

Knowledge, Interest and Perception of Academic Physiotherapists with Regard to Professional Ethics

Knowledge,
Interest and
Perception of
Academic
Physiotherapists

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To determine the level of interest, perception and knowledge of professional ethics among physiotherapy academic faculty.

Study Design: Cross sectional study

Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted at the Department of Physical Therapy, University Institute of Physical Therapy, University of Lahore from January 2021 to April 2021.

Materials and Methods: Non-probability convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from 104 Physiotherapy academic faculty members. Standardized and modified, self-administered questionnaire was used and collected data were analyzed in SPSS 21.0 for its analysis.

Results: The mean age of the academic faculty members was 27.7 ± 3.74 years in which majority (73.1%) were females. About 42.3% faculty had excellent knowledge, 86.5% of the physiotherapists showed medium level of interest towards professional code of ethics. Among all the physiotherapy faculty, 48.1% faculty perceived that code of ethics of physiotherapy must be the part of syllabus in all years of under-graduation (BSPT/tDPT/DPT).

Conclusion: Significantly higher level of knowledge and good interest is found in this study with perception of adding code of ethics in syllabus of students for all years and even better to punish the students in case they don't follow the ethical conduct during their academic activities

Key Words: Academic, Code of ethics, Faculty, Professionalism, Professional ethics, Physiotherapy

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INTRODUCTION

Profession is determined by having specific area of knowledge gained by extended academic procedure.⁽¹⁾ Ethics are the rules, regulations or standards that governs the conduct of individuals belonging to specific profession.^(3,4) Professional ethics are the constant rules that ensure that the profession keeps the confidence and trust of the public.⁽⁵⁾ Giving respect to others, being responsible, accountable and have commitment towards profession forms the base of professional ethics. Self-evaluation and having good interaction with colleagues is also essential.⁽⁶⁾

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Autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice are the four main components of professional ethics.^(7,8) There are two factors that constitutes professional ethics named as personal and background factors. Background factors includes the role of environment and teachers while personal factors includes self-motivation and interaction with other professionals.⁽⁹⁾ Professional ethics among engineering faculty showed that teachers should avoid inappropriate jokes in class and should not use facilities provided by university for their own personal matters.⁽¹⁰⁾ Professional ethics is an important component for every profession including nursing. According to an integrative review, professional ethics in nursing is rarely studied and the problems are poorly examined. professional ethics create a basis for the nursing profession.⁽¹¹⁾ Literature says; the level of professional ethics before the intervention was good in 64% of the nurses. But after the intervention 94% of the nurses showed good level of professional ethics.⁽¹²⁾

The commitment of health care providers to uphold a high degree of professionalism is invaluable because it provides patients with the confidence that they are in safe hands. Professional ethics in physiotherapy profession are very important but underrated in literature. Therefore, to fill this gap, the study aimed to find the interest, perception and knowledge of

professional ethics among physiotherapy academicians so that the physiotherapy teachers can be encouraged to promote behavioral and ethical considerations in students on early stages and a better growth and prosperity of this noble profession.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data of study was collected from University of Lahore, Superior University, University of Management and Technology, University of Central Punjab, University of South Asia, Pakistan Society for the Rehabilitation of Disabled College, King Edward Medical University, Allama Iqbal Medical College, Rashid Latif Medical College and School of Allied Health Sciences Children Hospital Lahore from January 2021 to April 2021

A qualitative, cross sectional study design was carried out for this study in which non-probability convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from 104 Physiotherapy academic faculty members. Sample size was calculated through the following formula;

$$n = (Z^2 \times P \times (1-P)) / e^2$$

where:

Z=1.96 for 95% Confidence Interval

P= Expected true proportion which was kept as 0.94 (94%)

e= Desired precision or acceptable error in estimate which was kept as 0.05

By this formula, sample size calculated was 104. Data were collected from University of Lahore, Superior University, University of Management and Technology, University of Central Punjab, University of South Asia, Pakistan Society for the Rehabilitation of Disabled College, King Edward Medical University, Allama Iqbal Medical College, Rashid Latif Medical College and School of Allied Health Sciences Children Hospital Lahore. Objective, benefits and important content regarding the research work was delivered to the participants and after their consent they were distributed with questionnaire forms. Ethical conduct was maintained for this study through Ethical Review Committee of Kanan Physiotherapy and Spine Center (PT/2020/REC/IRB/080). Physiotherapy faculty from academic side aging between 24 to 60 years, working as professional physiotherapy lecturer in any government or private institute of Lahore and holding at least degree of graduation (BSPT/tDPT/DPT). Standardized and modified self-administered questionnaire from existed literature was used as study tool.^(13, 14) Data were analyzed by SPSS, ver. 21.0.

RESULTS

The mean age of the academic faculty members was 27.7±3.74 years in which majority (73.1%) were females. Most of the faculty (51%) were post-graduated with last degree of MS-PT/MPhil-PT and 79.8% academic faculty were teaching in private colleges/universities of Lahore, Pakistan (Table-1).

