

## “A Study of Physical Therapists’ Perceptions about Limitations in Development of Physical Therapy Profession in Pakistan”

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the study** was to find out Physical Therapists’ perceptions about limitations in development of physical therapy profession in Pakistan.

**Methods:** A cross sectional survey was conducted and three hundred Physical Therapists from all over Pakistan were invited to participate to a questionnaire comprising of thirteen closed ended questions. A purposive sampling technique was used. Out of three hundred physical therapists only 116 responded back.

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**Results:** There were 116 Physical Therapists who participated in study. Male were 36 (31%) and 80 (69%) female. Out of which private job sector

with number reaching to 72 (62%), self-practicing therapists were found to be 24 (21%) and only 20 (17%) Physical Therapists were from Government Sector. Further it was extracted from collected data that out of 116 only 14 (12%) Physical Therapists were found engaged in Academics while rests of 102 (88%) Respondent Physical Therapists were doing clinical practice.

**Conclusion:** It has been originated that lack of awareness of scope of physical therapy practice, lack of job structure, lack of physical therapy council, clientage dependency of medical physicians and surgeons, lack of professional attitude among physical therapists, lack of check on physical therapy quackery, lack of formal hands on training and victimization of physical therapy field seniors due to their insecurity, were the perceived barriers in development of physical therapy profession with which most of physical therapists were agreed.

**Key Words:** Limitations, Physical Therapy Profession, Professional Development, Pakistan Physical Therapy.

### INTRODUCTION:

Physical therapy or Physiotherapy is usually abbreviated as PT. It is a health profession mainly deals with correction of impairments/ disabilities, promotes functional mobility and ability. It is based on assessment, evaluation, diagnosis and intervention through patient education, physical agents, manual therapy, manipulation, rehabilitation and exercise therapy. Sometime all these services are given in conjunction with other medical or surgical interventions<sup>[1]</sup>. In context of characteristics of profession, the physical therapy

professionals have 5 years degree education relating to health and physiotherapy field. They have clinicians-clients relationship, they have direct access to patients / clients, use their skill and knowledge to fix patient / client problems under the ethical codes of practice defined by WHO.<sup>[2]</sup> The professionals occupying this profession of PT are called Physical therapists, physiotherapists or physical rehabilitation therapists. Other than this clinical practice PT profession also deals with research, education, consultation and administrative affairs.<sup>[3, 4]</sup> Physical therapy profession has diverse range specialties including musculoskeletal, sports, wound care, EMG, cardiopulmonary, geriatrics, neurologic and pediatrics now a days. Professionals of physical therapy practice in health clinics, hospitals, fitness / wellness centers, academics, research centers industrial enters.<sup>[5, 6]</sup>

In developed countries, physical therapy profession has diverse scope and is quite independent but in developing countries such as Pakistan it is developing profession. Physical therapy professionals perceive many factors which are supposed to be limitations/ barriers in progress of the profession in Pakistan as briefed in below paragraphs. These perceptions were surveyed and conclusions made on base of results.

The study is unique in the sense that it is the first study of exploring the limitations in progress of physical therapy profession in Pakistan. However, there are many studies have been conducted with similar aims of finding barriers/ limitations in development of different professions or different aspects of a profession. In this regard a study conducted in Bulgaria figuring out about hurdles relating to growth and consumption of public health sciences.<sup>[7]</sup> Another study found that was conducted in Argentina about Pharmaceutical Care in Argentina to identify the perceived barriers to implementing pharmaceutical care in Argentina.<sup>[8]</sup> A systematic review also conducted to find out barriers and facilitators for application of shared decision-making in clinical practice.<sup>[9]</sup> Three more studies reviewed which were conducted about to know barriers in respective matters discussed in studies, as first about Barriers to effective quality management and leadership,<sup>[10]</sup> second about the Barriers to Charting in Private Practice identified by Physiotherapists in New Burnwick,<sup>[11]</sup> and third a protocol study found about Users' Perspectives

of Barriers and Facilitators to Implementing EHR in Canada.<sup>[12]</sup>

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS:**

This was a cross-sectional descriptive study conducted on the physical therapy professionals about limitations/ barriers in progress of the physical therapy profession. Personal interviews were conducted and a set of perceptions were collected which physical therapists have about developmental hindrance to their profession. These were called perceptions because there is no research proof of these hindrances but these are assumed by physical therapist. This study pin pointed facts which needs to be addressed based on perceptions of physical therapists. These perceptions open new areas of research regarding perceptions that may be verified in further research. The physical therapy professionals' perceptions all over the Pakistan Including Lahore (Punjab), Peshawar (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Quetta (Baluchistan), Karachi (Sindh) and Muzafarabad (Azad Kashmir) were enrolled for barriers in way of development of physical therapy profession in Pakistan from October 2011 to March 2012. Subjects of Non-physical therapist, not practicing, staying abroad/ working abroad were also excluded from the study. This resulted in the final sample size of 116 physical therapists for this study. All statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS software package (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 16.

