



Physiotherapy Students' Attitude towards Physiotherapist-Patient Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Background: The physician-patient relationship has been bedrock of care since all the times. This relationship is essential in the transference of health care facilities, treatment plans, diagnosis and improvement in the medical fields.

Objective: The objectives of the study are; to explain and quantify the attitudes of physiotherapy students, undergoing pre-clinical rotations, towards patient-centred approach and to measure the association/statistical significance in these attitudes and demographic data and to determine the factors associated with patient centered attitude.

Methodology: This is an observational cross sectional study. It was done at department of physical therapy Azra Naheed Medical College, University of Lahore and School of Allied Health Sciences. Study was completed in 4 months after the approval of synopsis. Non-probability, purposive sampling was used. Sample size was calculated to be of 215 students. Self-administered questionnaire consisting of validated 18-items, Patient Practitioner Orientation Scale (PPOS) was used to find out the attitude of physiotherapy students towards physiotherapist-patient relationship.

Results: The total mean score and standard deviation of all the 18- items of PPOS scale was 3.025 ± 0.46 . The mean and standard deviation of sharing item was 3.08 ± 0.62 , while the mean and standard deviation for caring items appeared to be 2.94 ± 0.59 . The range of total PPOS score was 3.42, maximum value being 4.68 and minimum 1.26. Females showed more patient centered approach with a value of 3.05 ± 0.55 than males (Mean \pm SD = 2.92 ± 0.45). The mean and standard deviation of family in medical profession for PPOS had almost same values. The gender*year interaction was not statistically significant because the P-value was greater than 0.05 (P-value=0.067). But the gender and year individually had statistically significant difference as the P-values of both variables were less than 0.05. Gender (p = 0.04) and year (p = 0.02).

Conclusion: The total Patient Practitioner Orientation Scale (PPOS) mean was high for female gender and early years of medical school. This showed that the factors that were responsible for the patient-centered attitude of physiotherapy students, these were female gender and early years of medical school. Male gender was found to be associated with physiotherapist-centered approach irrespective of the year of medical school.

Key Words: Physiotherapist-Patient Relationship, Physical Therapy, PPOS Tool.

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INTRODUCTION

The physician-patient relationship has been a bedrock of care since all the times.⁽¹⁾ This relationship is essential in the transference of health care facilities, treatment plans, diagnosis and improvement in the medical fields. Medical ethics is all about developing, maintaining, fostering and improving this relationship. The medium of communication between physiotherapist and patient is medical interview. The relationship is directly proportional to the quality and amount of information shared by the patient⁽²⁾.

According to the patients decisions about their compliance were rational but couldn't be predicted

by their therapists⁽³⁾. Gyllensten et al concluded that the skills of Interaction of the physical therapists with the patients result in better health outcomes therefore more emphasis should be placed on the reflective skills of the physical therapists⁽⁴⁾. Kaplan, Greenfield and Ware concluded that physician-patient relationship might have an important effect on the health related outcomes of Patients and it must be taken into consideration by the current healthcare system⁽⁵⁾. The amount of time spent together is of less important than the perception of being heard and the feeling that they are the main focus of the issue.

A better organized system also affects the physio-



therapist-patient relationship. With the increasing health consumerism, knowledge and patient empowerment, the patient centered care is being emphasized. Patients want them to be included in the health care as respected partners and desire to be involved in the decision making process⁽⁶⁾. PCC is thought to be the centre of cultural competency⁽⁷⁾ and basis of humanistic care delivery to the people suffering from socio-economic downfall⁽⁸⁾. Many studies have suggested that use of PCC in professionals has resulted in better outcomes in a lot of disease processes⁽⁹⁾. The more the patients recognize their health care professionals to be more focused and caring about them, the greater is their mental and physical recovery⁽¹⁰⁾.

