

Occupational Therapy Practice in Insular Territories: Challenges and Opportunities in the Province of Chiloé



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Occupational therapy in insular contexts

- Consistently describes generalist practice, High autonomy and Strong intersectoral reliance.

- Professional isolation and resource constrains

- Service-access report “thin markets, and reliance on informal coordination



(Boseto et al., 2019).
(Foster et al., 2021).
(Roots & Li, 2013).

Why this matters

Insularity can amplify inequities in rehabilitation access and continuity

- High degree of rurality
- Geographical dispersion
- Unique sociocultural characteristics

- Heterogeneity in Acces (National Institute of Statistics, 2021)

- Connectivity dependence (roads + sea crossings)
- Weather-driven disruptions and long travel times
- Higher logistics costs and fragmented referral pathways
- Risk of interrupted therapy “dose” and follow-up



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Chiloe Culture



Objective

To characterize the distribution of occupational therapy positions in the Chiloé Islands and to interpret, from a situated perspective, the professional practice and emerging challenges in the island context.

Theoretical position

- Adopt an **Epistemologies of the South** perspective to foreground plural ways of knowing and cognitive justice in health and rehabilitation. (Boaventura de Sousa Santos)
- Through an **Ecology of Knowledges**, i treat local/community knowledges as legitimate and analytically productive—rather than “context variables”.
- We use Situated Knowledges to make explicit how place, power, and positionality shape what can be known and how it is interpreted. (Donna Haraway)
- In **critical Latin American occupational therapy**, territory, everyday life, and justice are central to understanding praxis and participation. (Susana Galheigo; Alberto Guajardo)
- Interpret insularity not only as geography, but as a determinant that reorganizes practice, access, and participation.

Design

Complexity paradigm: Reality is polysystemic; phenomena are simultaneously biological, cultural, social, functional-beyond reductionism and rigid dichotomies.

Mixed-/multi-methods, exploratory scope, qualitative emphasis: sequential phases quantitative → qualitative (transformative sequential design, DITRAS)

Phenomenological approach: focuses on lived experience and meaning-making, privileging thick description rather than causal generalization.

Qualitative design: Participatory Action Research + Grounded Theory constant comparative method; open–axial–selective coding; central category)

(Edgar Morin, 1995) (Eduardo Bericat, 1998) (Fuster, 2019; Mari et al., 2010)

Design

Qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design

Quantitative phase:

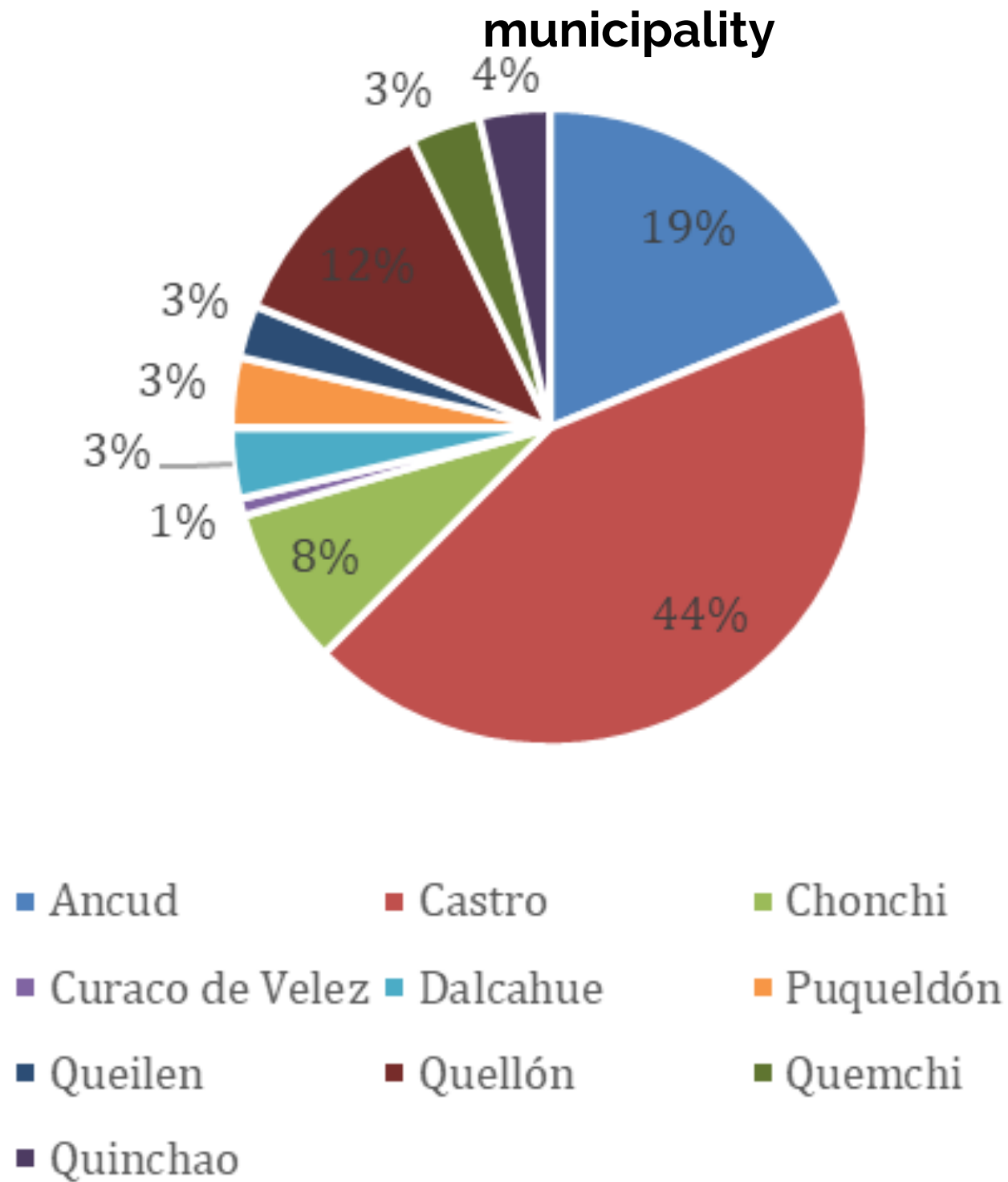
- Survey n = 19 OT professionals (includes open-ended questions; coded in Atlas.ti)
- Snowball search for occupational therapists N=134

