

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Rehabilitation Professional Attitude Towards Persons with Disability

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The objective of this study was to determine the attitude of physical therapy and speech language pathology students toward persons with disability.

**Study Design:** Descriptive analytical

**Place and Duration of Study:** From 1<sup>st</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 at Riphah College of Rehabilitation Sciences, Riphah International University Islamabad.

**Materials and Methods:** A sample of 246 (81 post graduate, 145 under graduate and 20 Speech language pathologists) was recruited through purposive sampling. Both gender and willing students were included in study. The standard tool for attitude toward disabled person (ATDP), A & B performa was circulated to all participations. Brief demographic information was included and finally statistical analysis was drawn through SPSS-20.

**Results:** The mean age of under graduate, post graduate physiotherapy students and speech language pathologists was 22.3±3.12, 25.7±2.81 and 27.6±2.7 years respectively. The statistical analysis showed that there was a significant difference in personal and professional attitude towards disability of under graduate and post graduate physiotherapy students ( $p < 0.001$ ). The comparison showed that there was no significant difference in personal and professional attitude towards disability of post graduate physiotherapy students and speech language pathologists ( $p = 0.481$ ,  $p = 0.275$ ) respectively.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that the attitude of speech language pathologists is more positive than physiotherapy students and graduates. The attitude of under graduate physiotherapy students is more positive as compared to the post graduates. There is dire need to modify and upgrade the curriculum about the significance of disability in under grad.

**Key Words:** Disabled Persons, Physiotherapy Students, Personal Attitude, Professional Attitude.

## Introduction

The disability is a condition which limits personal, physical and mental ability or situation of being disabled.<sup>1</sup> It can be considered as the incapacity, defect and disorder.<sup>2</sup> The disability is basically an

interaction of person's characteristics with the environment's characteristics. In earlier decades it was considered that the disability is a consequence of biological process and the individual is responsible for disability.<sup>3</sup> Later they related it with some social and psychological aspects and the biopsychosocial model was introduced. Now the disability is to be considered as the human right issue by different organizations. Disability is now understood to be a human rights issue. The people are not disabled by their bodies but by the society and Disability is a contextual variable with dynamic over time and circumstance.<sup>4</sup> The ICF model the most modern and well defined have discussed not only the single aspect of disability rather explore the multiple perspective of disability like employment, disability eligibility and social aspects.<sup>5</sup> The disablement process explained that disability is not an individual trait but a lack of linkage between personal disability and the environment.<sup>6</sup> So the main responsibility lies on the society and the environment of the persons

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with disability.<sup>7</sup>

The Attitudes are a complex collection of beliefs, feelings and values.<sup>7</sup> The attitude of society towards the disable was always negative and discriminative.<sup>8</sup> People thought that disability was because of their sins and the disable person is solely responsible for his/her disability.<sup>8</sup> This attitude created a distance and discriminative behavior among society which leads to increase the gap between disable and able persons.<sup>8</sup> The health care provider should be different regarding the attitude towards disability as compare to the non health care people. The health care providers have direct and long term relationship with people with disabilities. The literature showed the positive attitude of health professionals as compare to the other professionals.<sup>8</sup> The role of Physical Therapist in disability is also very challenging and the aim is to restore, maintain, and promote not only optimal physical function but optimal wellness and fitness.<sup>9</sup> The role of physical therapist is to improve quality of life of person with disabilities and play an effective role in multidisciplinary team.

In literature different studies conducted on the assessment of attitudes of health professionals towards disability. There is difference of perception of attitude in different cultural system and multi-model societies.<sup>10</sup> Parents and teachers have a vital role to play in shaping and modeling attitudes.<sup>11</sup> There are comparative studies in literature which shows the difference in attitude of different health professionals including the physiotherapy, occupational therapy, nurses, medical staff and other related persons.<sup>12</sup> It was supposed that the attitude of rehabilitation professionals must have positive findings as they have close relationship during the rehabilitation of person with disability.<sup>8</sup> The professional graduates have more positive attitude than students because they have more interaction with disability.<sup>13</sup> There are some confounding in the survey of rehab nurses, occupational therapy and physiotherapy and the study concluded that the occupational therapy has more positive findings than other rehab professional. The confounding includes the age, clinical setting, cultural system and the experience which have greater effect on attitude towards disability.<sup>14</sup>

In Pakistan, there is limited literature to explore the

different perspective of disabilities. This study will contribute in enhancing the positive attitude and also creating the awareness among health professionals. The study was aimed to evaluate the attitudes of different rehabilitation professionals towards disabilities and to determine the difference of professional and personal attitude among them.

