



*Mapping Occupational Science Literature from  
Low- and Middle-Income Countries—A Scoping  
Review.*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Low- and middle-income countries = LMICs

# INTRODUCTION



SCAN ME

## Definitions:

Decolonisation

Occupational science

Occupational justice

Occupational injustice

Occupational alienation

Occupational marginalisation

Occupational imbalance

Occupational deprivation

Occupational apartheid

Social occupational therapy

Low-income economy

Lower-middle income economy

Upper-middle income economy

High-income economy

GNI per capita

## Research Question:

- What was reported on in occupational science literature from low- and middle-income countries by authors from low- and middle-income countries?

## Research Aim:

- To identify, map, and describe what was reported on in occupational science literature from low- and middle-income countries by authors from low- and middle-income countries.

## Research Objectives:

- i. Identify the methodological characteristics of occupational science literature from low- and middle-income countries
  - ii. Identify the demographic characteristics of the participants in the occupational science literature from low- and middle-income countries
  - iii. Identify and describe the recent developments and trends reported on in occupational science literature from low- and middle-income countries
  - iv. Identify and describe the concepts that are reported on in occupational science literature from low- and middle-income countries
- NOT “what is said about LMICs,” BUT “what LMIC authors themselves are saying.”

*Scoping review  
based on Arksey and  
O'Malley's  
framework and 2024  
JBI guidelines.*

PCC (Population, Concept, Context)	
Population	Published literature that focus on occupational science concepts.
Concepts	<b>Occupational Science concepts:</b> Occupational science, occupational justice, occupational injustice, occupational alienation, occupational apartheid, occupational deprivation, occupational imbalance, occupational balance, occupational marginalization, occupational rights, collective occupations, occupational inconsideration, occupational choice, occupational consciousness, occupational legacy, resistance occupations, resistive occupations, restorative occupations, occupational time use, occupational identity, social occupational therapy.
Context	Occupational science literature that focuses on low- and middle-income countries and participants from low- and middle-income countries. Or written by authors from low- and middle-income countries. Or where the majority of authors are from low- and middle-income countries.

## Findings and discussion:

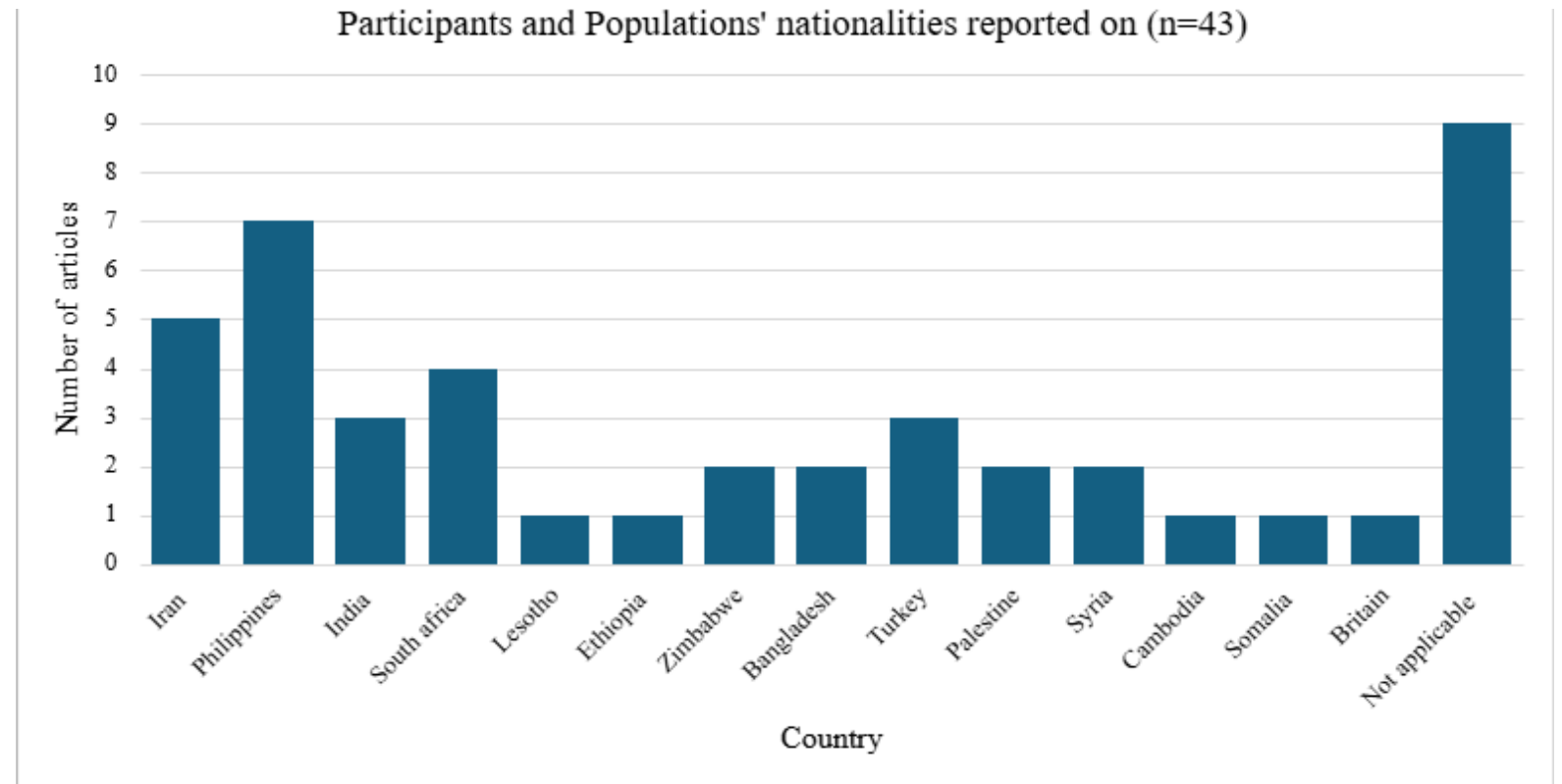
### Objective 1: Methodological and demographic characteristics of the literature