Qualitative phase (Mar–May 2026):

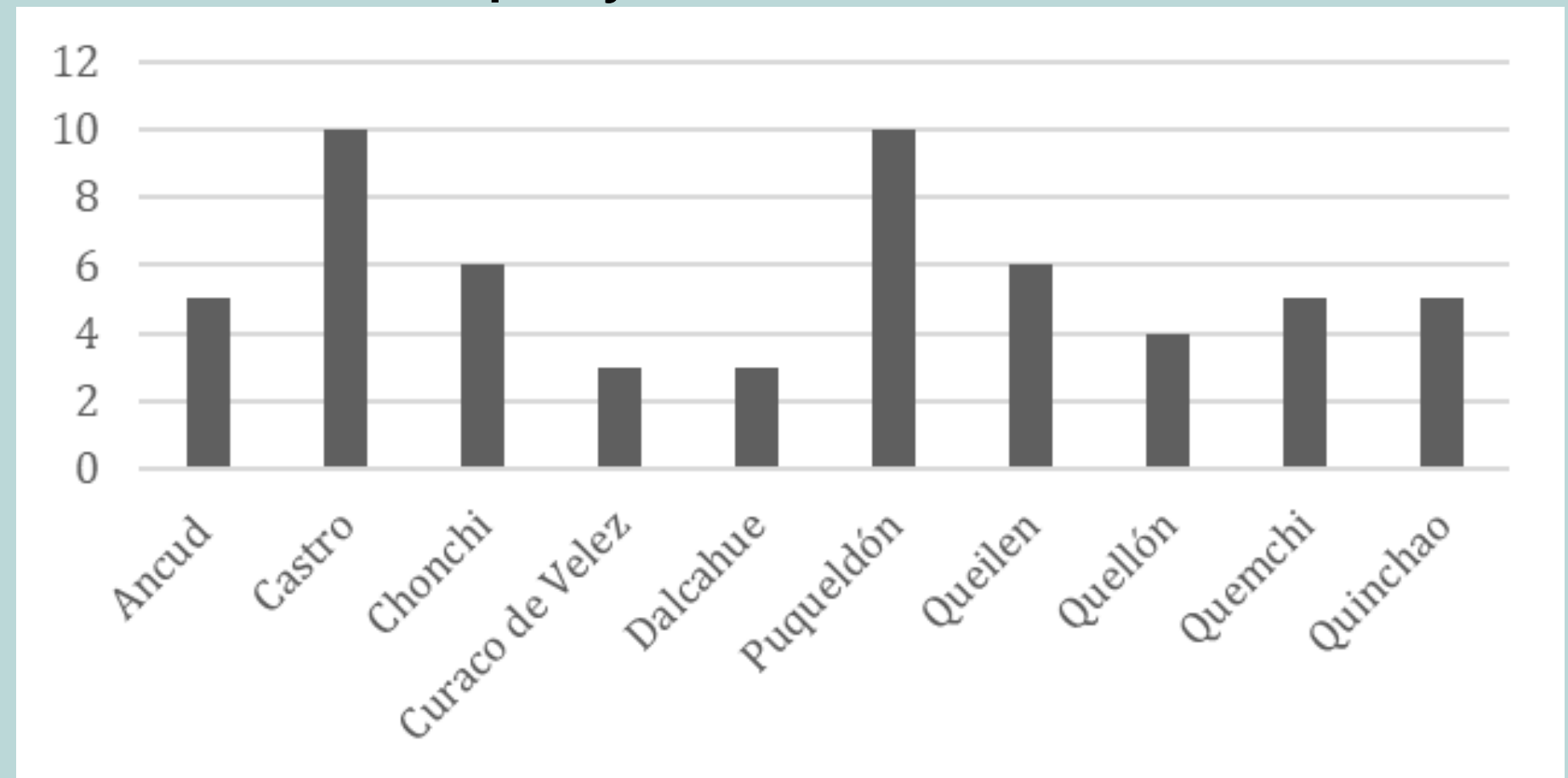
- Semi-structured interviews
- n = 10 (E1–E10)
- Inductive coding + constant comparative method

