

# Advocating for occupational justice: Occupational therapists mounting a moral argument

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## Imagine refugees in detention centres

Injustice everyday ....

Refugees in detention face systemic barriers preventing meaningful engagement in culturally valued occupations. **This is true for many people, every day in today's world order.** Who is detaining who?



Occupational deprivation harms health and social integration, affecting vulnerable populations worldwide...

Rights-Based Advocacy holds better promise

Occupational therapy champions these rights:

- The right to participate in occupations
- The right to choose occupations without coercion
- The right to engage freely without risk to safety or dignity (WFOT, 2019)

**But here's the challenge:** When we advocate for occupational justice, we rarely reference legislated rights explicitly. **So, what is the basis of our claims that occupational injustices are harmful and must be addressed and by who?**

We explored our question through a systematic rapid review of articles on occupational justice and injustice in both OT and OS journals



## What we know...

- Concept of occupational justice



## Related Global South concepts

- Occupational consciousness (Ramugondo)
- Occupational apartheid (Kronenberg)
- Occupational choice shaped by context (Galvaan)
- Activist occupational choices (Nhunzvi)
- Collective occupation (Ramugondo)
- Everyday forms of resistance (Simaan)
- Occupational inconsideration (Chichaya)



# What we found:

## Understanding of Rights & Justice

Understood differently in different places

Rights are unalienable entitlements

Rights are the basis of a “good” life

Justice – how rights ought to be distributed across society

People are entitled to claim their rights and society is impelled to allow them

Invoked when there are marked disparities between groups

## How victims are described

Trapped and suffocated by a multiplicity of oppressions

Victims of systemic injustice

Socially excluded, vulnerable, and unprotected

Marginalised and dependent

Agents of protest, resistance, and transformation

Resilient, adaptive, and entrepreneurial

## Examples of Populations experiencing Injustice



Infants in prison with their mothers



Tertiary students during COVID-19



Labourers and domestic workers in South Africa



South African women in former homelands (some older / with disabilities)



Youths with disabilities (SA, Namibia)



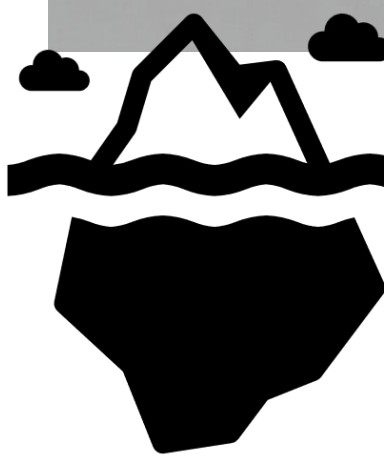
Youths in situations of poverty



Learners exposed to gender-based violence



Street vendors



### FINDING

### DESCRIPTION

Most cited injustice

Occupational deprivation across diverse populations

Rights referenced

Seldom specified in the literature

Argument basis

Primarily moral reasoning, not rights-based

## Redress

Community-based and inclusive leisure engagement

Decolonial and transformative practice

Justice-oriented frameworks and methodologies

Reparative and human-centred advocacy

Disability rights and policy reform

Safe and empowering educational environments

Occupation as power and identity

# DEFIANCE WITHIN THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSTRAINT

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONSTRAINT

THE DYNAMICS OF DEFIANCE



Journal of  
Occupational Science

