

Finding Value that Matters: Investigating Librarians' Attitudes toward Continuing Professional Development Pursuits

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Abstract

This paper primarily investigates the librarian's attitude in their participatory decisions when it comes to their continuing professional development (CPD) engagements, which would eventually contribute to their learning and relevance as a library and information professional. Since quite a number of local research gave focus on competencies, kinds and benefits of CPD pursuits, the intention of the paper is for librarians to look beyond the material and legalistic benefits of CPD initiatives and opportunities, especially in light of the ASEAN economic integration. Using the concept of adult education learning, the study attempts to examine the values librarians attach to determine their professional and personal learning direction. Results of the study point towards understanding the respondents' conscious efforts in their professional upkeep and how they value CPD participation to further develop their expected learning outcomes. It is anticipated that the study will have potential contribution along with the current efforts to strengthen CPD programs in the Philippines.

Keywords: continuing professional development, attitudes, values, participation

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Introduction

Learning and capacity building do not start and end in the university. While structured education lays the foundation for learning, continuous learning results to higher level of competencies in order to further develop the expertise in one's chosen field and branch out to other fields of interest. Competencies could be acquired by engaging oneself in learning venues to keep oneself current.

Professional development is a continuous process, hence, for as long as a professional desires for meaningful learning, there is no end to the process. To obtain new knowledge, a professional has to seize all learning opportunities from both formal and non-formal education, expanding the possibility of deepening professional expertise (Stan, Stancovici, & Paloş, 2013). For librarians, whose roles have transcended the traditional information service, engaging in professional learning activities has become a necessity, especially since the field integrates the latest developments in technology and information literacy, affecting the information seeking behaviors of today's library users. These trends are drivers that require adaptation to the changing times, such that "the availability of relevant and accessible continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities has never been more urgent for librarians, and the survival of the profession depends on the willingness of its members to engage with these opportunities during their working lives and to keep ahead of the curve" (Corcoran, Mcguinness, Smeaton, & Davis, 2014, p. 176). Staying relevant is key to professional effectiveness.

Attitude Towards Learning

Lifelong learning is the essence of continuing education. One continues to acquire the needed skills and knowledge because the environment and culture around him changes and has to stay competent. Moreover, continuous learning develops into the most significant means of improving one's quality of life (Ayfer & Gunay, 2015). To stay relevant, librarians should realize that learning is not just about professional advancement, i.e., earning credit units and renewing the license every 3 years. It is about harnessing learning in every nature of the learning opportunity there is available for one's professional development. Attitude towards learning is important as this will underline one's participation decisions in continuing professional development pursuits.

A number of related studies were conducted regarding attitude towards continuing education learning. Ayfer & Gunay (2015) performed a validity on the Turkish version of the Adult Attitudes toward Continuing Education Scale (AACES) using factor analysis. Boeren (2011) found out that most participants in adult education in her study illicit a more positive attitude towards learning and that non-participants who have intentions to participate scored higher on the attitude scales. In their study on the modeling participation intention of adults, Ming Lau and Chen (2012) concluded that positive and negative attitudes, normative belief and motivation to comply served as indicators to participation intention in continuing education. Stan, Stancovici and Paloş (2013) conducted a relationship study between the teachers' attitude toward

continuing professional training vis-à-vis their resistance to change, revealing that older teachers tend to attribute greater importance to CPD compared to their younger counterparts with less teaching experience.

Adult Education Learning in CPD

While library professionals understand the significance of professional advancement in one's career, a deeper sense of understanding on the importance of learning behind every CPD activity one engages in is another challenge.

Incorporating adult education concepts are seen as ways to inculcate meaningful learning whenever a librarian plans to undertake or participate in a CPD engagement. In a literature review gathered by Attebury (2015), *andragogy*, or how adults learn best (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2011), explains that adults would prefer to participate in activities where they see practical use of their learning and that are drawn from real-life, on-the-job experiences. Perhaps learning will be appreciated more when librarians see the value of the new information they will obtain from a seminar or training based upon their situation at work. This will also lead them to becoming self-directed in their learning. Another is the concept of *transformational learning*, which involves learning as one transitions or evolves roles, as learning takes place in phases. This would develop the learner from within, changing his behavior and attitudes as he goes on to learning new things.

