data was collected until saturation was reached and no new information or data arose from the FGDs (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

3.8.   Data analysis

The six steps of thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used to analyze the transcribed data. The semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were audiotaped (with permission from the participants) and were transcribed verbatim. The following steps of thematic analysis were used:

Step 1: Familiarization with the data:

During this phase, the researcher became actively involved with the data collection. Due to the nature of the qualitative data, this assisted the researcher to become familiar with the data as the researcher was active in the facilitation of the focus group discussions. This process increased the researcher's understanding of the undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives into occupational balance and its relation to health and well-being.

In addition, the researcher independently engaged in the process of transcription which helped to enhance the understanding of the content of the qualitative data. A detailed verbatim transcription was made, which meant hesitations and differences in voice were noted as well. In order to eliminate possible errors, each transcription was compared with the related record. This was done immediately after each interview and mostly before the following interview started. The researcher made notes while reading the transcripts to increase familiarity with the data in Microsoft Word. It was imperative that the researcher absorbed most of the responses and develop notions for analysis. During the discussions, the researcher was able to recognise some of the patterns and took note of them. This had an implication on how the data was going to be coded. Some of the themes were apparent from the data based on the participants' responses. The researcher read the transcripts of the focus group discussions several times as referred to in the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clark & Braun, 2013; Howitt & Crammer, 2008).

Step 2: **Initial codes generation**:

Part of this phase included generating codes using the transcripts. According to Theron (2015, p.5), the term coding refers to the "process of breaking the qualitative data down into distinct parts and coding these by using in vivo coding, process coding and other coding methods". Additionally, the researcher examined parts of the data closely in order to compare similarities and differences (Theron, 2015). As a result, the researcher became an analyst of the entirety of the data in a systematic process and made suggestions. The rationale for generating codes was to capture the essence of a segment of the text (Howitt & Crammer, 2008). Notes were jotted down in the margins of the transcripts. The coding followed the data-led approach, as the researcher allowed the data from the transcripts of the students to guide the analysis. Braun and Clark (2006) support the data-led approach by which the researcher uses the participants' perspectives in order to label the codes. Additionally, the researcher identified the codes and summarised the key elements. During this phase, the researcher collated the data belonging to separate codes until all the codes were grouped. Grouping the codes were done by managing the data in Microsoft Word.

Step 3: **Searching for themes based on the initial coding**:

According to Braun and Clark (2006), a theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question and searching for themes is similar to developing codes to identify similarities in the data. This 'searching' is perceived as an active process in thematic analysis as the themes are not hidden in the data waiting to be discovered by the intrepid researcher (Braun & Clark, 2006; Howitt & Crammer, 2008). The data was sorted, coded and checked for relationships. The codes were then read and sorted based on the content. This was a trial and error process that is allowed in methodological assumption of pragmatic worldview

that a researcher may work back and forth between approaches and in this phase, particularly applied to groupings as the notions of analysis development. The researcher ended this step by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme.

Step 4: **Reviewing themes:**

The researcher engaged in the process of reviewing the themes with their supervisor and co-supervisor as part of the audit trail and questioning the processes that were followed in order to create the themes. This is one of the strategies used in dependability and confirmability for enhancing trustworthiness in qualitative research. In this phase the researcher split up the themes into categories and subcategories in order to provide comprehensive analysis. After reviewing the themes several times, the researcher ensured that the themes were logical and understandable.

Step 5: **Defining and labelling themes**:

Preliminary themes were presented to the researcher's supervisors as part of peer review. Peer review is described as the process of subjecting an author's work or research to the scrutiny of others who are experts in the field. Furthermore, this was done to enhance the credibility of the findings. The supervisors added their comments as independent reviewers of the process. Some of the labelling of the themes used the exact responses from the participants' verbatim text. This made the researcher check the transcripts and audiotapes to ensure credibility.

Step 6: **Writing report**:

The researcher wrote a report in a narrative form to illustrate the analysis using quotations from the data. The next section focusses on the trustworthiness of the qualitative studies.

3.9.   Trustworthiness of the study

The trustworthiness of qualitative studies is of vital importance (Krefting, 1991, p.217; Maree, 2012, p.133). Babbie and Mouton (2006) state that the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability ensure trustworthiness in qualitative studies. They add that a qualitative study cannot be considered trustworthy unless it is credible (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). The principles, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are discussed below.

3.9.1 Credibility

According to Anney (2014), credibility refers to the truth value and confidence of the qualitative findings. To ensure credibility in this study, method and data triangulation were utilised. Triangulation as a verification procedure can be used whereby multiple different data sources can be used to substantiate evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective (Creswell, 1998). In relation to the triangulation multiple sources, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with the participants. Therefore, theoretical triangulation was used through literature pertaining to Occupational Science, the Occupational Justice Framework, the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement, the Ecological Human Performance Model and Symbolic interactionism. These theories were used in the discussion of the current study to confirm and build on the knowledge of OT. Theoretical triangulation means that ideas from diverse or competing theories can be tested (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1989). Peer examination/ Peer review was done by presenting the findings to the supervisors at UWC OT department; it further served as a form of debriefing (Krefting, 1991).

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to whether the research findings and conclusions of a particular study can be applied to other contexts and with other participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The principle of transferability in qualitative research is impractical as the study is conducted in the natural setting with the aim of describing the experiences of a particular group of participants. In this regard, I acknowledge that the findings in this study do not necessarily have relevance for other contexts or for the same context in another time frame. In this regard, Shenton (2004, p.69) stresses, "the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations".

Transferability (in relation to the undergraduate occupational therapy student population) was achieved by producing detailed and rich descriptions of contexts (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). It was ensured through a detailed description of the research process and the use of purposive sampling to select undergraduate occupational therapy students as participants for the study as explained in the inclusion criteria (Mthobeni & Peu, 2013).
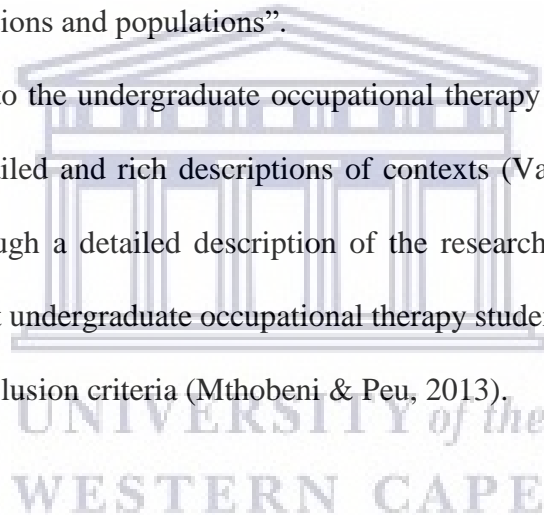
3.9.3 Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability is achieved through rich and detailed descriptions that show how the researchers' actions and opinions are rooted in and stem from the context of the study (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). This was achieved through establishing an audit trail where transcriptions and process of analysis are accessible and available as part of quality assurance, logic and documentation (Fouche, Schurink, & De Vos, 2011, p.420). The audit trail illustrates systematically research processes followed throughout data gathering and analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the use of an audit trail enhances dependability and confirmability of a study. Confirmability is defined as the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be

confirmed by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Tobin and Begley (2004, p.392) stated that confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination but are clearly derived from the data.

It is for this reason that a record of the research process and the data analysis trail was kept during this study. The researcher and supervisors met to review the findings of the current study until consensus was reached about themes, categories and interpretations.

3.10. Ethics statement

Ethics approval was sought from the Human Social Sciences Research Committee at the institution for higher learning in the Western Cape with ethics reference number HS17/1/34 (see Appendix 1). Subsequently, permission to conduct the study was requested from the Registrar through the online process and Head of the Department of OT at the institution of higher learning at the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences (see Appendix 2). Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were provided with an information sheet explaining the purpose of the study, requesting their participation and assuring them about their confidentiality. Participants was asked for informed consent to participate in the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion. Privacy and confidentiality were adhered to by using pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the participants. The audio tapes were stored on an external hard drive after it was downloaded from the recorder. It was kept safe where only the researcher had access to the data that was gathered. Audiotapes was coded and dated to ensure that the researcher maintained confidentiality throughout the study period. Electronic copies of transcripts were stored on a password protected file which only the researcher had access to. The data will be kept for a period of five years after which it will be destroyed. As human interactions seem to carry some amount of risks, therefore, care was taken to minimize such risks and the necessary

referral system was put in place for arrangements if participants required professional assistance. This entailed that if any of the participants experienced some degree of discomfort and needed further support, they would be referred to Campus Health practitioners for further support.

3.11. Summary

In summary, this chapter presented the research methodology that was employed to investigate the perspectives of undergraduate occupational therapy students regarding occupational balance, health and well-being. An exploratory design and qualitative approach were used to describe these experiences. In the next chapter, the findings of this study are presented which include the themes and categories derived from the data obtained from research participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1.   Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the study are presented based on two themes and its categories and

subcategories that emerged during the thematic analysis process as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Themes, categories and subcategories
 "" in-vivo quotes from the participants.

Theme	Category	Sub-category
"Trying to find a balance between doing all the things that you need to do and all the things that you want to do"	"Like a spiral"	"Not being under-occupied and over-occupied" "I feel like it just comes in waves" - The manner in which Occupational balance it was introduced. "Those things or skills that a person acquires with different life situations" "Like spontaneous things"
	Relationship between occupational balance, health & well-being	- Sickness affects the relationship - Doing one thing - Spiritual occupations
"Huge Adjustment"	OT programme and coursework	- Experience of the programme - Structure of the programme - Workload - Class size and interaction among students and between lecturers - Transitions
	Engaging in different occupations	- Types of occupations that we engage in "I will go crazy if I do studies all the time" - Daily routine - Making time for meaningful occupations

Table 2: Theme One: "Trying to find a balance between doing all the things that you need to do and all the things that you want to do"

Theme	Category	Sub-category
"Trying to find a balance between doing all the things that you need to do and all the things that you want to do"	"Like a spiral"	• "Not being under-occupied and over-occupied" • "I feel like it just comes in waves" • The manner in which Occupational balance it was introduced. • "Those things or skills that a person acquires with different life situations" • "Like spontaneous things" • Making time for meaningful occupations
	Relationship between occupational balance, health & well-being	• Sickness affects the relationship • Doing one thing • Spiritual occupations

The title of the first theme emerged as the participants demonstrated their understanding of occupational balance. Therefore, the following categories were used to present the first theme: *"It's like a spiral"* and *the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being*.

4.2 "Like a spiral"

The first category ("Like a spiral") links directly to the first dimension of occupational balance, namely: How one occupation affects another occupation, which in turn affects a person's ability to achieve occupational balance. "Like a spiral" appeared as a metaphor of spirals and waves that represented the participants' description of their understanding and experience of occupational balance in life. The metaphors resemble the participants' struggles of finding balance and calmness in their lives. These elements of the metaphor seemed to be directly related to participants' occupational balance and imbalance. When a spiral is used as a noun, it represents

a progressive rise or fall, each responding to an upward or downward stimulus provided by the previous one, which could also be regarded as the ripple effect (a spreading effect or series of consequences caused by a single action or event) (oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com, 2019). The participants used the metaphors to describe both their limited understanding and negative experience of occupational balance. Some of the metaphors that the participants used in relation to "like a spiral" included: "It's like maintaining an equilibrium" and "I feel like it just comes in waves".

4.2.1 "Not being under-occupied and over-occupied"

This sub-category deals with the participants' theoretical perspectives of occupational balance. The title of the subcategory emerged in the second-year focus group discussion when the participants shared their understanding the concept of "occupational balance". One of the participants elaborated that:

> *"It's finding a balance within your occupations…not being under occupied and over occupied. It's trying to find a balance in between…"* [Second-year FG, Participant 2]

Drawing from the fourth-year focus group discussions, the participants provided explanations of how they understand the concept of occupational balance, as they referred to occupations that they wanted and needed to do.

> *"Occupational balance is trying to find a balance between doing all the things that you need to do and all the things that you want to do"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 1].

The participants felt that it was important to prioritize their occupations and be able to make use of effective time management skills when they described their understanding of occupational balance. The participants further indicated that occupational balance seemed to be linked to maintaining equilibrium in life. The first-year participant in the following extract supports this assertion.

> *"finding a way to manage all the things that you enjoy, that bring meaning to your life, finding a way to have like an equal part in each of them…So like having a balance and spending equal amount of time with those things. Which is quite hard to do when you have shifts and stuff like work, but I think it's maintaining like an equilibrium with what you enjoy and what actually makes you feel whole as a person in a way?"* [First-year FG, Participant 2]

Participants explained their understanding of occupational balance as part of maintaining equilibrium concerning their roles. The participants realized that one of their occupational roles (i.e. being a student) has the ability to overshadow all other occupations. The participants' ability to know what occupational imbalance means tend to give substance to their understanding of occupational balance:

> *"Like in all your different roles….my understanding is to fully fulfil your different roles [fully] and like for us, I would say that we are not balanced cause our role as a student is overshadowing other roles…our role as a friend or as a family member. So, I think our occupational balance is when all your roles, all together doesn't overshadow each other"* [Third-year FG, Participant 4].

Participants shared about the importance of perseverance and resilience in life when faced with hardships. While some participants indicated that they were able to cope with everything that happens in life, other participants shared that it is essential for them to accept that in life there are times that they might not be able to cope or manage whatever happens in their lives.

"Well I've always had this perception that everything will always be ok, and I will be able to deal with everything life throws at me, but as you grow older you realize that sometimes it's ok not to be able to manage everything all the time. And mastering that is a skill in itself" [Third-year Individual Interview, Participant 1].

One participant felt that they had a good understanding of occupational balance. The interviewer challenged the participant's thinking by asking the participant whether they felt that having/ experiencing occupational balance is healthy. The participant indicated the following:

"Well, it depends, I guess. When you are able to participate in all of your occupations, meaning, work, school, play and rest without burning yourself out, then I suppose it is healthy to have the ability to balance all of your occupations" [Fourth-year Individual Interview, Participant 2].

4.2.2 "I feel like it just comes in waves"

The participants' experiences of occupational balance were shared in the form of a metaphor "it just comes in waves" to represent the challenges and actions. However, the participants indicated that they require time to relax and catch up on what they have missed while they were busy with their studies.

"I feel like it just comes in waves, because when it's time to study there's nothing but study. When there's no studying, we kind of find a routine of fulfilling everything, but then it's always back to studying… so there's no like real balance that's there…It's just like fitting in what we can, when we can" [Second-year FG, Participant 4].

"When we have a lot of work, then that's all we focus on, like Allison* said, but then it's like all dies down. Then we actually don't have a balance because then all we want to do is relax and catch up on everything that we haven't been able to do, so then you're not bringing our studies into our balance either" [Second-year FG, Participant 2].

Another participant indicated that their experience of occupational balance was "inconsistent" which echoes the metaphor of the waves and the spiral. Waves are inconsistent and are never the same. It changes rapidly and is affected by the previous movement of the wave (stimuli). This participant further mentioned that they had previously achieved occupational balance and it was a pleasant feeling to achieve.

"Well, it's very inconsistent. There's no flow. It's never constant. Some weeks I will have achieved occupational balance and some days it just feels as if my life is falling out of place. Like a spiral. I think I have experienced it before and it's nice to have control over everything" [Third year Individual Interview, Participant 1].

When the participants were asked about their experience of occupational balance, there was a consensus that most participants hardly achieved occupational balance, and when they did, it was quite a sporadic period. With this being said, participants understood that not all participants

experienced occupational balance the same. They felt that occupational balance was subjective as part of emotional satisfaction and well-being.

