



**THE TRIANGULAR COBWEB OF  
FACTORS HINDERING  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  
PROGRAMME IN UGANDA  
RURAL COMMUNITIES TODAY**

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# Occupational Therapy is the Mirror

*A cobweb is not always seen until something shows it up and makes us aware*



For this particular cobweb,  
taking OT to the grass roots  
exposed the cobweb

Potential hindrance to an OT  
intervention programme were  
revealed

# **PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

1. To better understand the challenges PWD and their families face in trying to live life to the fullest.
2. To uncover parents' perspective on disability.
3. To discover environmental, social and cultural factors hindering occupational therapy practice in South Western Uganda.
4. Explore possibilities of how OT can be effective within these communities.

# METHODS

**DESIGN:** Qualitative approach to describe and understand complexities of life experiences and meaning

## DATA COLLECTION

- ❖ OBSERVATIONS: Daily life patterns and routines, work and self care activities, caregiving practices
- ❖ 1:1 INTERVIEWS: Semi-structured format focused on:
  - ❖ Beliefs about PWD's and Etiology of Conditions
  - ❖ Community acceptance and values for PWDs
  - ❖ Aspects of care and care systems for PWDs
- ❖ FOCUS GROUPS: With clients and their families within Rukungiri
  - ❖ Interactive settings; people from same community/backgrounds

# **FINDINGS**

## **SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES**

1. Society's negative attitudes towards disability; disability regarded as "inability".
2. Children with disabilities are de-valued compared to other members of the community and labelled as "second class citizens".
3. Parents do not understand diseases and causes of disability.
4. Strong beliefs in witchcraft/curse.

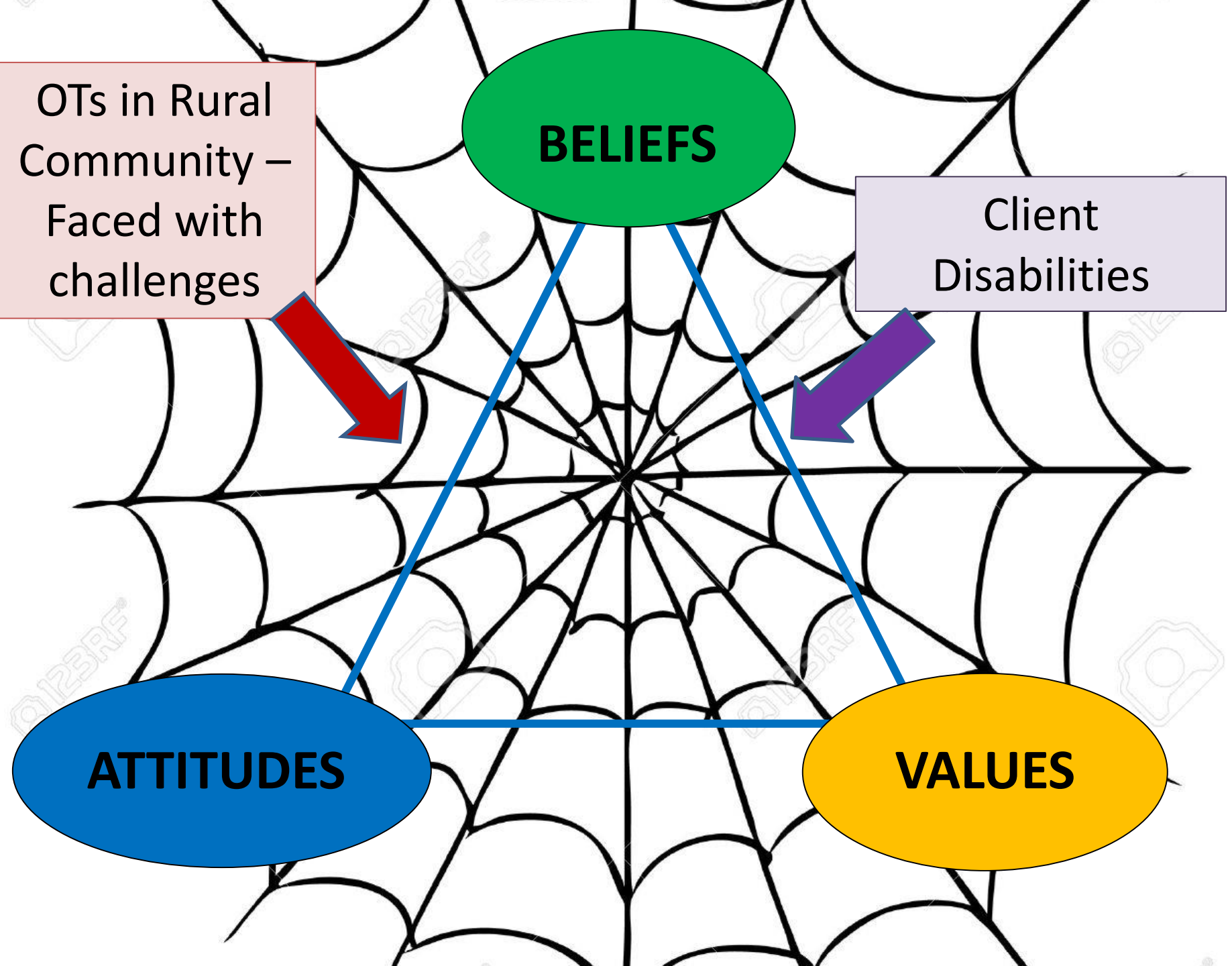
OTs in Rural  
Community –  
Faced with  
challenges

**BELIEFS**

Client  
Disabilities

**ATTITUDES**

**VALUES**



# BELIEFS: *HYDROCEPHALY*



If a pregnant mother eats a certain shaped pumpkin, she will produce this condition in her child.



If parents see a human skull during pregnancy they will produce a child with hydrocephaly



Failure to visit and pour out liberation to the spirits in this type of rocky area will also cause the same condition.

# Attitudes



1. Disability = Inability
2. Dependency fosters overprotectiveness
3. Discrimination closes doors @ school, work
4. Shame, punishment and false guilt; especially in mothers
5. Lack of community support motivated by fear
6. Families fears for future



# Values and Expectations



- Family and community place value occupations
- Negative impact when person is believed incapable

- Male child should:
  - Herd and milk animals; collect firewood & water
  - Do well at school
  - Be security for parents in their old age



# OT Strategies to Overcome Barriers



Create  
discussion groups  
to educate  
rural  
communities

# Offer Rural Learning Life Skill Clinics



**OT is the only  
Intervention  
Army in Rural  
Communities  
Today!**



**O.T**

**Ready to meet the  
challenges &  
*Rise* above *Disability***

**Let's join hands  
together and  
penetrate through the  
Rocky Rural  
Communities of  
*Beliefs, Attitudes* and  
*Values***

# CONCLUSION

*The author explores these challenges and offers opportunities for appropriate and effective therapy to improve the condition of PWD and facilitate a positive and hopeful focus on PWD.*

*The struggle continues, however OTs in rural Uganda are ready to change and challenge society.*