

THE ATTITUDE OF PHYSIOTHERAPY GRADUATES TOWARDS AGEING - A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

Background- The population is ageing globally. In recent years, the older adult population has been increasing. As a result, it is projected that more number of older adults may suffer from chronic conditions which will increase the demand of health care services like physiotherapy. Recently, ageism has been recognised as an important factor affecting the quality of rehabilitation services provided to older adults. **Aim-** To describe the attitude of physiotherapy graduates towards ageing.

Objective-To find out the attitude of physiotherapy graduates towards ageing by using KOGAN SCALE.

Materials and method- Our study was a cross sectional descriptive study conducted in 2020-21. It determined the attitude of physiotherapy graduates towards ageing. 57 graduates were selected on the basis of Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Nashik. Kogan scale was used to find out the attitude of the graduates.

Result- In the study, it was found that most graduates felt positive about older adults and had a positive attitude towards them. The result shows that out of 57 physiotherapy graduates, 46 physiotherapy graduates had a positive attitude towards older adults. This indicates that physiotherapy graduates, on average, are more appreciative towards the elderly.

Conclusion-Physiotherapy graduates have a positive attitude towards older adults. The reason behind this could be that the graduates have enough knowledge about the elderly as MUHS offers enough content of syllabus based on geriatrics and gerontology for physiotherapy undergraduates. The study has demonstrated that physiotherapy graduates have a positive attitude and a better approach towards older adults.

INTRODUCTION

The demographic shift towards population ageing is an issue of global significance. Annually about 58 million people around the world would turn 60 years old which equates to 2 people every second. ^{[1], [2]}

Global proportion of older adults more than 60 years is expected to increase by 2 folds in coming years resulting in greater number of older adults than children under 15. As a result, it is projected that more number of older adults

may suffer from chronic conditions which will increase the demand of health care services like physiotherapy. ^{[1],[3],[4]}

In preparation of the 'Baby Boomer' effect, Butler coined the word ageism which is described in 3 dimensions: the first is discrimination against people because they are old. The second dimension is systematic stereotyping means assumptions based on a particular group of people. And the third one is

patronizing older adults explains endearment beyond cultural context.^{[5], [6], [7]}

Michael E. Kalu and some other studies reported the professionals' attitude towards older people ranged from neutral to positive also they suggested that the professionals' will to work with older adults may increase likelihood and change their behaviour towards ageism.^[1]

Attitudes that influence behaviour may be different across health care professionals. Their differences may arise due to their knowledge curriculum on their different role plays in care of older adults. Consequently profession specific theories or strategies may need to be developed although professionals may learn from one another. There may be overlapping interests. Koskinen et al. Reported results of scoping review of literature related to geriatric educational program. As such, research on the attitude of physiotherapy graduates towards older adults and their interest in working with older adults is in progress.^[1]

In response to unique concern of older adults and to enhance the quality of their care, the number of expertise in gerontology care is needed. In particular physiotherapists are increasingly responsible for caring for senior citizens by improving their independence to carry out their activities of daily living.

Blackwood et al. Found positive attitude towards older adults among physical therapy students and members of American association by using various attitude scales encouraging us for this study.^[8] The plot the study includes the attitude based on their knowledge gained during graduation. Fortunately, Kogan scale predicts their attitude.^[9,10]

Although physiotherapists have good knowledge about geriatrics, positive clinical experience with older adults and supervisors with positive attitude towards older adults strongly influence and develop interest and will enhance the geriatric care.

Physiotherapists as a part of interdisciplinary team have a pivotal role as providers of care for older people. Physiotherapists are in a unique position to influence the quality of care.^[11, 12]

Therefore, the goal of current study was focused to describe physiotherapy graduates' attitude towards aged people.

METHODS

Our study was a cross sectional descriptive study conducted in 2020-21. It determined the attitude of physiotherapy graduates towards ageing by using Kogan Scale. 57 graduates were selected on the basis of MUHS, Nashik and others were excluded. An inductive, qualitative approach was adapted after obtaining the permission from the head of the institute and the institutional ethics committee. Kogan scale was used to find out the attitude of the graduates. A database of graduates was prepared. The compilation of consent form and confidentiality agreement was assured to all the participants. Owing to the time and clinical placement constraints the liberty was given to fill the Kogan Attitude Scale. Due to pandemic, later the responses were collected via Google forms avoiding any physical contact. The individuals were instructed to return the Kogan attitude scale within 7 days from the receiving date.

