

Culturally Responsive Pediatric Occupational Therapy Interventions: A Systematic Review

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Research Question

What are barriers and facilitators of culturally responsive pediatric occupational therapy intervention?

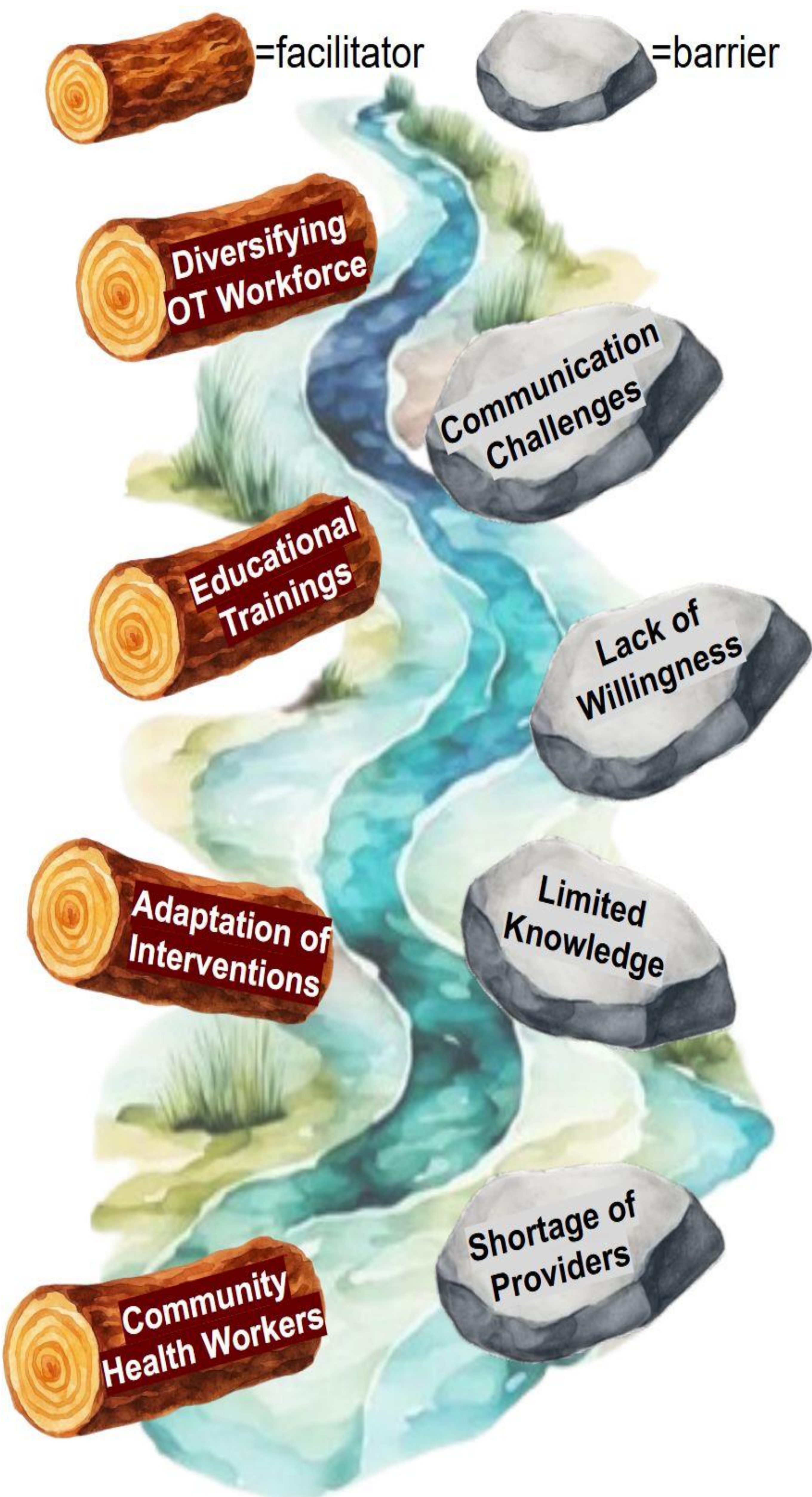
Introduction

- Occupational therapists work with increasingly diverse populations.
- Cultural responsiveness and humility remain among best practices to build effective and equitable therapeutic relationships.
- Culture is dynamic and rooted in lived experiences.
- Intentional engagement in persistent reflection and awareness of personal biases can ensure care is inclusive and client-centered.
- Tailored, culturally responsive occupational therapy (OT) intervention approaches are essential to improve trust, accessibility, and outcomes while reducing the risk of clients feeling misunderstood or disengaged from services.
- With minority populations projected to become the majority in the U.S. by 2044, positioning cultural humility within the scope of OT practice is essential (Grandpierre et al., 2018).
- This systematic review synthesized current literature to inform more efficacious, family-centered OT across diverse communities.

Method

Protocol: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines
Dates of search: Between May 14- 25, 2025 with additional search conducted May 25, 2025, to ensure all relevant research was included. **Inclusion criteria:** Peer-reviewed, published in English, and dated between 2020-2025.
Exclusion criteria: Studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria, included articles that were systematic reviews, scoping reviews, dissertations, and presentations.
Databases: PubMed, CINAHL Complete, Medline, Cochrane Library, OTseeker through Hawaii Pacific University's online library database.
Search terms: Cultural competence, pediatric, occupational therapy, barriers, facilitators, as well as combinations of these terms.
Selection: The initial search included 16 studies related to the topic; 9 articles met the inclusion criteria.
Analysis: Four independent reviewers completed the screening and selection of the studies, assessed their quality, and extracted the data.

Themes



Results

Nine studies met the inclusion criteria. The studies were assessed according to their risk of bias, level of evidence, and quality. They contained relevant information regarding barriers and facilitators to cultural responsiveness in pediatric OT intervention. The information from these articles was divided into two themes: barriers and facilitators.

Discussion and Implications for OT

Cultural humility in pediatric occupational therapy must begin with recognizing culture as a key client factor and integrating cultural values into services for families. A culture's view of disability and child rearing can influence a caregivers' understanding, expectations, and participation in therapy. As a result, pediatric OT practitioners need culturally responsive frameworks to create interventions that are family-centered (Grandpierre et al., 2018) Enhancing cultural responsiveness among OT practitioners involves individual reflection and systemic change. Culture influences family dynamics, relationships with healthcare providers, and child development expectations. By recognizing the value of cultural humility, prioritizing linguistic accessibility, and integrating family values into intervention design, OT practitioners can deliver more equitable and effective care. As a profession, OT practitioners have the responsibility of creating holistic and intentional therapeutic approaches.

Conclusion

Studies included within this systematic review provide evidence on the effectiveness of culturally responsive strategies to improve effective pediatric OT interventions. Additional research is necessary to assess long-term outcomes, utilize more diverse population samples, and accessible research design methods for comprehensive data collection. Cultural humility is essential for delivering equitable and effective OT services in diverse communities.

References, Figures & Appendices



Figure 1. Facilitators and Barriers of Culturally Responsive Pediatric OT Intervention (Photos from Creative Fabrica and ChatGPT with edits by Hana Rupnow OTS)