"I also feel like there's a difference and it's person specific, your balance...like Zoleka* she might spend 4 hours reading then do like an hour's work or something like that, but for me, it's about your balance in your life. It's not necessarily that much hours, it's literally what's applicable to your life" [Third-year FG, Participant 3].

"It's about deriving your emotional satisfaction in your life to make it balanced. So, whatever your balance is, you derive satisfaction from whatever that is" [Third-year FG, Participant 1].

The participant below highlighted their initial perception of occupational balance, however, when having experienced occupational balance, the participant realized that there were many factors which contributed to the challenge of experiencing occupational balance. Those included fulfilling the role of an adult and the need to accommodate family and friends as part of social participation.

"I think in the beginning I thought it will be easy to actually balance all of my occupations, but in actual fact...it is quite difficult. Especially when you have a social life and relationships with other people. People are so demanding, demanding of your attention. And that plays a factor in me not achieving occupational balance on some days. Some days, I need to focus on giving friends or family my attention when I am actually supposed to be studying. So, I really thought when I started studying

that it'll be easy, but adulting is really difficult sometimes" [Third-year Individual

interview, Participant 2].

The above discussion led to the participants reflecting on their coping mechanisms. These coping

mechanisms assist the participants to cope with their occupational role as a student. While one

participant mentioned that the best way to cope is to complete the tasks that they are required to

do. Other participants indicated that they engage in unhealthy occupations, and some mentioned

that they would rather avoid anything related to student life as a means to cope.

"I stay in bed and I just think of all the things I should be doing" [Second-year FG,

Participant 3].

"I shower and I just wash my worries away and then I'm like ok Allison* you

showered now, so you have to do your thing" [Participant 4, Second-year FG].

"I was just saying that sleep, because it's like when I get home and I have a lot to

worry about then I'm like I can't actually physically deal with this right now. I first

need to just shut down for a little... and eat a lot of sweets and some people have

been eating or not eating which is another way we all use to cope with stress and the

imbalance in our lives" [Second-year FG, Participant 2].

Participants shared that using a coping mechanism to deal with the stress along with their

studies, actually takes away time from doing what needs to be done, for example studying.

The participant stated:

"Obviously that takes away from my time of being like studying or working, but

sometimes you just need to." [Second-year FG, Participant 4].

One participant mentioned that they use procrastination as a means to cope with the workload, however, this appeared to lead to more stress and placed the participant under more pressure:

"I watch soapies and sleep. I clean my room so if I'm supposed to be studying, I'll think I can't study because it's so untidy. Then I clean my room and then I pack all my stuff. I think I shouldn't have dirty clothes, so then I do the laundry and then I'm under a lot of pressure and then I do everything...literally on the last minute" [Second-year FG, Participant 1].

Another participant added that while engaging in other occupations, another important way of coping is receiving support from their peers. This participant acknowledged the value of peer support:

"I do the eat-sleep thing, but if I don't want to sleep, like I'm not like that kind person that take a power nap. I can't power nap; my power nap is till the next morning. So, I need something to really make me laugh...like Kristin...Or I can always just like text a person "what do I need to do that's due tomorrow?" I just need that...nothing more, and then that kinda helps to know this little bit and that I can make it until tomorrow"* [Second-year FG, Participant 3]

4.2.3   The manner in which Occupational balance was introduced

Some participants felt that they were not adequately informed about occupational balance when they started studying, which led to the students reflecting on the manner the term occupational balance was introduced to them. The participants realized that they weren't informed about occupational balance or imbalance because they were perhaps meant to experience both before

being educated on the theory supporting these concepts. The participants were of the opinion that occupational balance should have been introduced to them the same way that the term occupation was introduced to them (quite early in their OT education). Furthermore, participants felt that the workload and all things that were accompanied by their studies overwhelmed them, and this was attributed to the fact that they were not prepared and adequately informed.

> *"I feel that they can start the way they did explain to us what occupation is like the basics that you need to know. ... I feel that if they taught us about occupational balance, try to explain how we need to achieve it before we can tell someone else how to achieve it, that would be a good thing...because most of us are feeling overwhelmed at the moment and they told us in the beginning that we're gonna feel overwhelmed but maybe then they should have taught us about occupational balance"* [First-year Individual Interview, Participant 2].

> *"I think they should explain it more in class. I think that little time was spent on it. But maybe they will talk about it again...so I'm not actually sure..."* [Second-year Individual Interview, Participant 2].

> *"I don't know, but it seems to me that the department is deliberately causing occupational imbalance in our lives so that we can kind of experience and understand it?"* [Third-year Individual Interview, Participant 1]

Participants shared that it is important for them to have their own personal understanding of occupational balance prior to their practice as OT students. The participants further indicated that having a good personal understanding of occupational balance would influence their ability to assist clients to achieve occupational balance more effectively when they are qualified occupational therapists. This is evident from first- to third-year individual interviews.

"First of all, you're not going to help someone else do it, if you can't achieve occupational balance. How are you going to manage your life, your patients or clients, the things you need to do for yourself? Otherwise you're not gonna be able to be the best OT you can be…. If you can achieve occupational balance, in order for me to help my patients, I feel like I kind of have to know what I'm doing…" [First-year Individual Interview, Participant 2].

"I think it will definitely be beneficial because if you as an OT and even as a person understand what it is and how to go about it, then it'll just make you as a therapist…your life easier to evaluate someone else's life" [First-year Individual Interview, Participant 3].

"I think maybe understanding it better would make you more aware of it, especially when working with patients. So, it could maybe help you to identify imbalances easier in order for you to help them better" [Second-year Individual Interview, Participant 1].
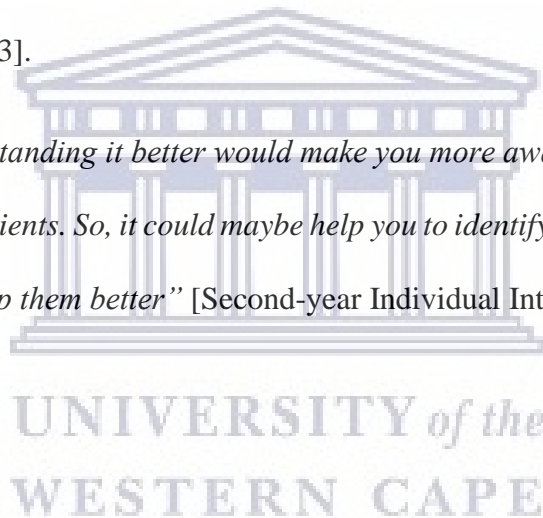
One participant expressed their opinion on how the topic was introduced to them. The participant felt that having experienced occupational balance would make them better at performing their job as an occupational therapist.

"Well I think that I'll be better capable at doing my job, because I have experienced some of our topics for example occupational imbalance as well" [Third-year Individual Interview, Participant 1].

4.2.4 "Those things or skills that a person acquires to deal with different life situations"

It was highlighted in one of the individual interviews that there are things or skills that the participants felt were essential in life to face different life circumstances. The participants reported that having mastered life skills such as stress management, having coping mechanisms in place and time management could be enablers to promote occupational balance.

> *"I can't think of specific factors, but, maybe those things or skills that a person acquires to deal with different life situations. For example, being able to manage your time effectively. Being able to cope with stress. I think from a personal point of view, factors that assisted me or that enabled occupational balance in my life is stuff like being able to time manage, and prioritize what is important at that point in my life"* [Third-year Individual Interview, Participant 1].

This is evident in the rationale provided by participant 1 who elaborated about priorities in occupations, that some occupations take preference than others.

> *"I mean like, say we had a week of tests, and something happens that are out of my control. I know that I should be attending to the emergency or whatever that has happened, but it's more important for me to study for my tests because I want to pass and I don't want to fail because I will disappoint my family"* [Third-year Individual Interview, Participant 1].

The same participant further indicated that working under pressure tends to assist in performing well academically thus preventing disappointments.

> *"I won't say that it's pressure from my family's side, I just think that I have set a standard for myself, and I will disappoint myself if I don't pass"* [Third-year Individual Interview, Participant 1].

Most of the participants assumed that experiencing occupational balance seemed to be directly related to living a healthy life, as reported in the different focus group discussions. A number of participants shared the same sentiments that time management is one of the enablers, which facilitates occupational balance.

"Time Management…lots of time management" [Second-year FG, Participant 3].

One participant in the second-year focus group discussion indicated that time management was one of the life skills that is not easy to achieve.

"it's easy to say time management but like when we have ten modules or nine modules or eight, eight split into two subjects and it's just, you get dates and then you plan for these dates but then everything comes with it…and spot tests or like it's easy to say time management but it's not so easy to do…" [Second-year FG, Participant 4].
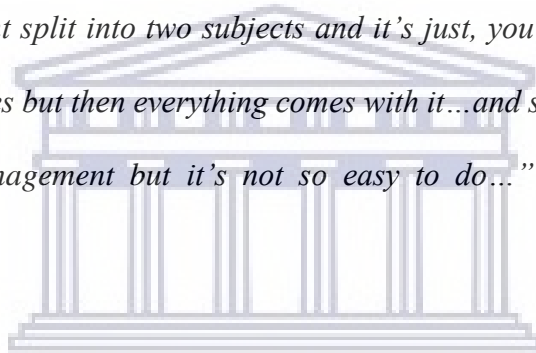
The participants further expressed the enablers to achieve occupational balance tend to change quite frequently. One participant was of the opinion that while understanding what an enabler to occupational balance is and being able to identify it, a person's general and psychological well-being has an influence on whether or not you are able to achieve occupational balance:

"Cause sometimes you have to deal with a situation, like you could say at six I must start studying, but how are you feeling as a person? Are you just going to stare at the books, or are you really going to study? Like it changes every day" [Second-year FG, Participant 3]

From the participants' discourse, it was obvious that there were enablers that seemed to influence their understanding and experiences of occupational balance. Some of the participants felt that

the same factors that can enable a person to achieve occupational balance could also be regarded as a barrier to occupational balance.

"Well, I would think [SIGHS] they go kind of hand-in-hand, the same things that would enable you can also keep you from doing it, so…your environment obviously if there's something keeping you from getting to a place where you need to be, to do your occupations. If you can't do it or doesn't want you to do it, trying to keep you from doing it…then I feel like that would negatively affect your occupations. Then, if someone is there to try and like encourage you to do it, then it can be a positive effect on you, so it can go both ways …" [First-year Individual Interview, Participant 2].

The above extract highlighted the importance of people who play a supportive role in the participants' lives. The participants identified the value of having a connection with others, as part of positive factors that tend to enhance occupational balance. The participants further mentioned that the people who they surround themselves with play a big role in achieving a sense of occupational balance.

"I think the people in your life plays a big role. Your environment? I will not be able to do this without you and Ilse* like you my people, because like she explained we help each other out, not only academically or something. I mean like emotionally wise we can vent about anything to each other, we will celebrate the small things together and stuff like that and that helps a lot" [First-year FG, Participant 5].

4.2.5 "Like spontaneous things"

This subcategory is about the unforeseen circumstances that appeared to influence participants' occupational balance. The title of the subcategory emerged from the first-year focus group discourse when participant 2 said:

> *"Like spontaneous things. As you don't know that there is going to be an accident. I don't know or it's someone turning around and telling me dude can you take my shift tonight?"* [First-year FG, Participant 2].

Some participants felt that factors that could be an enabler could also be considered a barrier. A few participants alluded to the fact that unforeseen factors such as traffic or unexpected prayer meetings held at their houses could prevent them from achieving occupational balance:

> *"So, like my parents, like we go to cell group for prayer, and sometimes they go to cell and sometimes it's at our house. Then I would need to write a test or something and they'll be like oh cell is here tonight and I'm like now I need to shift another day for my test cause (because) I can't do anything. So now everything is messed up"* [Third-year FG, Participant 3].

> *"I also think that your environment can also play a role, not just your people, your environment, so I think like, like with Tara* who has to catch a taxi like every single day. Like I know I get upset when I sit in traffic, like yesterday I think I had a really crappy day because of that massive traffic jam on Robert Sobukwe, because I got to class late, I didn't have my coffee in the morning. It messed my whole structure. So, I think there is like so many like little multi-faceted things"* [First-year FG, Participant 2].

4.3 Relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being

In this category, the participants shared their understanding of the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being. However, some of the participants struggled to provide an in-depth understanding of the relationship. This category related to another dimension of occupational balance, namely: How people's occupation matches their needs.

4.3.1 Sickness affects the relationship

One participant used the example of being ill to describe how health and well-being could be affected. Occupational balance was referred to as functioning optimally. This way of describing the relationship appeared to be very superficial and concrete.

"Well, if you are sick for example, so you are not well, you're ill. You firstly not going to be able to perform your occupation as well as you should because you have that barrier affecting you, because you sick and tired and you don't feel good. So your motivation is low, you just want to sleep. You know that kind of a thing. I feel like if you need to get your occupation done, you need to prioritize your life as well to be able to perform optimally" [First-year FG, Participant 5].

"I think there is a relationship where if a person has occupational balance in their lives it improves their health and well-being. Their health will improve, and they will be able to feel better about themselves and their lives" [Second-year FG, Participant 1].

Participants' insight into the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being were also quite concrete and limited in the beginning. The participants indicated that there should be a good relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being.

"I think your occupational balance is you finding a way to get to everything that you… so as a human, your occupations ... your health and well-being, that's your physical health and your mental health. I think it actually has a close relationship between the two, I think if you are ill for example you're not going to get round to do your occupations as well as you were if you were not ill. It has a direct effect on each other, so I think there should be a good relationship between each other" [First-year Individual Interview, Participant 3].

4.3.2 "Doing one thing"

In contemplating about doing one thing, participants explained that a person's health, well-being and occupational balance could be affected when you focus too much on one occupation. This links directly to the discussion around the implications of focusing on one occupation.

"And then the other way around if there is occupations that is kind of taking over your life, then you prioritize so much of that, that it keeps you from doing the rest, that could have an impact on your health as well. So that is where the balance comes in. You can't do one thing and then completely forget about the rest of the things you have to do" [First-year FG, Participant 7].

"Ok, occupational balance can affect your well-being and the other way around… like if you can balance all your occupations, that you need to do or if you can do what you need to do with all your occupations then your health would be better. If you can't do what you have to do and what you need to do then that would kind of…like…if you only work and you don't have time to relax or just like calm down after a while, I feel like you get stressed and that stress will build up and will affect your well-being. If you are sick or something like that and you aren't able to perform

all your occupations…like it can go both ways…" [First-year Individual Interview, Participant 2].

4.3.3 Spiritual occupations

One of the first-year participants shared that spiritual occupation such as playing piano, worshipping, reading the bible and prayer formed part of spirituality and faith. Other participants agreed that spiritual occupations enhanced their sanity and the relationship between health, well-being and occupational balance:

"I play piano, but I don't play it for exams and stuff. I play piano for worshipping and ja…So I do it in my own time and not like a worship team or anything, but I do it by myself in my own space and if I don't do that for say now a week, like at least like twice a week then I notice a change like in my behaviour. Like because for me, my spirituality and my faith is very important. I can read the bible and I can pray and I can like go on but if I don't sit down, take out the time to worship, then it becomes a problem and I become like sad and people will notice that. My mom will say, like what's wrong, it will just be because I actually had time to just actually play piano and worship. Like, I don't want to do it when everybody else is in the house, cause it's like, it's me time. So that becomes my well-being" [First-year FG, Participant 3].

Participants explained that the relationship between health, well-being and occupational balance as similar to "cause and effect". They were of the opinion that the one has a direct influence on the other.

