

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Perception, attitudes and factors influencing and limiting participation in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities among physiotherapists in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor

Fatin Athirah Rahman, Amira Dayana Amirulzaini & Fatim Tahirah Mirza*

Centre of Physiotherapy, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Selangor Kampus Puncak Alam, 42300 Bandar Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.

Abstract:

Introduction: The developing fields of science, technology, and healthcare have made it essential for healthcare workers especially physiotherapist to continuously learn throughout their life. **Objectives:** To determine the perception and attitude, factors influencing and limiting and the association between demographic characteristics with participation in CPD activities among physiotherapist in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted on 143 physiotherapists in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Self-administered questionnaire was distributed through google form. **Results:** Physiotherapists had positive attitude towards participation in CPD activities. Majority (92%) of the study respondents agreed on lifelong learning as part of what it means to be a professional and 95% of them feels that keeping up to date with knowledge or skills was the most beneficial aspect of CPD. The most (99%) factor influencing participation in CPD activities was 'to improve professional knowledge' while the most (83%) factor limiting participation in CPD activities was time constraints. Significant relationships were found between age ($p = 0.031$), working area ($p=0.001$) and working experience ($p = 0.008$) with participation in CPD. **Conclusion:** Physiotherapists in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor demonstrated a positive perception and attitude towards participation in CPD activities. They admitted that continuing education is a must for their professional development.

Keywords: Attitudes, Continuous Professional Development, Malaysia, Physiotherapy.

*Corresponding Author

Fatim Tahirah Mirza
Email:
Fatim_mirza@uitm.edu.my

1. INTRODUCTION

The developing fields of science, technology, and healthcare have made it essential for healthcare professionals to keep themselves updated with the latest evidence (Jiandani, 2015). The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (2018) defines CPD as a range of learning activities throughout healthcare professional careers to ensure they maintain their ability to practice safely, effectively and legally-laws in their growing scope of practice. This activity includes all formal and informal activities (Jiandani, 2015) such as workshops, courses, and seminars to meet current patient demand for good healthcare services (Yfantis et al., 2010).

In several states in the USA, mandatory CPD has been part of the regulation for physiotherapist enrolment since 1981 (Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy, 2011). In the region, Singapore has implemented mandatory CPD since 2003 (Singapore Medical Council, 2020). In Hong Kong, mandatory CPD already imposed on specialists' doctors while non-specialist doctors are encouraged to participate in CPD activities (The Medical Council of Hong Kong, 2020). Regulations and laws on CPD among medical professionals

have already been implemented in the Philippines and Thailand, but participation is still voluntary (Teerawattananon et al., 2003). Although mandatory CPD has not yet been implemented in Malaysia, the phased introduction through voluntary CPD has already been implemented (Aziza et al., 2013). Although CPD is mandatory for individuals' overall growth and progress, some healthcare professionals may not be able to achieve the goal of engaging themselves in CPD activities. Organizations or institutions may not be able to offer such environment that provides opportunities for all employees to maintain and develop their skills (Jiandani, 2015).

Most of the past studies have been conducted to examine the factors influencing and limiting participation in CPD among physiotherapists working in developed countries such as in the United Kingdom and New Zealand (French & Dowds, 2008). Also, most of the previous studies have been conducted to study the importance and challenges associated with CPD participation. Little is known about the attitudes and perception of physiotherapist on CPD activities as well as factors influencing and limiting their participation in CPD activities. Therefore, this study was designed to determine the attitudes and perception, factors influencing and limiting CPD

participation among physiotherapists in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor and their relationship with demographic characteristics (e.g., age, working area and working experience).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted between December 2021 to March 2022. Ethics approval was obtained from Human Research Ethics Committee Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) (Approval No: REC/12/2021 [UG/MR/979]). Inclusion criteria includes; i) individuals graduated with either Diploma or Bachelor Degree in physiotherapy, ii) working in Kuala Lumpur or Selangor, iii) have ≥ 1 year experience of working in the physiotherapy field and iv) able to understand English language.

Data collection was done via online questionnaire distributed by i) advertisement on the Malaysian Physiotherapy Association Facebook page, ii) direct messages on social media such as Instagram and Facebook, iii) email or whatsapp messages to Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) physiotherapy alumni (contact numbers and email addresses were gathered from exco alumni of UiTM physiotherapy association) and physiotherapists working at physiotherapy centres in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur (contact numbers and email addresses of the centres were searched online). At the beginning of the survey, the objective of the study, procedure and the inclusion criteria were stated. Participants gave informed consent by answering the survey.

