

**Questionnaire based qualitative study on factors influencing physiotherapy undergraduate students in choosing physiotherapy as possible career choice**

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**Abstract**

**Introduction:** People join professions for different reasons and the same applies to physiotherapists.

**Aim:** To determine factors influencing undergraduate students to choose physiotherapy as a possible career choice.

**Methodology:** Study population included 200 undergraduate physiotherapy students. Outcome measures used were self-structured questionnaire consisting of 15 factors which was distributed among the students.

**Results:** The major factor which influenced the undergraduate physiotherapy students to choose physiotherapy as a possible career choice was "Bright future and opportunity in abroad" (44.5%) followed by Desire to help others (45%), Opportunity to interact with other people (41.5%), Potential to earn good salary (39%), Opportunity to use own initiative (38.5%), Easy

job availability (37%) and lastly encouragement from peers. (35%).

**Conclusion:** Bright future and opportunity to study in abroad, Desire to help others, Opportunity to interact with other people were the predominant factors that lead students to pursue a degree in physiotherapy.

**Keywords:** Physiotherapy, undergraduate students, career choice, factors influencing.

**Introduction**

Physiotherapy is one of the major allied health sciences professions <sup>1</sup>. It is the health care profession that involves evaluation and formulating a diagnosis to cure impairments, improve mobility and hence improve quality of life <sup>2</sup>. The field of physiotherapy is the dynamic profession that offers tremendous opportunities in terms of academic learning, clinical practice and research <sup>3</sup>. Physiotherapist is one of the significant team player in a multidisciplinary health care team as they function in developing rehabilitation

regime and re-establish one's maximum movement capability and functional independency<sup>4</sup>. A student who is dedicated to entering a particular profession be more likely to persist in the course despite difficulties encountered<sup>5</sup>. Physiotherapists need a clear view of the purpose and intent of their profession and a conscious awareness of a professional identity which encompasses purposeful actions to pursue professional goals in changing practice contexts throughout the span of their careers<sup>6</sup>. The role of physiotherapy consists of encouraging and educating health and wellbeing of every person and general public; reducing impairments, disabilities and functional dependency as well as rehabilitating and restoring the movement's maximum function of daily living and improving quality of every individual<sup>4</sup>

In recent years, physiotherapy has proven to be a significant health care need as there is constant demand of physiotherapist<sup>4</sup>. World confederation of physiotherapy, establishes that physiotherapy "educational program be based on university or university level studies, of a minimum four years, independently validated and accredited at standards that accords graduates full statutory and professional recognition (World Confederation of Physical Therapy, 2019)<sup>7</sup>. Evidence suggests that an individual's character, level of intelligence and education, ability and personal acceptability are derived from occupational label<sup>2</sup>. Today, physiotherapists are autonomous professionals who take active roles in prevention of disease promotion of wellness, as well as physical fitness and rehabilitation<sup>3</sup>.

Any profession can be characterized by that it represents a social standing in relation to other professions and in modern society social position is

determined to a great extent by occupation of individual (or one's parents' occupations) in spite of inherited standing<sup>6</sup>. Professional socialization starts at the beginning of the educational program and is a continuous, life-long process of learning formal knowledge, skills and rules, as well as informal and tacit knowledge, norms, values and loyalties within the profession and emphasizes the students' interaction with the field in focus, their preferences and choices as well as their role models. Educational outcomes for professions are attained through the socialization of students to the values, attitudes and beliefs of their chosen profession and a commitment to a professional career<sup>6</sup>.

Factors influencing individual about his occupation influences the quality of his work, undeveloped and failed and unclear perception can result in dissatisfaction, poor professional performance, and abandonment of the field after graduation<sup>6</sup>. The factors that influence an individual to choose over the course to pursue or career pathways depend on multiple factors such as gender related jobs, salary opportunities, family influences or even passion. Even the factors influencing individual changes during first year to final year of studies due to lack of understanding or superficial knowledge about the course to be taken prior to enrolment physiotherapy.<sup>4</sup>

If students or practicing health professionals are misplaced in their professions because of wrong career choices, they often find themselves suffering dissonance, high anxiety or both<sup>8</sup>. In extreme cases the person may opt to leave the profession altogether to pursue a career more befitting them<sup>9</sup>.

#### **Material**

Self structured questionnaire, pen, writing board.