Quantitative Results

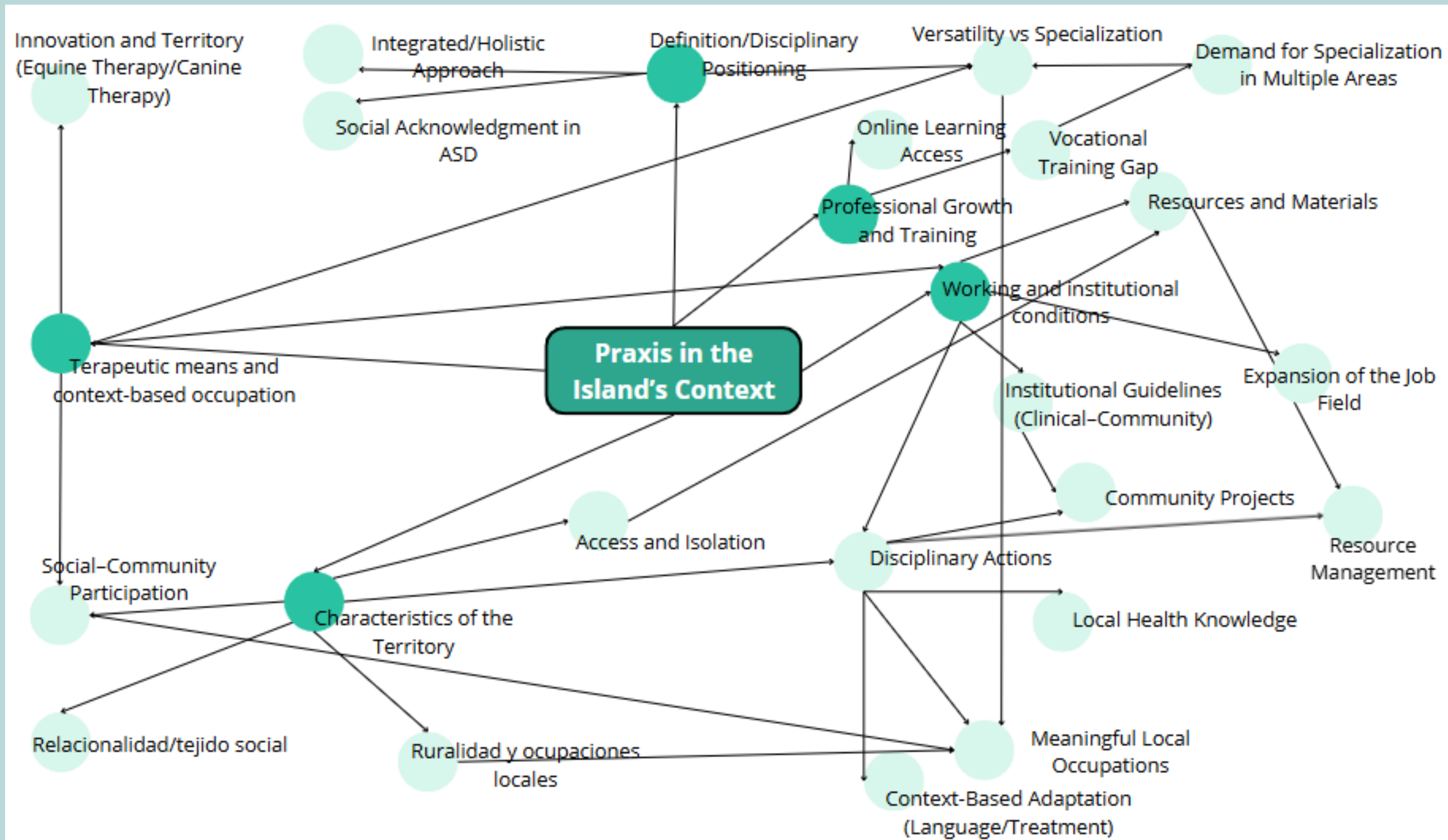
Percentage distribution of Occupational Therapists by municipality



Occupational Therapists per 10,000 inhabitants by municipality in the Province of Chiloé.