"I think that every occupation that you engage in has an effect and a like a cause and effect. Because like Allison* said, if I didn't get enough sleep, I'm a completely different person to someone who did get enough sleep. If I eat too much, that's going to have an effect on me, as well as f I don't eat enough, or don't…study enough or study too little then…it will always have an effect on your well-being…and your health, cause you are either doing something too much or doing something too little and that has consequences" [First-year FG, Participant 1].

"It's just…I feel like well, when you don't…seeing that sleep is for an example my occupation…when I didn't get sleep this week I came to class, I was inattentive. I didn't eat, so I felt like I was about to faint every two seconds and it's if you don't fulfil these parts of yourself it does have an overall effect on everything that you perform" [Second-year FG, Participant 4].
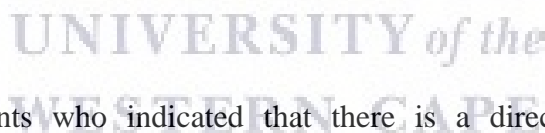
There were four participants who indicated that there is a direct relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being. They highlighted the following:

"There is a relationship. I think when you are unable to balance your occupations then your health and well-being is automatically affected" [Second-year Individual Interview, Participant 2].

"There is a relationship because the one won't happen without the other. So for example, if you don't have a fit or balance between all of your occupations, you may perhaps lead an unhealthy lifestyle because you are stressed that you are unable to equally put in effort for all of your occupations. You don't have a fit, or leading a

healthy lifestyle your soul may be affected, like you may be a bit down, because you feel bad that you cannot achieve occupational balance. So there is definitely a relationship between the three" [Third-year Individual Interview, Participant 1].

"There must be a relationship, because when I don't experience a balance with all of my occupations then I feel tired, demotivated, and unhappy and then I don't have a sense of health and well-being" [Third-year Individual Interview, Participant 2].

"Well obviously there is a relationship where if a person has occupational balance in their lives it automatically improves their health and well-being. There is a correlation between how occupationally balanced an individual is and the impact it has on health and well-being, with it being improved when occupational balance is achieved" [Fourth-year Individual Interview, Participant 3].

One fourth-year participant referred back to literature when elaborating on their understanding of occupational balance. The participant indicated that literature stipulated that occupational balance is a determinant of health, and when there is a balance between the occupations that you engage in, it leads to health and well-being.

"Based on literature and my understanding of the philosophy of the OT profession, engagement in occupations can contribute to an individual's health and well-being. Therefore it can be argued that maintaining a balance between the various occupational areas, hence occupational balance, can be seen as a determinant of health, as it is also one of the factors that influence one's health and well-being and that is affected by the environment in which individuals live" [Fourth-year Individual Interview, Participant 4]

The researcher further asked the participants about their understanding of health and well-being, and whether it is the same thing or if there was a difference.

> *"...health has to do with your physical, mental, emotional health and well-being refers to your overall state"* [Second-year Individual Interview, Participant 2]

The participants in the third-year focus group discussion all agreed that occupational balance is necessary for health and well-being to be achieved. Participants also mentioned that not having a state of occupational balance can aggravate other chronic conditions.

> *"I feel like there's no right or wrong...so I feel like occupations is a thing that you love obviously that you can't function without. The thing that you enjoy. So, if you participate adequately in your occupations, I feel like that leads to health. I feel like ok for example, if your occupation is swimming then you're going to be fit physically or mentally, it's going to help you to cope mentally, physically and if you're healthy I feel like you achieve well-being...I don't know..."* [Third-year FG, Participant 3].

> *"I studied yesterday and this was part of it and there was something about that your occupations are what you do every day like it's a...so it includes your ADLs, your IADLs and also stuff that you enjoy doing, so if you're not able to physically take care of yourself, you're not going to be healthy, and being healthy is not just being free of disease, it's being physically, socially, culturally and mentally...well-being means that you are healthy. So, if you aren't able to engage in occupations it affects your health, and because your health is affected, you won't be happy"* [Third-year FG, Participant 2].

The participants further mentioned that the occupational balance, health and well-being had a direct link, and that to truly understand the relationship one cannot look at it in isolation.

"I feel like they have a direct link or proportional, so if there's a change in the one there will be a change in the other. You can't look at it separately" [Third-year FG, Participant 3].

Participants also indicated that this relationship is dependent on the stage of life of a person as well as the fact that life changes constantly:

"Life…life changes constantly. You can't control it, you know, it happens all the time and you adapting to change" [Third-year FG, Participant 5].

"Yeah, you can't adapt to something, change is going to happen. It's inevitable. We go through changes our whole life, I mean we go from being born to a toddler, then you go through six years of school and then after that you do a degree, you'll be working. Your life is constantly evolving and changing and you're adapting…you can't adapt to a new phase in life if your state of mind doesn't move forward. I think that makes you feel stuck" [Third-year FG, Participant 3].

Other participants agreed that it is important to engage in meaningful occupations in order to maintain the relationship between occupational balance health and well-being.

"So like if you feel like you can manage all your day-to-day things and you're able to do the things that are meaningful to you, it helps…it promotes your well-being, like you feel happier and you do more things….you are more active…" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 4].

"The biggest things that I've learned especially from that first two blocks in first year is that I have to make time for myself otherwise I kind of lose my personality. I become very anxious, I become very stressed…so I need to…" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 1].

Table 3: Theme Two: "Huge adjustment"

Theme	Category	Sub-category
"Huge Adjustment"	OT programme and coursework	• Experience of the programme • Structure of the programme • Workload • Class size and interaction among students and between lecturers • Transitions
	Fieldwork block experience/In-service training	
	Engaging in different occupations	• Types of occupations that we engage in • "I will go crazy if I do studies all the time" • Daily routine

This theme focuses on how undergraduate OT students had to make a huge adjustment in their lives to adapt to and face the challenges accompanied with the OT programme and its coursework. It further highlighted the difficulties the undergraduate OT students experience concerning the transition from high school to first year and then their journey from first- to fourth-year. This theme comprised of OT programme, coursework, fieldwork block experience/ In-service training, and engaging in different occupations.

4.4 OT programme and coursework

This category captured the participants' descriptions of the OT programme at an institution for higher education in the Western Cape and its coursework. This category relates to the third dimension of occupational balance namely: How time is spent in different occupations. This category further captured the structure of how the OT programme was set up as well as the shared difficulties the participants faced while studying in their particular year group. It was strongly highlighted throughout this category that most of the participants experienced the programme to be challenging and difficult.

4.4.1 Structure of the programme

In this sub-category, one can see the mixed perceptions and experiences the participants had about the occupational programme at one of the institutions of higher education in the Western Cape. When the participants discussed their experiences of the OT programme, it became evident that participants in their first-year of study felt that the course was relatively easy, while participants between second- and third-year felt that the course was difficult and demanding. This finding illustrated the participants' level of insight and understanding of the OT programme. One could argue that the students would only have better insight when they have experienced the course for a period of one year before commenting on their experience, however, in order for the profession to improve on OT education, this information is crucial.

When participants were asked about the OT programme and the challenges, four participants placed emphasis on the structure of the OT programme:

> "Well…the way our classes are set up, we have block the entire week, and you know, sometimes we come for class and it'll be for an hour, and the next week we'll come again and it'll be for an hour, where I feel….they could've thought about what they

would like to speak to us about over the weeks and then use one day perhaps and discuss all of that…" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 5].

"Can I just say…what I think about the entire curriculum…In first year and second year there's a lot of movie watching, poster making… The tiny little group projects and then third year it's like WHOA…." [Fourth-year FG, Participant 2].

"You don't learn about diagnosis and things like that, whereas now they expect you to know everything even though not everything is taught. I get that you have that self-learning in our curriculum, but they expect you to know everything between first year and second year. They focus on things that I don't really think about… I don't really think about movie making…. hell no…" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 6].

The difference in terms of year levels were very apparent. Some students felt that the transition between the year levels were too big:

"Comparing second year to first year, it's like the whole first year in one semester and that is a huge adjustment, cause I feel like I'm still learning how to study this module…the modules that's being presented to us. It's not like in high school it's so…I think that makes it difficult for me…" [Second-year FG, Participant 3].

"They were very like…everyone says the gap between matric and 1st year is so big, like it's such an adjustment, but like I didn't find that at all. For me the jump was 2nd year going to 3rd year. I feel like all we did in 1st year was make posters" [Third-year FG, Participant 4].

Participants reported that they felt that they needed more information about the expectations of the course that they have chosen. It appeared that the participants were ill-prepared and not equipped for the unknown related to the OT course.

"I wish someone had sat down with me and told me the process that you're going to follow through the four years…maybe they didn't say it to us in 1ˢᵗ year because we wouldn't be able to understand where they were going. In 1ˢᵗ year you do Human Occupation I, then Human Occupation II and then III and like it makes sense now like the different Human Occupations. I feel like they could have spoken to us…more about what to expect in our four years here….Cause you go through like knowing and not knowing where they'll go with anything" [Third-year FG, Participant 1].

One participant expressed that they would have wanted to have better guidance in terms of the OT related terminology that they needed to know about when they started studying:

"But just simple things like the basic terminology that we learnt in 1ˢᵗ year. We took so long to understand but it's not part of our general vocab, you know so it's just the simple things like enablers and barriers, how long did it take us to learn that? You know…the word occupation…what does occupation actually mean. Like how much time did we spend on that and now we understand that, we couldn't have said we understand it before we started it in 1ˢᵗ year and things like the injustices we did, what does it mean to have equality or have justice, like those sort of things we could have done in 1ˢᵗ year. It all seems really basic to us now and it all seemed basic back then, but we didn't realize how important it was to have those words as foundation for the rest of the stuff" [Third-year FG, Participant 5].

Some participants indicated that the expectation from the lecturers became more as they progressed from first-year to fourth-year. Students are expected to be knowledgeable about OT

and the different terminology, yet very little information on these topics is taught in the first and second year of their studies:

> *"Ja…I feel like in 1ˢᵗ year they didn't teach us that much and then 2ⁿᵈ and 3ʳᵈ year they're expecting so much more from us… which kind of scares me cause you know, they're so chilled with you in the beginning and now they're like we expect you to know this, and you must be able to do this…and we didn't have that expectation before and that's like a lot of stress"* [Third-year FG, Participant 3].

Some first-year students felt that the programme was quite supportive and that there were a sense of comradery among some lecturers and the students:

> *"I think it's very good in the sense that they got really good support structure. Like I know for a fact that if we have an issue we can go to Ms Farmer* like she's generally upset if we have to miss like fieldwork or something, but she's not upset in a way like "no you have to make a plan", she'll be very understanding, like "ok I get you, you can do this or you can do this". She is very…It's very like…. there's a sense of comradery"* [First-year FG, Participant 2].

4.4.2 Experience of the programme

This sub-category revealed that most of the participants experienced the OT programme as difficult and indicates that most of the participants shared this feeling. This was evident in the third and fourth-year participants. Very few positive comments were made about their experience. First and second-year participants had some mixed feelings about their experience as a few participants felt that the OT programme was manageable:

"*Firstly I think it is manageable but it doesn't account for you having a part time jobs or I'm not sure if you find it like manageable, but it makes life a little more hectic I would assume. So for me, I don't work part time, I am involved in church things, like a few times in the week and on the weekends it's church and I struggle with it, but it's not impossible, it's doable, but you gotta have time management skills*" [First-year FG, Participant 6].

It was clear from the data that students within the first year group felt the same with regards to the level of difficulty, however, those in second to fourth year felt differently. Some students felt that the amount of work that the students had to complete takes away the meaningfulness of studying OT:

"*I think that the OT programme is fine, the modules, it's everything is up to level, it's just there's so much. So now instead of us learning to get that fulfilment of this is what we want to know, because this is what we want to do some day…it's more of I need to study because I need to pass tomorrow's thing and then I need to study this because I need to study and pass the next weeks thing…it's like the whole lot of things on top of each other…*" [Second-year FG, Participant 4].

"*I feel like, to answer your question about the OT programme, it's very good, it's very intensive, it is very intense… it has a lot of components. I feel like they could have…on that note… feel like they could have spread out more and done more 2ⁿᵈ year stuff than 1ˢᵗ year*" [Third-year FG, Participant 3].

One participant indicated that some students extended their studies to better cope with the demanding nature of the OT course. According to this participant, students registered for the extended study program have lighter workloads and appeared less stressed than those that don't extend their studies:

> *"Uh I've noticed that there's very much a trend that people are finishing in 5 years or 6 years and I mean like that's got to tell you something…that like for, for a lot of us, this is just too demanding and there's just too much to cope with and I feel like the people (obviously not us), the people that have not made it to full second year, some of the subjects are so much less stress and they just seem to be coping with life better because they have less workload and less stress levels…"* [Second-year FG, Participant 2].

When furthering the discussion around the students' experience of the OT programme in an institution of higher education, one fourth-year participant indicated that the programme was "difficult". The participant further stated:

> *"The expectation is so high, whereas you feel that first year, second year you're just learning about what is occupation…"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 4].

Other participants felt that the OT programme was very fast paced. They used words such as "rapid", "big jumps" etc. to explain what they experienced as part of their studies. Reflecting back on the past four years made the participants to realise that the programme needs them to have a structure:

> *"It's just big jumps…"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 7].

> *"It's rapid, it's really rapid…"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 3].

> *"It needs structure…"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 6].

"Crammed" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 4].

"Unstructured and deurmekaar [unorganized]*"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 3].

4.4.3   Workload

While the participants in first year felt that the programme was "manageable" they believed regular assessments would assist them. They felt that frequent testing or demonstration of how to apply certain concepts in theory would equip them better for tests and examinations:

"Preferably have like a class test at least like once a term. It's like we would know how they will actually assess us, because we have assignments, but like we don't know what to expect in the exam" [First-year FG, Participant 2].

"Ja they kinda like say just study the work and slides and like this is very much an application type of work...so it would be nice to kinda have like a practice test to kinda just be like, ohk this is how they ask the question" [First-year FG, Participant 2].

A participant from the second-year focus group discussion highlighted an important result of being ill-prepared. This participant mentioned that the result of this could lead to participants falling behind in the classroom.

"I think it's difficult and what she said…a lot of people fall behind because it's…they don't get assessed like maybe…I don't know…frequently enough…like for two assignments of…for example a module where we do two assignments and then it's exams. We've never been tested in what we're going to have to write in exams, so we

never know what is expected of you and they say that you are taught everything so you're supposed to know but it's not...I feel like it's not a practical answer when you've never been tested me to see if I actually know what I'm supposed to know, and so it becomes too much" [Second-year FG, Participant 5].

It appeared that while participants were of the opinion that they preferred being tested frequently as opposed to handing in assignments as a method of assessment, they felt that they also required lecturers to go through the test answers with them. This would equip them with the knowledge on how to answer their test/ exam papers.

"You get like past papers to look back on, but the thing is, you don't get the memos on that. So yes you can work it out and look at the type of questions that they ask, but you don't know the way that you answering it is correct" [First-year FG, Participant 5].

"It's a very opinionated subject, so it's very much like...and I can understand when they give us case studies, but like, it's a very much like, a lot of the things, yes I do know how to apply the core elements of care and what not, but some of it, it's very much opinionated and like they can't exactly mark you wrong in your module, but it would be nice to know what to expect" [First-year FG, Participant 3].

Another participant corroborated with the previous participants' opinions. This participant indicated the importance of being prepared was not knowing what to expect could possibly lead to participants cheating in tests as a result of being ill-prepared. The participant further reported

that this way of doing things basically does not assist them in knowing how to answer the questions in future.