Table No.1: Descriptive statistics of demographic variables and interest section of physiotherapy faculty regarding professional ethics (n=104)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.
Age (years)	27.7	±3.74	25	48
Variable	Construct	Frequency	%tage	
Gender	Male	28	26.9%	
	Female	76	73.1%	
Last Degree	BSPT/DPT/tDPT	48	46.2%	
	MS. PT/Mphil. PT/tDPT	53	51.0%	
	PhD. PT	3	2.9%	
Institution	Private College/University	83	79.8%	
	Government College/University	21	20.2%	
Interest of Physiotherapy faculty regarding Professional Ethics				p-value
Reading of Physiotherapy code of ethics	No/Never	17	16.3 %	0.001*
	Yes, partially	44	42.3 %	
	Yes, entirely	43	41.3 %	
How update yourself	Once a month	38	36.5 %	<0.001*
	Once every six months	27	26.0 %	
	Once a year	28	26.9 %	
	I don't update myself	9	8.7%	
	Not applicable	2	1.9%	
Main source of updates regarding professional ethics	Internet	45	43.3 %	<0.001*
	Scientific events	10	9.6%	
	Books and journals	45	43.3 %	
	Not applicable	4	3.8%	

*_ Significant G test results for the variable (p-value less than 0.05)

About 57.7% faculty perceived that professional attitude can be determined exclusively by human's personality and character, 87.5% teachers agreed to make assessments and evaluations of students' ethical behavior while teaching but only 51.9% actually was making check on students' ethical attitude towards professional ethics in their lecture times.

Majority (78.8%) staff was perceiving that it should be completely okay to punish students in their academic activities whenever they found them doing ethical misconduct either towards patients, teachers, mates and

colleagues. Most of the Physiotherapy teachers (61.5%) rated highest score (5 out of 5) towards training of code of ethics in physiotherapy field as professionals for students, teachers and clinicians, everyone. Among all

the physiotherapy faculty, 48.1% faculty found it important to add code of ethics of physiotherapy must be the part of syllabus in all years of under-graduation level (BSPT/tDPT/DPT). (G-test, $p < 0.001$) (Table-2).

Table No.2: Perception of physiotherapists towards professional ethics in physiotherapy profession (n=104)

Variable	Construct	Frequency	%age	p-value
Rate your knowledge of ethics in physiotherapy from 1 to 5	2	6	5.8%	<0.001*
	3	39	37.5%	
	4	44	42.3%	
	5	15	14.4%	
Professional attitude involving ethics can be determined exclusively by character & personality of physiotherapist	Yes	60	57.7%	<0.001*
	No, but are influenced by character and personality	43	41.3%	
	No, character and personality are of no concern	1	1.0%	
Ethical misconduct by peers (have you listened?)	Yes, I have experienced it	30	28.8%	<0.001*
	Yes, I heard of it	58	55.8%	
	No	16	15.4%	
Ethical behavioral assessment of students during teaching?	Yes	91	87.5%	<0.001*
	No	13	12.5%	
Do you evaluate students' ethical behavior towards profession in fair way as needed?	Yes	54	51.9%	<0.001*
	No	43	41.3%	
	Not applicable	7	6.7%	
Ethical misconduct towards patient or colleague, ever done by you ?	Yes	12	11.5%	<0.001*
	No	72	69.2%	
	I don't recall/ I don't know/ not applicable	20	19.2%	
Should students punished if they break ethical conduct during their academic activities	Yes	82	78.8%	<0.001*
	No	22	21.2%	
Rate the importance of training of code of ethics in physiotherapy as a professional (from 1 to 5)	1	2	1.9%	<0.001*
	3	10	9.6%	
	4	28	26.9%	
	5	64	61.5%	
In which year code of ethics in physiotherapy should be added as part of curriculum?	1st year	13	12.5%	<0.001*
	2nd year	4	3.8%	
	3rd year	16	15.4%	
	4th year	5	4.8%	
	5th year	15	14.4%	
	All years	50	48.1%	
It doesn't matter	1	1.0%		

* __Significant G test results for the variable (p-value less than 0.05)

The bulk of professionals (86.5%) cascaded in medium interest level of professional ethics as Physiotherapists whereas 51% faculty had good knowledge and 42.3% had excellent knowledge observed in the study (G-test, $p < 0.001$) (Table-3).

Mann Whitney-U test was employed on knowledge, interest levels and demographic variables for analyzing the significant difference among them. Results were not significant but it showed some probabilities according to their mean rank values. It was analyzed that male faculty had better knowledge and interest of professional ethics than female staff. Physiotherapy faculty who had done post-graduation were having good knowledge and high interest of code of ethics and professionalism than the ones who had just done with graduations (BSPT/tDPT/DPT).