Each participant was requested not to discuss kogan scale with their known participants to avoid interference effect.

Participants were asked to mark their statement in a Likert scale form with item values ranging between 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly) where higher scores indicate more positive attitudes. An attitude index was computed as the means of all 34 items. The Attitude towards Older People Scale is a uni-dimensional tool that does not recognise any dimensions or factors. It covers the affective and cognitive, other-directed, explicit, positive and negative components of ageism. Once the attitude scale came back to the sender, it was documented for further data analysis. Then analysis was done to obtain mean and standard deviation.

RESULT

In the study, it was found that most graduates felt positive about older adults and had a positive attitude towards them. The result shows that out of 57 physiotherapy graduates, 46 physiotherapy graduates had a positive attitude towards older adults. This indicates that physiotherapy graduates, on average, are more appreciative towards the elderly.

Questions	Positive		Negative		Total	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
1- It would be better if most of the elderly lived with their coevals in the same place	5.18	1.328	4.83	1.691	4.89	1.622
2-It would be better if most of the elderly lived in places where the young also lived	5.55	1.128	5.93	1.083	5.86	1.093
3-There is something different with most of the elderly: it is difficult to understand what makes them restless/tick	5.55	1.214	4.61	1.498	4.79	1.485
4-Most of the elderly are not different from anybody; understanding them is as easy as understanding the young	4.36	1.912	3.96	1.699	4.04	1.732
5-Most of the elderly live as they wish and cannot change	5.64	1.120	4.72	1.601	4.89	1.555
6- Most of the elderly can adopt themselves to the changes required by the conditions	3.27	1.191	4.28	1.559	4.09	1.539
7-Most of the elderly prefer to get retired as soon as entitled to it or their children are able to look after them	4.36	1.690	3.96	1.776	4.04	1.752
8-Most of the elderly would like continue to work as long as possible rather than be dependent on anybody	5.18	1.328	5.91	1.050	5.77	1.134
9-Most of the elderly tend to let their houses untidy and unkempt	3.82	1.834	2.52	1.457	2.77	1.604
10-Most of the elderly can keep their houses clean and tidy	4.91	1.300	5.80	1.276	5.63	1.318
11-It is foolish to say that wisdom comes by old age	4.18	1.401	3.65	1.840	3.75	1.766
12-People grow wiser with coming of old age	3.82	1.250	4.76	1.580	4.58	1.558
13-The elderly have too much power in business life and politics	4.73	1.272	4.15	1.429	4.26	1.408
14-The elderly should have power in business life and politics	3.82	1.250	4.54	1.260	4.40	1.280
15-Most of the elderly easily make people ill/make them feel unwell	4.09	0.944	2.50	1.362	2.81	1.432
16-It is quite relaxing to be with the elderly	4.18	1.471	5.48	1.394	5.23	1.488
17-Most of the elderly bore others by talking about 'good old days'	4.82	1.328	3.11	1.386	3.44	1.524
18-One of the most interesting and entertaining qualities of most elderly people is to tell about their past experiences	5.00	1.095	6.09	1.297	5.88	1.324
19-Most of the elderly spend too much time mix into other people's business (stick their noses) and giving unsought advice	5.36	1.286	4.24	1.401	4.46	1.440
20-Most of the elderly tend to keep their opinions to themselves and give advice only when asked	4.09	1.514	3.91	1.488	3.95	1.481
21-If the elderly people expect to be liked, their first step is to try to get rid of their irritating faults	4.27	1.421	4.15	1.210	4.18	1.241
22-When you think about it, old people have the same faults as anybody else	4.82	1.168	4.48	1.588	4.54	1.513
23-Its best to move to an area where there not many elderly people in order to keep your neighborhood nice	4.36	1.286	2.39	1.422	2.77	1.593
24-You can be sure to find a nice atmosphere if there is a sufficient number of elderly people in your neighborhood	4.82	0.874	5.30	1.209	5.21	1.161
25-There are a few exceptions, but in general most old people are pretty much alike	5.18	0.982	5.13	1.240	5.14	1.187
26-It is evident that most old people are very different from one another	4.18	1.471	4.57	1.486	4.49	1.477
27-Most of the elderly should take care of their personal appearance; they are too untidy	4.09	1.221	2.98	1.527	3.19	1.529
28-Most of the elderly have a clean and tidy personal appearance	4.27	1.348	5.41	1.240	5.19	1.329

