

OT Professional Event Reflection Paper

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OT-562-C: Personal Transformation II

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April 13, 2025

Attending the AOTA national conference in Philadelphia this past weekend was a thought-provoking and inspiring opportunity that I was lucky enough to experience. The event provided an opportunity to observe the dedication of professionals in the field and reflect on my own intentions for future professional involvement. Using the Theory of Planned Behavior learned throughout this course as a framework, I can analyze how this experience has influenced my attitudes, perceptions of subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in relation to professional commitment.

The conference significantly shifted my attitudes toward professional involvement. Witnessing experienced occupational therapists passionately discussing advancements in the field, sharing research findings, and advocating for the profession made me realize the importance of active participation. The enthusiasm and commitment of the presenters highlighted how professional involvement improves growth and innovation within the field. I left the event with a better appreciation for the role of conferences and professional associations in advancing practice standards and improving client outcomes.

Before attending, I viewed professional involvement as a concept that only applied to advanced practitioners. However, the welcoming environment and the willingness of experienced OTs to engage with students altered that perception. I now believe that participation in events like the AOTA conference is accessible and valuable, even as a student. This shift in attitude has increased my intention to attend similar events in the future and consider opportunities for contributing to the field beyond clinical practice.

The conference also deepened my understanding of the subjective norms within the OT profession (Ajzen, 1991). I observed that many practitioners dedicate their time to volunteering

and supporting the advancement of OT. Their commitment to mentoring, presenting research, and advocating for policy changes demonstrated a strong sense of professional responsibility within the OT community. Through conversations with attendees, I realized that professional involvement is viewed not only as a career enhancement but also as a responsibility in the field (DeJuliis, 2017). This shared expectation encourages practitioners to give back and contribute to the ongoing development of OT. While not all OTs are actively involved in professional associations, those who are involved often serve as role models. Recognizing this, has improved my passion to engage in similar activities and gain a sense of responsibility towards the growth of the profession.

My perceptions of perceived behavioral control were also influenced by this experience (Ajzen, 1991). Initially, I believed that engaging in professional activities would be challenging due to time constraints and lack of experience. However, attending student-oriented sessions and networking with other students revealed accessible opportunities for involvement. Learning about virtual conferences, student membership discounts, and local chapter events reduced my perceived barriers. Additionally, hearing from practitioners who successfully balance clinical work, research, and volunteer roles showed that active participation is manageable with proper time management and prioritization. This realization has empowered me to view professional involvement as an achievable goal rather than an intimidating obligation.

As I reflect on this experience, I feel a strong sense of motivation to remain involved in the OT community. I plan to become a member of the state OT association where I work and explore opportunities to attend future conferences or education events. Participating in advocacy efforts and supporting initiatives that promote the profession's growth has become a personal

goal. Furthermore, I recognize the ethical and political implications of low membership and involvement in state and national associations. Without active participation, the profession risks losing its collective voice in policy-making and resource allocation (Walder et al., 2022). Supporting these organizations ensures that OT continues to evolve and maintain its presence in healthcare advocacy.

Overall, attending the AOTA national conference has positively influenced my attitudes, perceptions of subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control regarding professional involvement. This experience has inspired me to actively participate in the OT community and contribute to its continued development. I now understand that my involvement matters, not only for my personal growth but also for the advancement of the profession as a whole.

References

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