The questionnaire consisted of 4 sections. The first section has eight-questions on demographic characteristics such as age, gender, level of education, working experience and area of specialization. The second section has twenty-four close-ended questions on factors influencing and limiting participation in CPD activities and were based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) somewhat agree, (4) agree and (5) strongly agree. The question from this section was adapted from a questionnaire previously used by Ryan (2003) and Stewart et al. (2019). The third section consists of twenty close-ended questions about attitudes and benefits participating in CPD activities (also graded on the similar 5-point Likert scale). The third section was adapted from questionnaires previously used by Bello and Lawson (2013), Maigeh (2004) and Stewart et al. (2020). The last section has one question about participation in CPD activity among physiotherapist adopted from the questionnaire previously used by Bello and Lawson (2013).

Data were analysed by using the IBM SPSS Statistics software (IBM Corp., USA) version 26. The demographic characteristics of the participants, attitude towards CPD, perceived benefits of CPD, factors influencing and limiting participation in CPD activities were analysed by using descriptive statistics. Chi-squared test and Fisher exact test were used to assess the association between the demographic

characteristic and participation in CPD activities. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

3. RESULTS

A total of 143 physiotherapist participated in this study. More than half (71%) were females. The majority (57%) of the participants were between 30 and 39 years age, has a bachelor’s degree in Physiotherapy (58%) and working at private hospital/centre (51%). Nearly all the participants were working full time (94%) and has between 1 and 5 years of experience working in physiotherapy field (52%). Demographic data of the study participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Details of the study participants (n=143)

Variables		n (%)
Gender	Male	41 (29)
	Female	102 (71)
Age (years)	20-29	57 (40)
	30-39	81 (57)
	40-49	5 (4)
Level of education	Diploma	51 (36)
	Bachelor of Degree	83 (58)
	Master of Degree	9 (6)
Working area	Government hospital	44 (31)
	Private hospital/ centre	73 (51)
	Self-employed	8 (6)
	Teaching institution	12 (8)
	Others	6 (4)
Employment status	Full time	134 (94)
	Part time	9 (6)
Working experience (years)	1-5	74 (52)
	6-10	34 (24)
	11-15	28 (20)
	16-20	6 (4)
	21-25	1(1)

3.1 Factors influencing and limiting participation in CPD activities.

As shown in Table 2, of the 14 factors influencing physiotherapist participation in CPD activities, almost all of the respondent rated strongly agree and agree on factors such as to improve professional knowledge (99%), to improve overall professional status (96%), to improve practitioner status (95%), increase self-esteem (95%), to update existing qualifications (94%) and to demonstrate professional competence (92%).

Table 2: Factors Influencing Participation in CPD Activities Among Working Physiotherapist

Factors	n (%)				
	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Uncertain	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
To fulfil statutory requirements	1 (0.7)	9 (6.3)	44 (30.8)	74 (51.7)	15 (10.5)
I will take up a CPD course if partially funded by my employer	3 (2.1)	12 (8.4)	22 (15.4)	67 (46.9)	39 (27.3)
I am prepared to pay for my CPD courses	4 (2.8)	13 (9)	48 (33.6)	68 (47.6)	10 (7)
I am willing to complete a course for my CPD without study leave	6 (4.2)	32 (22)	55 (38.5)	45 (31.5)	5 (3.5)
I am willing to complete a course for my CPD with partial study leave	3 (2.1)	16 (11.2)	45 (31.5)	68 (47.6)	11 (7.7)
To obtain a further qualification	1 (0.7)	11 (7.7)	14 (9.8)	84 (58.7)	33 (23.1)
To update my qualifications	0 (0)	3 (2.1)	5 (3.5)	72 (50.3)	63 (44.1)
To achieve a higher educational qualification	4 (2.8)	14 (9.8)	16 (11.2)	69 (48.3)	40 (28)
To demonstrate that I am professionally competent	2 (1.4)	3 (2.1)	6 (4.2)	91 (63.6)	41 (28.7)
To increase my professional knowledge	0 (0)	1 (0.7)	0 (0)	67 (46.9)	75 (52.4)
To increase my self-esteem	2 (1.4)	0 (0)	5 (3.5)	74 (51.7)	62 (43.4)
To prevent myself from becoming bored	8 (5.6)	15 (10.5)	19 (13.3)	64 (44.8)	37 (25.9)
To increase the status of the practitioner	2 (1.4)	2 (1.4)	3 (2.1)	79 (55.2)	57 (39.9)
To increase the status of the profession as a whole	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)	4 (2.8)	68 (47.6)	69 (48.3)