LIS profession in the Philippines

For one to become a library and information professional in the Philippines, a 4-year Bachelor's degree or a 2 to 3-year Master's degree in Library and Information Science (LIS) is a pre-requisite. To date, there are 68 schools in the country offering the LIS degree program. There is no Doctors program on LIS yet in the Philippines, however, quite a few Filipino librarians have earned their PhD in related schools or faculty of information studies abroad.

After earning the degree and the candidate would like to pursue a career in librarianship, professional certification is required. Republic Act 9246, which is the *Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003*, mandates an LIS graduate to take and pass the Librarian's Licensure Exam, otherwise, he/she cannot be hired nor be able to practice librarianship, especially in academic libraries, where these libraries are subject to periodic accreditation. Upon passing the exam and after registry before the government's Professional Regulation Commission (PRC; the office responsible for regulation and licensing of professionals in the country), the professional is given his/her license in a form of an ID - much like a driver's license, but a license to practice the profession.

However, the practice of librarianship does not end with the license. A librarian is expected to keep himself current in the field by educating oneself continuously, which is every professional's obligation to self and his stakeholders. In order to ensure this, a librarian seeks out learning opportunities for professional development from various professional societies offering

continuing education activities, or resorts to becoming a self-directed learner to manage one's own learning.

The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Law and Program

In July 2016, Republic Act No. 10912 (2016) known as the *Continuing Professional Development Act of 2016* was enacted into law. The law was promulgated to specifically strengthen the CPD programs of every profession in the country, so as to ensure the upgrade of the skills and competencies of a professional; likewise making their qualifications internationally at par, enabling professional mobility in light of the ASEAN economic integration (through the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement). It also directed for the creation of a CPD Council per profession, who is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of its CPD programs.

In Section 10 of this RA, it was also emphasized that CPD is a mandatory requirement for all regulated professions, which is especially crucial in the renewal of the professional license ID in order to continue with the practice of the profession. In its revised implementing guidelines (Resolution no. 2016-990, 2016), details for the crediting of CPD units for every CPD activity engaged in by a professional were elaborated.

With this development in the profession, librarians have taken a self-conscious effort to comply with the requirements of the law. However, the primary intention of the law points towards continuous learning of the professional, in order to keep pace with the changes in the field, society and economy, being the country's best resource for national growth. Learning should therefore be prioritized as the primary gain, over and above compliance, and it takes a positive attitude to value its importance.

Purpose of the Study

Given that there is an existing awareness among Filipino librarians about the CPD requirements to comply with, this study endeavors to capture the attitudes that influence their participation decisions, and how these would direct them to achieving their career-long learning pursuits. It also aims to look into the attributes they tend to value as they seek to engage in continuing education. Attitude and value attributes are contributing factors towards one's relevance as a library and information professional and learning appreciation.

This study seeks to find out the answers to these problem statements:

- What are the librarians' attitudes toward engaging in CPD activities?
- What makes them decide to participate?
- What values do librarians see in continuing education?

Scope and Methodology

The purposive sampling method was used to gather respondents for this study. To capture recent CPD experience, LIS professionals and practitioners who

undertook seminars, training-workshops and conferences given by Philippines-based professional library societies and alumni associations, who are also CPD providers, during the conference season from March to May 2016, were determined to be the would-be respondents of the study. Clearance was first obtained from six (6) professional groups, namely, the *Asosasyon ng Aklatan at Sinupan ng Diliman, Inc.* (AASDI), *Association of Special Libraries of the Philippines* (ASLP), *Philippine Association of Academic/Research Librarians, Inc.* (PAARL), *Philippine Normal University Library and Information Science Alumni Association* (PNULISAA), *Society of Filipino Archivists* (SFA) and *University of the Philippines Library Science Alumni Association* (UPLSAA), to access their participants' directories to obtain a sample. A total of 247 participants from the CPD activities organized by said professional groups were gathered, however, the list was filtered to exclude non-librarian participants.

