

Perception of intermediate college students about physical therapy as a profession in Lahore, Pakistan

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Objective: To find the perspective of 11th and 12th grade intermediate college students about physical therapy as a profession

Methodology: This descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted in the intermediate colleges of Lahore. We included 500 students; 267 science group and 234 non-science group. Data were collected using a self-administrated questionnaire, which was validated from eight experts. It contained 13 items.

Results: The results showed that 48% information related to physiotherapy was obtained from social

media. Seventy percent students did not know if physiotherapy was a qualified profession. Only 23% and 14% students knew that physical therapy was useful in cardiopulmonary and pediatric conditions.

Conclusion: Intermediate college students had lack of awareness regarding physiotherapy as a profession. Social media was a powerful source of awareness for them. (Rawal Med J 202;46:127-130).

Keywords: Physiotherapy, perception, profession.

INTRODUCTION

A characteristic of any profession occupies a social standing relative to other professions.¹ Physiotherapy is described as, a health care profession dealing with the problems related to human motion and movement and maximizing its capability. It make use of physical therapy to promote, hold and restore bodily, psychological and social well-being, taking account of variation in fitness status.^{2,3} The space between the required and actual numbers of physiotherapists is decreasing. One primary thing that would have an effect on this gap is the perception about this career by means of contemporary and future physiotherapists, together with medical students.^{4,5}

Persons between the ages 15 to 24 years are on the exploration level in their development. This phase is characterized by making tentative selections and skill improvement.⁶ Career choice is a complicated phenomenon, which makes it tough to predict and understand.^{7,8} A majority of college students are also unaware of profession possibilities open to them and most of them analyze their profession via searching on social status for a career of their desire.^{9,10} According to studies community services learning can be beneficial to the physical therapy.^{11,12}

There's need of a physiotherapist to make doctors aware about fields of physiotherapy, treatment modalities and evaluative approaches through different education programs.¹³

Some studies have concluded most of the students choose their profession due to an interest in physiotherapy.^{14,15} One of the study shows the end results that the knowledge of both college students was equal about each-other, but chiropractic college students have more positive perception and attitude towards physiotherapy than the physiotherapy college students have for chiropractor.¹⁶ There is a need to arrange workshops and lectures about the effectiveness of physical therapy in various diseases to educate the physicians.¹⁷ Even though it is thought that physical therapist needs to concern with physical therapy merchandising.¹⁸ The students have been thought to represent general population.¹⁹ The objective of the study was to find the perspective of 11th and 12th grade intermediate college students about physical therapy profession.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted on Intermediate college students, science

group (students who opted to study pre-medical or pre-engineering) and non-science group (who were studying computer science, business, and arts). Data were collected from Intermediate colleges of Lahore. Convenience based sampling method was used. Sample size calculated by formula was 288 by applying following parameters but data was collected from 500 students due to the availability of time and to make study more reliable. All students gave a written consent.

For the data collection, a self-administered questionnaire was validated by eight experts with validity of 0.82. This self-made questionnaire was validated through computing its content validity index (CVI) by a panel of 8 clinical and research experts to rate the questions on the basis of clarity, simplicity and relevance by using a four-point Likert scale.²⁰ The validity of the questionnaire was 0.82 and reliability obtained through pilot study was 0.71.

Statistical Analysis: For data analysis SPSS version 20 was used. The results were presented in form of frequency tables, percentages.

RESULTS

Out of 500 students, 53% were male and 46% female. Majority of them had age between 15-20 years (98%). Students of science group were 53% and 46.9% was non science group. Majority had knowledge of physiotherapy as a career option (81%) and major portion also knew about post-graduation including PhD and M. Phil after basic physiotherapy education (65.4%). The participants were having good knowledge about equipment's used in physiotherapy department (Table 1).

Table 1. Physiotherapy department includes.

		Frequency	Percent
Gym	Yes	218	43.3
	No	285	56.7
Therapeutic Exercise	Yes	402	79.9
	No	101	20.1
Electric Modalities	Yes	69	13.7
	No	434	86.3
Tape, Bandages, Splint	Yes	199	39.6
	No	304	60.4
Therapeutic Pool	Yes	72	14.3
	No	428	85.1

Table 2. With which condition physiotherapy help?

Neurological.	Number	%
Yes	148	29.4
No	355	70.6
Musculoskeletal problem		
Yes	396	78.7
No	107	21.3
Related to children		
Yes	73	14.5
No	430	85.5
Heart and respiratory issues		
Yes	119	23.7
No	384	76.3
Sports injury		
Yes	292	58
No	211	42
Problem related to old population		
Yes	171	34.0
No	331	65.8
In pregnancy		
Yes	83	16.5
No	420	83.5

Table 3. Physical therapy as a competent of medical profession.

	Frequency	Percent
As physician		
Yes	238	47.3
No	265	52.7
Orthopedic surgeons		
Yes	225	44.7
No	278	55.3
Physical medicine		
Yes	243	48.3
No	260	51.7
Rehabilitation		
Yes	176	35.0
No	327	65.0

Table 4. Physiotherapy is preferred as a profession as.

	Frequency	Percent
Knowledgeable		
Yes	255	50.7
No	248	49.3
Doctor title		
Yes	246	48.9
No	257	51.1
Many job options		
Yes	122	24.3
No	381	75.7
Medicine prescriber		
Yes	90	17.9
No	413	82.1
To do surgery		
Yes	66	13.1
No	437	86.9
Well paid		
Yes	112	22.3
No	391	77.7
Challenging		
Yes	85	16.9
No	418	83.1
Physically demanding		
Yes	260	51.7
No	243	48.3
More scope in future		
Yes	192	38.2
No	309	61.4
To move abroad		
Yes	115	22.9
No	388	77.1

Majority of the participants knew about physiotherapy domain of musculoskeletal system. The participants had poor knowledge about work of physiotherapist in neurological conditions and sports (Table 2). Participants found physiotherapy as average knowledgeable 50.7%, competent for other option of doctor's title 48.3%, as physically demanding 51.7 % (Table 3). They did feel physiotherapy profession as many job options 24.3% medicine prescription 17.9%, to do surgery 13.1%, for being well paid 22.3%, challenging 16.9%, better future scope 38.2% and to move abroad 22.9% (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

Several previous studies were focused on the attitude of the young generation about physical therapy but there is not much literature found in our country's setup regards the perception of college students. This study showed that students had a mix and misleading perception about the physical therapy profession. A study suggested that there was a lack of awareness among people was due to limited access of the general public to the physiotherapist.²¹ But nowadays there are huge services of social media among the students due to which they at least know about the physiotherapy.

A pilot study conducted in 2017 in Malaysia reported that the awareness of the role of physiotherapist was moderate.⁶ According to that study, main source of information was television. In present study it was social media. Seventy five percent students knew about electro therapy option for treatment as compare to the present study in which only thirteen percent participants were aware of it.

Another study from India reported that knowledge about physical therapy provision was 23% and only 5% of students knew about electrical modalities, 2.5% claimed to know about physiotherapy services in cardiopulmonary conditions.¹⁸ The current research shows much positive results as compared to the previous one like 88% of students knew about physical therapy provision.

We found that 13% students were aware of the use of electric modalities, 23% were aware of the role of physiotherapist in cardiopulmonary conditions and respectively in other domains. Another study showed same results as most students showed positive results towards physical therapy as a career choice.¹⁹ Students had more knowledge regarding traditional treatment like exercise versus modern treatment options like electrotherapy and ultrasound.

CONCLUSION

Intermediate college students had lack of awareness regarding physiotherapy as a profession. Only few knew about the importance of physiotherapy in different departments of medical profession.

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