

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**MODELLING THE STRUCTURES  
OF OCCUPATIONAL BALANCE  
AMONG COMMUNITY-DWELLING  
RETIRES: A MIXED-METHODS  
APPROACH**

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## ABSTRACT

Retirement marks a crucial life transition wherein maintaining a sense of purpose and well-being becomes paramount. This transition calls for a renewed focus on occupational balance, which, despite its relevance for retirees' health and well-being, has had a noticeable scarcity of research among Malaysian retirees. To bridge this gap, we use in-depth interviews and a cross-sectional study to explore occupational balance comprehensively. While the literature on occupational balance does exist, it often presents inconsistent findings, thereby necessitating a localised examination to gain a deeper and context-specific understanding. This study aimed to (i) explore the experience of occupational balance post-retirement among retirees; (ii) determine the influence of proposed independent variables (time use and health status) on the occupational balance post-retirement among retirees; (iii) determine the influence of occupational balance post-retirement on the retirees' life satisfaction; (iv) determine the mediating effects of occupational balance between time use or health status with life satisfaction; and (v) determine the moderating effects of demographic and socioeconomic status on the occupational balance structure post-retirement. In phase one, twelve retirees were purposively included in online, one-to-one, in-depth interviews recorded digitally. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, four superordinate themes emerged: (i) satisfaction thru activity, (ii) my activity proportion, (iii) desires and aspirations, and (iv) challenges towards occupational balance. The first phase reveals essential aspects of retirees' experiences with occupational balance following retirement. It encompasses their sources of satisfaction derived from engaging in various activities, the management of activity proportions within their routines, the pursuit of aspirational goals, and the hurdles they encounter in maintaining a balanced engagement in meaningful occupations. These themes informed the refinement of the initial occupational balance model during the transition phase. In phase two, 400 retirees were purposively included in the cross-sectional study. This phase employs covariance-based structural equation modeling to investigate the complex interplay between time use (Time Use Diary), health status (EQ-5D-3L), occupational balance (Activity Satisfaction and Activity Proportions), and life satisfaction (Satisfaction with Life Scale). The structural model demonstrated a good fit (RMSEA: .057 (90% CI: .050-.064),  $\chi^2$ /degree of freedom: 2.293, CFI: .934, TLI: .920, IFI: .935), revealing statistically significant relationships ( $\beta$  = -.130 to -.961,  $p$  = .018 to <.001). These outcomes illuminate the synergistic influence of time use and health status on retirees' occupational balance, manifesting through activity satisfaction and proportion, explaining 92.8% of the variance. Notably, retirees' occupational balance emerges as a potent predictor of life satisfaction ( $\beta$  = .518,  $p$  < .001), further reinforcing the mediating role it plays between time use, health status, and life satisfaction (direct effect:  $B$  = .051 to 1.103,  $p$  < .001; indirect effect:  $B$  = -.218 to -.213,  $p$  = .021 to <.001). Importantly, this model's applicability extends across diverse retiree subgroups, including variations in gender, religion, race, marital status, and financial stability. In conclusion, this study presents a robust structural model of post-retirement occupational balance with far-reaching implications for primary healthcare, community, and institutional settings. Hence, to pave the way for future research, it is essential to explore the unique determinants of retirees' occupational balance and life satisfaction, paying particular attention to the potential impact of longitudinal changes and associated factors.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>AUTHOR'S DECLARATION</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>LIST OF SYMBOLS</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Background	1
1.3 Problem Statement	5
1.4 Research Questions	8
1.5 Aim and Objectives	8
1.6 Significance of the Study	9
1.7 Scopes and Definitions	11
1.8 Theoretical and Operational Definitions	12
1.9 Outline of the Thesis	16
1.10 Summary	17
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 The Foundation of Occupational Science	19
2.3 The Foundation of Occupational Balance	21
2.4 Measures of Occupational Balance	33
2.5 Occupational Balance Structures	41
2.6 Retirement as a Life Stage	48

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter set up the research background and problem statement that led to the rationale of this study. In addition, this chapter detailed the research questions, objectives, significance of the study, scopes and delimitations, and theoretical and operational definitions.

### 1.2 Research Background

Occupation is defined as an individualised and meaningful engagement in everyday life activities (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020). It was central to human existence that could improve or deteriorate individuals' health and well-being. Occupations were classified into nine categories: (i) activities of daily living (ADL)/self-care; (ii) instrumental activities of daily living (IADL); (iii) health management; (iv) rest and sleep; (v) education; (vi) work; (vii) play; (viii) leisure; (ix) social participation (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020). A strong relationship exists between occupation, health, and well-being (Blank et al., 2015). Health and well-being can be achieved by actively participating in occupations, and it is vital for an individual to achieve a successful life (Farias & Laliberte Rudman, 2014). Therefore, occupational therapists mediate or facilitate clients' occupational engagement in achieving a balanced lifestyle that may influence health and well-being (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014). Despite the complex relationship of occupation with health and well-being (Blank et al., 2015), balancing one's daily occupations and nature is essential in promoting well-being (Wagman et al., 2015).

The study of individuals as occupational beings and their relation to health was formally introduced as occupational science in the 90s (Yerxa, 1990). Occupational balance is one of the common concerns in occupational science. Occupational balance may be defined as having a suitable number of occupations and the proper diversity between occupations (Wagman, Håkansson, et al., 2012a). In short, occupational balance is the balance between activities that people do daily. It is a significant