



EXPLORING UNDERGRADUATE REHABILITATION STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN FIELD EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

Background: Field experiences are essential components of undergraduate rehabilitation education and training, offering students opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world settings. However, success in these experiences can be hindered by various challenges and barriers.

Objective: The objective of this study was to explore undergraduate rehabilitation students' perspectives and advice on strategies for successful field experiences.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 270 undergraduate rehabilitation students at five major universities/Colleges of Lahore. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions related to demographic information, completed field experience placements, confidence in navigating challenges, and perspectives on successful strategies for field experience placements.

Results: The majority of participants were female (53.7%) and in their third or fourth year of study (60.0%). Most participants (87.0%) had completed a field experience placement and were confident in navigating challenges during these placements. Communication with other professionals was identified as the most significant challenge by participants, and attending orientation sessions, seeking mentorship, and using time management techniques were identified as effective strategies for success.

Conclusion: This study highlights the importance of field experience placements in undergraduate rehabilitation education and training. The challenges and strategies identified by participants can inform the development of educational programs and resources that can better prepare students for successful field experiences. These findings can ultimately contribute

to the improvement of undergraduate rehabilitation education and training.

Keywords: undergraduate rehabilitation students, field experience placements, challenges, strategies, communication, mentorship, time management.

INTRODUCTION:

Field experiences are an essential component of undergraduate rehabilitation programs as they provide students with an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge and practical skills in a real-world setting. These experiences allow students to learn about the complexities of rehabilitation work and develop the necessary competencies to succeed as rehabilitation professionals. By working in real-world settings, students gain practical experience and learn how to apply their knowledge and skills to address the challenges that arise in rehabilitation work (1-3).

However, field experiences are not without their challenges. Students may encounter various obstacles during their placements, such as communication difficulties, challenges in working with other professionals, or unexpected situations. It is important for students to be able to navigate these challenges successfully to make the most of their field experiences. Students who can successfully navigate the challenges they encounter during their field experiences are likely to have a more rewarding and enriching experience (4, 5).

Field experiences are an integral part of undergraduate rehabilitation programs, providing students with an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge and practical skills in a real-world setting. These experiences help students to develop the necessary competencies to succeed as rehabilitation professionals. However, the success of field experiences depends on several factors, including the

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students' ability to navigate various challenges that may arise during the placement (6, 7).

One of the significant challenges that students face during their field experiences is related to the communication and collaboration with other professionals. Rehabilitation professionals often work as part of an interdisciplinary team, which requires effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Therefore, students need to be able to navigate these complexities to succeed in their field experiences (8, 9).

Another challenge that students face during their field experiences is related to the development of professional identity. Field experiences provide students with an opportunity to develop their professional identity, which involves understanding their role in the rehabilitation team and the broader healthcare system. However, this process can be challenging, particularly for students who are new to the field (10, 11).

To overcome these challenges, undergraduate rehabilitation students can employ various strategies. For instance, students can use reflective practices, such as journaling, to help them process their experiences and develop their professional identity. Students can also seek mentorship from experienced rehabilitation professionals, which can provide them with guidance and support as they navigate their field experiences. Additionally, students can develop their communication and problem-solving skills by engaging in interprofessional education activities and simulations (12, 13).

This study seeks to explore undergraduate rehabilitation students' perspectives on successful strategies for field experiences. By doing so, it aims to provide insight into the approaches and strategies that have been most effective in helping students to navigate the challenges they face during their field experiences. Understanding these strategies can help rehabilitation programs to design better field experiences for their students, prepare students to be more effective in their placements, and ensure that students get the most out of their field experiences (14, 15).

In addition, this study can also contribute to the broader conversation around the importance of field experiences in the education and training of

rehabilitation professionals. By identifying successful strategies for navigating the challenges of field experiences, this study can help to reinforce the importance of these experiences in the development of rehabilitation professionals (16, 17).

Overall, this study is essential as it seeks to understand undergraduate rehabilitation students' perspectives and advice on strategies for successful field experiences. By doing so, it can provide valuable insights into the approaches and strategies that have been most effective in helping students to navigate the challenges they face during their field experiences. This knowledge can help rehabilitation programs to design better field experiences for their students, prepare students to be more effective in their placements, and ensure that students get the most out of their field experiences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Study Design and Participants:

This study was a cross-sectional survey-based research conducted at five major universities/Colleges of Lahore including the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Superior University, Avicenna Medical College, Riphah International University, The University of Lahore. The study included undergraduate rehabilitation students who had completed at least one field experience placement. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants. A total of 270 participants were included in the study.

Inclusion Criteria:

Undergraduate rehabilitation students enrolled University/College, who are currently enrolled in or have completed at least one field experience placement.

Participants who are willing to participate in the study and have provided informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria:

Students who are currently on a leave of absence or have a documented disability that prevents them from completing field experience placement.

These inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure that the study sample is representative of undergraduate rehabilitation students who have completed or are currently enrolled in field experience placement. The inclusion criteria require that



participants have completed at least one field experience placement, as this ensures that they have sufficient exposure to the challenges and opportunities presented by such placements to provide informed perspectives on successful strategies. Similarly, the exclusion criteria aim to exclude participants who may not be able to provide informed perspectives on the study topic

DATA COLLECTION:

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire that consisted of two sections. The first section collected demographic information such as age, gender, and year of study. The second section collected information about the participants' perspectives on successful strategies for field experiences. The questionnaire was developed based on a review of the literature and pretested with a small group of undergraduate rehabilitation students.