About limiting factors, time constraints due to commitments of the job (duty hours) scored the highest rating for ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ by the respondent (83%)

followed by employer/personal financial constraints with a percentage as high as 67%, patient care is prioritized over CPD (62%), and no protected time during work hours (60%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Factors Limiting Participation in CPD Activities Among Working Physiotherapist

Factors	n (%)				
	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Uncertain	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree
Isolated worker, no one to undertake CPD with	24 (16.8)	29 (20.3)	43 (30.1)	44 (30.8)	3 (2.1)
No protected time during work hours	7 (4.9)	25 (17.5)	25 (17.5)	72 (50.3)	14 (9.8)
Employer/Personal financial constraints	5 (3.5)	18 (12.6)	24 (16.8)	72 (50.3)	24 (16.8)
Patient care is prioritized over CPD	7 (4.9)	11 (7.7)	37 (25.9)	68 (47.6)	20 (14)
Lack of information about CPD opportunities	8 (5.6)	23 (16.1)	29 (20.3)	63 (44.1)	20 (14)
Time constraints due to commitments of the job	5 (3.5)	5 (3.5)	15 (10.5)	75 (52.4)	43 (30.1)
No motivation to attending the CPD programs	11 (7.7)	56 (39.2)	29 (20.3)	37 (25.9)	10 (7)
Geography/access issues to attend CPD activities	11 (7.7)	31 (21.7)	38 (26.6)	44 (30.8)	19 (13.3)
Available CPD is not relevant to my practice	8 (5.6)	39 (27.3)	43 (30.1)	38 (26.6)	15 (10.5)
Do not have access to any bibliographic databases	11 (7.7)	23 (16.1)	40 (28)	48 (33.6)	21 (14.7)

3.2. Attitudes and perception towards participation in CPD activities

Majority of the physiotherapists showed good attitude towards CPD. The four statements which most of the physiotherapists agreed on were (i) they felt a sense of achievement when they completed some CPD (89%), (ii) undertaking CPD gives them job satisfaction (85%), (iii) lifelong learning is an expected part of their professional status (92%) and (iv) undertaking CPD has helped them to improve client/ patient outcomes (80%).

Regarding benefits, most of the respondents believed and agreed that, keeping up to date with knowledge or skills (95%) was the most beneficial aspect of CPD, followed by increase motivation and understanding (93%), enhancing professional engagement and job satisfaction (92%), improved confidence (92%) and helps to solve work-related problems and improved reflection (90%).

3.3. Relationship between level of participation in CPD activities and demographic factors

Of the 143 participants, more than half (58%) regularly participated in CPD activities. The association between demographic characteristics and participation in CPD activity was examined by using a Chi-square test for gender and level of education, and Fisher's exact test for age, working area, employment status, area of specialization, working hours and working experience. The Fisher's Exact test was statistically significant for age ($p=0.031$), working area ($p<0.001$) and working experience ($p=0.008$). The Chi-square test was not statistically significant for both gender and level of education, $X^2(1, N= 143) -0.089, p=0.765$ and $X^2(2, N= 143)-1.647, p=0.439$ respectively. Hence, we concluded that there was no association between gender and level of education with participation in CPD.

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors limiting and influencing, attitudes, perceptions on benefits in CPD activity and relationship between demographic characteristics and level of participation in CPD activity among physiotherapists in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

The results showed that a significant percentage of physiotherapists had positive attitudes toward CPD. The objective and importance of CPD as a way of advancing their profession were also known to the physiotherapists in this study. Majority of the participants were young adults aged 20 to 39 years old with one to five years of experience working in this profession. In response to that, young adult may focus on the desire to continue their training (Bello & Lawson, 2013) and learning to gain as much experience as they can.

