



Investigating Membership in the Mississippi Occupational Therapy Association (MSOTA): Perspectives of Recent Graduates of the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC)

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this descriptive quality improvement (QI) project was to investigate the recruitment and engagement within the Mississippi Occupational Therapy Association as perceived by the recent graduates of the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC).

Methods: This QI investigation used an appreciative inquiry approach to collect qualitative data. Semi-structured phone interviews collected data surrounding the perceptions of recent graduates towards MSOTA.

Results: Fourteen recent graduates from the UMMC Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program were interviewed; eleven of the fourteen were included in the results. These interviews revealed information about the perceived benefits, deterrents, recruitment, and engagement of the new graduates within MSOTA. The following themes emerged with regards to each primary aim: education, networking, resources, and advocacy (benefits); cost, time, and unawareness (deterrents); awareness, opportunities, community and staying in the know (recruitment); and opportunities, networking, access for all and new graduate transitions (engagement).

Conclusion: With this knowledge, MSOTA can consider strategies to better facilitate recruitment and engagement of recent graduates. There is limited research available surrounding membership, recruitment, and engagement within occupational therapy organizations. Although the results of our investigation provide useful insights to the methods that can encourage membership recruitment and engagement, we acknowledge that additional research should be done to further the understanding of the perspectives recent graduates hold concerning membership in their state level occupational therapy organization.

INTRODUCTION

Professional organizations play a crucial role in the community of practice by providing opportunities to the members who share a common purpose and commitment to that purpose (Farina et. al, 2016; Hughes et al., 2016; Rowley et al., 2020). The Mississippi Occupational Therapy Association, MSOTA, was established in 1976 and has been continually committed to the advancement and safeguard of occupational therapy in the state of Mississippi (MSOTA, n.d.). The occupational therapy practitioner membership rate within the state of Mississippi is currently 13.24%. MSOTA currently has a total of 444 members which is made up of 41.4% OT practitioners and 58.6% OT students (MSOTA, n.d.). Membership rates are dependent upon the relationship between benefits and deterrents within professional organizations (Farina et. al, 2016; Burns,1973; Adebo-Adelaja, 2019). Entry level therapists are an important asset because they bring fresh ideas, new energy, grow the organization's representativeness, and replace members who have retired from practice (Reyes & Brown, 2018). The research points to a gap in understanding the perspectives of new graduates regarding membership within MSOTA.

PRIMARY AIMS

- Primary aim I:** Identify the awareness of the benefits offered by MSOTA for new graduates
- Primary aim II:** Identify deterrents of membership in MSOTA for new graduates
- Primary aim III:** Suggest preferred methods of recruitment to target new graduates for membership in MSOTA
- Primary aim IV:** Suggest preferred methods to facilitate engagement of new graduate members of MSOTA