## Methodology

The study was done to know “Factors influencing undergraduate physiotherapy students to choose physiotherapy as a possible career choice” Permission and approval to carry out the research work was obtained from the institutional ethical committee and the head of the institution of Physiotherapy College also. Research design was Questionnaire based qualitative study. Study setting was V.S.P.M’s college of Physiotherapy. Type of survey conducted was questionnaire based survey, and scoring was done using a five point Likert scale. Target population covered in the study was all the students from first year to final year. Sample size was 200.

The questionnaire was a self - structured questionnaire, which was modified according to the Indian scenario and validated from the MET cell of the medical college to which the physiotherapy is attached.

Questionnaire consisted of 2 components. Component 1<sup>st</sup> consisted of demographic data such as age, academic year, gender

2<sup>nd</sup> component consisted of Factors influencing the students to choose Physiotherapy as a possible career choice which consisted of 16 questions of which one was open ended question.

15 questions were rated according to five point Likert scale:

- 1 - not at all important
- 2 - Slightly important
- 3 - Moderately important
- 4 - Very important
- 5 - Extremely important

Duration of the study was 18 months. Outcome measures were factors influencing undergraduate physiotherapy students through self-structured

questionnaire. The selection criteria were based on inclusion and exclusion criteria as mentioned below:-

**Inclusion criteria-** First to final year students, both genders, Students voluntarily willing to participate in the study, Students present on the day of survey.

**Exclusion criteria -** Interns and Post graduate students, Students who are not willing to participate, Students who were absent on the day of data collection

Sample population was the students present on the day of the survey who were belonging to Bachelor of Physiotherapy course formed the sample for study. Sampling procedure used was Universal Sampling. Sample size was 200. The subjects who formed the sample for study were both males and females aged 16-30 years of age. Sample size was estimated considering proportion having influence of family members.

Following assumptions were made by the study of it all (2019)

Assumptions

- 1) Expected proportion =31%
- 2) Relative procedure =20%
- 3) Desired confidence level = (1- $\alpha$ ) %=95%

Required sample size N=200

Formula used –

$$N = \frac{Z^2 (1-\alpha) p (1-p)}{d^2}$$

Where Z (1- $\alpha$ ) =Standard normal score for 5% error =1.96

p=expected proportion =31%

d=relative precision= (0.20×0.31)

$$n = \frac{1.962 \times 0.31 \times (1-0.31)}{(0.20 \times 0.31)^2}$$

n=200

### **Sampling Method**

Sampling frame included all undergraduate students enrolled in Physiotherapy department of student institution. Universal sampling method was used to pick up the required number of study subjects, n=200.

### **General Procedure**

Prerequisite permission from the head of institution was taken. A protocol was prepared for study. An appropriate self-structured questionnaire was prepared. So, the most applicable questionnaire was selected and modified to match the Indian condition. A self-structured questionnaire was validated by the MET unit of the medical college associated with the physiotherapy college. Study was carried out to obtain the responses and estimate the sample size. The study protocol was explained to subjects who were participating in the study. The subjects were given ample time to fill up the whole questionnaire and were submitted to the researcher. All the responses from the questionnaires were entered in a Microsoft Excel Sheet 2013 for further analysis. A statistical analysis was performed and the raw data was processed by various statistical methods. The results of the research were discussed afterwards.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Data was entered in MS Excel coded and analyzed in statistical STATA, version 10.1,2011

Data analysis included both Descriptive and Inferential statistics.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive analysis was used to summarize quantitative variables with mean and standard deviation while frequency and percentages were used to summarize categorical (qualitative) variables.

Proportion of factor wise responses were estimated with percentage along with 95% confidence interval.

### **Inferential Statistics**

Inferential statistics included Pearson's Chi square to test significance difference in proportion by various sub groups (Year wise)

A p-value < 0.05 was considered statistically for all paired comparisons.

### **Results**

A total of 200 physiotherapy undergraduate students participated in the study. 174 (87%) were females and 26 (13%) were males. First year students were 59 (29.50%), followed by Second year 69 (34.50 %), Third year 43(21.50%) & Final year 29 (14.50 %) respectively.

Based on the factors that influences physiotherapy undergraduate students to take up physiotherapy course, the most commonly selected answers were "Bright future and opportunity in abroad" (44.5%) followed by Desire to help others (45%), Opportunity to interact with other people (41.5%), Potential to earn good salary (39%), Opportunity to use own initiative (38.5%), Easy job availability (37%) and lastly encouragement from peers. (35%).