A survey questionnaire was devised as instrument for this study. It was designed to cull data to correlate the respondent's profile with the 24-item participation attitudes and 12-item value attributes. Attitude attributes were partly based on Blunt and Yang's (2002) *Adult Attitude towards Continuing Education Scale* (AACES), however, indicators and statements were contextualized to adapt to the local LIS environment familiar to the subjects of the study. A five-point Likert scale was used to determine the level of agreement for attitude towards participation and learning and the level of importance for values attributed to CPD engagements, respectively. Participation background in formal and non-formal continuing education activities within the last 3 years (2013-2015) were also profiled.

The online questionnaire was sent out individually through email to all 247 prospective respondents for a period of 3 weeks in the month of June. Responses were recorded and analyzed using descriptive statistics for frequency and cross tabulations, and inferential statistics using the chi-square test.

Results and Discussion

At the end of the data gathering period, 128 responses (52% retrieval rate) were collected as valid data, where respondent demographics, participation background and attitudes and values toward CPD engagements, were analyzed.

Respondent Demographics

Table 1 profiled the age group of respondents and their position distribution in the library. In this table, younger-aged respondent librarians (20-29 years old) are largely part of library pool (16.4%), however, 7.8% of them are middle managers, and interestingly, one of them (0.8%) is a young, chief librarian. Middle-aged respondent librarians (30-39 years old) are generally coordinators/successors (25%), but with 8.6% of them being the chief librarian. Respondent librarians aged 40-59 years old are likewise coordinators/successors, however, librarians in the 50-60 and above age brackets are assuming chief library position. Seniority in terms of age is being considered in appointing top management and administrative positions.

AGE	POSITION IN THE LIBRARY						Total
	First level (team)		Middle management (supervisory)		Top management (chief)		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
20-29	21	16.4	10	7.8	1	0.8	32
30-39	8	6.3	32	25.0	11	8.6	51
40-49	5	3.9	14	10.9	2	1.6	21
50-59	6	4.7	7	5.5	6	4.7	19
60-above	1	0.8	1	0.8	3	2.3	5
Grand Total	41	32.0	64	50.0	23	18.0	128

Table 1: Age vs. Position in the library

Majority of the respondents are of permanent status, regardless of the type of library where they are employed; and a majority of them are employed in academic libraries (63.3%, see Table 2). Meanwhile, respondents of probationary status are apparent in academic and school libraries (3.9%, respectively).

Employment Status	Type of library								Total
	Academic		Public/Government		School		Special		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Contractual (i.e., renewable, time-bound)	3	2.3	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	4
Permanent	81	63.3	13	10.2	6	4.7	10	7.8	110
Probationary (i.e., being considered for permanency)	5	3.9	1	0.8	5	3.9	1	0.8	12
project based (part-time)	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Temporary	1	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Grand Total	91	71.1	15	11.7	11	8.6	11	8.6	128

Table 2: Employment status vs. Type of library

Table 3 describes the respondents' years in the profession, and their education and library position distributions. Respondents with 0-1 year experience are entry level librarians with bachelor's degree (n=4), with 1 assigned as a middle manager. For respondents who have been practicing for 2-5 years, majority are Bachelor's degree holders in all levels of management, with one even assigned as the chief librarian. Respondents who have been practicing for 6-10 years are generally middle managers with Master's degree (n=9), however, only Master's degree holders (n=3) in this career age are chief librarians. Librarians with career age 11-15 years are likewise middle managers with Master's degree (n=12), while chief librarians are also Master's degree holders (n=7). By career age 16 years and above, the number of Bachelor's degree holders at all management levels decreases as career age progresses.

Bachelor's degree holders with career age 2-5 years dominate entry level positions, while Master's degree holders dominate middle management positions from career age 6 years and above. There are Doctors degree holders who are middle managers with career age 11-15 years (n=1) and 21 years-above (n=3), respectively, and a top manager with career age 21 years-above (n=1).

