

Perceptions on Community-Based Rehabilitation by Physical Therapy Alumni at Doña Remedios Trinidad Romualdez Educational Foundation, Inc.: A Qualitative Research Design

Jay Patrick A. Yulo¹, Kyle Andrew L. Go², Florell C. Enverzo³,
Roland A. Labarda⁴, Ralph Christian C. Batan⁵, Lance Antonn D. Chu⁶,
Dax Kevin Rey S. Go⁷, and Jester Migg Rolf A. Lobjrigo⁸,
Gwynth Kaye Sudario⁹, Edgar Thaddeus Tabuyan¹⁰, Jovan Velarde¹¹,
Rafael Babiano¹²

^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12}Department of Physical Therapy College of Biomedical Sciences, Doña Remedios Trinidad Romualdez Educational Foundation, Tacloban City, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study aimed to assess the perceptions of physical therapy alumni after participating in Community-Based Rehabilitation activities. Using phenomenological approach, data were analyzed from surveys and direct interviews with 10 participants from Doña Remedios Trinidad Romualdez Educational Foundation, Inc. (DRTREFI), Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines, who were selected to gain deeper understanding of their perceptions and experiences with community-based rehabilitation. Participants included physical therapy alumni from 2019 to 2020 batch of Doña Remedios Trinidad Romualdez Educational Foundation Inc., who have worked in at least two barangays, managed three different patients, and gained over two months of experience in community-based rehabilitation (CBR). Study narratives revealed the importance of creativity in patient care. Through participation in community-based rehabilitation (CBR), participants developed a critical approach to managing their patients. After participating in community-based rehabilitation, physical therapy alumni became more open, sensitive, and mindful of their actions towards the community. This experience helped them better relate to the struggles of their patient, thus improving their initial perceptions of the patient-Physical Therapy relationship and enhancing their approach to providing health care in the community.

Keywords: Community Based-Rehabilitation, Alumni, Perception

Introduction

The Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program is a holistic approach aimed at addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities by integrating rehabilitation services within the community [1]. Unlike institution-based rehabilitation, which reaches only a small fraction of those in need, CBR focuses on promoting positive societal attitudes toward people with disabilities, providing effective services, and

ensuring accessibility to information and support. The world bodies promoted it as an approach suitable for developing countries with limited resources to provide broader coverage of services [2]. Physical therapists play a crucial role in CBR, requiring flexibility, innovative thinking, and a wide range of skills to effectively contribute to the CBR outcomes that include increased independence, improved mobility, and enhanced social participation [3].

In Tacloban City, only a few schools promote community service, community-based rehabilitation, and students willing to serve. Along this aspect, researchers deemed it proper and necessary to examine how physical therapist alumni can help improve the quality of life of people with disabilities utilizing the CBR strategy in Tacloban City. The study aimed to assess the perceptions of physical therapy alumni who have participated in CBR activities, focusing on various aspects such as content provided in coursework, health promotion, intra-professional practice, and engagement in rural communities. Anchored on Gregory's Constructivist Theory by Démuth [4], the study sought to understand how personal experiences, beliefs, and attitudes influence the perception of CBR among physical therapy alumni.

Findings of the study were expected to benefit various stakeholders, including students, clinical instructors, institutions, communities, and future researchers. Students can gain a deeper understanding of CBR as a subject and develop essential skills for their future careers. Clinical instructors can evaluate the effectiveness of their teachings, while institutions can ensure that their students meet high learning standards. The community can benefit from improved involvement in supporting and enhancing CBR programs, addressing health issues within their communities. Finally, the study will serve as a reference for future research endeavors in understanding the perceptions of physical therapy students towards CBR. Physical therapists play a crucial role in CBR, requiring flexibility, innovative thinking, and a wide range of skills to effectively contribute to the CBR outcomes that include increased independence, improved mobility, and enhanced social participation.

Methods

Study Design

Researchers utilized the phenomenological approach to examine the perceptions of Physical Therapy alumni who underwent community-based rehabilitation. The research was approved by the Ethical Committee with the ERC Protocol No. 2023-009.

Participants

In this study, all 52 Physical Therapy alumni were initially selected. After a survey, participants willing to be interviewed were chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Physical Therapy graduates of Doña Remedios Trinidad Romualdez Educational Foundation Inc, from 2019 to 2020 batch.
2. Experience in a total of 2 or more barangays.
3. Handling of 3 different patients.
4. Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) experience for 2 months or more.

These criteria ensured the selection of suitable participants to provide meaningful insights. Ultimately, 10 participants were chosen for the focused interview.

Sample Size

Researchers used purposive sampling, selecting participants based on specific qualities. This method, also

known as judgment sampling, involves choosing individuals who can provide valuable information due to their knowledge or experiences [5].

