

# **From Individual to Community: Occupational Therapy's Evolving Role in Municipal Resilience Building**

**A Comparative Study of OT Practitioners and Policy Makers**

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# Moving Beyond the Clinic to the Community Arena

## Individual Model (Clinical Practice)



- Traditional clinical space
- Individual treatment focus
- Medical model approach



## Broader Framework (Community Practice)



*The Social Model of  
Disability  
The Ecological Model*

- Active engagement in community arena
- Emphasis on social context of occupation
- Therapist role: Promoting community well-being and health equity
- Addressing structural, social, and economic barriers



# The Disconnect Between Potential and Implementation

## Potential to Promote Community Resilience

- International discourse growing
- Evidence of effectiveness
- Holistic approach to health

## Implementation in Local Authorities

- ✗ Limited implementation in Israeli municipalities
- ✗ Policy makers' knowledge and attitudes unexplored
- ✗ Unknown barriers to community-based practice
- ✗ Lack of empirical research on OT perspectives

# Research Aims



## Identify Barriers & Facilitators-

Key challenges and enabling factors influencing the successful implementation of community resilience-building initiatives in Israeli municipalities



## Assess OT Practitioners' Perspectives

Current knowledge, attitudes, and perceived roles of occupational therapy practitioners in fostering community resilience. (N=108- quantitative; N=9 interviews of senior OTs)



## Examine Policy Makers' Views

To explore the understanding and approaches of policy makers regarding the integration of community resilience principles within 2 local authorities. (N=9)

**Mixed method design; Grounded Theory method**

# The Knowledge Gap - A Striking Finding

**81.5%**

reported being **UNFAMILIAR** with the concept of "community-based occupational therapy" as defined by the WFOT

• *Widespread confusion about domains of community-based OT*

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## What Influences Attitudes?



### **KNOWLEDGE LEVEL**

Moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.324, p < 0.05$ )

→ Higher knowledge = More positive attitudes



### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

OTs with 11-20 years showed most positive attitudes ( $F = 4.053, p < 0.05$ )

# Qualitative Analysis: What Drives Community Engagement?

## OT Voices - Four Key Themes



### PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY & VALUES

*"Community practice is an authentic expression of professional self"*

- Humanistic values: dignity, social justice, giving
- Flexible identity anchored in *"professional soul"*



### EXPANDING PERSPECTIVE: Micro → Macro

- From therapy room to systemic influence
- Community itself as client



### CHALLENGES AS OPPORTUNITIES

*"Entering through the window when doors close"*

- Barriers strengthen motivation through growth



### PROFESSIONAL MATURITY REQUIRED

*"Professional courage to navigate uncertainty"*

- Consolidates over years

# A Tale of Two Cities: Context Matters

## EILAT (Periphery)

📍 Geographic Remoteness

👥 Manpower Shortages

## KIRYAT ONO (Center)

⚙️ Heavy Bureaucracy

💰 Budgetary Constraints

### 📄 THE SHARED REALITY:

Forced resource prioritization and socio-economic disparities limiting equitable services

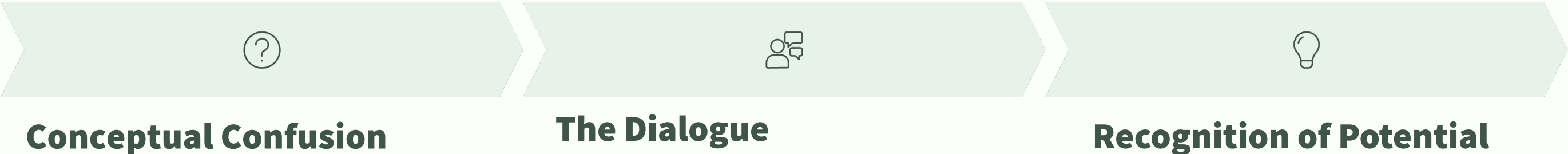
### Yet both expressed:

- ✓ Recognition of OT potential
- ✓ Willingness to explore municipal models
- ✓ Need for customized approaches



# **Occupational Therapy: An Invisible Profession**

## **The Knowledge Paradox**



### **Policy makers' initial perceptions:**

- ✗** Tendency to confuse OT with social work
- ✗** Perceived as strictly individualized practice
- ✗** Focused limitedly on motor skills
- ✗** Relegated to early childhood settings

**❏** *"I didn't really know what OT was before this conversation"*

# OT Recognized as Natural Partner for Urban Challenges



## RESILIENCE

Strengthening community fabric against crisis



## LONELINESS

Addressing social isolation in aging populations



## ACCESSIBILITY

Beyond ramps—ensuring functional inclusion

❏ *"OT can address the complexity of urban life— not just individual problems, but community-level solutions" (Head of Welfare Services)*