Years in the profession	First level (team)			Middle management (supervisory)				Top management (chief)				Grand Total
	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Total	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctors degree	Total	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctors degree	Total	
0-1 year	4	0	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
2-5 years	13	3	16	8	2	0	10	1	0	0	1	27
6-10 years	5	2	7	2	9	0	11	0	3	0	3	21
11-15 years	1	2	3	8	12	1	21	2	7	0	9	33
16-20 years	3	2	5	2	7	0	9	0	2	0	2	16
21 years-above	1	5	6	2	7	3	12	0	7	1	8	26
Grand Total	27	14	41	23	37	4	64	3	19	1	23	128

Table 3: Years in the profession vs. Position in the library vs. Education

Participation Background

Respondents were inquired of their participation in formal and non-formal continuing education within the last 3 years (2013-2015).

Figure 1 shows the type of CPD engagements participated in by the respondents per age group. Among the offerings, on-site seminar has the most frequent participation by all respondents (n=128), followed by workshop (n=107), conference (n=95) and training program (n=84), respectively – all onsite. Online counterparts such as webinar, Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and virtual conference have low participation rate. Other types such as benchmarking and self-study were identified by a few. Meanwhile, respondents belonging to the 30-39 age group participated the most within the last 3 years.

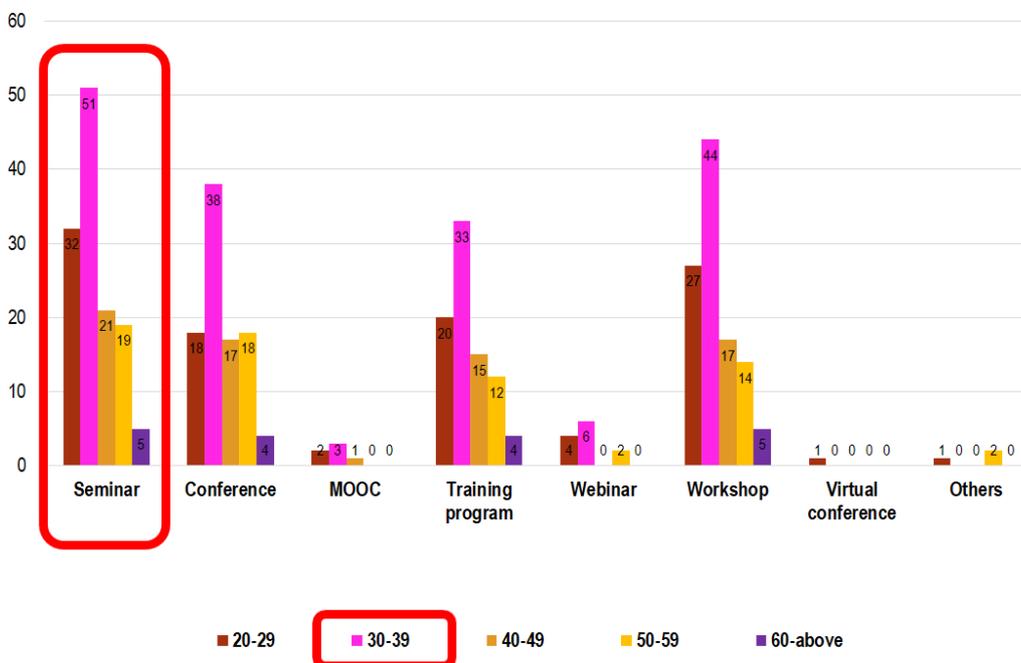


Figure 1: Type of CPD engagements per age group (Multiple responses allowed)

Respondents were asked how frequent do they participate in CPD engagements vis-à-vis their current employment status (see Figure 2). Seasonal participation, i.e., dependent on timing and/or availability of program offerings, emerged to be the most frequent (n=36), however, close to the same number of participants also indicated that they have participated thrice or more a year (n=35) and twice a year (n=33). Per employment status, respondents who are of permanent status has the most frequent participation (n=110).