"The only subject that we actually feel like prepared for, for our exams is , HUB (Human Biology), because we had practice tests and we know how they gonna ask that, because Psychology we've only had online tests and I'm like, as much as they (say) like please don't cheat, like everybody knows if you have your book with you and you write it like that, you don't actually know how to kinda do it…It would be nice for subjects like that if we have more like a little, like maybe a test and then assignments, just to see like what to expect, because it's very much like, we shooting in the dark for exams and now and that's how I feel, it's going to be a bit rough" [First-year FG, Participant 1].

The following extracts echo the importance of being taught on how to perform assessments in order to provide proper intervention. The participants also indicated the limited teaching on, for example, different diagnoses, yet they are expected to know how to determine which assessments are appropriate for a particular diagnosis and being able to formulate an intervention plan based on that information.

"You don't learn about diagnosis and things like that, whereas now they expect you to know everything even though not everything is taught. I get that you have that self-learning in our curriculum, but they expect you to know everything between first year and second year. They focus on things that I don't really think about…" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 6].

Some participants indicated that it was difficult to do group work, whether it was for subjects related to OT or not. This participant felt that this "problem" would not continue when they progress on to second year:

"The problem for me with that is, the small groups, I feel like, some of the people want to be there and other people don't want to be there. That is why I am looking forward to second year, because I feel like everyone who is slacking, who doesn't do their part, who doesn't want to be there, isn't going to be there. So, that problem with one person in a group does all the work, isn't going to be that hectic anymore. Oh but some, even in my Human Occupation class, like our small group, it's normally me and Mia* that does the work and I mean like, we have five people, six people in the group and it's still just one of us doing all of the work and the other people just pretend to give an opinion" [First-year FG, Participant 3].

4.4.4   The classroom size and interaction among students and between lecturers

Participants felt that the size of the classroom had an influence on how they interacted with each other as well as the lecturer in the classroom. They felt that if the classes were smaller, there would be more interaction, and vice versa:

"I really like the small classes, like our OT class we're like 30. Well, I do enjoy the smaller classes. So, like in Human Biology we have like a little class, but like, Health Promotion was fine, it wasn't like a huge class. I get a little bored in Psychology cause it's such a huge class and like, there's not much interaction" [First-year FG, Participant 3].

A few participants found that the interaction between the participants, as well as with the lecturers contributed to their learning. They also felt that having conversation with their lecturers made their interaction less formal which made it more fun.

"There's so much happening for OT and sometimes lecturers are not formal, so sometimes you get that you're in class and it's so fun and I feel like it sometimes just takes you out of this serious world…like today, we will have a nice long conversation about four lectures you will have and then you get home and you feel like there's nothing you have to do because in the class all you did was to basically speak and discuss things …"[Second-year FG, Participant 5].

"Yeah, but I must say we have a lot of social interaction, we interact very much in class and outside class" [Third-year FG, Participant 3].

Another second-year participant indicated the importance of getting to know their lecturers. This participant referred to a lecturer who marked their paper while the participant had no idea who the lecturer was.

"Maybe also like…. getting to know the lecturers also, like when you write on your paper and you like don't know the lecturers name and you're like Oh Gosh...I don't know who's this person but you've been in their class for like how long, so engaging with them also" [Second-year FG, Participant 4]

4.4.5 Transitions

Language was identified as one of the barriers that the participants were struggling to deal with during the transition. One participant specifically pointed out that it was difficult to adjust to the new language medium that was used at the tuition.

"The problem for me was I had school in Afrikaans. So, it was like, it was a bilingual school, but we did most of our work in Afrikaans. So, for me come here and immediately switch over and its new terms you learn everyday" [First-year individual interview, Participant 3].

Despite that there were challenges that the participants had to deal with as part of transitions, students' active involvement was perceived as an enabler that promoted learning. Another participant mentioned that high school was easier than first year in higher education. Everything was given to the scholars:

"I enjoy the things I do now, because I feel like in high school you kind of, you were given everything to do. Some of the things you like and some of the things you don't like so now I feel like, I'm in a place where I like what I'm studying. So, I love Psych 111, I find the theory very interesting. Psych 112 I don't like it at all" [First-year FG, Participant 7].
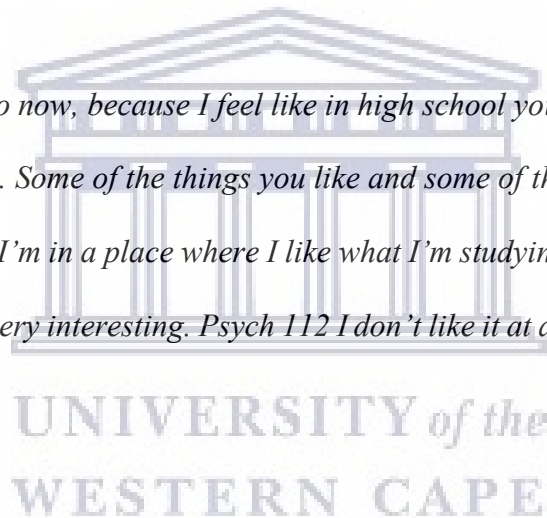
4.5 Fieldwork block experience

This category demonstrated the participants' experience of the in-service training they receive during their studies. One participant expressed that while it was a good experience, little guidance was provided to the students before their fieldwork block. This participant felt that when they arrived at the placement, they were told what to do, and did not necessarily arrive prepared:

"Like one of the other things I think would be nice is like for fieldwork, the first fieldwork, they were like, hey you guys, this is where you going, have fun, and there was nothing like there was like ok if you have children do this this this, if you have

disabled people then you do this, this and this. So, like there was nothing, there were

no guidance as to what we could do. We rocked up there and ok, like…" [First-year

FG, Participant 2].

Another participant responded to the previous student's statement. This participant alluded to the

fact that it could perhaps have been the lecturer's way of allowing the students to experience the

fieldwork block first to be able to reflect afterwards:

"But maybe it was intentional, cause in the debriefing they let you reflect on what

you did. They ask you like how did you experience it and you kinda answer your own

question that you had like. (Mumbling) Ja like maybe it was intentional in that sense.

Cause I feel like we do know, but also you go completely unprepared like you have

no clue what to expect" [First-year FG, Participant 5].

Other first-year participants mentioned that they found it difficult to separate themselves from

their clients. Some students wanted to relate to their clients, while others found it difficult to

terminate with the clients:

"We're battling…you battle to like distance yourself from your client…and there

isn't really like a little, I don't know like maybe a one lecture they could do to say

here's some of the mechanisms that you can use to distance yourself. I find it very

hard to not want to like adopt a kid, cause like anything bad that would happen to a

little girl, has happened to her and I cried like for fourty five minutes in my car

afterwards, cause I was like it's so crappy and I know Mary* was just like you know

it's a client…We like, we have been told that, don't get attached to your client, it's unprofessional, but like we're human" [First-year FG, Participant 2].

"What was really rough for me with the last rotation we had…was like I got somewhere with my client. Like it was great and it meant a lot to me, but what sucked was when I had to get up and leave…Like it felt…I felt so guilty almost, because I can get up and leave and go on with my life, but that is her life and this is her life, this is what she has, that's it." [First-year FG, Participant 5].

One participant indicated that the fact that she could not separate her emotions from the clients, led to her questioning whether or not she should stay in the profession of OT:

"Mine is bad, because for our OT assignment, my client was just telling me how she got blind and stuff and I am very sensitive person, I think. I ended up crying like it was so bad, because my dad was with me and I ended up crying in front of her and then I just had excuse to go to the bathroom or something. So, I'm trying to stay strong and while I was telling that story now, I'll try to act strong, but the whole day it will disturb me, like a whole day or two days. So that for me, I told my dad that I'm probably not gonna take OT for four years, I don't think I'm big about it, because I can't take in all this pressure, but I'm trying" [First-year FG, Participant 1].

When the fourth-year participants were asked whether they feel prepared before starting a fieldwork block, and whether they feel that more emphasis should be placed on fieldwork preparation, all participants agreed that they require more preparation. The participants

mentioned that they have a "bootcamp" before each fieldwork block, where administration is attended to:

"Three days before block....fieldwork block, ...it was just mainly admin related, I thought it's prep because they called it preparation for block but it was just...getting admin sorted out" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 7].

Some students felt that boot camp assisted them with regards to admin related to fieldwork block. Furthermore, they mentioned that while it was helpful to sort out admin related tasks, the time allocated to boot camp wasn't sufficient and that all students were combined, for example, those individuals doing the Individual Process Model and those doing the Group Process Model. They felt that it should've been separated so that students could benefit more from these sessions.

"And also like fieldwork boot camp was a lot of admin stuff, like how to go through each process, like individual process...but I don't think they think it through....like sitting whole day in a class and we all focus on ok...I'm going to group (block), you're going to individual (block), you're not going to focus on group so why not use the individual people like do the individual process with them, so that they can focus on the thing that they need to focus on instead of doing everything and everyone is bored and tired and not concentrating..." [Fourth-year FG, Participant 6].

One participant made a valuable suggestion to improve their understanding of the different process models. This participant referred to when they visited a school for a period, and during this period they were expected to use the process models for a case study. By having done this

before, they were able to do it when they were expected to do it in individually for fieldwork block:

> *"We had a practical thing where we went to a school once a day for 6 weeks and we worked and we worked through in groups and we got different people's perspective, so the time I went to community although the process changed slightly in the way they have done it, I still knew what came in the community case study…"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 1].

While the participant above felt that it was introduced to them previously, some participants did not agree:

> *"If they did, I don't know…then I don't remember it… and that was split up first of all. It was in a group and it was on an individual person, and what we don't do in blocks…..we don't work in a group and have individual clients, and do in a group the individual process model, so I only did a part and I only focused in the part that was given to me. I didn't go through the whole process…"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 4].

Another participant mentioned that even though they had done the process model as a case study in third year, they had done it in a group. Therefore, they weren't expected to complete all of the sections independently - they were only expected to complete a section of the case study/ process model.

> *"We didn't have a chance to actually apply it…"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 5].

Lastly, in conclusion to the question about the participants' fieldwork experience, a participant mentioned that it was impractical to expect the students to provide comprehensive detail in a case study as they were not at the placement and did not have access to the client's folder to provide more information, other than that provided in the case study:

> *"Or even if they make us apply it in a different way, we're not actually forced to go into placement and see a thing…give us all case study based things, that we can apply the…the different processes so you get a story of this person at *a clinical facility for the physically disabled, a physical thing and you write case studies. Obviously, it's going to be very limited access to the information…it is very limited, but it still forces the students to apply it"* [Fourth-year FG, Participant 1].

4.6 Engaging in different occupations

This category conveys the different occupations the participants engaged in. this category relates to people's satisfaction with their mix of occupations (a dimension of occupational balance). The following subcategories are used to discuss the foregoing category: "Types of occupations that we engage in, "I will go crazy if I do studies all the time" and daily routine.

4.6.1 Types of occupations that we engage in

Participants reported that there were different types of occupations that they participated in as part of their daily lives. Participants identified occupations related to the domain and process model. Those included occupations related to education, work, leisure, social participation and rest and sleep.

"I think like, it's predominantly your studies, if you have a part time job, your social life and sleep… [First-year FG, Participant 2].

"Ok, I also spend a lot of time at church. I work, which is like church on the move, you got different friends… and sport and just exercise time or like reflecting time…getting a break from studies…" [First-year FG, Participant 3].

"Sleeping" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 2].

"Being with your friends, being a friend and being up to date with what's going on, not just being in class – but actually knowing what's going on in class" [Second-year FG, Participant 3].

Other participants in the focus group discussions identified occupations related to their current occupational role of being a student. While one of the participants appeared unsure of their answer, another participant further indicated that they needed to stay abreast of what is being covered in the class by the lecturers.
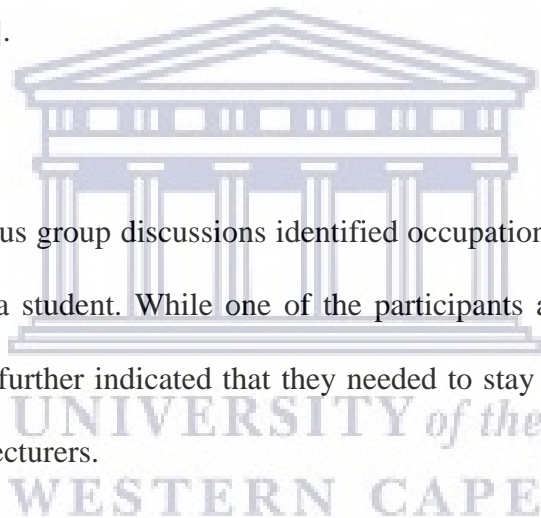
"Isn't it just being a student, studying?" [Second-year FG, Participant 1].

"Attending classes and studying, tests and exams" [Second-year FG, Participant 2].

"Formal education" [Third-year FG, Participant 3]

"Studying, sitting down at your desk. Trying to have a social life, at least a little bit…" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 1]

"Work" [Third-year FG, Participant 4]

"Working" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 4]

Other participants identified occupations that formed a part of Basic Activities of Daily Living (BADL's). Given this, it appeared that the participants were knowledgeable about OT terminology.

"Leisure, Exercising, ADL's" [Third-year FG, Participant 1]

"Eating" [Third-year FG, Participant 2]

"Daily routines, like brushing teeth…" [Fourth-year FG, Participant 3]

4.6.2 **"I will go crazy if I do studies all the time"**

As mentioned previously, participants reported that there were certain occupations that they engaged in daily in their lives. However, the participants further shared that focusing on one occupation might have a negative influence on their mental health. This is evident in the extracts of two participants (3 and 4).

"I try to spend my time between social and studies, because I will go crazy if I do studies all the time, or do academic stuff" [First-year FG, Participant 3].

"I feel like my hobbies forms part of that, because I only focus on school and I don't get out. If I'm not forced to get out of the house by my hobbies, I will go insane" [First-year FG, Participant 4].

The participants shared that they tend to engage in a variety of activities that helped them to cope with the challenges of their life schedules. The participants identified activities such spending time with someone, drinking coffee with someone as well as rest and sleep.

"If I get half a chance I will go out and drink coffee with someone, just go drink some wine somewhere, you know, just to get out" [First-year FG, Participant 3].

"I go home and do nothing, and some of us will go to Res and go to sleep…Because that's what we do…when things get too much…" [Second-year FG, Participant 5]

4.6.3   Daily routine

In explaining their daily routine, the participants reflected on how their time was structured in relation to their occupations. Some of the participants indicated that certain activities that formed part of their routine, ultimately formed part of their occupations. The participants' reflections shed light on the fact that the structure of first year allowed some of the participants to have a part-time job.

"(I) basically have two part-time jobs and I was a part of like an outreach society, so it's like my third job" [First-year FG, Participant 2]

However, there were participants who seemed to have trouble in balancing their daily schedules and found it to be challenging.

"I work at (burger) bar, so I got a waitressing job, it's part-time. I will go to work, it starts at four, and it ends at eleven. So the night shifts are really long and then we still clean up after eleven, so then you go to your registry and then you go sweep and like clean radio station and that kind of stuff. Then you gotta do cash up, then I only leave, so like its rough for me to work, because sometimes I don't get the time, because, your shift starts almost immediately like quarter two and that's not always possible, but ja" [First-year FG, Participant 5]

It has been noted that it's not only part-time jobs that tend to be a challenge for the participants but some had family responsibilities that needed to be fulfilled.

> *"I'm not really that busy ... but in my family we have chores …So we have to do the litter in the morning and then everybody takes turns to do dishes it annoys and but we take turns to cook supper and then you have the make sure, you got all the ingredients and then you need to go to the shops"* [First-year FG, Participant 4].