## **RESULTS:**

The total sample for this study consisted of records of 116 physical therapists, Male were 36 (31%) and 80 (69%) female. Out of which private job sector with number reaching to 72 (62%), self-practice therapists were found to be 24 (21%) and only 20 (17%) Physical Therapists were from Government Sector. It was extracted from collected data that out of 116 only 14 (12%) Physical Therapists were found engaged in Academics while rests of 102 (88%) Physical Therapists were doing clinical work. There were asked 8 perceptions which were supposed to be the barriers in development of Physical Therapy Profession in Pakistan. The result of those 8 perceptive statements is given below but all perceptions were found with most of responses with being agreed;

Out of 116 Physical Therapists, 104 (89.7%) agreed with perception that lack of public awareness about physical therapy profession as barrier in progress of the profession, 10 (8.6%) disagreed to this statement, while rest of 2 (1.7%) physical therapists mentioned that they have no knowledge of this factor as a barrier in professional development. 116 (100%) physical therapists agreed about lack of job structure as a barrier in development of physical therapy profession. 109 (94%) physical therapists agreed that lack of physical therapy council as barrier in professional development, 6 (5.2%) didn't know about, only 1 (0.9%) physical therapist disagreed with this perception as barrier. Eighty nine (85.3%), 4 (3.4%), 13 (11.2%) physical therapists respectively agreed, didn't have knowledge and disagreed respectively about the perception that medical physicians and surgeons suppress the physical therapy profession. Seventy six (65.5%) physical therapists themselves agreed with the perception that their non-professional attitude is a limitation in professional development, however, 30 (25.9%) physical therapists disagreed with this perception, rest of physical therapist didn't know about this. 108 (93.1%) majority physical therapists agreed with the perception that lack of check on physical therapy quackery is as development barrier, 5(4.3%) disagreed, only 3 (2.6%) physical therapists didn't know about. 107 (92.2%) physical therapists agreed with perception that formal hands on training can uplift profession, 4 (3.4%) and 5 (4.3%) physical therapists respectively disagreed and didn't know about it. Ninety eight (84.5%) physical therapists agreed with perception that seniors in physical therapy field are victims of insecurity so do not promote their juniors so causing hurdle in overall progress of profession, 8 (6.8%) disagreed and 10 (8.6%) didn't have knowledge.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

As this is first study of its nature in Pakistan. The studies have been conducted about finding out the barriers/ limitations but in other professions worldwide. Even the literature review revealed that there are many sectors, departments and issues when their progress came under question, there were conducted studies about the barriers limiting their progress. Here in Pakistan Physical Therapy profession is an under developed profession and physical therapists themselves perceived the limiting factors. When these perceived barriers

surveyed among physical therapists, most of physical therapists agreed with them as barriers in development of profession.

#### **CONCLUSIONS:**

This study revealed that the perceived barriers in way of development of physical therapy in Pakistan. The perceived barriers which were mostly agreed are lack of awareness of scope of physical therapy practice, lack of job structure, lack of physical therapy council, clientage dependency of medical physicians and surgeons, lack of professional attitude among physical therapists, lack of check on physical therapy quackery, lack of formal hands on training and victimization of physical therapy field seniors due to their insecurity.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Pakistan Physical Therapy Association, the professional body of physical therapy professionals, should give recommendations to Pakistan Government for above mentioned barriers. Physical therapists themselves should pay role to correct the gaps of progress. Further research work should be done in these perceived areas.

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**Table No.1**

S. #	Perceptions Perceived by Physical Therapy Professionals About Physical Therapy Profession	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
1	Lack of public awareness about physical	104 (89.7%)	2 (1.7%)	10 (8.6%)
2	Lack of Job Structure of Physical Therapy Profession	116 (100%)	-	-
3	Clientage dependency on Medical Physicians and Surgeons	99 (85.3%)	4 (3.4%)	13 (11.2%)
4	Lack of professional attitude in Physical Therapists in Pakistan	76 (65.5%)	10 (8.6%)	30 (25.9%)
5	No check on Physical Therapy quackery	108 (93.1%)	3 (2.6%)	5 (4.3%)
6	Lack of governing body / council of Physical Therapy	109 (94%)	6 (5.2%)	1 (0.9%)
7	Lack of formal hands on training for practicing Physical Therapists	107 (92.2%)	5 (4.3%)	4 (3.4%)
8	Seniors in Physical Therapy field are victims of insecurity and do not promote their juniors in clinical and job sectors	98 (84.5%)	10 (8.6%)	8 (6.9%)

*Note: Total number of physical therapists who participated in study were 116.*