Social representation of the kinesiotherapist profession

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Abstract

The scientific approach is focused on identifying the social representation of the profession of physical therapist referring to mental images of social reality to a group consensus meeting. The goal of research identifies social representation of the profession of physical therapist, on the premise that students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport have made a social representation of the profession of physical therapist in accordance with the description of the occupation of COR. Working method was based on the questionnaire. Interpretation of results, the first two items of the questionnaire was done through word association technique, developed by P. Verges (1) and an alternative method for determining the structure and organization of elements representation proposed by. C. Havârneanu (2). Qualitative analysis reveals that students' specialization Physical Therapy and Special Motricity believes that a therapist uses therapy as a strategy to work, and it must be applied professionally. Respondents considered, as shown in the data collected, that this profession is subject to skills, education, cognitive baggage, all sending to knowledge, experience and passion. The core refers to the complex representation obtained thanks cognitive process by which individuals or groups in familiar transforms abstract and it integrates knowledge of their system.

Key words: social representations, physical therapy, social dialogue.

Rezumat

Demersul ştiinţific se centrează pe identificarea reprezentării sociale a profesiei de kinetoterapeut care trimite la imaginile mentale ale realităţii sociale care întrunesc consensul unui grup. Astfel, obiectivul cercetării identifică reprezentarea socială a profesiei de kinetoterapeut, plecând de la premisa că, studenţii Facultăţii de Educaţie fizică şi Sport şi-au format o reprezentare socială a profesiei de kinetoterapeut, în acord cu descrierea ocupaţiei din C.O.R. Metoda de lucru a avut la bază chestionarul. Interpretarea rezultatelor, la primii 2 itemi ai chestionarului, s-a realizat prin intermediul tehnicii asocierii de cuvinte, elaborate de către P. Vergés (1) şi a unei metode alternative pentru determinarea structurii şi organizării elementelor unei reprezentări, propuse de către prof. univ. dr. C. Havârneanu (2). Analiza calitativă relevă că studenţii specializării Kinetoterapie şi motricitate specială consideră că un kinetoterapeut utilizează terapia ca strategie de lucru, iar aceasta trebuie aplicată cu profesionalism. Respondenţii consideră, aşa cum reiese din datele culese, că această profesie este subordonată abilităţilor, educaţiei, bagajului cognitiv, toate trimiţând la cunoaştere, experienţă şi pasiune. Nucleul central al reprezentării trimite la complexul obţinut datorită obiectificării (procesul cognitiv prin care indivizii sau grupurile transformă abstractul în familiar) şi-l integrează sistemului propriu de cunoştinţe.

Cuvinte cheie: reprezentare socială, kinetoterapie, dialogistică socială

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Social representations are "the product of our actions and communications" (3), the image that mediates the conflict between the strange, hostile reality and ourselves. The creator of social representations sees them as a system of values, notions and practices related to objects, as aspects or dimensions of the social environment that allow him to understand the material space and to adjust his behaviour and language by the new variable. Actually, they are constructs mirroring reality and bringing to focus the events in individuals' groups; they are metaphors allowing us to get the unknown closer and to turn abstract into familiar. Social representations can be mental images of social reality that meet the consensus of a group.

Though S. Moscovici (3) failed to describe the new concept clearly, for good reasons (theory development), the supporters of social representation have attempted to identify its characteristics in various manners. "The notion of social representation denotes a form of social knowledge, a conceptualisation of common sense, which contents show the operation of generative processes and socially marked functions. Social representations must be studied articulating affective, metal and social elements… " (4). In the same sense, A. Palmonari and W. Doise (5) posit that social representations can be dual, because they present a side of the image and one of the meaning: each image can be ascribed a meaning and each meaning an image. The action through which the social actor accesses common meanings consists in exploring the unknown real universe, emerged as terror caused by ignorance and turned into the will for knowledge. The product (social representation) outlines an analogy between image and fund.

In this sense, our investigation focuses on the profession of kinesiotherapist, with good reputation on the labour market and targeted by high-school graduates. Social space is made of images, and social actors propagate the information, which circulates under various forms, thus acquiring certain features. The Order of MMFPS no. 1.832/2011 – approval of Classification of Occupations in Romania, occupation level MO 561/ 08.08.2011, no. 226405 – defines the kinesiotherapist as the college-graduate specialist who provides kinetic assistance with prophylactic, therapeutic and medical recovery character (the last with doctor's prescription).