This participant further elaborated and indicated that their schedule was unstructured and appeared to help with university life.

> *"But I don't have a specific morning routine. I'm usually the last person out of bed, rolling over, drink tea and then stumbling out the door, but once I am at Varsity, then I'm fine, so my days are not really that structured."* [First-year FG, Participant 4].

Some of the participants shared their daily routines and occupations that they engage in everyday, which formed part of their occupational performance.

> *"I actually have a morning routine. I wake up and then I have to go to the bathroom first. I won't start my day without going to the bathroom. I'm gonna put my hair in a bolla and then I go…and then I have to wash my face. Then I can either eat and get dressed or eat food first, but usually I get dressed first and then I eat food and then I'm kind ready"* [First-year FG, Participant 3].

> *"My days are pretty intense, like Mondays, so I have to brush my teeth and then by half past six I have to leave. I go fetch the one girl and I fetch another girl, but I drive fastly. it's just a good hour and half drive to varsity and then we get here and I will have like my coffee and my muffin and then we go to our lectures and stuff and then*

I take them home and then I go tutor in Melkbos and then after that I go to work at exclusive books and then I work till like half past seven and here around quarter two eight and then I have dinner and then I study. [Participant 2, First-year FG].

From the third-year focus group discussion, it was clear that the participants seemed to engage more in academic related activities than social participation. The participants felt that their abnormal pattern resulted in them spending most of their time in the classroom involved in study related tasks.

"*I feel like a normal day for us, ok I can't really speak for everyone else but it's like we go to class, have a 15 minute break in between and then leave class…I…I don't think we really do much activity but like class. We would be in the same building, like day in and day out. There isn't really much…some days you'll go to the library but not really…well that's what I do"* [Participant 2, Third-year FG]

"*We don't really leave the classroom even during the breaks; we mostly just sit in class"* [Participant 5, Third-year FG]

"*We don't actually really have breaks when you think about it, because our breaks are either filled with meetings or a lot of other things. You go eat something quickly, so we have like intervals between in a day, but not like an hour break because it's filled with academic work or groups (a lot), especially during this semester. It's quite tiring, you never switch off"* [Participant 4, Third-year FG]

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

This study aimed to explore undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives of occupational balance. The previous chapter presented the findings of the current study based on the two themes that emerged from the thematic analysis: "Trying to find a balance between doing all the things that you need to do and all the things that you want to do" and "Huge adjustment". These themes answered the research question: "What are undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives regarding occupational balance and its relationship to health and well-being?" This chapter presents the discussion of the findings based on the objectives of the study. Additionally, this chapter discusses the findings as interpreted through the lens of four dimensions of occupational balance and the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study.

5.2 Dimensions of occupational balance

5.2.1 How one occupation affects another occupation

The participation in meaningful occupations are believed to promote occupational performance and contributes to good health and well-being (Hocking, 2009; Baum & Christiansen, 2005). Occupations can potentially have various effects on other occupations. When people engage in less meaningful occupations or if they experience occupational role overload, it may have a negative effect on health and well-being (Law, Steinwender & Leclair, 1998).

The theme "Trying to find a balance between doing all the things that you need to do and all the things that you want to do" was one of the comments made by a participant, and highlights the difficulty some participants had with applying the concept to their lives. The category "like a

spiral" that arose from the first theme, depicted how the participants experienced occupational balance.

Based on the findings of the current study, some students were able to explain their understanding of occupational balance. Students in the first- and second-year groups struggled to describe their understanding of occupational balance. It was evident that when they tried to provide an explanation (by breaking down the concept), they struggled to define a fundamental concept such as occupation. This explained why they possibly struggled to describe their understanding of occupational balance. This resonates with the first theme that emerged from the data, "Trying to find a balance between doing all the things that you need to do and all the things that you want to do". This led to questioning how this topic was incorporated in OT education and how it was taught. Wilcock (2000, p.84) believed that "people learn best what is best fitted to their individual capacities, what has meaning for them and what is valued by their culture". Wilcock (2000) further stated that educational methods grounded in knowledge of occupation "must be interactive and participatory" and "encourage students to appreciate and respond to their need to lead an occupationally balanced lifestyle" (p. 84). This meant that students would understand OT related topics/ terminology better if they experienced a sense of occupational balance. It can be suggested that participatory and interactive teaching methods should be considered when introducing occupational balance. With regards to occupational balance as one the concepts of OT, third- and fourth-year students were able to provide a good explanation of their understanding of this concept. This finding is attributed to the students' knowledge of occupational justice that assisted them to provide a good explanation of their understanding of occupational balance in relation to intrapersonal experience of both occupational balance and imbalance. Consequently, this meant that OT educators might need to use scaffolding to introduce occupational balance. According Alber (2011), scaffolding is breaking up the learning into chunks and providing a tool, or structure, with each chunk. In relation to occupational

balance, OT educators should consider how first- and second-year OT students could be introduced to the concept and its contribution to health. These findings are in accord with the category of the manner in which occupational balance was introduced. Thus, the concept of occupational balance is deeply rooted in the theory of occupational science, therapy and occupational justice.

However, many of the students were struggling to achieve occupational balance in their lives, as they indicated that they were inadequately equipped with coping strategies. There are similarities between the experiences expressed by the students in this study and those described by de Witt, Monareng, Abraham, Koor and Saber (2019) who found that OT students has major stressors related to their studies. Consistent with the literature, this research found that participants who reported the major stressors among OT students were academic demands and fieldwork (de Witt et al., 2019). This could mean that the OT educators should attempt to design and develop programmes that may be used to assist students who are struggling academically.

However, the findings of the current study show that the students seemed to have mixed feelings about OT program. This was evident in the findings where some students expressed that OT was manageable provided, they do revision daily. In contrast to these findings, there were students who felt that the amount of work that they were required to do, took away the meaningfulness of studying OT. Accordingly, the findings in this study reinforce the previous studies that highlighted that the challenges in health sciences education tend to influence students' occupational balance. These findings are consistent with Ikiugu et al.'s (2015) explanation that meaningful occupations "can be dreary or may be even led to experiences of pain and suffering" (p.48).

It has been reported that students in higher education tend to be stressed by a variety of stressor sthat influences their occupational balance and engagement in educational activities. The

stressors that appeared to be influential to students' occupational engagement and performance included personality traits (such as conscientiousness) (van Zyl, Joubert, Bowen, du Plooy, Francis, Jadhunandan, Frederick & Metz, 2017); the fear of failing, financial and accommodation concerns (de Witt et al., 2019). In the South African context, it has been noted that students were influenced by the exposure to other challenges such as mental health conditions, and family violence (van Zyl et al, 2017; Swanepoel, 2014; Pillay & Ngcobo, 2010), having to look after themselves and high family expectations (Swanepoel, 2014; Pillay & Ngcobo, 2010; Theron & Theron, 2014). The findings highlighted several mechanisms that the students put in place to cope with the stress and pressures. Those mechanisms were identified as time management, prioritizing what is important, spiritual occupations, relaxing or resting as well as deriving support from their peers to cope with the demands of their studies. This is supported by literature that reveals that while students engage in different areas of occupation such as education, students will require performance skills such as coping and time management skills (Brown & Stoffel, 2011).
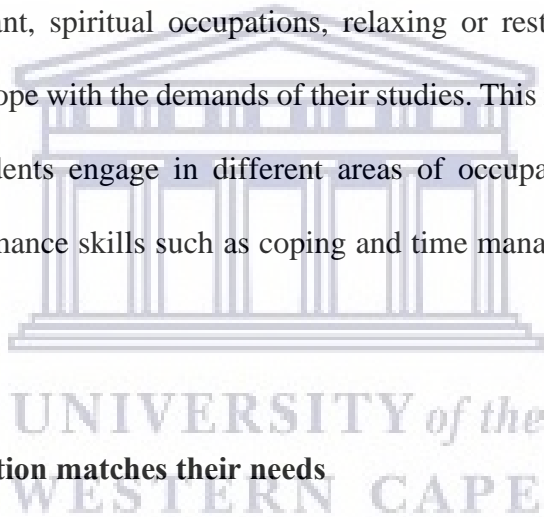
5.2.2 How people's occupation matches their needs

Matuska & Christiansen (2008) proposed a model called the Life Balance (LBM), that proposes that the composition of everyday activities enables people to address different need-based dimensions. These need-based dimensions include: (1) meet basic instrumental needs necessary for sustained biological health and physical safety; (2) have rewarding and self-affirming relationships with others; (3) feel engaged, challenged, and competent; (4) create meaning and a positive identity" (Mutuska & Christiansen, 2008, p.11).

The findings of this study revealed that when the participants referred to the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being, they used sickness to describe their understanding

of the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being. Three categories arose from the data namely: "*Sickness affects the relationship*", "*doing one thing*" and "*spiritual occupations*" that appeared to support the students' understanding of the relationship between occupational balance health and well-being.

When the participants of this study elaborated on the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being, they indicated that it is important to have a good relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being and that the one cannot happen without the other. They further added that if they did not experience one, or if one were affected, then the others would be affected too. They stated that when your health is affected in some way, your ability to balance all occupations would be affected. Participants also indicated that the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being could be affected if a person spends too much time on one occupation or falls within a pattern that could lead to one of the outcomes of occupational injustice known as occupational imbalance.

OT suggests that having a satisfactory balance of occupations tend to promote health and well-being (Polatajko et al., 2007). This would mean that the students would have to consider these occupations meaningful. Some scholars have argued that meaningful occupations can be described as occupations that are right, important and worthwhile (Hvalsoe & Josephsson, 2003; Christiansen, 1999; Hammell, 2004; Majnemar, 2010).

Of late, there has been an increasing consensus that meaningful occupations provide people with a sense of control, identity, connection with other people, self-transcendence (in the sense of demonstrating caring for a person or a thing other than oneself), competence, self-expression, and connection to a larger reality than oneself (Ikiugu, Polland, Cross, Willer, Everson & Stockland, 2012; Perruzza, & Kinsella, 2010). However, it is also believed that not all occupations provide a sense of happiness (Ikiugu, Hoyme, Mueller & Reinke, 2015). For

example, a student studying for an exam may be experience the process of studying as tedious, even though it could also be seen as a very meaningful occupational activity. It would lead to success if the student worked very hard, even though they might be experiencing pain and suffering. The findings of the current study support that the experience of high that is associated with flow may not be there when one is studying. Although it may come later, when the student receives the news that he/she did very well in the exam. The point is that a meaningful occupation may not be necessarily psychologically rewarding. "Psychologically rewarding" is when one's engagement in occupation produces a sense of flow that is characterised by absorption, happiness, and satisfaction (Ikiugu et al., 2015; Perruzza, & Kinsella, 2010).

Spirituality is considered as one of the significant elements of a holistic approach that promotes health, quality of life and the well-being of individuals, groups and communities in the South African context (Mthembu, Wegner & Roman, 2017). It should be noted that in the current study that the spiritual occupations were found to be vehicle to meaning and well-being of the students. This finding was consistent with the one of the results of Mthembu et al.'s (2017) study. The students in the present study indicated that they needed to engage in the spiritual occupations so that they may function optimal in their studies and life in general. Although the group of students were open about their spirituality, literature suggests that occupational therapists and nurses are still not confident and feel uncomfortable with spirituality (Hoyland & Mayers, 2005; Kiaei et al., 2015; Wilding, 2007).

It is believed that one of the main reasons for this is that OT students receive minimal teaching and therefore have little information related to spirituality (Mthembu et al., 2015a; Mthembu, Roman, & Wegner, 2016a). Some participants related back to literature when they elaborated on the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being. They indicated that occupational balance was necessary for health and well-being as occupational balance is a

determinant of health. The participants were also of the opinion that a person's experience of the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being is dependent on the stage of life a person and the occupations they engage in.

5.2.3 How time is spent in different occupations

How people use their time is often seen as a reflection of occupational balance, in terms of a balance between occupational categories (Christiansen, 1996; Farnworth, 2003). In this light, people's perceptions of what constitutes occupational balance influences the amount of time spent in different daily occupations (Eklund, Erlandsson & Leufstadius, 2010).

In this study, the findings highlighted that the students were concern about the transition between high school and first year. This corroborates with several studies that reported on the drop-out rates of university students (Nolan, 2019; Van Der Merwe, 2017; Govender, 2017). Tswanya (2017) indicated that the Council on Higher Education chief executive, Professor Narend Baijnath, stated that generally more students drop-out in their first year compared to any other year. He further indicated that the increased number of dropouts were due to both academic and socio-economic factors (Tswanya, 2017). When looking at specific universities, the University of Cape Town (UCT) confirmed that in 2015, 2005 students (across all faculties and all academic levels) dropped out, and 2871 students dropped out in 2016 (Tswanya, 2017). Additionally, the spokesperson (Elijah Moholola) for UCT indicated that the highest number of dropouts occurred in Bachelor Science, while this was followed by Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Business Science.

At UWC, it was reported that there was an increase in the number of students dropping out (Tswanya, 2017). Luthando Tyalibonga (UWC spokesperson) mentioned that this could be attributed to personal, medical, poor academic performance and lack of interest in their field of

study (Tswanya, 2017). In another article (posted in the Cape Argus) on high drop-out rates in first-year university students, it was reported that 40% of first-y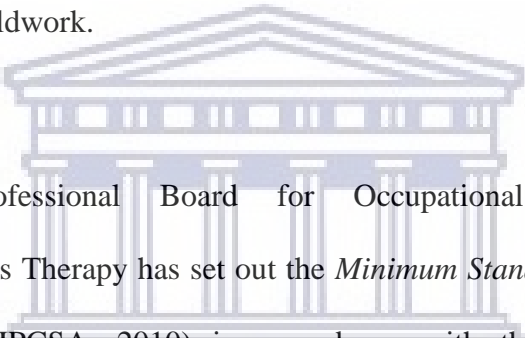ear students drop-out (Pather, 2018). This article was posted based on a study, which revealed interesting findings. Over 200 students in higher education were involved in the study, and all those students were older than the average first-time university entrants (Pather, 2018). Many of the students did not enter university out of choice, rather out of desperation to change their circumstances (Pather, 2018). Other students felt the urgency to succeed and viewed a university degree as the key to financial stability (Pather, 2018). Other findings in this study showed that 94% of the students relied heavily on bursaries or scholarships to study, and therefore took on part-time jobs to have some form of income (Pather, 2018). This led to student's not spending time on student-related activities such as sitting in the cafeteria or socializing with their fellow classmates or enjoying quality time with family.