43 peer-reviewed articles were included (2011 and 2024).

*68% used qualitative designs*

*Africa and Asia, with South America underrepresented*

*Only 13 of 135 LMICs covered (as define by WB)*

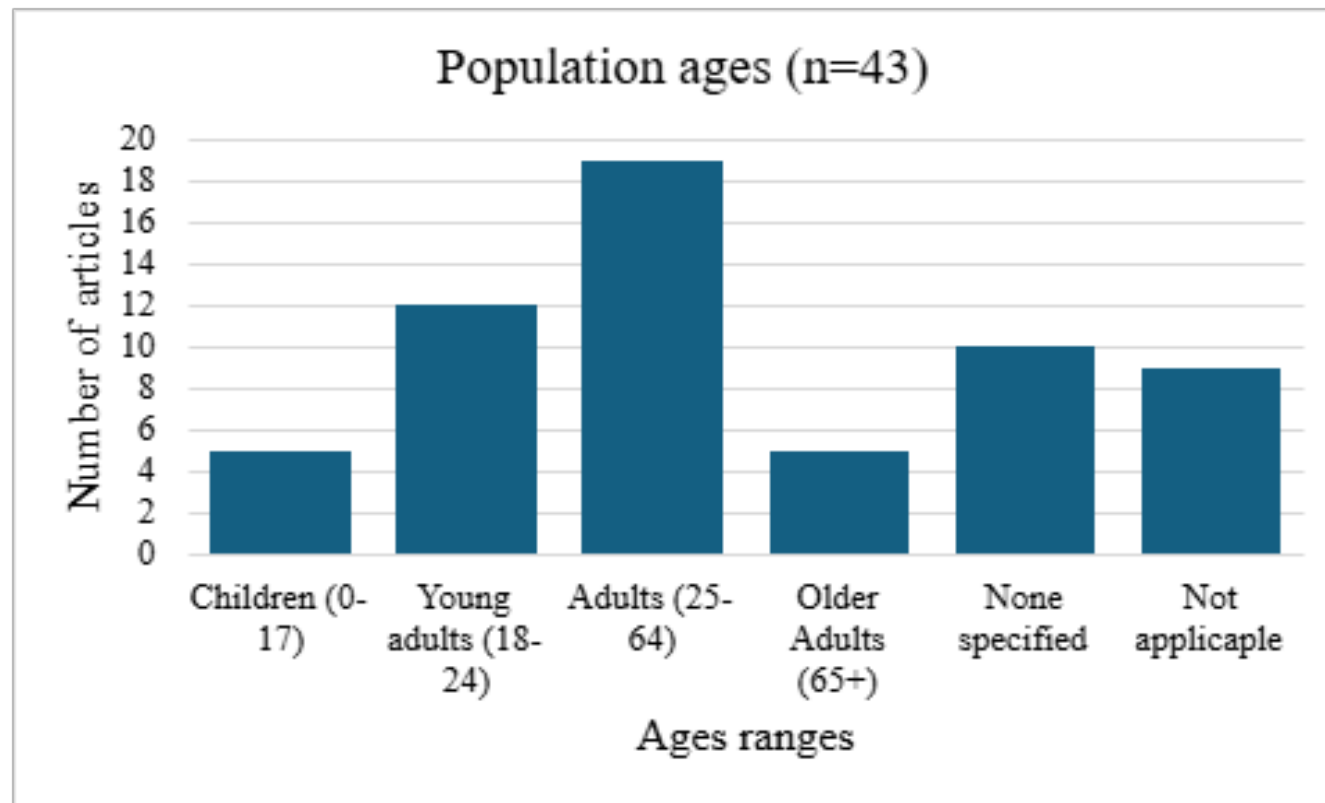


## Findings and discussion: Objective 2: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Adults and young adults were most frequently studied.