Based on distribution of students according to their response extremely important for factor opportunity to interact with other people by academic year, the first year, second year, third year, final year responses were as follows 55.93%, 31.88 %, 30.23 & 17.24% respectively. p value = 0.003 (Significant)

Based on distribution of students according to their response extremely important for always wanting to be a physiotherapist by academic year, the first year, second year, third year, final year responses were as

follows 33.90%, 17.39%, 9.30%, 17.2% respectively. p value = 0.020 (Significant)

Distribution of students according to response extremely important for factor did not want longer duration course from first to final year was 13.56%, 4.35%, 4.65%, 0.00% respectively. p value = 0.002 (Significant)

Distribution of students according to their response very important for factor potential to earn good salary from first to final year was 40.68%, 42.03%, 27.91%, 44.83% respectively. p value = 0.012 (Significant)

Distribution of students according to their response extremely important for previous knowledge of the profession by academic year was 20.34%, 20.29%, 6.98%, 20.69% respectively. p value = 0.032 (Significant)

According to the response moderately important for factor teachers suggested it; responses recorded from first to final year were 30.51%, 24.64%, 48.84%, 13.7% respectively. p value = 0.001 (Significant)

According to the response extremely important for factor desire to help others, responses recorded were 52.54%, 39.13%, 34.88%, 34.48% respectively. p value = 0.002 (Significant)

## Discussion

Questionnaire based study was carried out among 200 students from 1<sup>st</sup> year to 4<sup>th</sup> year undergraduate physiotherapy students to find the factors influencing them to choose physiotherapy as a possible career choice. Our study came up with result that the factor 'Bright future and opportunity in abroad' (44.50%) was found extremely important among the students. The wish of the students was to become established outside the country, there are lot of opportunities in abroad whereas finding work as a physiotherapist does not

pose any problem in European countries<sup>10</sup>. Findings of present study were in agreement with the study named Perception of physiotherapy students regarding to their profession done by **Md. Yamitez Ali Sarkar (2006-2007)**.

Whereas the factor 'Desire to help others' was found to be very important factor for influencing students to choose physiotherapy as a possible career choice (45%) and was also found as extremely important among 1st year students (52.54%). Physiotherapy has a great scope to service directly to the general people and also provide service to the person with disabilities which influenced the students a lot to choose physiotherapy as a career. Similar results were found in the study named Factors influencing Zimbabwean Physiotherapy students in choosing physiotherapy as a career done by **Mkondo et al (2007)**. They reported that 60% for the factor desire to help others.

The factor 'Interest in sport and athletic injuries' was found to be very important factor for influencing (35%) which was also found extremely important in males (53.85%). "In cricket, when player gets injured, they get recovered by physiotherapist treatment<sup>6</sup>."

The factor 'Opportunity to interact with other people' was found to be very important (41.5%), which was also found to be extremely important among final year students (55.93%). Results are in line with the study done by **Hon Swii Yatti et.al (2019)** named Why I choose physiotherapy course as my career? An Asian Prospective, they reported that (70.69%) students are influenced by this factor.

The factor 'Potential to earn good salary' was found to be very important (39%) which was also found very important among final year students (44.83%). Success and happiness in a given profession are defined in the

terms of monetary wealth and recognition or respect given by others influences them a lot<sup>8</sup>.

The factor 'Opportunity to use own initiative' was found to be very important (38.5%). Working conditions for Physiotherapist are generally accepted as being good. There are little out of hour's work required unless desired by the individual therapist. There are ample of opportunities for part time work. Private practitioners are able to choose their own working conditions.<sup>5</sup>

The factor easy job availability was found to be very important with (37%), which was also found very important among the females with (40.23%). There are plenty of jobs available, so the students will not be disappointed in this regard even there are more opportunities for part time work as well as private practice. The increasing number of multispecialty hospitals and the emphasis on holistic care and rehabilitation has highlighted the role of physiotherapist in patient management<sup>1</sup>.

Factor encouragement from peers was found as very important with (35%), most of the students had received information of physiotherapy from their friends who had visited the physiotherapist as a patient who gave them broad appreciation of the profession.<sup>5</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Bright future and opportunity to study in abroad, Desire to help others, Opportunity to interact with other people were the predominant factors that lead students to pursue a degree in physiotherapy.

Female students were motivated more by Previous knowledge of profession, whereas male students were influenced more by Interest in sports and athletic injuries and easy job availability.

The factor Potential to earn good salary was found very important in final year students, teachers suggested it

was moderately important for third year students and Opportunity to interact with other people was extremely important in first year students.

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