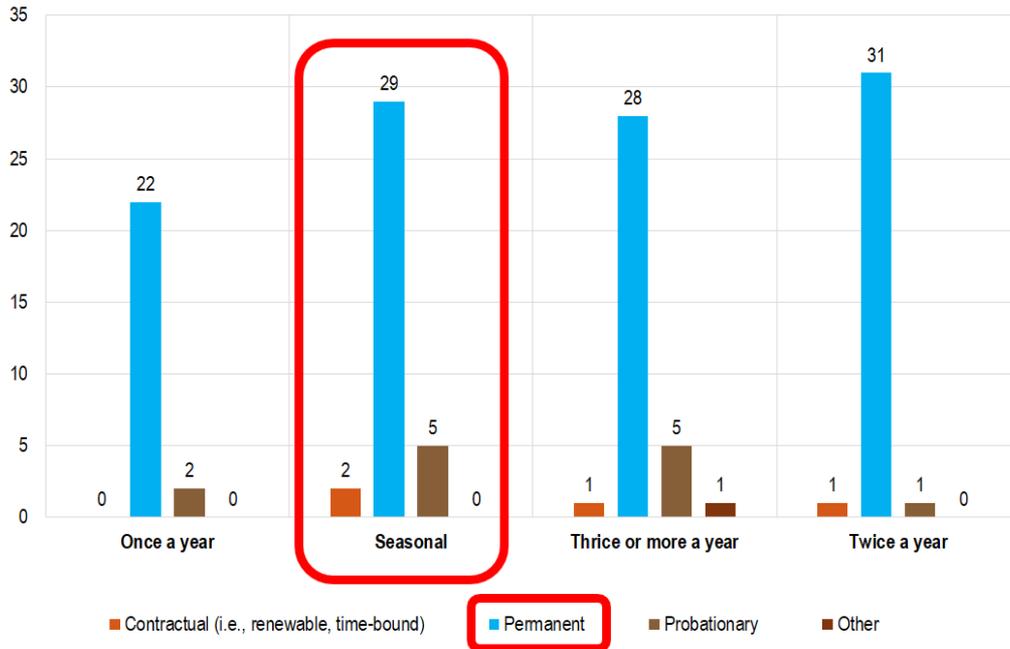


Figure 2: Frequency of Participation per Employment Status

Figure 3 compares the respondents' participation frequency vis-à-vis their position in the library. The numbers reveal the same participation rate (i.e., in this order: seasonal, thrice or more a year, twice a year, once a year), with the middle managers being the most frequent who participate.

