

Legal Compliance of Physiotherapists to Professional Competency Standards: A Case Study at Bintang Physio and Physiozone Physiotherapy Practices in Bandung

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Abstract

Introduction: The physiotherapy profession plays a critical role in the healthcare system, particularly in improving physical function and patient recovery. However, challenges persist regarding the compliance of physiotherapists with legal and professional competency standards. **Objective:** This study aims to analyze the legal compliance of physiotherapists with the established professional competency standards at two private physiotherapy practices in Bandung: Bintang Physio and Physiozone. **Method:** A qualitative research approach was used, employing purposive sampling to select 10 participants, including physiotherapists and clinic managers. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. **Result and Discussion:** The results revealed that physiotherapists at both clinics generally adhered to legal requirements, including the possession of valid Surat Tanda Registrasi (STR) and Surat Izin Praktik (SIP). Furthermore, both clinics followed standardized operating procedures (SOPs) and maintained ethical conduct in their professional interactions. However, challenges such as economic pressures and market demands were identified as potential barriers to full compliance. **Conclusion:** In conclusion, while legal compliance is largely met in both clinics, ongoing support and education are necessary to address existing barriers and enhance adherence to professional standards.

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Introduction

Physiotherapy is a vital part of the healthcare system, supporting recovery from injury, disability, and chronic conditions. Because physiotherapists make clinical decisions that directly affect patient safety, their practice is governed by legal requirements and professional competency standards (Ali & Siwi, 2024); (Ikhsanb & Nurdin, 2025). In Indonesia, physiotherapists are expected to meet licensing and registration obligations (e.g., Surat Tanda Registrasi/STR and Surat Izin Praktik/SIP) and to deliver services in line with nationally defined competency standards (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2024). However, in private practice settings, compliance can be uneven, particularly when routine supervision and external oversight are limited compared with larger healthcare institutions.

Private physiotherapy clinics are increasingly sought by the public due to accessibility and service flexibility, yet the same characteristics that make them attractive can also create regulatory vulnerabilities (Rahmanto & Ma'rufa, 2023). In many private clinics, day-to-day professional supervision may depend largely on internal management policies, while periodic monitoring from external authorities may be infrequent. Limited supervision can affect how consistently competency standards are applied, including adherence to scope of practice, documentation, standard operating procedures, and ethical safeguards (Rahardjo, 2009; Thouresia et al., 2024). In Bandung, Bintang Physio and Physiozone represent two active private physiotherapy practices where these dynamics can be observed and examined in a real-world context.

Existing research on legal compliance in Indonesian healthcare has generally focused on broad regulatory issues or malpractice, while studies that specifically examine physiotherapists' legal responsibilities and competency-standard implementation in private clinics remain limited. For example, legal accountability discussions often emphasize licensing requirements and the risks of practicing without proper registration, but provide less insight into how private clinics maintain ongoing compliance in daily service delivery (Atmaja & Putra, 2022). International practice standards are well documented (World Confederation for Physical Therapy, 2019), yet evidence is still needed on how these expectations are translated into practice under Indonesia's regulatory environment, particularly where supervision is constrained.

Therefore, this study investigates the legal compliance of physiotherapists at Bintang Physio and Physiozone, with a focus on adherence to professional competency standards and applicable legal requirements. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research explores how physiotherapists and clinic management understand and implement these obligations, how supervision (internal and external) supports or limits compliance, and what barriers remain. The findings are expected to inform practical recommendations for strengthening supervision mechanisms and improving consistent adherence to professional standards in private physiotherapy services.

The main research questions guiding this study are:

- **RQ1:** To what extent do physiotherapists in Bintang Physio and Physiozone comply with the legal and professional standards set by Indonesian regulations?
- **RQ2:** What supervisory and organizational factors (e.g., internal governance and external oversight) influence the compliance of physiotherapists with these standards in private practice settings?

Legal Compliance of Physiotherapists to Professional Competency Standards: A Case Study at Bintang Physio and Physiozone Physiotherapy Practices in Bandung

- **RQ3:** What barriers (including limited supervision, resource constraints, and external pressures) hinder full compliance with legal requirements and competency standards in these clinics?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes insights into how legal and professional standards are maintained in private physiotherapy services in Indonesia. The results can support policymakers, professional organizations, and clinic managers in designing supervision and support strategies that enhance compliance and protect the quality and safety of physiotherapy care.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the legal compliance of physiotherapists with professional competency standards in the private practices of Bintang Physio and Physiozone in Bandung. The study is grounded in an interpretive paradigm, emphasizing the understanding of the lived experiences of physiotherapists and the contextual factors influencing their adherence to legal and professional standards. The interpretive approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how these professionals navigate the regulatory frameworks in their daily practice and provides insights into the subjective meanings they attach to legal compliance (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The research was conducted in two physiotherapy clinics located in Bandung, Indonesia: Bintang Physio and Physiozone. These clinics were selected based on their reputation and the diversity of their clientele, which provides a comprehensive setting for understanding compliance practices in physiotherapy. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who are experienced physiotherapists actively practicing in these clinics. In total, 10 physiotherapists participated in the study, including clinic managers and staff, ensuring a range of perspectives on legal adherence and professional standards.