# Emerging Needs & Future Directions

## From Barriers to Opportunities - The Vision

### Pathways Forward (internal):

#### Academia and Training

- Development of a unified professional language and clear conceptual framework
- Implementation of mandatory courses in community occupational therapy
- Creation of a community practicum



#### Organizations and Policy

- Examination of the model of collaborations with local authorities (education, welfare, health)
- Establishment of supportive systemic conditions (resource allocation, standards)

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**Pathways Forward (external):**



**ADVOCACY**

Educating decision-makers



**STRATEGIC ROLE**

Recognizing OT as cross-sectoral



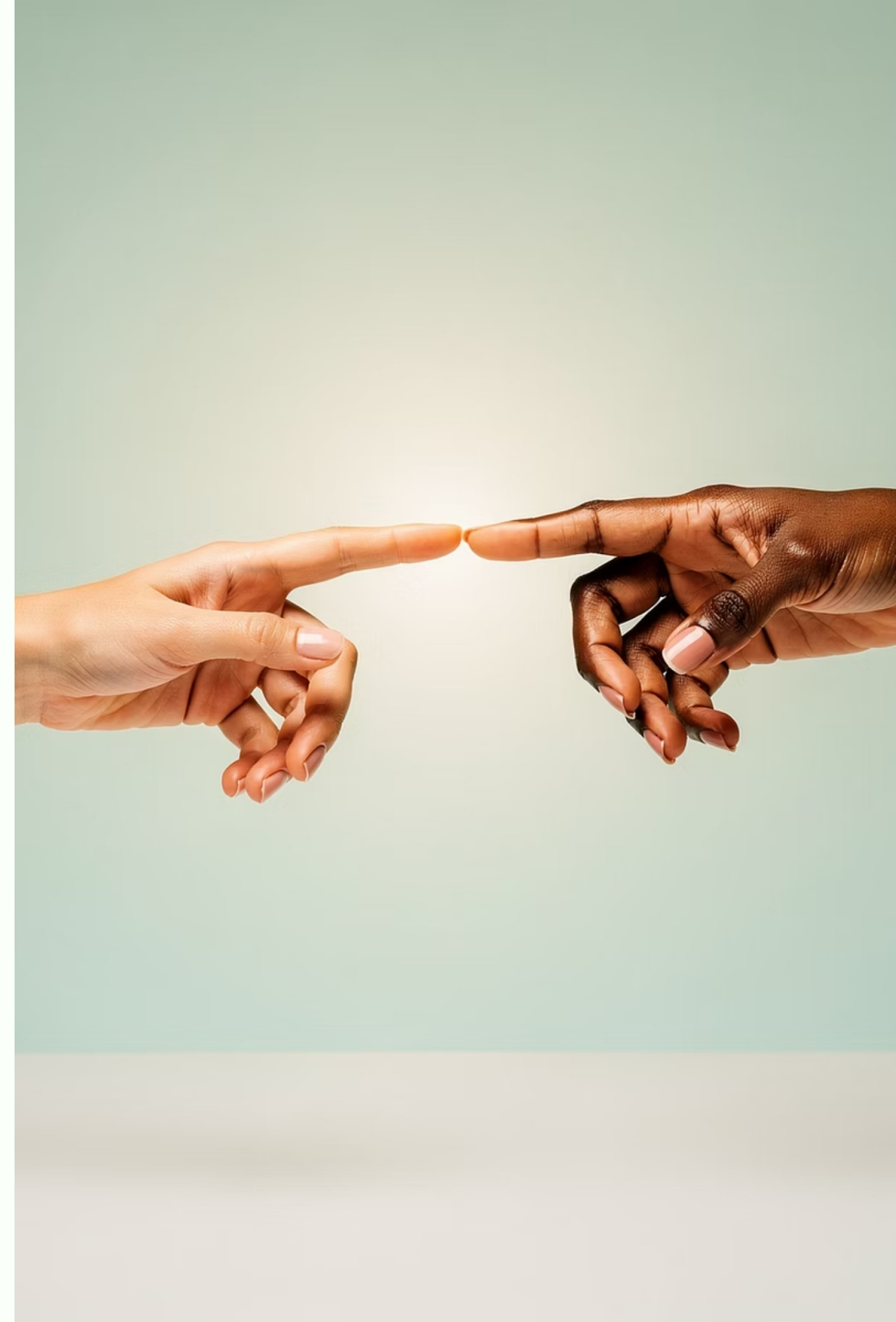
**MUNICIPAL MODELS**

Creating community OT units  
customized to context

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*"My dream is to have a psychologist, psychiatrist, and health profession team in the Education Department—natural partners I wouldn't need to search for every time... OT should be there."  
(deputy mayor Eilat)*

***“We have the tools.  
We have the values.  
We just need someone  
on the other side.”***



# 4<sup>th</sup> Year Students Research Seminar