This investigation will show the concordance between the job description from the perspective of the Ministry of Labour and from that of students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport.

Research objective

The objective of this research is to identify the social representation of the profession of kinesiotherapist.

Research hypothesis

Students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport have a certain social representation of the profession of kinesiotherapist, in agreement with the C.O.R. job description.

Research sample

This study comprised 48 students from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, "Al. I. Cuza" University Iaşi. In the table below, I present the number of students and the year when the research took place.

Method

The questionnaire was applied during the seminars of the discipline Psychomotricity (Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, specialization: Kinesiotherapy and special motricity).

Students were ensured of confidentiality, and I asked them to fill in the questionnaire in a personal manner.

For the first two items of the questionnaire, I interpreted the results through word association technique, developed by P. Verges (5) and an alternative method for determining the structure and organization of elements representation proposed by. C. Havârneanu (1). For the first technique, I used occurrence frequency and mean occurrence ranks; for the second, I used occurrence frequency and mean importance ranks. The formula for the last technique is as follows:

> Social representation indicator = occurrence frequency X mean of ranks

Procedure

To process the data of word association question-nnaire (the first two questions to identify representation, targeting the occurrence of terms

and their importance), I used the table technique by Vergés (1) and an alternative method, elaborated by Prof. C. Havârneanu (2), PhD. P. Vergés' theory of associativity was based on occurrence frequency and mean occurrence ranks. I centralized these data in a four-compartment table. Elements with high occurrence frequency and high occurrence rank (under a certain threshold) will be considered the core. Those with low occurrence frequency and low occurrence rank will be situated, most probably, at the periphery of social representation. For the second technique, I used occurrence frequency and mean importance ranks; cross-referenced and introduced within a graph, they will delimit – through the indicator obtained – the core and the peripheral elements.

Associativity technique

After applying the word association technique, the content analysis found 79 different occurrences that also comprised synonyms or words with a very similar meaning for each specification. The next step was to group terms by categories (Table no. 1), for the social representation of the profession of kinesiotherapist to suggest all opinions on this matter.

By applying the technique of prototypes and categories elaborated by P. Verges (Fig. no. 1), I was able to identify the core system and the peripheral system of social representation of the kinesio-therapist profession.
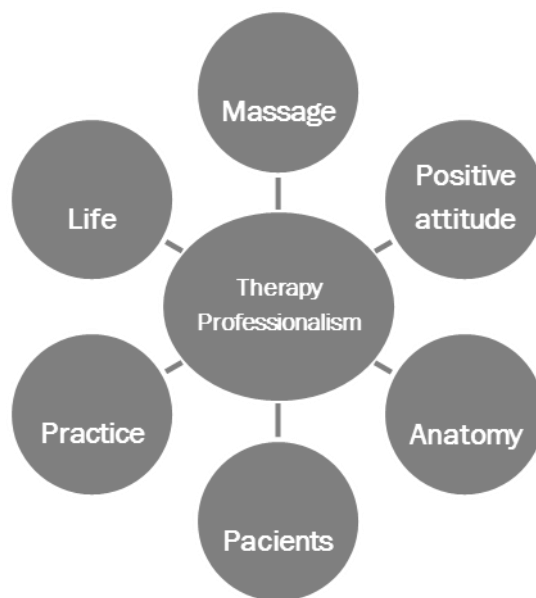
Findings and discussions