Data were collected through multiple qualitative methods: in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with physiotherapists and clinic managers to gather insights into their understanding of the legal and professional standards they are required to follow, as well as their experiences in meeting these requirements. The interviews were designed to explore their personal practices, knowledge of relevant regulations, and perceived barriers to compliance. Additionally, direct observation was employed to assess the implementation of professional standards in clinical settings. The researchers observed interactions between physiotherapists and patients, the application of therapeutic techniques, and the use of clinical protocols. Document analysis was conducted on relevant organizational records, including practitioner certifications, operating procedures, and regulatory compliance documents, such as the Surat Tanda Registrasi (STR) and Surat Izin Praktik (SIP).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed. Triangulation was used to compare data across different sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents, to enhance the credibility of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Member checking was also conducted, wherein initial findings were shared with participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations (Patton, 2002). Additionally, thick descriptions were provided in the analysis to enhance the transferability of the findings to other similar contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These strategies ensured that the data collected accurately reflected the participants' experiences and that the interpretations were grounded in their perspectives.

Legal Compliance of Physiotherapists to Professional Competency Standards: A Case Study at Bintang Physio and Physiozone Physiotherapy Practices in Bandung

Through this methodology, the study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing legal compliance in physiotherapy practices and provide recommendations for improving adherence to regulatory standards. The qualitative approach allows for a deep exploration of the complexities and nuances involved in the implementation of professional and legal standards in Indonesian physiotherapy settings.

Result and Discussion

1. Result

Participant Profile

The participants in this study consisted of physiotherapists and clinic managers from two physiotherapy practices in Bandung: Bintang Physio and Physiozone. A total of 10 participants were selected purposively, ensuring a variety of perspectives on legal compliance and professional practice. Table 1 presents the educational background and professional qualifications of the participants.

Table 1
Profile of Participants

Participant	Role	Educational Background	Years of Experience
Participant 1	Physiotherapist	D3 Physiotherapy (AMF)	6 years
Participant 2	Physiotherapist	D4 Physiotherapy (S.Tr.Kes)	4 years
Participant 3	Physiotherapist	Professiional Physiotherapist (Ftr.)	8 years
Participant 4	Clinic Manager	Bachelor in Health Science	5 years
Participant 5	Physiotherapist	D3 Physiotherapy (AMF)	7 years
Participant 6	Physiotherapist	Professiional Physiotherapist (Ftr.)	10 years
Participant 7	Physiotherapist	D3 Physiotherapy (AMF)	3 years
Participant 8	Physiotherapist	S1 Physiotherapy (D3 background)	6 years
Participant 9	Physiotherapist	D3 Physiotherapy (AMF)	5 years
Participant 10	Clinic Manager	Bachelor in Health Science	5 years

Main Themes

The analysis of the data collected through interviews, field observations, and document studies revealed several key themes regarding the legal compliance of physiotherapists with professional standards:

- **Compliance with Legal Documentation (STR and SIP)**
- **Implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Service Standards**
- **Ethical Conduct and Professional Interaction**
- **Medical Record Documentation**
- **Supportive Facilities and Infrastructure**

Legal Compliance of Physiotherapists to Professional Competency Standards: A Case Study at Bintang Physio and Physiozone Physiotherapy Practices in Bandung

Table 2
Key Themes Identified in the Study

Theme	Description
Compliance with Documentation (STR, SIP)	Physiotherapists' adherence to the legal registration and licensing requirements (STR, SIP).
SOP and Service Standards	The implementation of operational procedures aligned with professional standards.
Ethical Conduct and Professional Interaction	Adherence to ethical practices and patient care standards.
Medical Record Documentation	The completeness and accuracy of patient medical records.
Supportive Facilities	The adequacy of facilities and infrastructure to support professional practice.

In-Depth Theme Presentation

1) Compliance with Legal Documentation (STR and SIP)

The data shows that the majority of physiotherapists in both clinics consistently hold valid Surat Tanda Registrasi (STR) and Surat Izin Praktik (SIP) as required by Indonesian law. These findings align with the observations made by the clinic management, which indicated that internal policies encourage regular updates of these documents to ensure compliance with the law.

"...We make sure every therapist updates their STR regularly, and the SIP is checked before they start their duties" (Participant 4, n.d.).

This level of compliance reflects a strong awareness of the legal requirements, contributing to the overall legal adherence in these practices (Atmaja & Putra, 2022).

