



A Tale of Two Countries

Professional Identity in Occupational Therapists in Malaysia and Australia

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METHODOLOGY

- Narrative Enquiry – Australian and Malaysian Occupational Therapists
 - Semi-structured Interviews – currently 8 participants (4 from each country)
 - Thematic and narrative analysis, together with comparative analysis with the conceptualisation coming from the scoping review and global study

KEY FINDINGS

- Professional Identity is relational, values-based, negotiated, transactional rather than individual
- Identities are under pressure
- Adaptation strategies involved
 - Advocacy and negotiation
 - Cognitive reframing and meaning making
 - Emotional regulation
 - Acceptance
 - Building competence and credibility
 - Leveraging support systems

Different Edges of the Same Process

	Malaysia	Australia
Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medical/ professional hierarchies - Referrer control - Visibility and recognition - Ontological dissonance - Embedding of profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role ambiguity and blurring - Partial invisibility - Ethical and moral tensions - Regulatory fear and complaints - Systemic misunderstanding
Identity under pressure	Struggling for recognition and authority within medically dominated systems	Contesting practice conditions within a recognised profession
Adaptation strategies	Protective and incremental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diplomacy and careful negotiation - Reframing - Validation (outcomes and external recognition) 	Agentic and transform – active <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not just surviving the system but changing it - Reshape roles - Resist pressures - Leadership and advocacy

Summary

- ✓ Professional Identity is dynamic and transactional
- ✓ Power, hierarchy and professional maturity shape what forms of adaptation are feasible and safe
- ✓ Cultural and structural forces shape identity formation, evolution and maintenance
- ✓ Trajectory of 'Becoming'
 - Early fragility
 - Identity disruption
 - Emotional labour and adaptation
 - Gradual sharpening
 - Forward-looking hope

