

The Impact of Gender on Professional Development activities among the Academic Staff of Health Sector Faculties in University of Gezira



Medical Science

KEYWORDS :

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ABSTRACT

Professional development sustains staff competence through continuing improvement of knowledge, skills and performance. Notable improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of continuing professional development (CPD). The aim of this study was to assess the impact of gender on professional development activities among the academic staff of health sector faculties at Elrazi campus in University of Gezira. It was a descriptive exploratory, cross-sectional, study including all the academic staff of health sector faculties at Elrazi campus in University of Gezira. Questionnaire was designed to include, personal data, interest and motivation for CPD. Questions about different activities of CPD were included, e.g. number of courses or workshop being attended, research conduction over the past four years, reading of scientific journals and publishing of scientific papers and facilitation of these activities. It was found that, almost all teachers (96%) were interested in CPD. Over half (53%) of the academic staff attended more than 6 courses or workshops about CPD. Only 45% of the staff read scientific journals regularly. There were significant differences in reading scientific journals regularly and publishing scientific papers between males and females, with P-value of 0.005, and 0.00 respectively. CPD can succeed only in settings, or contexts, that support it. Commitment and support from administrators is vital for success of CPD activities.

INTRODUCTION

Professional development (PD) is defined as “the process of improving staff Skills and competencies needed to produce outstanding educational results for students”. (Golding, 2006). Educators must keep abreast of the important advances that are occurring in education. Additionally, professional development is increasingly seen as a systemic process that includes the development of all individuals involved with student achievement from the superintendent to the teaching assistants. (Golding, 2006). UNESCO's aim in the field of staff development is to promote co-operative and innovative action so as to strengthen the quality and relevance of higher education, both now and in the coming year. (Jennifer et al, 1994). The need for continuous professional development (CPD) is well recognized the challenge is how to make it effective. Career development efforts for adult learners are more likely to succeed if they are responsive to the learners' needs, offered at convenient times, and provided in a variety of forms. (Miedzinski, 2001). Currently, there is a growing interest in considering how best to assist the learning for professional occupations across universities worldwide. This interest is arising from the increased emphasis within higher education institutions on programmes that aim to prepare students for specific occupational outcomes usually for the professions, and growing expectations that these graduates will be job ready and able to engage in and move smoothly into effectively practicing their profession. (Billett, 2011). University of Gezira began its path exploring problems of society, training professional cadre capable of utilizing the potential of the rural areas of Sudan and conduct basic and applied scientific research to serve the rural community, if, CPD is supported by faculties this can impact health by aligning the curriculum with community needs and develop strong cadre of community health workers and hence patient benefits. In addition there had been little specific re-

searches into the facilitators and barriers for engagement with continuing professional development. The aim of this study was to identify to what extent the academic staff, of health sector faculties of Gezira University, currently performs two distinct activities of CPD: attending courses/workshops; and research and to evaluate the impact of age, gender and motivation upon the extent to which academic staff engaged in PD activities.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study was conducted in health sector faculties of Gezira University in Wad Medani city, (Elrazi campus) Gezira State, Sudan, about 180 Km, south east of Khartoum, during the period of September 2014 to February 2015. Gezira University, is the second governmental university in Sudan, it was established in the year 1975 with four faculties, to serve the community. It is descriptive, exploratory, cross-sectional study. The Study Population was the academic staff of health sector faculties at Elrazi campus, (Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy, Applied Medical Sciences, Medical Laboratory Sciences and Dentistry). The academic staff of faculty of dentistry consists of two associate professors, seven assistant professors and seven lecturers. Faculty of applied medical sciences has two associate professors, ten assistant professors and ten lecturers. Faculty of Medicine has 18 professors, 18 associate professors, 24 assistant professors and four lecturers. Faculty of Pharmacy has one professor, two associate professors, eight assistant professors and eight lecturers. Faculty of Medical Laboratory Sciences has academic staff consisting of 20 members, two associate professors, five assistant professors and 13 lecturers. The total number of academic staff in all health sector faculties at Elrazi campus was 141 members during the study period. All academic staff members of health sector faculties at Elrazi campus were included in this study. The total number of the academic staff from health sector faculties who responded

to the questionnaire and contributed to this study was 80, with response rate of 55%. Semi-structured questionnaire was sent to all academic staff in health sector faculties at Elrazi campus. The questionnaire was designed and validated. Questions were divided into specific domains of interest including academic staffs demographics; interest in CPD and motivation to CPD courses or work-shops, different activities regarding CPD like attendance of courses or work-shops, reading of scientific journals, conduction of researches, and cause of promotion. The SPSS statistical programme using Microsoft Windows 16.0 was used to process and analyze the data from the questionnaire. For clearing the data and check up variables, descriptive statistic was used; extreme values were removed from further analysis adjustment. Descriptive statistic was also used for cross tabulation and chi square test was used for analytic comparison between two variables for statistical difference and this was assessed by calculation and interpretation of the P-Value. A P-Value of less than 0.05 was statistically significant.

RESULTS

The sample of study population consisted of 80 members of the academic staff of health sectors of Gezira University, during the period of September 2014 to February 2015. This represents the respondents' teachers out of 141, (response rate was 55%).