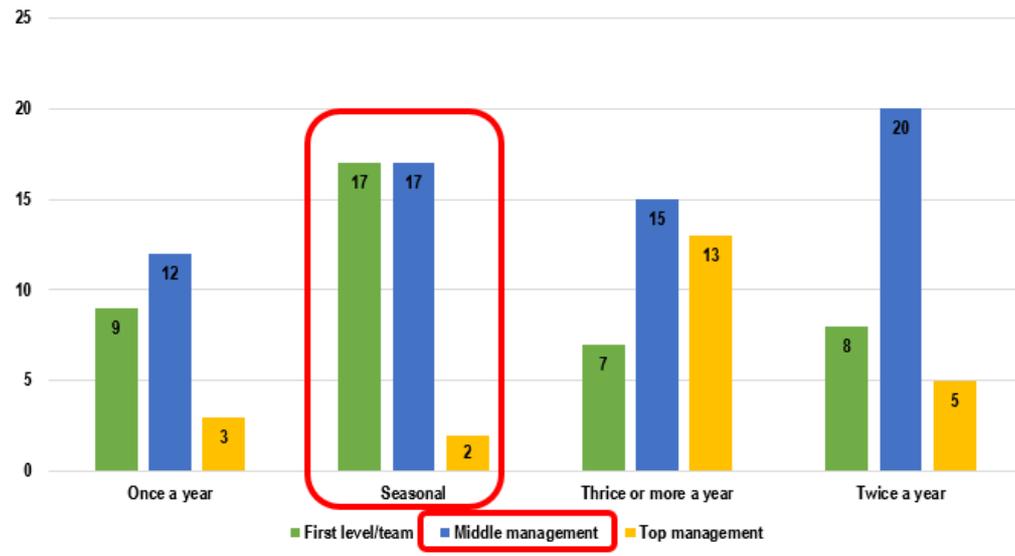


Figure 3: Frequency of participation per Position in the library

In terms of location of CPD engagements participated in (see Figure 4), respondents have generally participated in programs organized locally, within the Philippines (n=128), and those organized by their institutions/in-house (n=88). As per age group, respondents who are 30-39 years old are again the group who frequently participate in these engagements.

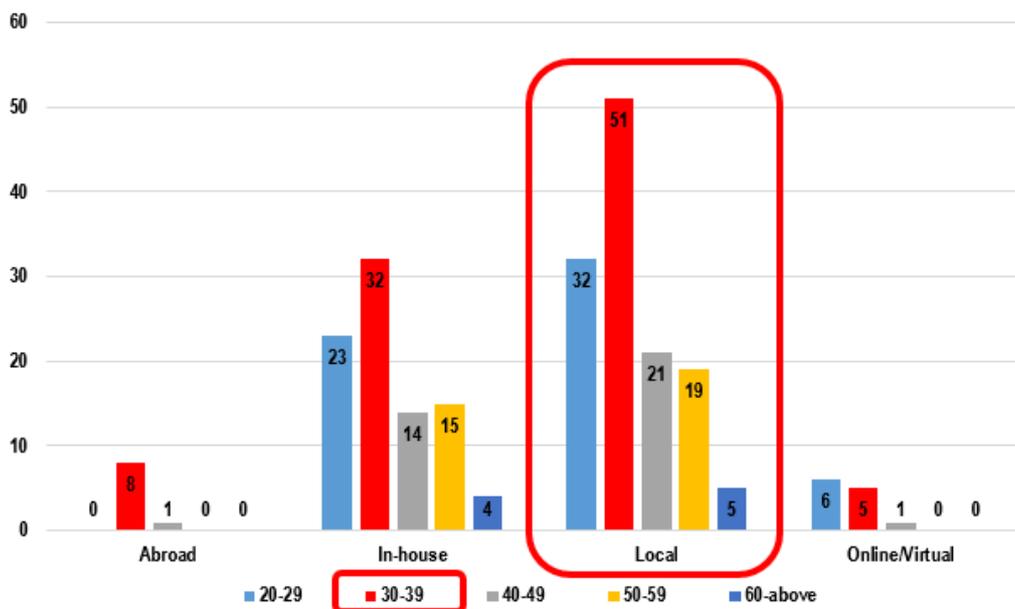


Figure 4: Location of participated CPD activities per Age Group (Multiple responses allowed)

Respondents were asked about the kinds of institutional support they receive when participating in CPD engagements (see Figure 5). The usual financial support received are those intended for registration fees, travel/transportation and accommodation costs. Meanwhile, there were 3 respondents who have signified to have received no support at all. Incidentally, these are librarians belonging to the 20-29 age bracket.