DATA ANALYSIS:

SPSS version 26 was used for data analysis. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results were presented as frequencies, percentages, and means.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University/College. The participants were informed about the study's purpose and procedures, and their informed consent was obtained before their participation in the study. The participants' confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout the study.

RESULTS

Section 1: Demographic Information

Demographic Information	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-21	75	27.8%
	22-25	105	38.9%
	26-30	65	24.1%
	Over 30	25	9.3%
Gender	Male	120	44.4%
	Female	145	53.7%

	Prefer not to answer	5	1.9%
Year of study	First year	45	16.7%
	Second year	60	22.2%
	Third year	85	31.5%
	Fourth year	80	29.6%
Completed field experience placement	Yes	235	87.0%
	No	35	13.0%
Confidence in navigating challenges during field experience placement	Not at all confident	5	1.9%
	Slightly confident	15	5.6%
	Moderately confident	65	24.1%
	Very confident	135	50.0%
	Extremely confident	50	18.5%

The majority of participants were between 22-25 years old (38.9%) and female (53.7%). Most participants were in their third or fourth year of study (31.5% and 29.6%, respectively) and had completed a field experience placement (87.0%). The majority of participants (68.5%) were moderately to extremely confident in their ability to navigate challenges during field experience placements.

Section 2: Perspectives on Successful Strategies for Field Experience Placements

Strategies for Field Experience Placements	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Most significant challenges	Communication with other professionals	75	27.8%
	Time management	35	13.0%
	Learning to use new equipment or technology	50	18.5%
	Dealing with unexpected situations	65	24.1%

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	Other (please specify)	45	16.7%
Preparation for field experience placements	Attend orientation sessions	70	25.9%
	Review materials provided by the university	75	27.8%
	Review relevant coursework	60	22.2%
	Other (please specify)	65	24.1%
Effective strategies for navigating challenges during field experience placements	Communication with other professionals	85	31.5%
	Time management techniques	55	20.4%
	Reflective practices, such as journaling	40	14.8%
	Seeking mentorship from experienced professionals	60	22.2%
	Participating in interprofessional education activities	30	11.1%
	Other (please specify)	20	7.4%
Communication and collaboration with other professionals during field experience placements	Regular meetings with other professionals	100	37.0%
	Email	70	25.9%
	Phone	45	16.7%
	Text messaging	30	11.1%

The most significant challenges reported by participants during field experience placements included communication with other professionals (27.8%), dealing with unexpected situations (24.1%), and learning to use new equipment or technology (18.5%). Preparation strategies for successful field experience placements included reviewing materials

provided by the university (27.8%), attending orientation sessions (25.9%), and reviewing relevant coursework (22.2%). Effective strategies for navigating challenges during field experience placements included communication with other professionals (31.5%), seeking mentorship from experienced professionals (22.2%), and using time management techniques (20.4%). The majority of participants reported that they communicate and collaborate with other professionals during field experience placements through regular meetings (37.0%), email (25.9%), and phone (16.7%).

DISCUSSION

The results of first section provide insight into the characteristics of undergraduate rehabilitation students who participated in this study. The majority of participants were between the ages of 22-25, which is consistent with the typical age range of undergraduate students (18). Additionally, the majority of participants were female, which is also consistent with the field of rehabilitation sciences (19). The fact that most participants were in their third or fourth year of study indicates that they had some level of experience with field experience placements. This experience may have influenced their perspectives and advice on strategies for successful field experiences. The high level of confidence reported by participants in their ability to navigate challenges during field experience placements is encouraging, as it suggests that they feel well-prepared for these experiences (20, 21).

The results of second section provide insight into the challenges and strategies that undergraduate rehabilitation students perceive as important for successful field experience placements. The finding that communication with other professionals was identified as the most significant challenge by participants is consistent with previous research in the field. Effective communication is essential in healthcare settings and is particularly important for interprofessional collaborations (22). The strategies for preparation and effective navigation of challenges reported by participants, such as attending orientation sessions, seeking mentorship from experienced professionals, and using time management techniques, are also consistent with previous research (23, 24). The fact that regular meetings with other professionals were reported as the most common mode of communication and collaboration is encouraging, as it suggests that students are engaging in



interprofessional collaboration, which is an important aspect of healthcare practice (25).

These findings highlight the importance of field experience placements in the education and training of undergraduate rehabilitation students. The challenges and strategies identified by participants can inform the development of educational programs and resources that can better prepare students for successful field experiences (26).

This study aimed to explore the perspectives and advice of undergraduate rehabilitation students on strategies for successful field experiences. The results of this study provide valuable insight into the challenges and strategies that students perceive as important for successful field experience placements. The findings suggest that effective communication with other professionals, time management, and dealing with unexpected situations are the most significant challenges faced by undergraduate rehabilitation students during field experience placements. The most common strategies for preparation and effective navigation of challenges included attending orientation sessions, seeking mentorship from experienced professionals, and using time management techniques (27, 28).

Future research can build on these findings by exploring the perspectives and experiences of other stakeholders involved in field experience placements, such as field supervisors and patients/clients.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the challenges and strategies perceived as important by undergraduate rehabilitation students for successful field experience placements. Effective communication, time management, and dealing with unexpected situations were identified as significant challenges, while attending orientation sessions, seeking mentorship, and using time management techniques were the most common strategies for success. These findings can inform the development of educational programs and resources that can better prepare students for successful field experiences and ultimately contribute to the improvement of undergraduate rehabilitation education and training.

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