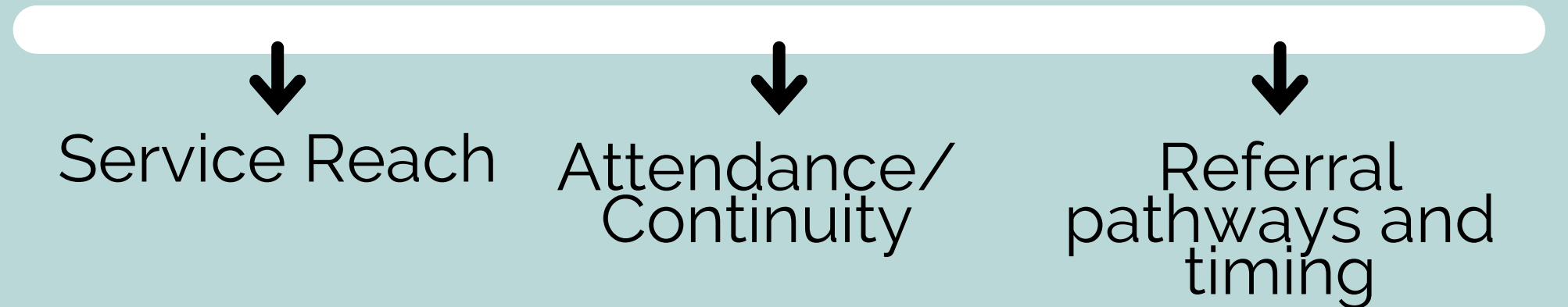
Cualitative Results Code network map



Barriers

Therapist describe constant negotiaton between clinical needs and territorial

Conectivity, Weather and Travel time affect



"...Approach therapies... locomotion, suddenly, that's one of the aspects we see as interfering the most..." (E5)

Practice becomes flexible, creative, and network-based

Adaptative strategies reported

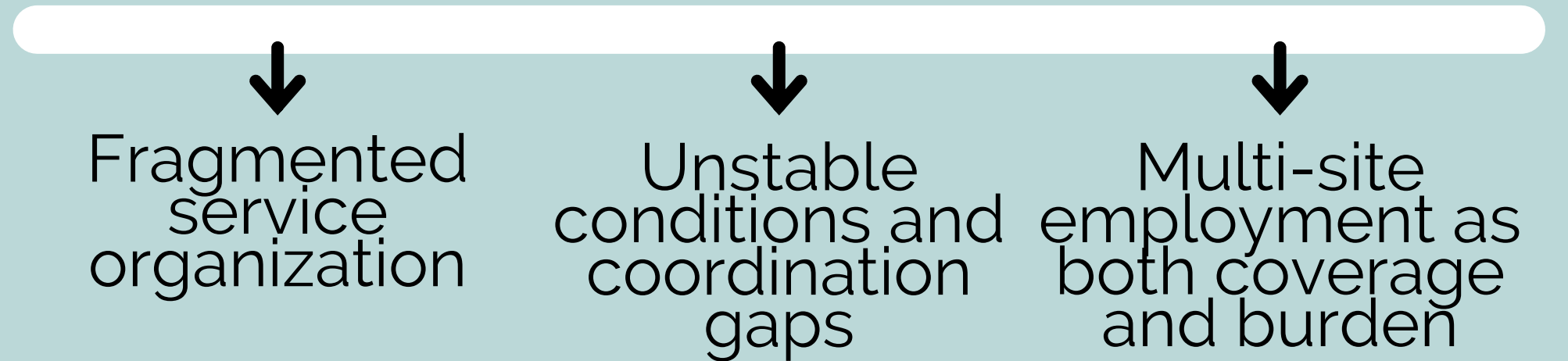
- Flexible scheduling and session planning**
- Resource improvisation and contextual adaptation. Collaboration and informal networks to sustain service delivery**

Resonates with rural/remote OT literature on generalist and adaptative practice

Hayes et al., 2022; Roots & Li, 2013.

Reported Issues

Laboral and institutional tensions



Russell et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2010.

Comunitary Practices

Findings support situated knowledge: territory is not just context; it produces practice logics

Links to rights-based and critical OT perspectives: access and participation as equity issues shaped by place

Haraway, 1988; World Federation of Occupational Therapists, 2019; Silva et al., 2023.

Conclusions

- OT positions are unevenly distributed; health sector dominates
- Insularity shapes access, continuity, service organization, and daily practice
- Therapists respond through flexible and networked praxis, but face institutional/labor tension

Implications

- Territorial workforce planning with equity targets
- Mobile/hybrid service models suited to insular mobility
- Retention supports: supervision, networks, stable contracts, continuing education

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