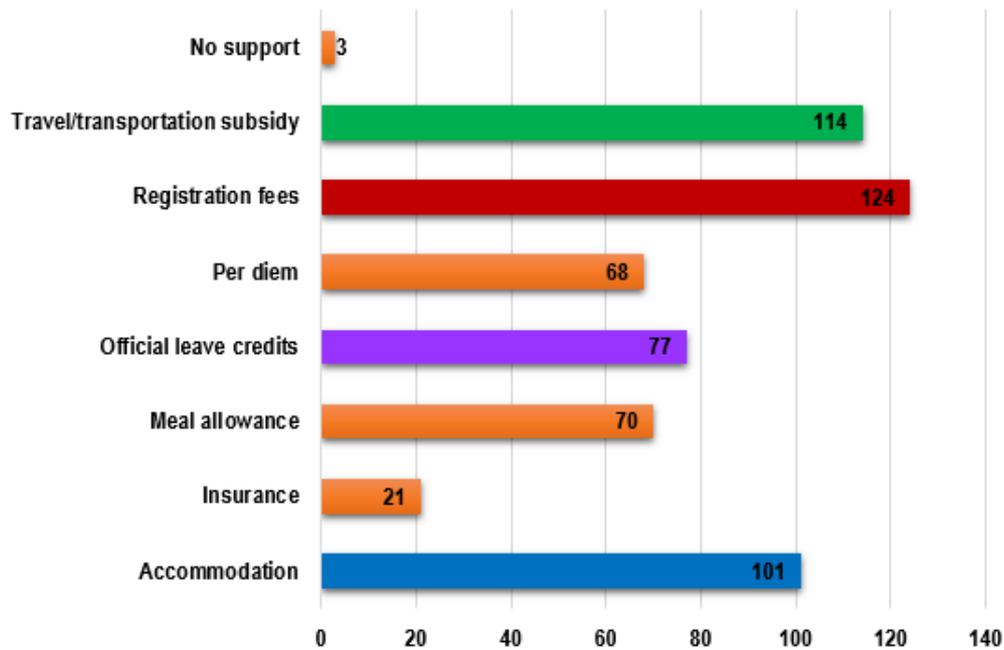


Figure 5: Types of Participation Support
(Multiple responses allowed)

Attitudes and Values Toward CPD Engagements

To begin analyzing the attitudes and values, independent and dependent variables were initially identified. The following were the *independent variables*: (1) Age; (2) Educational attainment; (3) Employment status; (4) Years in the profession; (5) Type of library where connected; (6) Position in the library; and (7) Frequency of participation in CPD activities. On the other hand, attitudes (denoting benefits, importance, negative attitudes and intrinsic value) and value attributes of the CPD activities (Topic/theme, Content, Resource persons, Relevance, Location, Venue, Timing, Duration, Cost, Leisure, Organizers) were the *dependent variables*.

The overall mean of the participation attitudes (24 indicators) was obtained in order to determine the level of attitude towards CPD engagements of the respondents of this study, which turned out to be positive (at 3.62). As to the level of importance of the value attributes, 8 items were perceived as very important, with topic/theme, content and relevance emerging as the top priorities (see Table 4).

VALUE ATTRIBUTES OF CPD	Mean	Level of importance	Rank
Timing	4.37	Very important	8 th
Duration	4.41	Very important	7 th
Cost	4.6	Very important	5 th
Leisure	3.82	Important	11 th
Topic/theme	4.88	Very important	1st
Content	4.87	Very important	2nd
Speakers	4.74	Very important	4 th
Organizers	4.44	Very important	6 th
Location	4.19	Important	10 th
Venue	4.19	Important	10 th
Accommodation	4.27	Important	9 th
Relevance	4.81	Very important	3rd

Table 4: Level of importance of value attributes

The chi-square test was conducted to each independent variable against the 24 participation attitude factors to find out its level of association (see Table 5). Of the 7 independent variables, this table reveals that only **employment status** is highly associated with participation attitudes, with the highest chi-square value at 42.458 and p-value at <.01. It also has a strong relationship with attitudes, with the largest Cramer's value at .407. This implies that respondents consider participating in CPD activities as it greatly affects their employment.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	x-value	p-value	Cramer's V	Level of association
Age	5.021	0.755	0.140	-0.115
Education	1.008	0.909	0.063	-0.003
Employment status	42.458	0.000*	0.407**	-
Years in the profession	9.935	0.446	0.197	-0.083
Type of library where connected	1.303	0.972	0.071	-0.039
Position in the library	5.348	0.253	0.145	0.050
Frequency of participation in CPD activities	6.674	0.352	0.161	-0.002

*p-value is <.05, with <0.01 = highly associated

**Cramer's V maximum value = 1

Table 5: Association of independent variables and participation attitudes

The chi-square test was likewise conducted to each independent variable against the 12 value attributes. Among the independent variables, age, years in the profession and frequency of participation are associated with topic/theme, location, timing, content and relevance (see Table 6).