Furthermore, the present study showed that the students seemed to experience various challenges related to their fieldwork block experience. The second theme ("Huge adjustment") highlighted the struggles that students had experienced throughout their study journey of OT. The findings highlighted the experiences expressed regarding the structure of OT course in terms of before they commenced their specific fieldwork block, as well as the challenges they faced during the fieldwork block. This is corroborated by Morgan, 2006 and Van Rensburg, 2006, who indicated that the issue of integration of theory and practice in OT has been found to be a challenge for OT students. Generally, theoretical modules precede fieldwork modules and it is believed that they prepare students for fieldwork (Van Rensburg, 2006). However, it appears that students are not adequately prepared when they enter fieldwork (Van Rensburg, 2006). The findings from the present study highlighted that the students struggled with the implementation and application of a variety of concepts. The fourth-year participants indicated that they had one session before the

commencement of the fieldwork block, called "boot camp", during which they were supposed to discuss matters related to fieldwork. The participants highlighted that this boot camp was impractical as they only discussed administrative tasks related to fieldwork. They indicated that they needed this session to equip them with skills which would have helped them prepare for and assisted them during their block. The participants also shared that the lecturers should have structured the boot camp sessions more strategically e.g. group the students who will use the same process model in the same class and do a quick revision of the process model etc. They thus felt that ill-preparation contributed to the challenges they experienced while on fieldwork block as they were struggling to apply what they have learnt in class. The participants explained that the case studies they did in the classroom did not compare to the amount of information they would have access to at the actual placement and therefore struggled to integrate theory into practice. While students felt that they were not adequately prepared for fieldwork, a study by de Jongh (2009) focused on recent curriculum changes that occurred at the same institution for higher education where the current study was conducted. These changes were brought about as the curriculum had to consider certain factors such as adult learning and lifelong learning. The staff body at the OT department (at the institution) realized the importance of preparing students well enough for them to be able to provide better services in the community. First year is seen as the foundation, where most of the programmes that OT students are enrolled in, are shared with other departments in the Faculty of Community Health Sciences (de Jongh, 2009). According to de Jongh (2009), second- and third-year are separated into childhood, adolescence, adulthood and older adulthood. More importantly, these year levels emphasise practice informed by theory, with a particular focus on reflective skills (de Jongh, 2009). In this light, the findings of the current study don't corroborate with literature. This raises the question whether students truly understood their responsibility and that of their lecturers? Adult learning implies that adults should be approached in a different way than teaching children and adolescents (preadults)
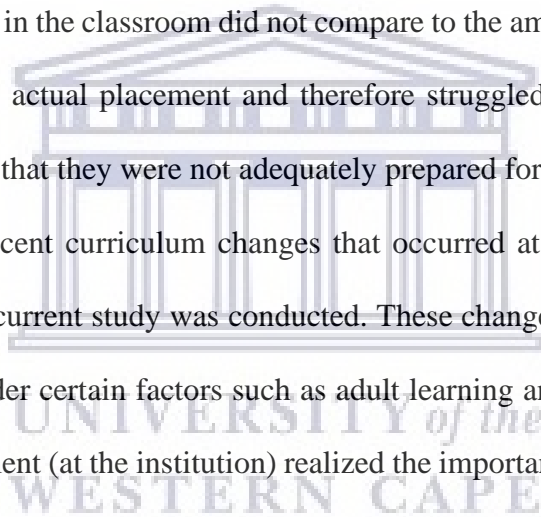
(Collins, 2004). There are several strategies to adult learning, some of which include: (1) adults are autonomous and self-directed, (2) adults are goal-oriented, (3) adults are relevancy-oriented and practical, (4) adults (all learners) need to be respected, (5) adults are motivated to learn by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, (6) adults learn best when they are active participants in the learning process, (7) adults learn more effectively when given timely and appropriate feedback and reinforcement of learning, and lastly, (8) adults learn better in an environment that is informal and personal (Collins, 2004). When reflecting on the principles of adult learning, it appears that there is a shared responsibility – the student and the educator/ lecturer. More emphasis should be placed on what responsibility lies with who, so that students can ensure that they are well prepared for fieldwork.

The South African Professional Board for Occupational Therapists, Medical Orthotics/Prosthetics and Arts Therapy has set out the *Minimum Standards for the Training of Occupational Therapists* (HPCSA, 2010) in accordance with the *World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) Minimum Standards for the Education of OT students* (2002). According to these standards, each student is expected to complete a minimum of 1 000 hours of fieldwork prior to obtaining the OT degree and registration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). Students in their first, second and third years of study have to perform fieldwork under the direct supervision of a registered Occupational Therapist (OT), but students in their fourth-year of study may work under the guidance of a registered health professional in the absence of a registered OT (although access to a registered OT should be provided for guidance on an ongoing basis). It is also required that the students be exposed to different fieldwork placements to gain a broad scope of practical experience. The Professional Board evaluates each university's OT department every five years to ensure that all teaching programmes comply with the Minimum Standards.

Each university designs its own fieldwork and educational programme to comply with the above-mentioned requirements. There is no method for the ideal format of a fieldwork programme, but it is expected to reflect the current context and trends of health and community care (Duncan & Alsop, 2006; Aiken, Menaker & Barsky, 2001). The fieldwork experience provides many opportunities for real-life experiences which allow the students to integrate theoretical and practical learning, and assists in the development of their clinical reasoning, problem-solving and judgement skills.

Other findings such as the students' experience of tutorial sessions which they had to attend on a weekly basis is very pertinent to highlight. The participants explained that these tutorials were created so that students had the opportunity to reflect on their practical fieldwork block experience. Often student's felt that they were not allowed to share experiences which affected them emotionally. A study has suggested that OT fieldwork education, with its current emphasis on supervisory education, fails to maximize student learning and fails to adequately provide students with the skills and knowledge required to be competent and confident entry-level clinicians (Hodgetts, Hollis, Triska, Steven, Madill & Taylor., 2007; Lester, 1995; Toal-Sullivan, 2006). Fieldwork is believed to be a fundamental component of student learning in OT education (Cohn, 1989; Etcheverry & Baptiste, 1987). Mackenzie (2002) draws attention to the importance of exploring the way students process their practical learning as well as how they incorporate their experiences into future attitudes and skills in practice. Mackenzie (2002) indicated that organized briefing and debriefing programmes could be a way of achieving this. It is further believed that using briefing and debriefing, conflicts between theory and observed practice can be discussed (Horsfall, 1990). Briefing is defined by Pearson and Smith (1986) as the process of orientating a person to an experience, which includes the instructions, goals and rules within

which participants in the activity can achieve their goals. Briefing links back to when the students reflected on the "boot camp" they attended before commencing with their fieldwork block. This "boot camp" was an opportunity for the students to be briefed and orientated about all fieldwork related requirements and administration etc. The participants further reflected on their experience of the tutorials they attended. This was an opportunity for the students to reflect, discuss and work through ideas, issues, feelings or concerns which are generated by individuals within the group (Horsfall, 1990). The fact that students were afforded little opportunity to share their experiences with the group in this tutorial session, made them demotivated and negative towards their fieldwork experience.

The first-year participants expressed that they struggled to terminate with their clients as well as separate their emotions from when they interacted with clients. This indicated that the time spent with their clients were valued, and the students derived meaning from those interactions.

Other findings of this study revealed that participants were challenged in terms of the transition between high school and university, as well as between first and second year. Evidence further suggested that most first-year students do experience some negative experiences (McInnis & Jamesare, 1996). Additionally, it was noted that some of the most common challenges that students experience are the "transition from school to university, being in an unfamiliar situation, adapting to new teaching and study methods, adjustment to the demands of adult independence, coping with workloads, adjustment to academic demands as well as lack of structure and social support" (Pancer & Hunsberg, 2000, p.2; Tao & Dong, 2000, p.123 – 124; Ballantyne, 2000, p.1; Walker, 1998:, p2 – 13; Banning in Upcraft, Gardner & Associates, 1990, p.53). Lastly, very little research done on the transition from high school to university on the African continent (Chidzonga, 2014). According to Chidzonga (2014), almost all the studies on the transition from
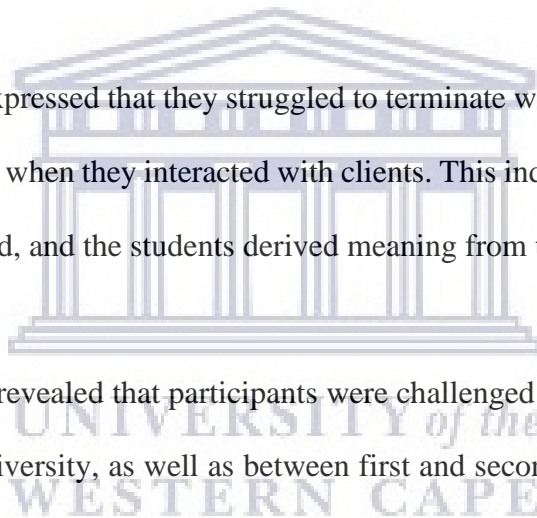
high school to university were done in North America, Europe and Australia (Burnett, 2006; Krause, Hartley, James., & McInnis, 2005; Briggs, Clark & Hall, 2012; James, Krause, & Jennings, 2010). The findings of this study revealed that the transition from high school to university was accompanied with many challenges (Chidzonga, 2014). McInnis (2001) stated that the first year is the period in which students face great challenges in adjusting in a social and academic environment.

5.2.4 People's satisfaction with their mix of occupations

It is important that people engage in a variety of occupations and not only engage in one occupation that takes all one's time or energy (Eklund, Orban, Argentzell, Bejerholm, Tjörnstrand, Erlandsson & Håkansson, 2017). It is believed that a variation is required between physically demanding occupations and more relaxing ones, between physical and mental occupations, and between compulsory and pleasurable occupations (Bejerholm, 2010; Wagman, Björklund, Håkansson, Jacobsson & Falkmer, 2011).

While the participants of this current study expressed their difficulty in adjusting to the higher education environment, they also identified the importance of prioritizing their occupations in order to function more optimally. This refers to the participants having the skills to organise and structure their activities and their occupations in such a way that it is beneficial to their well-being. In this light, it appeared that students often occupied themselves with academic related activities. Furthermore, the participants placed emphasis on the fact that it is important to have the ability to prioritize occupations according to its level of urgency, as well as having effective time management skills as factors that play a role in achieving occupational balance. It appeared that they struggled to understand that achieving occupational balance also involved activities that they did not want to do. This relates to the participants having choices in those occupations which they wanted to engage in. In this regard, occupational choice is made up of four elements,

namely: awareness of one's own capacities, interests, personal goals and values and time perspective of occupations (Creek, 2008). Wilcock (2006) mentioned that occupational balance can be between chosen and obligatory occupation, between strenuous and restful occupation or between doing and being. In this regard, there are many elements to occupational balance. Those include whether they are meaningful or not meaningful to you are a person.

In line with the symbolic interactionism, the findings of the current study indicated that the students had roles and they ended experiencing role conflicting because their occupational roles of being a student, friends and family member have been overshadowed by other occupations. The findings corroborate with the principles of emergence and human agency from symbolic interactionism by Snow (2001).

In relation to the current study, the principle of human agency and occupational decision-making helped the students to autonomously take actions to redress their occupational imbalance and participate in those spiritual occupations. This ties with the participants' awareness of the challenges and they need to find a way to balance all their occupations. They described it as "not being under-occupied" and over-occupied". It is reported that engaging in too much occupation could be an emotional response to over-stimulation, and boredom is the most common emotional response to the lack of stimulating occupation (Wilcock et al., 1997).   According to Anaby, Backman and Jarus (2010), occupational balance is defined as a perceived disharmony, lack of fit, or interference among occupations. Furthermore, occupational balance can also be seen when some people are overoccupied and other underoccupied (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004).

The findings of this study revealed that the participants showed some sense of awareness regarding occupational imbalance. They indicated, for example, that they felt they had resilience and perseverance when it became difficult to manage all their occupations. The findings of the

present study are consistent with de Witt et al. (2019) who determined the level of resilience and stress and health behavior of students registered in the undergraduate OT programme. Participants also expressed that in some cases it is not healthy to experience occupational balance as it could lead to burn-out.

Participants of this study emphasized that it is important to relax when there is time to relax. They indicated that when they are busy with their studies, they don't have time for anything else. They felt that their experience of occupational balance wasn't consistent. Furthermore, the participants also indicated that they were aware that not everyone experiences occupational balance the same. This corroborates with what literature says regarding occupational balance. Occupational balance (which is consistent with Backman, 2010; Erlandsson, Rognvaldsson, & Eklund, 2004; Westhorp, 2003; Wilcock et al., 1997) is a subjective state of harmony or congruence across a person's occupations (Anaby, Backman & Jarus, 2010). Furthermore, participants indicated that some of them experienced occupational balance quite sporadically and that those periods of balance do not last long.

Previous studies have reported that OT students tend to use their spirituality as a coping mechanism in times when they experience difficulties related to their academic activities (Mthembu, Ahmed, Nkuna & Yaca, 2015a; Mthembu, Wegner & Roman, 2017). Spirituality was quite evident during focus group discussions. It was clear that while most of the participants did not necessarily belong to the same religion or engage in the same spiritual activities; almost all of them required time to engage in activities related to their respective religions. Some people may seek to explore their spirituality through religion, while others may rely on feelings or a sense of meaning (Law et al., 1997). Several participants identified the spiritual occupations that they engage in. Those included playing piano and worshipping, reading the bible or praying.
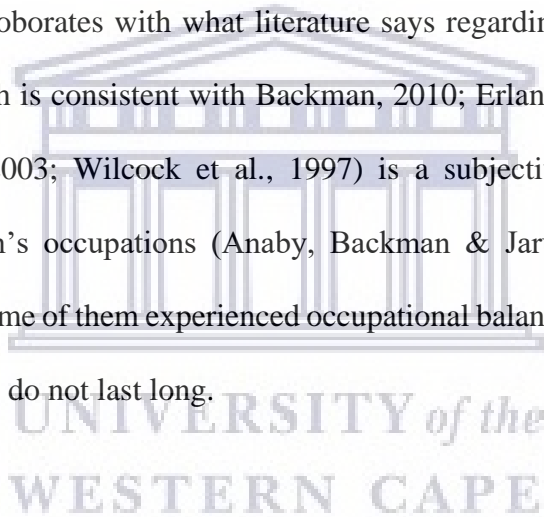
This formed part of their spirituality and faith, but some used these spiritual occupations to cope with the demands of their respective occupational roles. They believed it enhanced their sanity and it improved the relationship between health, well-being and occupational balance. This supports the idea that spirituality has a positive effect on social, mental and emotional health (Mthembu et al., 2017). Given this, people tend to turn to their beliefs and values during any life crisis, difficulties and sickness because of the benefits attached to their spirituality (Mthembu et al., 2017).

It was clear from the data that there were a combination of factors influencing the participants' occupational role as student, which also affected their perception of occupational balance. The participants indicated that they achieved occupational balance at some point, however, they also experienced occupational imbalance quite often while they were studying. The participants also linked occupational balance and their understanding of it while still being undergraduate OT students to when they will be qualified occupational therapists in the future. They believed they would need a better understanding of it to be able to provide a better service to their clients in practice. This corroborates with Wilson and Wilcock (2005) who indicated that it is mandatory that occupational therapist have a good understanding of the multifaceted nature and importance of occupational balance, both for themselves and their clients.

5.2. Integration of findings through the Canadian Model of Occupational Engagement

The Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement (CMOP-E) as well as the Ecology Human Performance Model (EHP) were used to depict the undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives on various topics related to OT education. It further attempted to answer the research question.

Person:

In accordance with the CMOP-E, the person is made up of three performance components, which include: cognitive, affective and physical (Polatajko et al., 2007). This corroborates with the EHP model's assumption of the "person" which states that the person is made up of their skills, abilities and experiences (Dunn, Gilbert & Parker, 1997). The EHP further asserts that there is a relationship between the person, what the person wants to do (occupation), and where (environment) they conduct their daily lives (Dunn et al., 1997). In contrast to Polatajko et al.'s (2007) and Dunn et al.'s (1997) definition of a person, Law et al. (1996, p.15) refer to a person as "unique being who assumes a variety of roles simultaneously. Furthermore, Law et al. (1996) point out that these are

The CMOP-E acknowledges spirituality in human occupation and is positioned at the core of the person. The cognitive performance component was indicated as the domain that comprises of "all mental functions, both cognitive and intellectual, and includes perception, concentration, memory, comprehension, judgement and reasoning (Law et al., 1997, p.44). In this light, all undergraduate occupational therapy students who participated in this study were female, full-time students at an institution of higher education in the Western Cape. These students each brought their individual qualities, competencies, cognitive skills, experiences, motivation, learning style to the study, which took place over a period of a year. All the students who participated in this study were selected to study OT and therefore met the intellectual requirements to fulfil the criteria for each year level of study.