29-Most of the elderly are irritable, grouchy and unpleasant	5.09	1.221	3.33	1.592	3.67	1.673
30-Most of the elderly are cheerful, agreeable and good humoured	4.64	0.924	5.50	1.188	5.33	1.185
31-Most of the elderly constantly complain about the behaviour of the younger generation	5.27	1.104	5.09	1.363	5.12	1.310
32-Most of the elderly rarely complain about the behaviour of the younger generation	4.00	1.844	3.59	1.600	3.67	1.640
33-Most of the elderly need more love and reassurance than other people	5.82	0.982	5.85	1.229	5.84	1.177
34-Most of the elderly need as much love and reassurance as other people	5.18	1.168	6.02	1.202	5.86	1.231

DISCUSSION

This study has a number of implication for the physiotherapy profession in relation to the aging population and the resultant growing requirement for health services in aged care as they have far reaching impact on the quality of care for older adults.

In our study, it was found that while some graduates had negative attitudes towards older adults, most graduates felt positive about older adults. The result shows that out of 57 physiotherapy graduates, 46 physiotherapy graduates had a positive attitude towards older adults. This indicates that physiotherapy graduates, on average, are more appreciative towards the elderly. There are several factors that influence the attitudes of physiotherapy graduates; gerontological education, academic or clinical education seems to have a marginal and not long lasting effect on attitude towards older adults. However, contact with older adults including family and clinical placement and employment setting is an important factor in some graduates. [13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18] It is also found that if there is a lack of educational training and exposure of working with older adults it may influence the knowledge and attitude towards ageism. [19, 20] The graduates who had contact with the elderly in clinical setups were significantly less biased. Only 11 graduates showed negative attitudes as they might have not come across older adults so frequently and might not be acquainted with their problems and could also be due to staying in nuclear family. Generally, gender was found to be non significant across the studies in relation to attitudes towards older adults. And the results showed that neither the appreciation of the elderly nor prejudices against them depends on the age of the graduates.

Stewart et al. showed that physiotherapy students had lower general knowledge on ageing compared to nursing students. In this study, the included students were in their 1st

year of physiotherapy program at Auckland University in New Zealand. Therefore, by seeing the above study result, in the current study, the minimum criteria for inclusion was decided to have 4th year passed graduates doing their internship and onwards which led to contradicting results in our study. [21, 22, 23]

In other studies it was found that the older physiotherapists were least interested in working with elder people though they had good knowledge about gerontology while some studies found the opposite to be true. [24, 25, 26, 27]

The physiotherapy graduates have significantly less negative attitudes towards older adults regarding their response to statement number 9, 11, 15, 17, 23, 27, 29 as they disagree with these negative statements by responding with low mean scores.

At the same time the physiotherapy graduates are more appreciative towards elderly regarding their response to statement number 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 34 as they respond to these positive questions with high mean scores.

The physiotherapy graduates show an overall positive attitude when they agree with statement number 2 and 24 as they believe it is possible for two or more generation to live in the same environment and as they know cross generational interaction is very healthy. Also analysing the respond given by the graduates to statement number 4, 6, 22, 26, 30 it is evident that the physiotherapy graduates show a really positive and appreciative attitude towards the elderly as the physiotherapy graduates think of the older adults as any other human being and know that older adults just like any other age group can adjust and cope up with different situations. They know all age groups have faults and older adults are no different. And also they are well aware of the fact that most older adults are very different from each other and except a few elderly

people others are quite fun to be with.