METHODOLOGY

This observational cross sectional study was conducted at department of physical therapy Azra Naheed medical college, University of Lahore and School of Allied health sciences. Data was compiled at Riphah international university Lahore. Study was completed in 4 months. The Sample size of 215 undergraduate physical therapy students was taken from a population of 467 students and we used 5% level of precision. Both male and female students of 3rd, 4th years of Bachelors of Science in physical therapy and students of 5th to 10th semesters of Doctor of physical therapy were included. Students having no clinical experience and those students studying physiotherapy assistant course were excluded from the study.

All 215 students fulfilling inclusion criteria from department of physical therapy Azra Naheed Medical College, University of Lahore and School of Allied Health Sciences, Lahore were taken. Informed consent was taken and then socio-demographic data (like name, age, contact information, gender) was obtained. Questionnaires, that took 20 minutes to complete was given to students to assess their approach towards physiotherapist-patient relationship. Patient Practitioner Orientation Scale (PPOS) was used to assess their approach⁽¹¹⁾. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with individual items on a 6-point scale. The overall Patient Practitioner Orienta-

tion Scale (PPOS) score was computed as the mean of the scores for 18 items. Sharing and caring scores was computed as the mean of the scores for nine items in each dimension, respectively. For this study, the calculated mean scores ranged from a value of 1 ($\frac{1}{4}$ physiotherapist-centered) to 6 ($\frac{1}{4}$ patient-centered).

All collected data was organized and analyzed by computer program SPSS version 20. Mean \pm standard deviation were calculated for quantitative variables while frequency (%) was used for qualitative variables. Total score of Patient Practitioner Orientation Scale (PPOS) tool was calculated and mean \pm Standard deviation for individual attributes. Factorial analysis of variance was used to determine the significance of gender, family in medical profession, semester and year. Student's t-test was used to measure the means and mean differences of total Patient Practitioner Orientation Scale (PPOS) score and demographic data. P-value \leq 0.05 was considered significant.

RESULTS

The mean of year of study for PPOS had slightly different values. The value of mean for 3rd year students was 3.12 ± 0.46 and the value of mean score of PPOS for 4th year students was 2.91 ± 0.56 . The variability of year of medical study and total PPOS score was about the same as the P-value was greater than α (0.05) i.e. 0.49. While there was statistically significant difference between the means of two variables as the P-value was less than α (0.05) i.e. 0.004. So the null hypothesis was rejected, it means that the means of total PPOS and year of medical school were not equal.

This figure shows the mean PPOS scores of male and female students per class, the approach of male and female students was different in 3rd year, female students being more patient-centered (Mean \pm SD 3.23 ± 0.45) in regard to Physiotherapist-patient relationship than male students (Mean \pm SD 2.93 ± 0.43). While in 4th year there was almost no difference among the opinions of both genders.

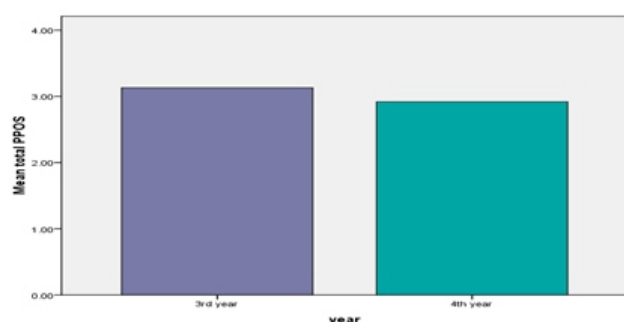


Table- I: Interactions among gender, year of medical school and total PPOS

Variables	Mean Square	P-value
Gender	1.134	0.040
Year	1.382	0.023
Gender-Year	0.899	0.067

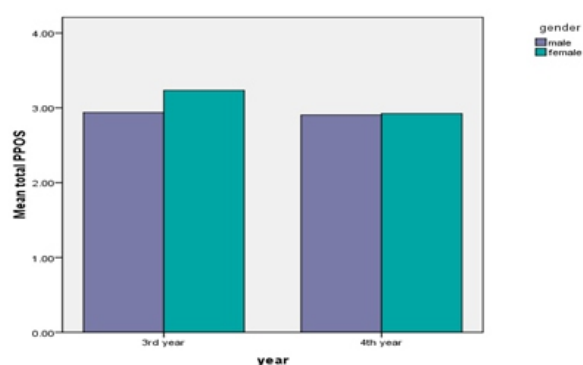
This table shows us the effect of independent variables on dependent variable.