Figure 1. Graphic representation of the profession of kinesiotherapist

Basic indicators were occurrence frequency and mean rank, combined as follows: on vertical, I placed frequency, while on horizontal, occurrence order. A convenient value was selected to separate elements with high frequency and mean occurrence rank (u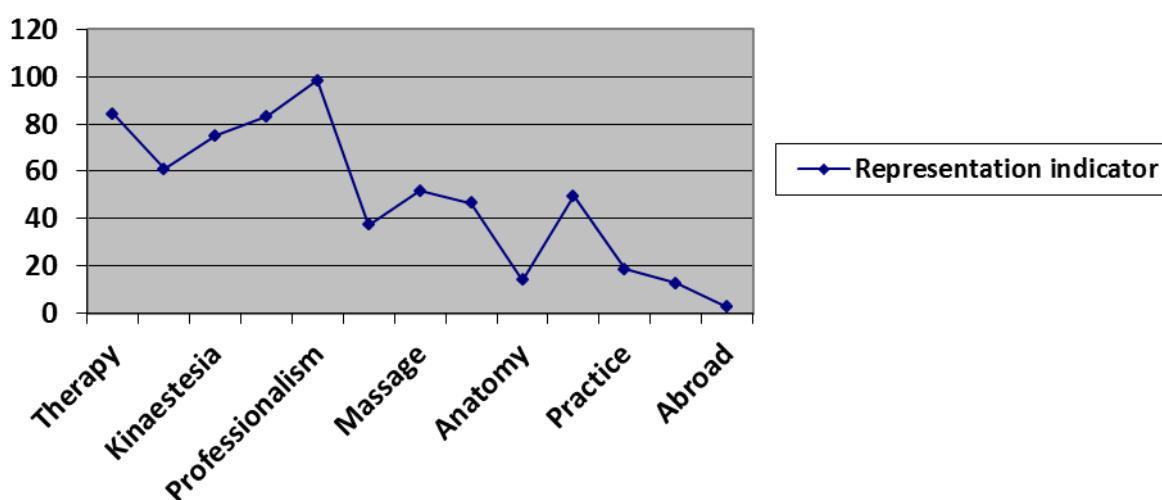nder a certain threshold) from the content of the other three cells. The upper left cell of the table comprises elements with highest possibility of being central, while the lower right one – where frequency is under the threshold and the occurrence rank is low – features peripheral elements (Table no. 2 and Graph no. 1).

Table 1. Categories of social representation of the kinesiotherapist profession

Categories	Frequency	Occurrence rank	Importance rank	Mean of ranks	Representation indicator
Therapy	32	2.59	2.68	2.63	84.32
Teamwork	21	2.84	2.96	2.9	60.9
Kinaesthesia	25	3.12	2.88	3	75
Passion	25	3.33	3.33	3.33	83.25
Professionalism	39	2,6	2,45	2.52	98,28
Assistance (support, help)	16	2.57	2.09	2.33	37.28
Massage	16	2.85	3.6	3.22	51.6
Positive attitude	16	3	2.8	2.9	46.4
Anatomy	4	3.5	3.5	3.5	14
Patients	16	3.04	3.14	3.09	49.44
Private practice	6	2.83	3.33	3.08	18.48
Life	3	4.33	4	4.16	12.49
Abroad	1	2	3	2.5	2.5

Table 2. Social representation of the profession of kinesiotherapist, according to P. Verges' technique

		Occurrence rank	
		Lower than or 2.6	Higher than 2.6
Frequency	Higher than or 20	Therapy Professionalism	Team work Kinaesthesia Passion Massage
	Lower than 20	Assistance (support, help) Abroad	Massage Positive attitude Anatomy Patients Private practice Life

Graph 1. Technique of social representation indicator (C. Havârneanu)

Conclusions

Qualitative analysis has shown that students at Kinesiotherapy and special motricity believe that the kinesiotherapist uses therapy as working strategy, and that it should be applied with professionalism. Respondents considered, as shown in the data collected, that this profession is subjected to skills, education, cognitive baggage, all related to knowledge, experience and passion. The core of the representation is related to the complex obtained due to objectification (cognitive process through which individuals or groups turn abstract into familiar) and it integrates it to the personal knowledge system. In the first phase of elaborating the social representation of the profession of kinesiotherapist, subjects choose the information part circulating in the society; they personalize it and transform it according to their traditions, culture and group history, thus becoming independent from the environment, from the context that created it, which makes it adaptable and intelligible. This "nucleus", "core" or central "system" (as it was coined throughout the evolution of this theory) becomes concrete.

The central system – featured here by the words *massage, positive attitude, anatomy, patients and private practice* – plays an important role in determining the consistence of social representation. It relates to group homogeneity, to historical, cultural, ideological conditions and to social values. The peripheral system is organized around the central system, and it plays the role of mediator between the core and a real situation where the representation manifests itself. The goal is to protect, to mitigate external pressures and to allow the representation to acquire identity. The peripheral system elements are related to those of the central system; they represent the essential part of representation content, the dynamic, living part of the entire system. In the same sense, it fulfils the following functions: concreteness (it expresses the subjects' experience and reality in real terms), regulation of representation depending on the evolving context and defender of the central system.

It is apparent that the central system highlights memories, group history and its traditions, while the peripheral system comprises the individual experiences and histories.

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