

## Physiotherapists' Attitude Towards Professionalism

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To find out the attitude of physiotherapists towards their profession and to assess the quality of professionalism in physiotherapists.

**Study Design:** Cross-sectional study.

**Place and Duration of Study:** Private and government physiotherapy setups in Lahore, Pakistan, from Oct 2019 to Dec 2019.

**Methodology:** 312 physical therapists were recruited in the study. A modified standard questionnaire by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) was used for the data collection. Data were analyzed by using SPSS 22.0.

**Results:** In the current study, 312 participants were included, out of which 54.2% were male physical therapists and 45.8% were female physical therapists. Their mean age was  $26.27 \pm 2.15$  years. The average professionalism score was  $270.56 \pm 22.27$ . Quality of professionalism, measured in physical therapists was 5 (1.60%), 14 (4.5%), 106 (34%), 148 (47.44%), and 39 (12.50%) as poor, fair, good, and excellent professionalism, respectively.

**Conclusion:** The majority of physical therapists showed a borderline positive attitude and very few had a negative attitude towards professionalism. Moreover, good quality of professionalism was observed prominently in most of the physiotherapists, whereas, minority of them portrayed bad and poor professionalism.

**Keywords:** Attitude, Professional, Professionalism, Physical therapist.

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## INTRODUCTION

Professionalism is a term that is derived from the word profession. Professionalism is a way to control and to organize work.<sup>1</sup> In physical therapy, professionalism has its huge importance and it should cover all the aspects of work control that are in the good interest of the patients.<sup>2,3</sup>

The work practice, attitude, and behavior demonstrate the professional values of the physical therapist.<sup>4,5</sup> A very few researches have been conducted to observe the professionalism in the field of physiotherapy. The professional values, guidelines to practice and fundamentals of professionalism are still not clear. Promotion of professionalism in every field is important.<sup>6,7</sup> Highest level of professionalism is required for a safe culture.<sup>8</sup>

Sandra Gracea and Franziska Trede, in a study, suggested that that academic educators and clinical placement supervisors play a vital role in shaping the development of professionalism in undergraduate students. They suggested that some educational strategies should be developed to form a healthy understanding of professionalism.<sup>9</sup> The lecturers and clinical

supervisors are the role models for physiotherapy students and they learn professionalism from them. Professional values should be implicated in workplaces and in universities to promote professionalism. Students should participate during their lectures and should ask questions to their teachers related to professionalism.

Professionalism is a lifelong process that is, learned from professional practice and the workplace environment. The students need to understand the importance of professionalism to become a good practitioner.<sup>9</sup> A study on medical students found that society has a lot of expectations from the future doctors. Therefore, it was suggested that medical institutes should take proper responsibility to teach professionalism and its value to their students.<sup>10</sup>

This study was aimed to assess the level of professionalism in the field of physiotherapy, and to reflect the professional values of physiotherapists. The study would help them to improve and grow professionally by understanding the integral principles of professionalism to work for the best interest of their patients.

## METHODOLOGY

It was a cross-sectional study in which a non-probability convenient sampling technique was used

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to collect the data from 312 physical therapists from Private and Government Physiotherapy setups in Lahore, Pakistan.

**Inclusion Criteria:** Physical therapists of both gender, aged between 25-60 years, with less than 10 years of experience in the profession of physical therapy and working in any, Government or Private setup in Lahore, Pakistan were included in the study.

**Exclusion Criteria:** All the physical therapists who were doing internships, house jobs and unwilling to sign the consent voluntarily were not included. Moreover, physical therapy assistants were also excluded from the study.

Calculated sample size from Epitool was 259 by taking  $p=0.41$ ,<sup>11</sup>  $d=0.06$  and  $1-\alpha=95$ , however we calculated more data for the generalizability of our results. The study was completed within three months after the approval of the synopsis, from October 2019 to December 2019. Ethics permission was granted from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Lahore, Lahore (IRB-UOL-FAHS/745-VIII/2020). After describing the purpose of the research, before data collection, informed consent was taken. The confidentiality of the participants was highly maintained.

The research instrument used for data collection was a modified standard questionnaire by Cahalin *et al.*<sup>12</sup> We included all the seven core values of professionalism, as given by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Likert scale (1-5) was used, 1= never, 2=rarely, 3= occasionally, 4=frequently, and 5= always. Core values comprised of accountability, altruism, compassion/caring, excellence, integrity, professional duty, and social responsibility. Every question contained five marks and the maximum score in each core value was 50, 25, 55, 55, 60, 35, and 60 sequentially, with a total score of 340. By calculating the total score of these questions in every core value, professionalism quality and level were checked.

Data were entered in Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22 for the analysis. Frequencies and percentages were calculated, for gender. Mean, standard deviation, with minimum and maximum range were computed for age, seven core values of professionalism and their total score.

**RESULTS**

In the current study, 312 participants were recruited, out of which 169 (54.2%) were male physical therapists, and 143 (45.8%) were female physical

therapists. Their mean age was 26.27 years,  $\pm 2.15$  with a range of 23-32 years.

All of the core values were analysed, which were stated by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Results portrayed that the mean score of accountability was  $39.92 \pm 6.79$ . The mean score of altruism was  $19.34 \pm 4.03$ . The mean score of core value entitled compassion/caring was analysed and calculated as  $42.74 \pm 6.46$ . Another significant core component of professionalism was excellence and the mean score of that was  $44.90 \pm 4.66$ . Furthermore, mean score of social responsibility was  $47.50 \pm 6.16$ . Professional duty was also identified, based on the average gained score by physical therapists, as  $28.51 \pm 4.33$ . Besides, integrity; the last component of professionalism core values, was analysed as well. The mean score was  $47.76 \pm 6.57$  (Table-I).