Figure- I: Student's t- test between PPOS and year of study



The gender*year interaction was not statistically significant because the P-value was greater than α i.e. 0.067, so the null hypothesis was not rejected, it there was no interaction present between the variables, both of the variables were independent. But the gender and year individually have statistically significant difference as the P-values of both variables were less than α . Gender ($p = 0.04$) and year ($p = 0.02$).

Figure- 2: Factorial analysis of variance for PPOS gender and year of study



So the null hypothesis was rejected, which means, there was significant difference in total PPOS score in males and females, similarly there was significant difference in total PPOS score for 3rd and 4th year.

DISCUSSION

The physiotherapist-patient relationship is very important both for the development of the field as well as the reputation of individual physiotherapist among the clients and the physiotherapy community. This study was aimed to show the attitude of Pakistani physiotherapy students towards their patients as no such study has been conducted in past in Pakistan. Regardless of the emphasis laid on by clinical instructors, health care administrators, practicing physiotherapists on the importance of curricula that nurture the growth of patient-centered attitudes in the newbie's of physiotherapy field in Pakistan, our study suggested that the attitudes of students were more physiotherapist centered than patient-centered. Previous researches have shown that medical interventions made during pre-clinical years designed to improve patient-centered attitudes in students are masked by the personal clinical experiences of the clinical years resulting in more physician-centered attitude in the fresh ones of medical field ⁽¹²⁾. Our data supported this fact that despite of international importance of patient-centered approach, the data suggested that the clinical curricula and environment were not sufficient enough to foster the patient centered attitudes in students; these points need to be pondered upon.

Most of the students in third year of medical education showed patient-centered approach but the students of final year were more physiotherapist-centered. This shows that as the year of medical education increases the approach of the students become more and more physiotherapist-centered. In order to overcome this threatening scenario educational reforms are needed to be made in the pre-clinical and theoretical curricula. The differences depicted in different years of medical education with respect to gender showed that in the early years of medical education the female students were more patient-centered, but as the year of education increases their attitude changes and



declined to physiotherapist-centered. But the males were consistent in their results and depicted more physiotherapist-centered attitude. This difference may have existed due to the gendered patterns of communication in males and females. Early researches show that students enter the medical schools with a high degree of idealism but as they experience the hardships of clinical practice, the idealism flew away and the students start to think more about their own interests⁽¹³⁾.

This difference in attitudes of students with respect to gender and medical year was also studied individually with the subscales of PPOS. Further study and understanding of this gender related difference among students is needed to be explored. It is important to note that this study measured attitude towards physiotherapist-patient relationship rather than actual patient-centered behavior. This study has several limitations; the sample size used was small. The results of attitude of students were taken only once, so the comparisons made for the medical years/semesters may not be indicative of attitudinal changes in students as different classes were taken and compared. The generalization of our data is affected by the year/annual system, as the course and curricula is not same for both of them.

CONCLUSION

The total PPOS mean was high for the female gender and early years of medical school. Mean of the sharing sub-score was higher than the mean of caring sub-score; this showed that overall trend of the students was patient-centered. No association was found between the total PPOs and the mean of family member in medical profession, this showed that presence of any family member in medical profession did not affect the attitude of students towards their relation with patients. Special reforms are needed to be made in the curriculum to make the students learn about communication skills with the patients. Further studies in this regard are recommended, as no such study has been previously conducted in Pakistan.

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