2) Implementation of SOPs and Service Standards

Both clinics adhere to structured Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that guide every stage of patient care, from initial assessment to therapeutic interventions. This adherence was confirmed through direct observation, where physiotherapists followed the SOPs meticulously, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and infection control protocols.

"...We follow SOPs for patient handling, ensuring that every patient is treated according to established clinical guidelines" (Participant 2, n.d.).

The consistent implementation of these SOPs shows a commitment to ensuring quality service delivery that aligns with the Indonesian Ministry of Health's standards (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2024).

3) Ethical Conduct and Professional Interaction

Both clinics foster a professional environment where ethical conduct is prioritized. Interactions between physiotherapists and patients were observed to be empathetic, respectful, and in compliance with confidentiality standards. This was consistent with the findings from interviews, where physiotherapists emphasized

Legal Compliance of Physiotherapists to Professional Competency Standards: A Case Study at Bintang Physio and Physiozone Physiotherapy Practices in Bandung

the importance of maintaining patient dignity and providing comprehensive education about treatment plans.

"...We make it a point to always discuss the treatment options with the patient and ensure they understand their rights" (Participant 6, n.d.).

This adherence to ethical guidelines aligns with the framework provided by the (World Confederation for Physical Therapy, 2019), which emphasizes the importance of maintaining professionalism and ethical standards.

4) Medical Record Documentation

A significant finding was the adequate and organized management of patient medical records. Both clinics were found to maintain detailed patient histories, including assessments, treatment plans, and progress notes, in accordance with professional standards. This reflects an emphasis on accountability and transparency, which is critical in reducing legal risks and improving patient outcomes.

"The record-keeping is done meticulously; every patient's journey is well documented, ensuring continuity of care" (Participant 3, n.d.).

This practice ensures that all documentation meets the standards outlined by the Indonesian Ministry of Health and aligns with global best practices (Bernasconi et al., 2020).

5) Supportive Facilities and Infrastructure

Both clinics demonstrated a high standard of facilities, with well-maintained equipment and safe, comfortable environments for patients. These investments in infrastructure contribute to enhancing the quality of care and aligning with regulatory standards for clinical environments.

"All our equipment is regularly checked and calibrated, and the patient areas are designed for comfort and safety" (Participant 5, n.d.).

The clinics' infrastructure aligns with the Ministry of Health's requirements for safe and effective healthcare delivery (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2013).

2. Discussion

The findings from this study indicate a positive trend in legal compliance among physiotherapists at both Bintang Physio and Physiozone. The consistent adherence to legal documentation requirements, the structured implementation of SOPs, ethical professional conduct, accurate medical record-keeping, and high-quality facilities all contribute to a compliant and high-performing physiotherapy practice.

These results align with previous studies on healthcare compliance in Indonesia, such as the work of (Atmaja & Putra, 2022), which highlights the importance of legal understanding in preventing malpractice. Additionally, the findings underscore the

Legal Compliance of Physiotherapists to Professional Competency Standards: A Case Study at Bintang Physio and Physiozone Physiotherapy Practices in Bandung

importance of institutional support in fostering an environment conducive to legal adherence, as noted by (Rahardjo, 2009), who emphasized the role of organizational culture in promoting compliance with professional standards.

However, challenges such as economic pressures and market demands remain significant barriers to full compliance, as some physiotherapists reported feeling pressured to offer expedited services that might compromise adherence to regulatory standards. This reflects the complex interaction between professional responsibility and external pressures, as discussed by (Thouresia et al., 2024). Therefore, while the current study found generally high compliance, ongoing support, education, and regulatory oversight will be essential in addressing these challenges.

In conclusion, the study highlights the critical factors contributing to legal compliance in physiotherapy practices and provides valuable insights into the regulatory environment that can guide future improvements in policy and practice.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the legal compliance of physiotherapists with professional competency standards at Bintang Physio and Physiozone clinics in Bandung. The findings reveal a generally positive trend in compliance with legal requirements, particularly in terms of holding valid Surat Tanda Registrasi (STR) and Surat Izin Praktik (SIP). Both clinics have effectively implemented Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and service standards, ensuring high-quality patient care. Moreover, physiotherapists demonstrated adherence to professional ethical guidelines, promoting a respectful and collaborative therapeutic environment. The management of medical records was also found to be thorough, contributing to accountability and continuity of care. These findings provide substantial evidence of the commitment of both clinics to upholding legal and professional standards in physiotherapy practice.

The implications of this study are twofold. Theoretically, it contributes to the body of knowledge on healthcare legal compliance, particularly within the physiotherapy profession in Indonesia. It reinforces the understanding that legal compliance is not merely a regulatory obligation but an integral aspect of professional identity and service quality. Practically, the study highlights the importance of institutional support in fostering legal adherence, suggesting that continued professional development, internal policy reinforcement, and robust infrastructure are essential to sustaining compliance. Furthermore, the study underscores the need for ongoing education for physiotherapists regarding legal regulations and the ethical aspects of their practice.

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