**Table-I: Descriptive statistics for age and core values of professionalism by american physical therapy association in physical therapists of lahore, pakistan (n=312).**

Parameters	Mean $\pm$ SD	Minimum	Maximum
Age (years)	26.27 $\pm$ 2.15	23	32
Accountability	39.92 $\pm$ 6.79	25	50
Altruism	19.34 $\pm$ 4.026	10	25
Compassion/ Caring	42.74 $\pm$ 6.461	25	55
Excellence	44.90 $\pm$ 4.658	35	55
Social Responsibility	47.50 $\pm$ 6.16	30	60
Professional Duty	28.51 $\pm$ 4.33	15	35
Integrity	47.76 $\pm$ 6.57	30	60

The investigators gave all the participants a total score of professionalism in the last, by adding up marks obtained in each section of the questionnaire. A total score of all the seven core values was 340 and by all, the mean total score obtained by physiotherapists was  $270.56 \pm 22.27$  with a minimum of 205 and a maximum of 320 marks.

Quality of professionalism was categorically calculated as bad professionalism, poor professionalism, fair professionalism, good professionalism and excellent professionalism with measured values of 5 (1.60%), 14 (4.5%), 106 (33.7%) or rounded off as 34%), 148 (47.44%), and 39 (12.50%) respectively (Figure). Authors also investigated the attitude of physical therapists towards professionalism which was seen as 5 (1.6%), 60 (19.2%), 208 (66.7%), and 39 (12.5%) for borderline negative attitude, negative attitude, borderline positive attitude, and positive attitude respectively (Table-II).



Figure-1: Quality of professionalism, in physical therapists of lahore, pakistan.

Table-II: Attitude of physiotherapists towards professionalism (n=312) parameters construct, n (%).

Attitude towards professionalism	Negative Attitude	5 (1.6%)
	Borderline Negative Attitude	60 (19.2%)
	Borderline Positive Attitude	208 (66.7%)
	Positive Attitude	39 (12.5%)

## DISCUSSION

In this study, most of the physiotherapists showed a borderline positive attitude towards professionalism and good quality of professionalism was observed in the majority of the participants in the study. Similar to the current study, the results of another study showed positive attitudes towards the principles of professionalism. The study was conducted on Chinese Physicians. However, their behaviors were reported to be incongruent with their attitudes at times. It was recommended that to improve the professionalism in physicians, effective strategies should be considered by the hospital management to improve overall competencies in physicians.<sup>13</sup>

Similar to the current study, another study was conducted on physiotherapists by Joseph *et al.*. However, poor professionalism was found in Nigerian physiotherapists, which was in contrast to the present study. The results showed a low level of professionalism and it was suggested that regarding professionalism, course contents should be the part of the curriculum of physiotherapy educational programs. Moreover, seminars and workshops can also be impactful for working physiotherapists, which will help them to grow professionally.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the current study, the results of another study conducted by Dikmen *et al.*, showed a low level of professionalism. The study was conducted on nursing staff. The study found that the working conditions of nursing staff were affecting their professional behaviors. The study found that the nursing staff was not opting for research work to

upgrade themselves professionally and recommended that professional behaviors of nurses should also be evaluated to provide quality care to the patients. Nurses should have a proper understanding of their responsibilities and should work in the best interest of the patients to provide quality care.<sup>15</sup>

Another research was done by Sobani *et al.*, to determine the level of professionalism. The study was conducted on the undergraduate medical students studying in private medical colleges in Karachi, Pakistan. The study found that the old used teaching practices were establishing the principles of professionalism in medical students that were working as a buffering system to maintain the pre-training levels of professionalism from falling.<sup>16</sup> Similar to the above study another study done by Taibah *et al* on dentists suggested that as professionalism is the core part of the development and performance of a professional, so it should be reinforced by the educators and administrators.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to the current study, another study by Marzi *et al.*, study showed a low level of professionalism. The study was conducted on public service servants. It was recommended in the study that while recruiting employees, their competencies should be evaluated so that the level of professionalism may improve and behavioral problems should be lowered. Good administration, implementation, and regulations of laws can also improve professionalism.<sup>18</sup>

A poor level of professionalism was found in most of the studies conducting on different fields. A very few studies showed a good level of professionalism which is not satisfactory. Professionalism is the base of medicine and rehabilitation acknowledge by a study done by Silver *et al.*<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, the results of most of the studies showed that either the people are not taking it seriously or they do not have a proper understanding of professionalism. In a study by Honghe *et al.*, recommended that 20 more research is required to assess the level of professionalism in different professions.

It is recommended that to improve the level of professionalism in different fields the overall competencies of the employees should be evaluated by the administration and management on yearly basis and the employees should also work to upgrade themselves by educating themselves.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study assessed the professionalism only in physical therapy profession and only in the city of Lahore.

Further extensive studies should also be conducted on other professions.

### CONCLUSION

In our study, majority of physical therapists showed borderline positive attitude and a very few had negative attitude towards professionalism. Moreover, good quality of professionalism was prominently observed in most of the physiotherapists where minority of them portrayed bad and poor professionalism.

**Conflict of Interest:** None.

### Authors' Contribution

SRM: Conception & design, data collection, guarantor of the article, SA: Conception & design critical revision, guarantor of the article, AN: Statistical expertise, critical revision, guarantor of the article, HAS: Analysis and interpretation of data, statistical expertise, drafting, guarantor of the article, MS: Data collection, Analysis and interpretation of data, guarantor of the article.

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