Studying statement number 8, 11, 12, 14 it is clear that the physiotherapy graduates believe that older adults need to be valued and encouraged to keep working and should be freed from the limited roles in the society and that they are aware of the fact that older adults are holders of wisdom while younger people have a better access to knowledge. The graduates agree with the fact that people grow wiser with the coming of age. Also the physiotherapy graduates know that despite the fact older adults are not in the working population they can be given access to business and politics if they meet the expectations and most of them don't confuse the 90% of the older people who are able with the 10% who are not. And thus the response of the physiotherapy graduates to these question show an overall positive and appreciative

attitude as they break all the stereotypic roles of the elderly in the society which is a great limitation to the older adults and welcome them to work and have power in business and politics as they are wise enough to do so.

Analysing question number 9, 10, 27, 28 a really positive attitude of physiotherapy graduates is noted as they know older adults have significant roles in the society such as supporting a family, caring for their grand children and they do it voluntarily, also they live up to their responsibilities and live independent. The graduates know that the elderly have responsibilities but always take some time out to take care of themselves and people around and are very much conscious about their external appearance. Studying question number 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 29, 34 it is very clear that Physiotherapy graduates show positive attitude as they know a major part of traditional knowledge is transmitted through older adults and spending time with them is quite relaxing, as they know that inter- generational interaction is very important. As the physiotherapy graduates know life experience is one of the most effective ways to learn lessons and entertainment. They know that elderly people are cheerful and agreeable and in return the elderly people need as much love and attention as any other generation.

They disagree with the fact that elderly people make them feel unwell and know that it is a naive expectation that older adults will bore them by talking about the good old days.

However, physiotherapy graduates have fewer prejudices against the elderly regarding

statement number 1, 3, 5, 7, 13, 19, 21, 25, 31, 33 as they show high mean scores in these negative questions and also as they show low mean scores in some positive questions such as question number 20 and 32.

Their response to question number 1, 3, 13, 21, 31, 32, 33 suggests that the attitude of some physiotherapy graduates is negative as they believe in the stereotypic roles of elderly according to the age and think it is better for them to live with people of their own age group. They discriminate between the older people and others and this categorization can be highly problematic. Some think young people are not considered to deserve the right to participate or express their opinion which is not true. Also some think elderly people have irritating fault which they need to get rid of and it is seen that it is a deeply ingrained structure that elderly constantly keep on complaining about the younger generations. Some physiotherapy graduates think elderly people demand more love and attention. Also analysing the response given by some graduates to question number 5, 7, 25 it is evident that the attitude noted of some graduates is negative as they think the older adults lack in adaptability and confuse the 90% of the older people who are able with the 10% who are not. Also some graduates agree with the fact that elderly people tend to get retired as soon as entitled to it. Attitude projected in these questions is not positive as the graduates believe in the stereotypic fact that older adults indulge and involve in all sorts of activities. Clearly, younger generation thinks the elder people advise and give opinions even when not asked. As the physiotherapy graduates agree with question number 19 and 20

Kogan scale used in the study proves to be valid and reliable. It covered the affective and cognitive, other-directed, explicit, positive and negative components of ageism.

The study has notable strengths as the results were obtained from public as well as private university graduates, therefore, it can be generalised to other private and public university graduates since the clinical education seems to be similar throughout the country. On the basis of content of the syllabus the study results can be generalised and implemented for other institutions' graduates. The result shows that education provided by different universities rendered proper knowledge so as to inculcate a positive attitude in the graduates towards elderly.

However, it was observed that the factors

influencing the attitudes of elderly towards physiotherapy treatment could have been taken into consideration. Thus, the scope of future studies is to consider the factors influencing the attitude of geriatric population towards physiotherapy treatment.

Overall, it was found that the attitude of the physiotherapy graduates is positive and appreciative towards elderly people. This is very important to create a healthy rehabilitation environment and to improve the quality of care given to the older adults during physiotherapy treatments.

CONCLUSION

Physiotherapy graduates have a positive attitude towards older adults. The reason behind this could be that the graduates have enough knowledge about the elderly as MUHS offers enough content of syllabus based on geriatrics and gerontology for physiotherapy undergraduates. The study has demonstrated that physiotherapy graduates have a positive attitude and a better approach towards older adults.

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