Environment:

The CMOP-E illustrates that the person (the participants) is embedded within the environment indicating that each individual lives within a single environmental background namely cultural,

institutional, physical and social which affords occupational possibilities (Polatajko et al., 2007). In this light, the environment may be supportive or detrimental to the way in which individuals perform their occupations.

Cultural environment

Hammell (2009) argues that OT and science should enhance the values of occupation by considering the cultural perspective. According to the CMOP-E, the cultural element refers to the ethnic, racial, ceremonial and routine practices based on ethos and value systems of particular groups (Law et al., 1997, p.46). All participants who participated in this study were females, it was a mix between racial backgrounds (White, Black, Coloured and Indian), and their ages ranged between 18 and 24. In this regard, when looking at the group of undergraduate occupational therapy students who participated in the study, it is evident that there were many factors (in terms of their environment) that they share, but it is also obvious that there are vast differences among the participants. Ten participants per year level were included in this study, and therefore the assumption is that those ten participants (per year level) would follow a similar daily routine when they are engaging in their occupational role of a student, as their time table/ schedule would be similar. Routines are regular, repetitive, predictable patterns of behaviour or time use, including habits, rituals, and the rhythms of life (Christiansen & Townsend, 2010). The data collected reveals that the participants experienced occupational imbalance given the demands of the OT programme at the higher education institution in the Western Cape. The participants indicated the following, which contributed to them leading an unbalanced lifestyle: engaging in one occupation, unforeseen circumstances that impact on their occupational role and having a part-time job.

Institutional environment

The institutional element of the environment refers to the influence of economic, legal and political elements of an environment (Law et al., 1997, p.46). When referring back to the data, the participants mentioned the fact that they cannot afford to fail. They indicated that the financial implications that it could possibly have on their families and that was used as a motivation to perform well academically. These participants were from non-urban backgrounds thus placing pressure on them to break certain generational curses. Hence, the Department of Higher Education is so concerned about the dropouts and throughput of universities in the South African context, as it cost the government lot of money to support students.

Physical environment

In alignment with the symbolic interactionism and CMOP-E frameworks, the findings in the current indicated that physical environment appeared to influence the students' occupational engagement and performance in their meaningful educational activities. Most of the students who had opportunity to stay at home while they were studying seemingly coped well with their educational activities rather than those who relocated to Cape Town staying on campus or in private accommodation. The general consensus was that the student who stayed at home had an immediate support structure and had certain perks such as having a home-cooked meal or a neat and tidy room when they arrived home from campus. Some of the participants who fell in that category was not of the same opinion.

The environment represents the outer circle of the model, in which the individual exists and where occupations occur (Polatajko et al., 2007). The model illustrates that the person is embedded within the environment indicating that each individual lives within a single environmental background namely cultural, institutional, and physical and social which affords occupational possibilities (Polatajko et al., 2007). In this light, the environment may be

supportive or detrimental to the way in which individuals perform their occupations (See figure 1).

In contrast to the physical environment, the findings highlighted that some of the students had to take on part-time jobs to make ends meet. This finding indicates that the students were having financial constraints, which meant that they were faced with high cost of tuition and living. A descriptive quantitative survey by Daud, Norwani, and Yusof (2018) that identified that students are experiencing the financial problems in Higher Education Institutions. Furthermore, the findings of Daud et al.'s (2018) study and the findings of the current research revealed that financial problems could have influence on the health and occupational balance of the students on campus. It is clear that the students were experiencing occupational imbalance because they suffered from financial problems.

Social environment

The Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement describes the elements of the social environment as social priorities of all elements of the environment, patterns of relationships of people living in an organised community, social groupings based on common interest, values, attitudes and beliefs. Taking this into consideration, several issues concerning social and instrumental relationships for undergraduate OT students have surfaced. Firstly, all participants of this study expressed the difficulty they experience to balance their occupations related to their studies as well as their occupations related to their engagement with their family members. Even though some of the participants have found that spending quality time with their family members gave them a sense of calmness and meaning, they struggled to engage in these occupations. They attributed this to the structure of the OT programme and that they had little time to do anything else but engage in their studies. Secondly, the participants felt that while

they depended on having some interaction with family members, they learnt that their family members were unable to relate to them with regards to their experiences of studying OT. In this light, the students often vented to their peers as their peers seemed to understand what they were going through in their students' lives.

It should be noted that occupational therapy students who were staying away from their families tend to be vulnerable compared to those who had the families around the Western Cape. The findings of the present study corroborate with de Witt et al.'s (2019) assertion that poor social support seem to be a problem among undergraduate occupational therapy students. The findings of the current study are consistent with Wagman and Håkansson (2019) echoing Hall (2018) that an interpersonal perspective of occupational balance is important in occupational science and therapy. These studies inveterate that interpersonal perspective to occupational balance is significant in occupational science and therapy. As highlighted in the current study, Wagman and Håkansson (2019, p.538) assert that "one individual's occupational balance influences and is influenced by other people". Furthermore, the present results are significant in that they corroborate with Hall's (2018) first theme of social participation and sociability. By positioning occupational balance within the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, the findings of the current study corroborate with Smith and Bugni (2006) and Carter and Fuller (2016) that social context and environment contribute in the occupational balance. In line with the symbolic interactionism, it is clear that occupational balance of the occupational therapy students evolved between themselves and other in the context of social structure (Carter & Fuller, 2016).

Regarding the social environment and occupational balance, the students expressed that they are experiencing challenges such as having to complete certain chores and to fulfil certain roles at home. The findings have shown that the students had to care for a sick family member, to care

for other siblings while their parents were at work and to study. It is clear from the findings of the study that there was a role conflict, which is identified in symbolic interactionism. According to Grace (1972), role conflicting is the stress that arises from role incompatibilities between two or more roles assumed at the same time, such as the stress arising from the conflict between professional, student and family roles. Symbolic interactionism framework give emphasis to socially defined roles, however, in the current study the role conflict that the students experienced influenced their occupational balance.

Occupation:

Occupation refers to groups of activities and tasks of everyday life, named, organized, and given value and meaning by individuals and a culture. When reflecting on the occupations that the undergraduate occupational therapy students engaged in, they identified many. Certain occupations appeared to have more meaning to some than others. According to the CMOP-E, occupation is everything people do to occupy themselves, including looking after themselves (self-care), enjoying life (leisure), and contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities (productivity) (Townsend & Polatajko, 2007, p. 369). The first theme of Hall's (2018) study contextualizes the importance of social participation, social obligation, and reciprocity in enabling people to engage in areas of occupation such basic activities of daily living; instrumental activities of daily living; rest and sleep; education; work; play; and leisure (AOTA, 2014). However, Hammell (2009) cautions that occupational therapists and occupational scientists should avoid being rigid the areas of occupation and overlook meaningful occupations that promote the psychological need for relatedness and connections to others.

Self-care

The participants of this study indicated that they often neglect themselves when they experienced periods of occupational imbalance. They mentioned that when they experienced occupational imbalance, they only focused on one occupation – their studies. While the participants identified their inability to maintain good self-care, they also said they realized that engaging in meaningful occupations assisted them to look after their well-being. The participants listed the occupations they find meaningful, and those included: going to the gym or exercise, going out with friends or family members and sleeping and relaxing. However, the participants felt that there was insufficient time to engage in these meaningful occupations.

Productivity

The CMOP-E defines productivity as paid or unpaid work, household management, play or school (Månsson, 2009). It is further described as contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities (Townsend & Polatajko, 2007, p. 369). One could argue that most of the students in this study are contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities (given that some of the students who participated in the study are doing paid work (part-time jobs). However, when looking at the participants of this study and taking into consideration that the students find themselves in higher education (which could also be described as their community), they are engaging in productive work (for example studying, meeting the requirements of their year-level). Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that students feel that they contribute to society, especially those students who are in their third –and fourth year of studies – doing their fieldwork block. During the fieldwork block period students have the opportunity to engage with members of the community by ploughing back into the community, but also, using what they have learnt in the classroom in a practical situation. However, this study revealed that most students struggle to cope and manage themselves during

these fieldwork opportunities. They find it challenging going from spending time in the classroom, to having to juggle both practical work and attending classes once a week.

Leisure

Leisure has been defined as a complex phenomenon with three principal elements: time, occupation and experience (Lobo, 1998; Suto, 1998).The effect of spending time enjoying life and engaging in occupations that a person deems meaningful, appears to have a positive impact on a person's overall well-being. Some benefits of participation in occupation include an improved feeling of self-worth and well-being, a sense of occupational achievement and a joy in successful achievements and the ability to cope with the challenges (Mee, Sumsion & Craik, 2004). Furthermore, it is believed that occupation influences health, self-respect, a sense of dignity, social competence, happiness, well-being and satisfaction with meaning of life (Clark, Parham, Carlson, Frank, Jackson, Pierce, Wolfe & Zemke, 1991). In the context of this study, the findings prove to concur with literature. Many participants indicated that engaging in leisurely activities, and those which they find meaningful, improves their health and well-being. They further asserted that this is directly linked to the ability to manage or balance their occupations effectively. Students of this study indicated that while the OT programme was rigorous in terms of their schedules, they made it a point to factor leisure time into their busy schedules. Here follows a depiction of the undergraduate occupational therapy students' lives according to their description in the study:
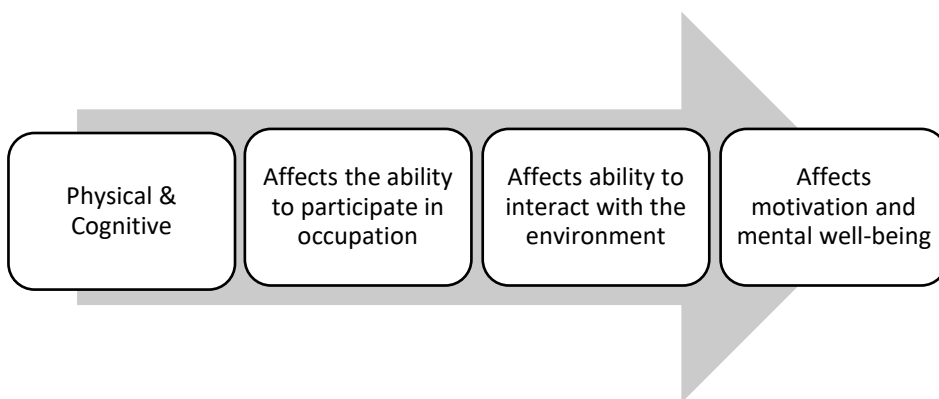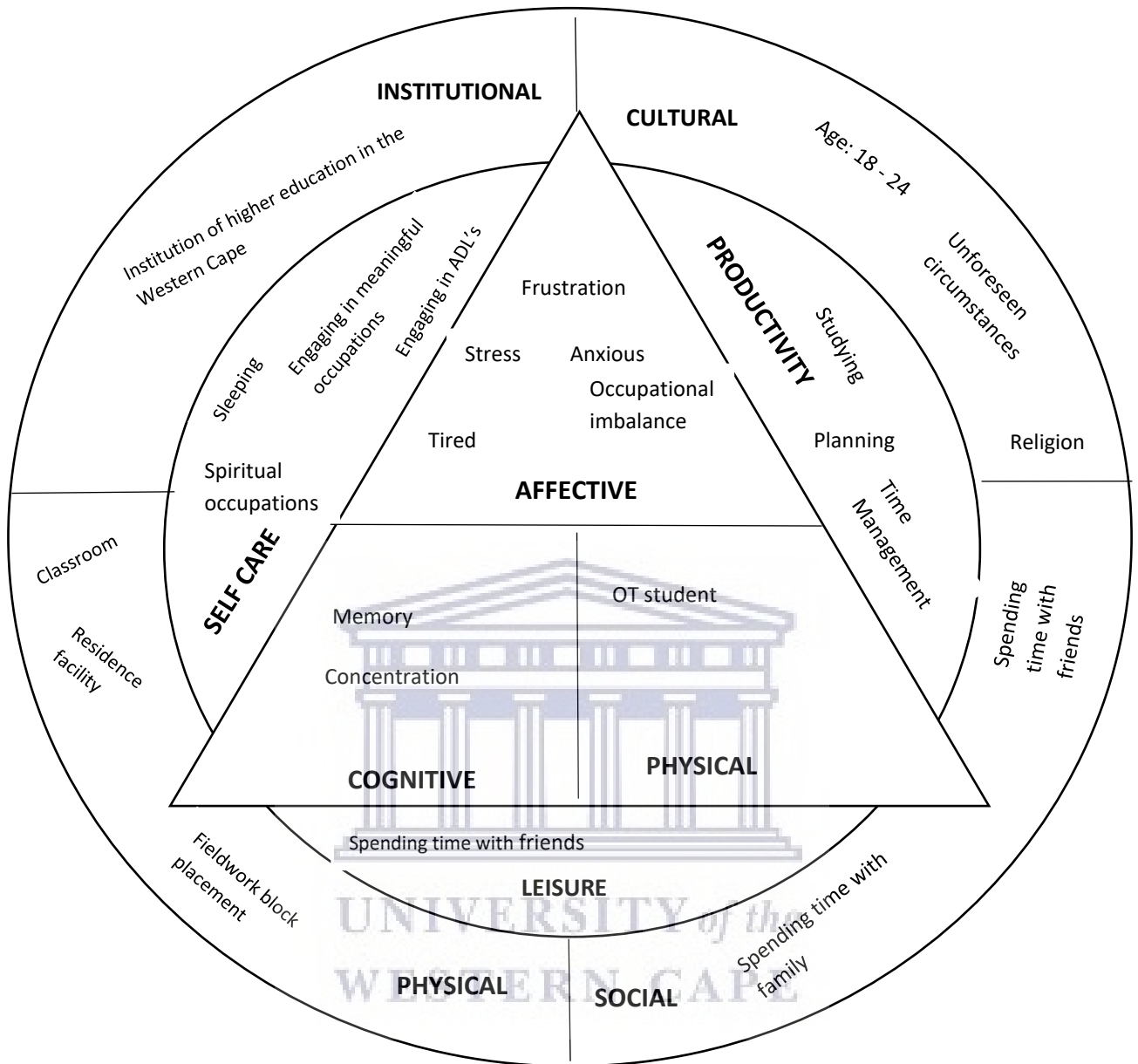
Figure 3: Illustration of the undergraduate occupational therapy students' occupational balance

When applying the strategies outlined by the EHP model, the following is noted:

1) Establish/ Restore

The participants of the study emphasized the difficulty they experienced in understanding some key concepts in OT education, and they further asserted that they struggled to maintain a level of occupational balance. The aim of this strategy is to restore function by improving abilities and skills of a person that is dysfunctional. Therefore, improving how occupational therapy students engage in their occupations (not too much, and not too little), by putting in place health coping strategies such as going to the gym or exercising when they feel that things are becoming too much for them to handle, or learning better ways to manage their time effectively.

2) Alter

Involves altering the context so that it supports performance with the person's skills and abilities. The participants of the study felt that they needed more emphasis of certain concepts during their foundation level of study. They also indicated that with some concepts such as occupational balance, a thorough explanation and ways to implement it in their own lives would be more beneficial than the way it been introduced to them currently. This is an area for development.