Underrepresentation of children, older adults, caregivers, and LGBTQ+ population.

Only male and female specified.



## Findings and discussion:

### Objective 3: Recent Developments and Trends in the Literature

*2011-2015: Occupation as cultural preservation and resistance.*

*2016-2020: Occupational justice and culturally defined balance.*

*2021-2024: Decolonising frameworks, structural critique, rejection of Eurocentric norms.*

*COVID-19 (2020-2022): A spike in publications noted. Occupation shifted from Western individualism to collective, political, historically situated concepts.*

## Findings and discussion

### Objective 3: Recent Developments and Trends in the Literature:

#### *Regional Insights:*

*Asia: Emphasis on collectivism, adaptive participation, contextual justice*

*Africa: Focus on historical trauma, occupational legacy, structural inequality*

*Middle East: Occupation as identity preservation and political resilience*

**= Focus of regions might differ, but findings highlight that occupation is contextual, relational, and historically situated.**

## Findings and discussion: Objective 4: Occupational Science Concepts Reported on:

48 concepts reported on

- ✓ *Occupational Justice* (32.6%)
- ✓ *Occupational Injustice* (27.9%)
- ✓ *Occupational Balance* ( 23,26%)
- ✓ *Occupational Deprivation* (20.93%)

Occupational Science Concepts	Frequency of reporting	Occupational Science Concepts	Frequency of reporting
doing, being, becoming, belonging	4	contextual occupations	1
occupational wholeness	1	occupational dimensions	1
occupational science	3	occupational profile	1
indigenous occupations	1	collective occupational well-being	1
collective activity	1	communal occupational roles	1
occupational injustice	12	occupational change	1
being and becoming indigenous	1	meta-occupation	1
occupational justice	14	occupational meaning	1
occupational alienation	6	quality of life	2
occupational deprivation	9	occupational risk	2
occupational imbalance	8	occupational well-being	1
occupational apartheid	6	occupational being	1
occupational choice	7	occupational consciousness	1
occupational marginalization	4	occupational integrity	1
occupational rights	3	occupational balance	10
occupational identity	6	occupational behaviour	1
occupational currency / power	1	occupational repertoire	1
occupational potential	3	occupational enrichment	1
collective occupations	6	occupational disruption	1
collective identity	1	occupational satisfaction	1
transformative occupation	1	occupational reconstruction	1
occupational transition	1	occupational capacity	1
shared occupations	1	occupational legacy	1
occupational adaptation	2	occupational decision making	2

# Implications for OT Practice in LMICs

## Shift to Collective Frameworks

Moving beyond Western individualistic models to culturally-rooted, collective occupations (*ubuntu*, olive growing, foodwork)

## Decolonising OT Education and Practice

Integrating local knowledge, oral traditions, and Indigenous perspectives

## Tool Adaptation and Development

Call for context-sensitive tools - such as the adaptation of the Occupational Justice Health Questionnaire (OJHQ) (George et al. 2025) and additional information on the collective occupation tool (Adams & Casteleijn, 2023)

## Justice-Oriented Approaches

Addressing structural injustices (e.g., land rights, refugee settlement, disability inclusion)

# Conclusion

- *Occupational science literature from LMICs challenges Western-centric views, emphasizing justice, cultural relevance, and community approaches.*
- *Ethnographic, qualitative, and participatory methods reflect a commitment to decolonizing occupational science.*
- *Limitations of this study include English-only sources, exclusion of grey literature, and underrepresentation of LMICs.*
- The conclusion is not an ending—it is a call to action.

For conversations on the findings and the way forward:  
[Fasloen@sun.ac.za](mailto:Fasloen@sun.ac.za)



# References

- Adams, F., & Casteleijn, D. (2023). Assessment of Participation in Collective Occupations: Domains and Items. *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 53(2), 86-94.
- George, E., Moorthy, S., Di Tommaso, A., Rankin, E., Oxlad, M., Murthy, G., Tetali, S., & D'Souza, B. (2025). Developing a modified and contextualised Occupational Justice Health Questionnaire (OJHQ) for use with marginalised populations: A Delphi study. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 32(3), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2025.2463013>

## For Future Research:

- Representation of LMICs
- Promote diversity by including various groups of people.
- Diversify research methods for stronger evidence and policy relevance.
- International collaboration
- Develop and validate OS models and tool to be relevant.

## For Practice:

- Advance the concept of collective occupations
- Advocate for patients, and influence policy.
- Use evidence to support inclusive, justice-orientated policies to empower communities.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## For Education:

- Incorporate indigenous knowledge, reflective teaching and ethnographic content.
- Foster partnership between Global South communities and academics to build a more inclusive and representative knowledge base.
- SU occupational science curriculum, can incorporate the new occupational science concepts from LMICs to ensure that what is taught can be relevant to SA context.