In this table, *age* is associated with topic/theme, location and timing with chi-square values of 9.726, 28.5 and 37.947, respectively. The p-values are less than .05, which indicate that there is a significant association between the variables. Meanwhile, the gamma values (i.e., the level of association) of -0.394 and -0.322 suggest a weak relationship between the respondent's age with topic/theme and location. While timing has the highest chi-square value and p-value, its gamma indicates no relationship, which signifies that age does not predict decision regarding the timing. This furthermore implies that the younger the age, the higher the level of importance is given to topic/theme, location and timing.

Years in the profession is significantly associated with topic/theme, with its chi-square value of 11.77, while its gamma value at -0.282 suggests a weak relationship. This indicates that respondents who are still young in the profession or lesser years in practice give higher importance level to topic/theme when it comes to CPD participation.

Frequency of participation is significantly associated with content and relevance of CPD activities, with chi-square values of 9.915 and 9.063, respectively, although its respective gamma values at 0.372 and 0.361 points to a weak relationship. This implies that respondents who participate in CPD activities once a year give higher level of importance to content of the CPD offering and its relevance to their field(s) of interest than those respondents who attend to CPD activities twice or thrice a year.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Value attributes	x-value	p-value*	Level of association
Age	Topic/theme	9.726	0.045	-0.394
Age	Location	28.5	0.028	-0.322
Age	Timing	37.947	0.002	-0.166
Years in the profession	Topic/theme	11.77	0.038	-0.282
Frequency of participation	Content	9.915	0.019	0.372
Frequency of participation	Relevance	9.063	0.028	0.361

*less than .05

Table 6: Independent variables and value attributes with significant association

Salient Findings

Data analysis revealed that the respondents' general attitude towards deciding to participate in CPD activities is positive. This favorable attitude is reflective of their desire for professional up keeping and learning.

Topic/theme, content and relevance of the CPD activity to one's current work assignment were highly valued by the respondents when deciding to participate. Interestingly, leisure opportunities that come with the CPD activity was also considered important.

Employment has emerged as the utmost consideration when deciding to participate in CPD activities. This has been likewise evident in the subjects' participation background within the last 3 years.

Results indicate that the younger age and professional bracket value the timing, content, relevance, location and topic/theme of the CPD activity more than the other aspects. This implies that those that are elder and in their senior years in the profession would not put so much value on said aspects when attending CPD activities.

Conclusion

The general positive attitude towards continuing professional development pursuits is expected, as librarians are well aware that there is compliance involved, especially if the librarian decides to practice the profession. Compliance to the law has become the initial reason for engaging in CPD activities. As therefore revealed in this study, tenure security, promotion or rank and file movements at the workplace were the more apparent motivators needing CPD as a pre-requisite, where employment status came out to have a strong relationship with participation attitudes. With the CPD now enacted into law, this new development in the profession will furthermore impose direct implications on their learning and participatory attitudes.

Valuing the topic/theme and content of a CPD engagement is a good indication that librarians see an opportunity to cultivate their learning in every CPD activity that they choose to participate in as they build their career in librarianship. It is important that this value be primarily seen as a priority and the positive attitude towards learning be therefore sustained throughout a librarian's practice as he/she progresses in his/her career or as he/she ages; not being reduced to merely looking into the legalistic and material benefits of a continuing education activity.

Considering the results of this study, CPD providers, i.e., professional societies and alumni organizations, are challenged to revisit their continuing education thrusts and give more weight on the theme, content and relevance of their offerings in order to inculcate more learning outcomes. More learning venues aside from the traditional seminars/conferences (e.g., webinar series) are also recommended for them to develop further for wider reach of intended audience. On a larger scale, it is likewise recommended that CPD providers should align

their programs with the ongoing efforts of the country's CPD Council in strengthening the profession's CPD programs to enhance the skills, competencies and global mobility of the library professionals.

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