Table (1) Demographic Data of the study population.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (years)		
31 – 40	37	47
41 – 50	19	23
51 – 60	17	22
More than 61	7	8
Gender		
Male	49	61
Female	31	
Marital status		
Married	74	92
Single	6	8

57% (46) teachers had children at school age.
 54 (68%) teachers have or had administrative position while 26 (32%) had not.
 96% (77) of teachers were interested in continuous professional development.

Figure (1) Attendance of courses or workshops about CPD

Figure (2) Reason for motivation to have CPD workshops/ courses

Thirty six, (45%) of the academic staff used to read scientific journals regularly.

Table (2) Correlation of gender & administration position Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.038 ^a	2	.002
Likelihood Ratio	12.341	2	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	11.420	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	80		
a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .39.			

P-Value = 0.002 (statistically significant)

Table (3) Correlation of gender & motivation to have CPD Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.510 ^a	4	.033
Likelihood Ratio	10.600	4	.031
Linear-by-Linear Association	.570	1	.450
N of Valid Cases	80		
2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.88. P-Value = 0.03 (statistically significant)			

Table (4) Correlation of gender and reading of scientific journal

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.034 ^a	1	.005		
Continuity Correction ^b	6.776	1	.009		
Likelihood Ratio	8.290	1	.004		
Fisher's Exact Test				.006	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.933	1	.005		
N of Valid Cases ^b	79				

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.13.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

P-Value = 0.005 (statistically significant)

Table (5) Correlation of gender & publishing of scientific papers

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.343 ^a	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	20.025	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.038	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	76		

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.76.

P-Value = 0.00 (statistically significant)

Discussion

The current study provided information about the activities of the academic staff of health sector faculties. University of Gezira, in the field of professional development and it showed correlation of gender to different activities of CPD. The total number of the academic staff participated in this study was 80, 61% were males and 39% were females. The majority (47%) were in the age group 31-40 years. 92% were married (table 1) and 57% had children at school age. Almost all teachers (96%) were interested in CPD, and this means that the academic staff liked to be up to date in the field of professional development. Over half of the academic staff (53%) attended more than 6 courses or workshops about professional development, while only 4 teachers (5%) in the study population never attended a course or workshop about professional development, (fig.1). This result indicated that, the academic staffs were keen to attend workshop and courses about CPD. In the study which was carried out by Wilbur K, among pharmacists in Qatar in 2010, he found that 75% attended live local educational programmes in the past two years. (Wilbur K, 2010).

The most important reason for motivation to have professional development courses was to obtain qualification in 36% of the teachers, and this can be explained by the fact that, the majority of the sample size were young group lecturers, the second

reason was interest in 20% , the third reason was promotion in 19% of the staff members ,and 12.5% of teachers were motivated to get experience to go abroad.(fig.2). This was similar to the results of a study conducted by Anne' O'Donne, for the academic staff in Liberty college in Ireland, where personal development was the prime motivation in 40% of teachers. (O'Donohue, 2006).

Regarding reading scientific journals regularly only 45%; of the staff read scientific journals regularly, this is in contrast to the study carried out by Bcuk, D, and Newton in United Kingdom where 87% of the doctors in the study read scientific journals regularly.(Bcuk, D, Newton T, 2002). It was also unlike the results of the study performed in 2008, by McNicholl MP, et. al in Northern Ireland, in NHS Trust, they found that a significant number read health care journals. (McNicholl MP,et al. 2008). This result indicated that scientific journals might not be available in the library for the staff, in addition only approximately half of the staff had internet services at their offices.

Regarding the impact of gender and engagement in different professional development activities, there was no significant difference; in interest in continuous professional development between males and females academic staff, P-value 0.26, it was observed that all females included in this study were interested in CPD.

There was significant difference between males and females in this study regarding administrative position, P-value 0.002, (table 2), this may be explained by family responsibilities in females and work-overload.

No significant difference in the number of courses and workshops in CPD, between males and females, P-value 0.75.This meant that females' academic staff was careful as males to promote themselves in their profession. This was, unlike the result of the study carried out by Bcuk, D, and Newton in United Kingdom; where they found that, attendance at postgraduate dental courses was related to being male. (Buck D, Newton T. , 2002)

There was significant difference in motivation to have professional development courses between the two genders P-Value 0.03, (table 3); where 40% of male academic staff included in this study where motivated to have these courses or workshop to obtain qualification while only 26% of female staff were motivated to obtain qualification, and the same percentage (26%) of female academic staff were motivated to enjoy the social engagement during the course. On the other hand only 4% of male academic staff was motivated to enjoy social engagement.

No significant difference in research conduction over the past four years, between males and females' academic staff. P-value was 0.166. The explanation for this might lie in the fact that, despite their household responsibilities, females were keen to promote themselves.

It was observed from this study that, there were significant differences in reading scientific journals regularly and publishing scientific papers between males and females, with P-value of 0.005, and 0.00 respectively (tables 4 &5). It was obvious, that, females read less and had fewer publications than male, although there was no difference in research conduction. This might be due to extra female duties and responsibilities at home, in addition to other barriers facing them towards reading and publishing of scientific papers.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Almost all academic staff members in this study were interested in continuous professional development and attended courses or workshops about professional development and these courses were facilitated by the university. There was significant

difference between males and females in this study regarding administrative position, motivation to have PD courses, reading scientific journals regularly and publishing of scientific papers. Each staff member should have an individual professional development plan to ensure effective professional development and training. Further studies are recommended to highlight problems facing continuous professional development programmes with suggested strategies for solutions.

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