However, some of the study participants find it difficult to implement CPD changes into practise and are unsure about it. This is due to time constraints to implement new technique with increasing number of patients day-by-day (Dharmagunawardene et al., 2019). Almost half of the participants also disagree that CPD only useful to physiotherapist who works in academic. Previous study by Al Mutlaq et al. (2017) stated that CPD not only for academics but also for other professional bodies. This is because learning is about developing skills and being a better person in addition to getting academic knowledge.

The second finding that knowledge exploration are the most common benefits perceived after CPD activity participation among physiotherapist is consistent with most of the previous studies (Dharmagunawardene et al., 2019; Manley et al., 2018; Panthi & Pant, 2018; Ramli & Maslan, 2015; Stewart et al., 2020). Specifically, the present study discovered that CPD allows one to keeping up to date with knowledge and skills, which can allow for acquisition of new information and recognition of practise. According to Bindon (2017), CPD strives to maintain and enhance existing knowledge and competence, therefore strengthening the professional characteristics of healthcare personnel, future employability, and capacity to do the present job.

The main factor that influences participation in CPD activities among physiotherapists is to increase professional knowledge. Increasing professional knowledge would enable physiotherapist to give quality care to patients. As we can see the demand for quality, accountability and efficacy of practice has highlighted the need for professionals to demonstrate that they are keeping abreast of new knowledge, developments and techniques related to the professions (Ahuja, 2011). Hence, if employers recommend training programmed for skill and knowledge enhancement, workers will spend more time engaging in CPD activities as they are desire to learn, but many of them lack the knowledge or confidence to tackle the training material. However, the main factor that limits participation in CPD activities is time constraint. This is consistent to a previous study from Chong et al. (2011) who also stated that time constraints is a factor limiting practitioners' availability to attend CPD as it will impact rural practitioners, practitioners working in limited staff environments, private employees and those who need to attend CPD away from their communities (Penz et al., 2007 & Gould et al., 2007).

The findings for whether there was a link between demographic characteristics and level of participation in CPD activity among physiotherapists revealed that there were strong positive association between age, working area and year of experiences and level of participation in CPD activities. The present study indicates young adult between 20 to 29 and 30 to 39 years are more interested and regularly participated in CPD activity. The previous study findings are also not surprising, since Pool et al. (2013) found that their study participants (over 50 years) were less likely to engage in CPD activities than their younger colleagues. Some studies found that older workers were less willing to invest in learning and training (Van Vianen et al. 2011) and to improve their working skills and qualification (Pillay et al. 2006) compared to younger workers.

Our study revealed that more than half of physiotherapists in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor work in private hospital or centre followed by government hospital. However, government physiotherapist is more likely to participate in CPD activity compared to private staff. This might be because

the government spends much more on learning and development than the private sector (Jewson et al., 2015). This contrasts with the findings of a recent research by Stewart et al. (2020), which found that physiotherapists working in the private sector are more eager to engage in CPD activities and experience more enjoyment and job satisfaction as they were given the opportunity to choose and perform CPD as and when it is suitable. In comparison to individuals working in government, where CPD may be motivated by service needs instead of individual interest (Stewart et al., 2020).

Other than that, working experience also had a significant relationship with level of CPD participation where the less-experienced workers (1-5 years) reported more participation in CPD activity. This is somehow consistent with previous study by Pool et al. (2013) who also demonstrated that working experience may help to increase level of expertise, which may affect workers' desire to participate in CPD. According to Kyndt et al. (2011), less-experienced workers were more motivated by personal and professional development as they wish to learn and progress in their professions, and they were curious about new things.

5. CONCLUSION

Most of the physiotherapists in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor demonstrated positive attitudes, perceptions, and active engagement towards CPD. The present study also identified the factors influencing and limiting participation in CPD activities. Majority of the study respondents perceived lifelong learning as part of what it means to be a professional and they felt sense of achievement and job satisfaction by undertaking CPD. Participants in this study also acknowledge that keeping up to date with knowledge or skills and increase motivation and understanding were the most beneficial aspect of CPD. Apart from that, this study showed that improving professional knowledge, to increase the profession and practitioner status were the most frequently cited factors influencing CPD participation. Time and financial constraints on the other hand were the most frequently cited factors limiting participation in CPD activities. Additionally, statistically significant relationship was found between demographic variables (age, working area and working experience) with CPD engagement.

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