Interventions

Researchers established a questionnaire checklist & performed pilot testing. The questionnaire was validated by the head of the Physical Therapy Department and then were distributed to the participants in a form of a survey. The researchers explained to the respondents the importance of their response to the study and requested the respondents to answer with all honesty. Focused interview utilized guide survey questions along with probing questions to dig deeper into the experiences and perceptions of the PT alumni after participating in community-based rehabilitation. Set A questions were focused on CBR perceptions. On the other hand, Set B questions were focused on how they view rural areas after participating in CBR while the Set C section was focused on the abilities they learned after

Statistical methods

Researchers highlighted insights and perceptions, categorizing individual experiences into general patterns through thematic analysis. Emergent codes facilitated data grouping, which was extensively analyzed from transcribed recordings and questionnaire data. Transcriptions were kept separate for comparison, and similar statements were grouped to identify common themes. Data cleaning involved spot-checking, eyeballing, and logic checks to ensure accuracy. Themes were derived from participant statements, with interpretations linked back to specific statements.

Results

Table 1. Main themes and sub themes to know the perceptions of PT alumni towards their profession.

Major Themes	Sub Themes
Perception in Coursework	Community awareness Improvise when it comes to materials. Community needs
Role of Health and Promotion	Awareness of PT Emphasize importance of healthcare
Perception in Interprofessional Manner	Enhance decision making skills. Professional approach

Table 2. Main themes and sub themes to know the perceptions of PT alumni in the community.

Major Themes	Sub Themes
Perceptions in providing health care in rural community	Community awareness Improvise when it comes to materials. Community needs
Perceptions in the community after attending CBR	Awareness of PT Emphasize importance of healthcare

Table 3. Main themes and sub themes to know the perceptions of PT alumni towards their experiences.

Major Themes	Sub Themes
Ways to improve CBR	Coordination with LGU
Difficulties during CBR	Transportation/Service Weather
Success during CBR	Improvement of patient

There were eight major themes that were gathered and interpreted that highlighted the perceptions of PT alumni towards community-based rehabilitation. Eight major themes are perception in coursework, role of health and promotion, perceptions in interprofessional manner, perceptions in providing health care in rural community, perceptions in the community after attending CBR, ways to improve CBR, difficulties during CBR, success during CBR.

These eight major themes emphasized perceptions of PT alumni in 3 categories: first is towards their profession, that focused on how community-based rehabilitation provided awareness, resourcefulness & community awareness (Table 1). Second is towards the community where empathy & being considerate evoked a change in perception in how they view the rural community (Table 2). Third is towards their own experience in how difficulties, success in the community developed into ways to improve CBR (Table 3).

Discussion

PT alumni’s perception of coursework after attending CBR is motivated by the awareness of PT, improvising materials, and addressing community needs. This experience helped them to become aware of what Physical therapy is since they were able to experience to use their creativity as PT when there is a lack of appropriate materials to use in treatment. In participants’ perception of the role of PT in health and promotion, answers were motivated by awareness of PT, emphasizing the importance of healthcare. In terms of interprofessional manner, the perceptions of the participants were divided into two sub-themes. One was referring to enhancing their decision-making skills, through participation in CBR critical skills were sharpen especially in handling their patient. This just not refers to what treatment to imply but also how to handle them with regard to the patient-professional relationship. This correlates in the study of Epstein, where he mentioned that one of the most important variables to consider for a good outcome is the relationship in the care process [6]. On the other hand, the professional approach which refers to participating through CBR, the participants developed a skill on how to have a good interprofessional relationship [7].

Regarding PT alumni’s perceptions of providing healthcare in rural communities, participants highlighted their empathy, sensitivity, and mindfulness in handling a patient. This inspired the participants to deliver high-quality care in underprivileged and distant places. In the study by Peterson, to accommodate each person’s particular requirements, values, and preferences more successfully, physical therapists cultivate a self-reflection practice characterized by openness and humility [8]. As ways to improve CBR and successes during CBR, participants disclosed that providing convenient access to physical therapy is essential through coordination with the local government unit. Concerning difficulties, transportation and location became the major problem in reaching and delivering quality care throughout the CBR in the rural areas. Additionally, the weather was the second problem that the PT’s faced, especially with heavy

rains affiliating with the concern about the road when going to the communities, making the travel difficult and dangerous. As stated by Chan & Ryan, weather has been highlighted as a perceived obstacle to involvement in physical activity [9].

Participation and interactions with the community gave a whole new change in how the respondents see CBR. Starting with their insights on how patient improvement and satisfaction made them feel that their CBR mission was successful, Lowe et al. [10], rehabilitation significantly improves patients' quality of life by increasing physical activity and participation in activities of daily living (ADLs), alleviating distressing symptoms and enhancing perceived independence.

This study limits its coverage on Physical Therapy Alumni in Doña Remedios Trinidad Romualdez Educational Foundation Incorporation only. Its main purpose of the study focused only on perception of these alumni after participating in Community-based Rehabilitation. In addition, due to stringent guidelines of the research criteria, the participants were limited to 10 only.

Conclusion

After participating in community-based rehabilitation, physical therapy alumni became more open, sensitive, and mindful of their actions towards the community. This experience helped them better relate to the struggles of their patient, thus improving their initial perceptions of the patient-Physical Therapy relationship and enhancing their approach to providing healthcare in the community.

Disclosure

The authors certify no conflict of interest with any financial organization regarding the materials discussed in the manuscript.

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