RESULTS

Figure 1: Deterrents to New Graduates Membership

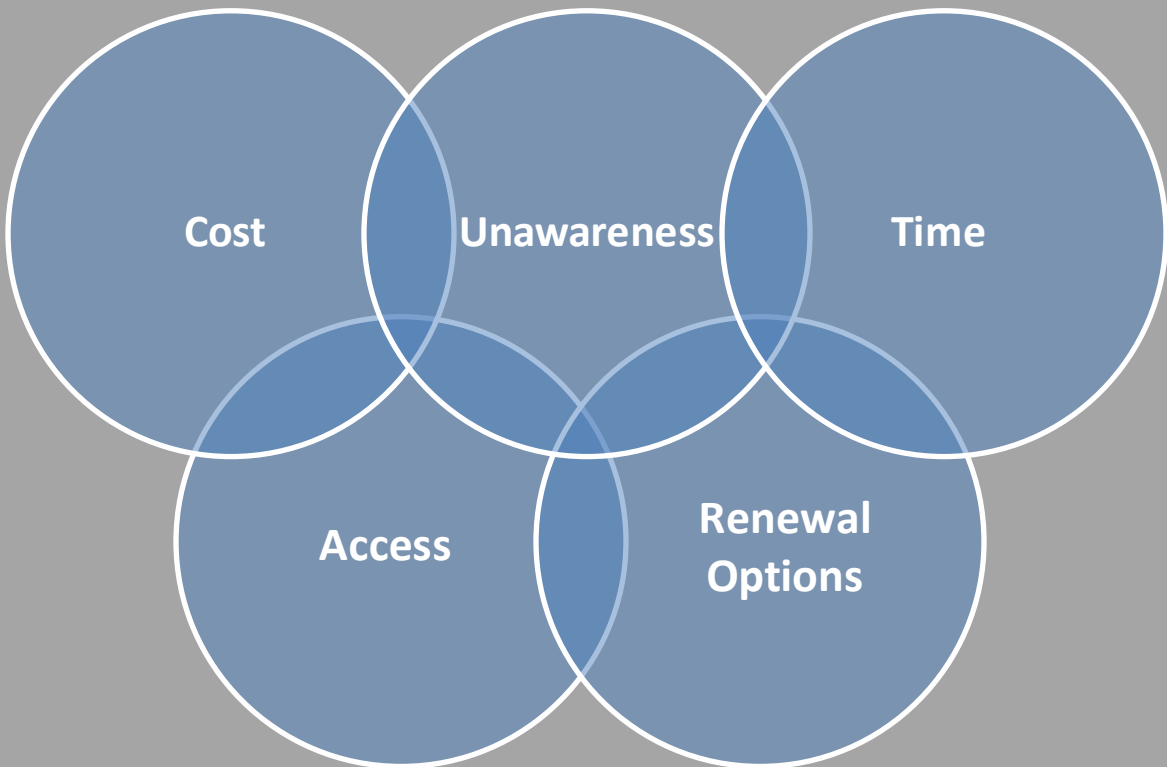


Table 1: Suggestions to Facilitate Recruitment and Engagement of New Graduates

Opportunities	“price being cheaper...discounted rate” (NG14 Participant). “Maybe a payment plan or something [for membership fees]” (NG 4 Participant).
Awareness	“email blast...whenever you’re getting close to needing to renew [MSOTA membership]” (NG 14 Participant). “maybe just something for retaining [MSOTA] members could be... send out an email that tells when the membership is about to end” (NG 5 Participant).
Access	“I [new graduate] would say the virtual stuff just because life is so crazy. Maybe even prerecorded lectures...you could play back at a different time” (NG 7 Participant).
Community/ Networking	“more social media presence...I [new graduate] think that could go a long way connecting with members. Some people are more likely to absorb info on their Facebook page rather than their email.” (NG 5 Participant).
Transitions	“Just time and availability. Like, especially being a new grad just trying to balance learning how to be an OT in the real world. Sometimes it can just be hard managing that and try to be involved in the state and national organization at the same time.” (NG 5 Participant).

LIMITATIONS

- Lack of generalizability secondary to small sample size
- Recent graduates from schools other than UMMC were not included
- Use of original interview questions
- Potential non-response bias due to narrow timeline to complete survey and schedule interviews
- Researcher oversight during creation of initial RedCap survey

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This quality improvement project used an appreciative inquiry approach to collect qualitative data.

Study Participants: Fourteen occupational therapy practitioners who graduated from UMMC within the past three years were interviewed for this QI project; three of these interviews were excluded from the results due to not meeting the inclusion criteria of practicing within Mississippi.

Data Collection: Semi-structured phone interviews were utilized and recorded to collect data. Open ended questions were asked from an interview guide developed by the investigators.

Data analysis: Data was analyzed from transcribed phone interviews using the constant comparative method and hand coded to identify themes and subthemes.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the framework of appreciate inquiry, the results of this study have been translated into the provocative statements listed below:

- MSOTA will update their website to increase **awareness** of the benefits offered to occupational therapy practitioners.
- MSOTA will offer an automatic membership **renewal option** to increase membership renewal rates.
- MSOTA will increase their overall **online presence** by creating a social media platform.
- MSOTA will offer wider **access** to its members by offering both virtual and in-person meetings.
- MSOTA will host meetings in a greater number of **locations** throughout the state of Mississippi.
- MSOTA will work with the current **recruitment committee** to increase the efforts for reaching new graduates.
- MSOTA will offer **mentorship opportunities** for new graduates in MSOTA.
- MSOTA will provide **discounts** to its members for **learning opportunities**.
- MSOTA will provide opportunities for new graduates to become more **aware and involved** in state legislation.

CONCLUSION

There is very limited research available surrounding membership, recruitment, and engagement of recent graduates within occupational therapy organizations. With the knowledge gained of recent graduate's perspectives regarding membership, MSOTA can consider strategies to better facilitate engagement and recruitment of recent graduates. Although the results of our study provide useful insights to the methods that can encourage membership recruitment and engagement, we acknowledge that ongoing research should be done to increase the understanding of the perspectives various cohorts hold concerning membership in their state level occupational therapy organization.