Physiotherapy professionals who were working in private colleges/universities were poor in terms of knowledge of professional ethics rather than the faculty of government institutions. Level of interest of professional ethics were almost equal in staff of both government and private institutes. Correlation

coefficient (r) was ran out between knowledge and interest of professional ethics in physiotherapy academic faculty. Weak positive relationship was found ($r = +0.38$) but results were not significant ($p = 0.70$) (Table-4).

Table No.3: Knowledge and Interest of Physiotherapy faculty towards professional ethics (n=104)

Variable	Construct	Frequency	%age	P-value
Interest	Low Interest	4	3.8%	0.000*
	Medium Interest	90	86.5%	
	High Interest	10	9.6%	
Know-ledge	Fair Knowledge	7	6.7%	0.000*
	Good Knowledge	53	51.0%	
	Excellent Knowledge	44	42.3%	

*_Significant G test results for the variable (p-value less than 0.05)

Table No.4: Mann- Whitney U test and Correlation between Knowledge and interests of physiotherapy faculty in professional ethics (n=104)

	Gender	Mean rank value	p-value
Knowledge of professional ethics	Male	60.64	0.06
	Female	49.50	
Interest in professional ethics	Male	53.18	0.81
	Female	52.25	
	Last Degree	Mean rank value	p-value
Knowledge of professional ethics	BSPT/DPT/tDPT	53.46	0.37
	MS. PT/ MPhil. PT/PhD. PT	48.78	
Interest in professional ethics	BSPT/DPT/tDPT	50.68	0.86
	MS. PT/ MPhil. PT/PhD. PT	51.29	
	Type of institute	Mean rank value	p-value
Knowledge of professional ethics	Government	60.29	0.13
	Private	50.53	
Interest in professional ethics	Government	52.17	0.92
	Private	52.58	
CORRELATION COEFFICIENT (r)			
Variable 1	Variable 2	Sign (2-tailed)	Pearson correlation value
Knowledge of physiotherapy faculty about professional ethics	Interest of physiotherapy faculty about professional ethics	0.70	+0.38
Interest of physiotherapy faculty about professional ethics	Knowledge of physiotherapy faculty about professional ethics		

DISCUSSION

The mean age of the academic faculty members was 27.7 ± 3.74 years in which majority (73.1%) were females. Most of the faculty (51%) were post-graduated with last degree of MS-PT/MPhil-PT and 79.8% academic faculty were teaching in private colleges/universities of Lahore, Pakistan. About 51% of the faculty had good knowledge and 42.3% of the faculty showed excellent knowledge in the study. Overall good knowledge and interest of physiotherapy

faculty was found towards the professional ethics in the present study. Similar to the current study two studies showed that books, journals and internet are the main source of the knowledge but in contrast to the current study the results of both of the studies showed that the physiotherapists update themselves rarely or once in every six months whereas the current study showed that physiotherapists update themselves once in a month.^(13, 15)

Similar to the current study another study taken out by Coelho et al. showed the same results that students should be punished if they break ethical conduct during their academic activities. The study showed the results that code of ethics towards professionalism should be taught in all semesters of the curriculum just like the current study.⁽¹⁶⁾ In support of the current study another research was performed by Surjit Singh et al. in 2016, and found good knowledge in doctors working in a tertiary care hospital. The doctors were also using their knowledge for the betterment of their patients found in the study.⁽¹⁷⁾ One more study by Haleh Jafari et al. in 2019 on nursing students was in favor of present study results. It was found that nurses have good knowledge and attitude towards the medical ethics.⁽¹⁸⁾ In contrast to the current study Jadranka Vukovic et al. performed a study in 2018 on pharmacists, the results of the study was not consistent with present study. The study showed the results that there is a need to improve the level of education in pharmacists to have better understanding of the medical ethics in order to deal with ethical issues and to make better professional decisions.⁽¹⁹⁾ Professional ethics are the base of any profession.⁽²⁰⁾

The study summarizes that updating the professionals by themselves individually on regular basis is important to maintain good professionalism. The study was limited in sample size because it covered only Lahore city but sample size is not the only factor on which results can be generalized. In addition, for detailed exploration regarding various aspects of professionalism and code of ethics further studies with larger sample size including other professions and cities can be conducted. Professional code of ethics must be taught in syllabus and should be the part of curriculum on both national and international levels. Students of physical therapy profession should be encouraged to maintain the professional decorum in the class towards everyone and in their carrier. Teachers should strictly evaluate the students during their academic activities for better growth of them as professional healthcare providers.

CONCLUSION

Significantly higher level of knowledge and good interest is found in this study with perception of adding code of ethics in syllabus of students for all years and even better to punish the students in case they don't follow the ethical conduct during their academic activities. Male physiotherapy academicians were leading in knowledge and interest of code of ethics than female teachers meanwhile, teaching faculty in government colleges or universities were having better professional decorum than professionals from private institutions. A weak positive relationship is found between knowledge and interest which depicts that professionals with better knowledge will have more

interest in adapting professional behavior towards patients, colleagues and other healthcare professionals.

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