3) Adapt

This strategy focuses on addressing environmental features and task demands to support and enable performance. The participants indicated that their experience of occupational balance was sporadic and it came in waves. They felt that they needed a sense of equilibrium to function/ perform better. Adjustments in timeframes/ schedules in their OT programmes would aid to this. An adaptation to this extent would allow students to adjust to the work

pace more effectively for example, participants felt that the transition between first and second year was very big (compared to high school to university). Therefore, adjusting and spreading out the work required and taught in each year level of study could possibly aid in this.

4) Prevent

This strategy refers to all aspects related to the person, task or context in which the person is performing their occupations in (which could potentially lead to maladaptive performance or a problem in the future. In this regard, it is important for the participants to understand theory well in order to implement it effectively in practice. Participants of the study felt that they required more input and guidance before fieldwork block started. Receiving such support could prevent any problem (which could carry risks) that might occur due to a student's inability to apply certain concepts in practice.

5) Create

This strategy involves creation of a supportive environment that could assist undergraduate occupational therapy students to enhance their resilience and skills to live an occupational balanced life.

The CMOP-E and EHP model provided the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of the undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives of occupational balance, and its relationship to health and well-being. The findings of this study suggest that undergraduate occupational therapy students' view on occupational balance is mainly affected by their interaction with their context/ environment. In other words, students felt that their studies had the ability to overshadow all their occupations and therefore they struggled to achieve occupational balance. They were of the opinion that it is not consistent and that they were not

adequately informed about the concept before experiencing it. Lastly, the undergraduate occupational therapy students were aware of the implications of not having adequate information on the concept which resulted in them not achieving occupational balance. In this regard, they often experienced periods of disharmony with their occupations, and this impacted on their general health and well-being.

5.3.   Summary

This chapter began with a discussion on the dimensions of occupational balance and the findings of the study. The discussion concluded by integrating all the findings by using the Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement. This enhanced the understanding of and insight into the phenomenon of occupational balance from the perspectives of the occupational therapy students.
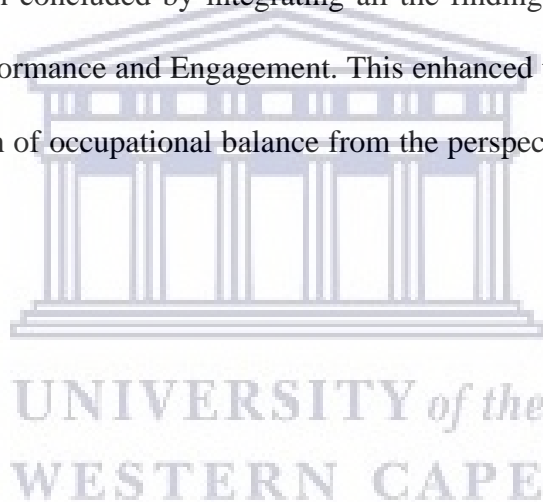
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1.   Introduction

The previous chapter presented the discussion of the findings of the current study that was conducted at a higher educational institution in the Western Cape. By implementing the social constructivist paradigm, the researcher was able to gain an insight into the students' occupational balance. This was achieved by making use of the theoretical frameworks namely CMOP-E, EHP and symbolic interactionism. These theoretical frameworks provided a holistic view of the students' occupational engagement and their experiences of occupational balance. In this chapter, the research question, aim and objectives of the study are presented. This chapter further outlines the conclusions and recommendations that the researcher has drawn from the findings and the discussion around the study.

6.1.1 Research Question

What are undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives regarding occupational balance, in other words the management of occupations in relation to health and well-being?

6.1.2 Research Aim

The aim of this study was to explore undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives of occupational balance.

6.1.3 Objectives of the study

- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' understanding of occupational balance.

- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' understanding of the relationships between undergraduate related occupations and health and well-being.

- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' experiences of what they perceive to be their level of occupational balance.

- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' perceptions of barriers which might prevent them from achieving occupational balance.

- To explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' perceptions of facilitators who might influence their level of occupational balance.

6.2. Summary of findings

The findings of the study provided valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of the undergraduate occupational therapy students who participated in the current study. Overall, the perceptions of the students suggest that students in the same year level of study perceived and experienced OT related terminology the same.

Most students in the first –and second year group struggled to describe their perception of occupational balance. These students either did not experience occupational balance at all or to the same extent as the third –and fourth year students and it appeared that students in their third and fourth year of study were able to describe occupational balance from a theoretical point of view. The findings of this study also highlighted that these students experienced occupational balance as inconsistent and used metaphors such as "I feel like it comes in waves" and "like a spiral" to describe their practical experience of occupational balance.

It was evident from the results that students had trouble with the transition between high school and university. These findings support a study by Briggs and colleagues (2012) who stated that student transition to university offers many challenges to students, parents, families and institutions. A study by McInnis (2001) draws focus to first year, the period in which most students experience serious challenges in adjusting socially and academically. Furthermore, the students in this study mentioned various factors that played a role in their experience of the OT programme. They highlighted that the workload became quite intense as they progressed through the year levels. Students in the first and second year indicated that they were able to cope academically whereas third- and fourth-year students indicated that the expectations were too high, the course was too demanding, and it needed structure. They elaborated and indicated that their studies can become quite stressful at times and that they use many healthy and unhealthy mechanisms to cope. Some of the healthy coping mechanisms were listed as effectively managing their time (time management), engaging in spiritual occupations, relaxing and prioritizing what is important. Unhealthy mechanisms were related to procrastination and eating unhealthily. The results brought out the importance and significance of engaging in meaningful occupations. Although there were vast differences in the type of occupations students engaged in, many students placed emphasis on the importance thereof.

One of the most significant findings of the study was the students' understanding of the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being. This study found that when students described the relationship, they referred to occupational balance as optimal functioning; health to either being sick or not; and well-being to either your physical health or mental health. They believed when one of the three (occupational balance, health or well-being) is affected, then the entire relationship is affected. This finding suggests that there should be a good relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being.

6.3.   Limitations of the research

● Some participants found difficulty in expressing themselves during the interviews, which could have been due to the lack of using OT related terminology in settings outside of the academic field. Therefore, the researcher resorted to probing and clarification during the interview. In so doing, she might have coerced the participants to respond in a particular manner.

● The participants in the study were all female. This poses a limitation as different factors and aspects of the OT programme might be perceived differently by males.

● Another limitation is that data was collected from the twenty-five students who agreed to participate in this study from one institution of higher education with undergradual OT programme and therefore the findings of this study are specific to this setting and cannot be generalised to other educational settings.

6.4.   Recommendations from the study

The study revealed limitations of the undergraduate OT programme as well as factors that contributed to it, which hindered some undergraduate occupational therapy students' ability to truly understand and achieve occupational balance. The following are recommendations on how the programme may be improved.

6.4.1 Recommendations for teaching and learning in occupational therapy programme

● Occupational therapy educators should introduce occupation and occupational balance earlier to students in the OT programme through use of scaffolding teaching method. This will afford students more opportunities to learn and understand how to detect when they are experiencing both occupational balance and occupational imbalance. It will further

allow students to determine what factors and strategies/ coping mechanisms assist them in achieving a sense of occupational balance and vice versa. Additionally, it will assist students in understanding this concept better when they work with their clients in practice.

● Ensure that all students are knowledgeable on the different process models and that they are afforded ample opportunity to complete each process model as a case study before commencing with fieldwork in third- and fourth-year.

● Ensure that students in first- and second-year understand the complexity of terminology such as occupation and occupational balance.

● Occupational therapy educators may assist student to learn the interpersonal perspective of occupational balance in relation to social participation and sociability.

● Include more frequent tests or practical demonstrations so that students could learn how to apply the theoretical knowledge that they have gained in the classroom.

● The structure of the OT programme needs to be assessed and potentially restructured so that the workload is evenly spread over the four years.

● Provide students support in terms of understanding how spirituality fits into OT and how to deal with diversity. This can be done through facilitating more discussions on spirituality in OT. It could also be done by advising students to enroll in applicable co-curricular activities which may facilitate this in a less traditional way of teaching.

6.4.2 Recommendations for student support:

● Provide students with more opportunity to engage in reflective practice by journaling their experience of the OT programme as part of the occupation and interpersonal perspective of occupational balance.

- Integrate OT into campus service models, to broaden the scope of potential support for students on campus.

6.4.3 Recommendations regarding future research:

Although the aim of the study was achieved, other findings obtained warrants further investigation.

- A key recommendation is that a study about undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives of occupational balance should include a larger sample such as samples from different higher educational institutions. A larger sample would allow for the findings to be generalized to the population. Furthermore, such a study should encompass factors pertaining to the barriers students experience within the OT programme that prevent them from achieving occupational balance.

- Design and develop OT programme to support occupational therapy students' participation in occupations that enable occupational balance through interpersonal perspective.

- To explore experiences of health sciences students regarding their occupational engagement and performance in educational activities.

6.5. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore and describe undergraduate occupational therapy students' understanding and their experiences of occupational balance. This study has been one of the first attempts to thoroughly report on the relevance of the three theoretical frameworks namely Canadian Model of Occupational Performance and Engagement, ecology of human performance and symbolic interactionism in enhancing our understanding of occupational balance from the

perspectives of occupational therapy students. This study indicated that the occupational therapy students seemed to understand occupational balance which builds on an interpersonal perspective. The study further indicated that there is a relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being. Additionally, this study reported that the students tend to experience occupational imbalance related to their role conflicting because of educational and family activities. It has been noted from the study that the students' role conflicting challenges were enhanced by the demands from their friends, and family. In contrast, the study revealed that there were times that the students could engage in social participation with their peers, families and communities so that they may cope with the stressors of their OT course and families. This study also confirmed that social self and spirituality are often used as a coping mechanism, when occupational therapy students experience occupational imbalance. Overall, this study provides contribution to the body of knowledge in occupational science and OT education about the concepts of occupation and occupational balance from an interpersonal perspective. It envisaged that the findings would be of importance in viewing occupational therapy students who are facing challenges related time, money and caring for their families.

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Appendices

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UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

27 February 2017

Mrs LJ Ferus
Occupational Therapy
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: HS17/1/34

Project Title: An exploration of undergraduate occupational therapy students' perspectives of occupational balance.

Approval Period: 21 February 2017 – 21 February 2018

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Appendix 2: Permission to conduct study

STUDENT ADMINISTRATION
Administration Building, 1st Floor
ashaikjee@uwc.ac.za, nschoeman@uwc.ac.za
021 959 2110

10 March 2017

Dear Josephine Lizelle Ferus

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

As per you request, we acknowledge that you are in the process of obtaining the necessary permissions and ethics clearances and are welcome to conduct your research as outlined in your proposal and communication with us. Please note that this permission is subject to you obtaining permission from the Ethics Committee of the University.

Please note that while we give permission to conduct such research (i.e. interviews and surveys) staff and students at this University are not compelled to participate and may decline to participate should they wish to.

Should you wish to make use of or reference to the University's name, spaces, identity, etc. in any publication/s, you must first furnish the University with a copy of the proposed publication/s so that the University can verify and grant permission for such publication/s to be made publicly available.

Should you require any assistance in conducting your research in regards to access to student contact information please do let us know so that we can facilitate where possible.

Yours sincerely

DR AHMED SHAIKJEE
MANAGER: STUDENT ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

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INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: *An exploration of occupational therapy student's perspective of occupational balance.*

This is a research project being conducted by Lizelle Ferus at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you meet the inclusion criteria for the proposed study. The purpose of this research project is gain insight and knowledge in your understanding, your perception and experiences of occupational balance.

The proposed study will be a qualitative study, which will be conducted at the Occupational Therapy Department at the University of the Western Cape. The study will aim at gaining an in-depth view into the understanding, the perceptions and experiences of occupational therapy students regarding occupational balance as limited research has been done on this topic.

You will be asked to either participate in an individual interview and/ or a focus group discussion at the Department of Occupational Therapy (UWC). The individual interviews will approximately be 45minutes in duration and the focus group will approximately be 1 hour in duration.

The researchers undertake to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, *your name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data,* and to ensure your confidentiality, all data collected will be stored on a password-protected laptop. If the researcher writes a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

This study will use focus groups therefore the extent to which your identity will remain confidential is dependent on participants' in the Focus Group maintaining confidentiality.

All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. The researcher will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

The intention of this research paper is to allow for a more comprehensive understanding about occupational therapy students' perspective of occupational balance. Furthermore, the findings of this paper may be used to contribute to the occupational therapy education programme, and provide valuable recommendations to improve the occupational therapy education programme at UWC with regards to occupational balance.

The benefits to you include *that you will have a better understanding experience of occupational balance.*

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

This research is being conducted by *Lizelle Ferus* at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Lizelle Ferus at: lizelleferus@gmail.com .

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof Lisa Wegner
Head of Department
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
lwegner@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Research Ethics Committee.
(REFERENCE NUMBER: *to be inserted on receipt thereof from SR*)

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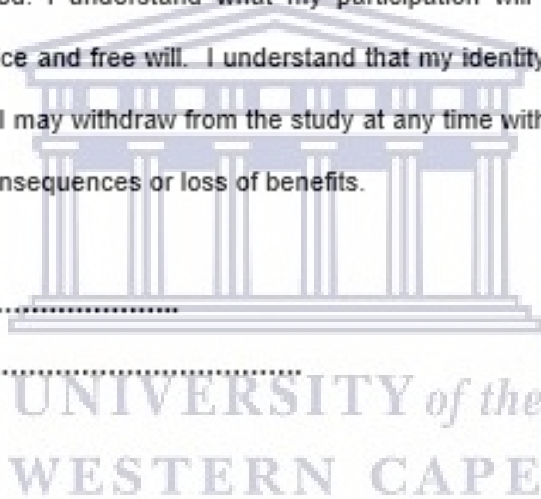E-mail: lizelleferus@gmail.com

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: *An exploration of occupational therapy student's perspective of occupational balance.*

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

Participant's name……………………………

Participant's signature…………………………………

Date………………………

Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel : +27 21-959 3151

E-mail: lizelleferus@gmail.com

FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY BINDING FORM

Title of Research Project: *An exploration of occupational therapy student's perspective of occupational balance.*

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone by the researcher. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits. I understand that confidentiality is dependent on participants' in the Focus Group maintaining confidentiality.

I hereby agree to uphold the confidentiality of the discussions in the focus group by not disclosing the identity of other participants or any aspects of their contributions to members outside of the group.

Participant's name……………………………………..

Participant's signature………………………………..

Date………………………….

Focus Group Confidentiality Binding Form

<u>Interview Guide</u>

<u>Interview Questions:</u>

1) Have you ever heard of the term "occupational Balance"? If so, where?

2) What is your understanding of occupational balance?

3) Do you think that your colleagues/ fellow students understand it the same way you do?

4) Explain your experience of occupational balance.

5) What is your perception of occupational balance?

6) What do you perceive as barriers to achieve occupational balance?

7) What do you perceive as facilitators in achieving occupational balance?

8) Describe how occupational balance relates to health and well-being.

9) Would you change the manner in which occupational balance is introduced to students?

10) How do you think that understanding this topic could ultimately assist you with how you practice as an occupational therapist one day?

<u>Focus Group Questions:</u>

1) What occupations forms part of a student's life?

2) Describe your normal day, and do you think you participate in a variety of activities?

3) Describe your understanding of occupational balance.

4) Describe your understanding of the relationship between occupational balance, health and well-being.

5) Explain what factors enable occupational balance.

6) Explain factors which prevent occupational balance from occurring.

7) How do you perceive occupational balance while studying?

8) How would you describe the occupational therapy programme at UWC?

9) What activities or occupations make you feel stressed in your everyday life?

10) What do you do to relax and do you think the time you spend on these activities is sufficient to achieve occupational balance?

11) Describe your understanding of how the type of activities and occupations you engage in would affect your health.