

Research Question

Does occupational therapy promote quality of life and well-being in the postpartum period in maternal health?

Introduction

Pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period are major life transitions that significantly influence women's physical, psychological, and social well-being. While maternal healthcare has traditionally focused on medical outcomes, there is growing recognition of the need for holistic approaches that also address occupational participation, mental health, and quality of life. Motherhood requires adaptation to new roles, routines, and responsibilities that can affect self-care, sleep, work, leisure, and caregiving.

Occupational therapy is uniquely positioned to support women during the perinatal period through interventions that promote occupational engagement, role adaptation, and participation in meaningful daily activities. Although emerging evidence supports occupational therapy's role in maternal health, the current evidence base remains limited. **The purpose of this systematic review is to evaluate the existing evidence on occupational therapy interventions that support women's well-being during pregnancy and the postpartum period.**

Method

- **Literature search:** Occurred between 5/14/2026 and 5/20/2026. An additional search was conducted on 5/27/2026 to ensure all relevant research was included.
- **Inclusion criteria:** Peer-reviewed, published in English, full-text available, occupational therapy in maternal health, promoting well-being, quality of life, and mental health, and interventions involving occupational therapy, and dated between 2022-2026.
- **Exclusion criteria:** Systematic reviews, scoping reviews, dissertations, and conference proceedings
- **Electronic databases:** Springer Nature, Academic Search Complete, and SAGE Knowledge
- **Keywords:** occupational therapy, maternal health, and postpartum, and combinations of these words

Fig. 1. Benefits of Occupational Therapy in Maternal Health



References



Results

Four articles were included in this systematic review. Initially, 10 articles were found in the literature search, and 6 were excluded due to the exclusion criteria.

Literature on occupational therapy (OT) in maternal health remains limited, particularly regarding specific occupations and cultural contexts. Despite limited research, the evidence supports integrating OT across the maternal health continuum to improve maternal outcomes. See Figures 1.

The Value of OT in Maternal Care

Occupational Adaptation: OT interventions promoting life balance and meaningful activity participation improve psychosocial well-being and maternal role adaptation (Karakus et al., 2026; Vidal et al., 2023).

Interprofessional Collaboration: Collaboration between OTs and maternal healthcare providers addresses postpartum depression risk factors and improves quality of life for mothers and infants (Carpenter et al., 2026).

Holistic Care Example: Beyond the mechanics of breastfeeding, OT addresses role adaptation, self-efficacy, and occupational performance (Vidal et al., 2023).

Discussion

Maternal OT service delivery is limited by inadequate interdisciplinary awareness of OT, limited workforce diversity, ineffective mandatory training, and low referral rates from other healthcare professionals (Halsall et al., 2025).

The limited literature examining the value of OT in maternal health care suggests this is an emerging area of practice that invites further research to support the growth of evidence-based interdisciplinary collaboration. However, a synthesis of the existing literature indicates that occupational therapy contributes to measurable improvements in outcomes across the maternal health continuum.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that occupational therapy has significant importance in maternal health. From psychosocial, quality of life, and functional participation, occupational therapists provide distinct contributions within interprofessional teams.

There is strong evidence supporting the expansion of maternal OT services while highlighting a critical need for more research to advance evidence-based practice in this specialty.