### Materials and Methods

A descriptive cross sectional study design was used and a sample of (n=246) rehabilitation professionals was recruited through purposive sampling from Riphah International University, Islamabad. The study was conducted from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. The sample included 145 under graduate doctors of physical therapy DPT final year students, 81 post graduate students and 20 Speech and language pathologists. Both gender and willing students were included while students with disability were excluded from the sample. The demographic details were recorded and written informed consent was taken from all participants. The standard tool "Attitude towards Disabled Person" (ATDP) designed and developed by Yurker (1960) was used to evaluate the perception of attitude. This tool has been widely used for the measurement of attitude of people towards disability.<sup>15</sup>

There are two types of questionnaire A & B, the part of ATDP, includes the personal and professional performa. The score of scale ranges from 0 - 120 and the interpretation shows that the high score reflects positive attitude towards disability. The process of distribution of both the questionnaire was to divide the class subjects into two groups. One group was asked to fill the personal performa keeping in mind the personal attitude towards disability. Other group was asked to fill the professional with perception of professional attitude towards disability and then vice versa. After completing the process the participants were asked to fill the other performa. This process assured the random distribution and avoidance of influence of perception of students. The data was analyzed through SPSS-20. The descriptive analysis including the frequency, percentage and mean were calculated while "Independent t test" was used to compare the means between groups.

### Results

The mean age of under grad, post grad

physiotherapy students and speech language pathologists were 22.3±3.12, 25.7±2.81 and 27.6±27 years respectively. The total sample has distribution of 58.94% undergrad, 32.93% post grad and 8.13% Speech and language pathologists.(Fig 1) The statistical analysis showed that there was a significant difference in personal and professional attitude towards disability of under grad and post grad physiotherapy students ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) respectively. (Table I) The und-grad students have positive attitude towards disability as compared to post grad. The comparison showed that there was no significant difference in personal and professional attitude towards disability of post grad physiotherapy students and speech language pathologists respectively ( $p = 0.481$ ,  $p = 0.275$ ). (Table II)

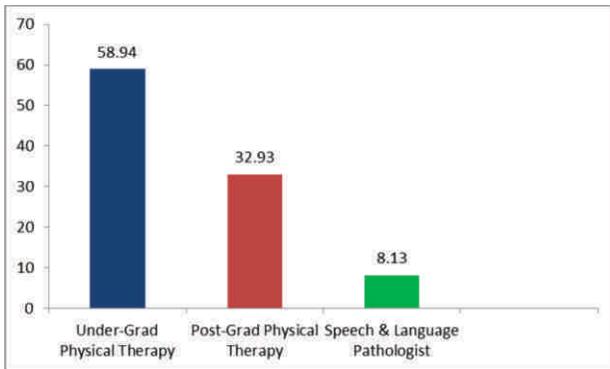


Fig 1: Shows the Sample of Different Categories

Table I: Personal and Professional Attitude of Undergrad and Post Grad PT Students

ATDP	Under grad (Mean ±Sd)	Post grad (Mean ±Sd)	p-value
Personal attitude	34.16±10.83	28.46±13.73	0.001
Professional attitude	34.16±10.77	26.90±12.56	0.000

Table II: Personal and Professional Attitude of Post Grad PT Students and Speech Language Pathologist

ATDP	Post grad (Mean ±Sd)	SLP (Mean ±Sd)	p-value
Personal attitude	28.46±13.73	30.90±13.94	0.481
Professional attitude	26.90±12.56	30.50 ±15.23	0.275

**Discussion**

The summary of results state that there is difference in attitude (both personal and professional) towards

disability of under grad and post grad physiotherapy students and the under grad students have more positive attitude than post grad students.

The results also depict that there is no difference in post grad and speech language pathologists but speech language pathologists have more positive attitude towards disability. The literature shows that the occupational therapists have high and more positive score as compared to the physiotherapists. The score of occupational therapy students are also above the average while physiotherapists have low score in attitude towards disability.<sup>13</sup> There is a difference in the attitude of final year and first year medical students towards disability, although it was not compared in this study. The personal attitude was greater than professional attitude in the final year students.<sup>14</sup>

The personal attitude reflects the cultural and other related factors' contribution and it is frequently more positive than professional attitude. It is difficult to modify and change the personal attitude while the professional attitude can be enhancing with the direct contact with person with disability. The focus should be to improve the professional attitude through training and other clinical oriented workshop related disability.<sup>15,16</sup> A study on students of occupational and physiotherapy showed that the score of physiotherapy is less than occupational therapy.<sup>17</sup> The medical education has significant impact on the development of attitude towards disability which leads to positive attitudes among health professionals. In one study the final year and house officers have similar attitudes towards disability.<sup>18</sup>

The gender has also an influence on the attitude and especially the personal attitude can be changed towards gender. But the professional attitude has not be inclined because of gender issue in attitude towards disability.<sup>19</sup> The curriculum of the health professional has significant outcome and plays a key role in the development of attitude and enhancing the positivity in attitude in health care professionals.<sup>20,21</sup>

**Conclusion**

The study concludes that the attitudes of speech language pathologist is more positive than physiotherapy students and graduates. The attitude of under grad physiotherapy students is more

positive as compared to the post graduates. There is a need to enhance the level of education, modify the existing curriculum and arrange workshops to improve the attitude of students towards disability. Future research should be conducted to explore the perception of students and clinicians about the significance of disability and person with disability.

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