

Knowledge and Awareness about Occupational Therapy among the Public in Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study aimed to assess the knowledge and awareness of Occupational Therapy (OT) among the public in Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia. There is a lack of prior research on this topic in the region, highlighting the need for a comprehensive evaluation of public understanding.

Methods: A survey consisting of 20 questions was distributed to 385 participants, with 59.2% identifying as male and 40.8% as female.

Results: The findings revealed that 66.5% of participants had heard of OT, while 33.5% had not. In terms of educational background, 15.3% held a diploma, 39.2% a bachelor's degree, 8.8% a master's degree, 4.4% had completed postgraduate education, 27.3% had a high school education, and 4.9% were uneducated. Notably, 73.8% expressed interest in learning more about OT, while 13.3% did not and 13.2% were unsure. Regarding their perceived knowledge, 18.4% felt they had sufficient information about OT, 40.5% did not, 29.1% believed their knowledge might be sufficient, and 11.9% were uncertain. Furthermore, 24.4% of participants believed that OT had the necessary tools in Saudi Arabia, while 32.7% disagreed, and 42.9% were unsure.

Discussion: The study highlighted a significant disparity in awareness of OT in Al-Ahsa and acknowledged the difficulty in locating previous regional studies. The high percentage of participants interested in learning more about OT indicates a strong demand for educational resources and outreach. Furthermore, nearly half of the participants reported a lack of sufficient information, underscoring the urgent need for accessible resources and public education. The findings suggest that enhancing awareness and understanding of OT could improve healthcare outcomes and community engagement. Future research should focus on developing targeted educational initiatives to address the identified gaps in knowledge. Despite certain limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the awareness and understanding of OT in Saudi Arabia, particularly within Al-Ahsa.

Conclusion: The findings of this study reveal a critical gap in knowledge and awareness of Occupational Therapy among the public in Al-Ahsa. Addressing these gaps through educational programs and community engagement is essential for improving the understanding of OT's role and benefits.

Keywords: Occupational Therapy, Awareness, Knowledge, Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia, Public Health.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge and awareness of occupational therapy (OT) are crucial for providing quality care to all clients and for ensuring job satisfaction among occupational therapists (OTRs) [1]. The cultural understanding of therapists and the influence of culture on healthcare practices significantly impact decision-making regarding the implementation of evidence-based practices. The study found that managers have high expectations for the role of OTRs, which affects the treatment planning process and can lead to poorer outcomes for OT interventions [2]. A lack of knowledge about OT prevents healthcare professionals from engaging in collaborative planning with OTRs, negatively impacting the quality of care. For clients to accept OT services, they must be informed about the profession. To help clients overcome denial, unrealistic expectations, or a lack of acceptance of OT services, OTRs often modify their treatment plans extensively. Consequently, OTRs face challenges related to confidence, frequently doubting their abilities to meet client expectations [3].

There is insufficient baseline data on the number of qualified OTRs and OT services available. Furthermore, research on OT awareness and knowledge among healthcare professionals (HCPs) in Saudi Arabia is limited. A study conducted in Jordan, which surveyed 829 participants, revealed that 48% did not have adequate knowledge about OT, and 28.3% were entirely unaware of it. The authors emphasized the need for further research in specific areas of the country due to limitations in generalizing these results across diverse cultural contexts [4].

Ischemic heart disease (IHD), stroke, road accidents, and neuropsychiatric disorders significantly contribute to the disease burden

in Saudi Arabia. A multimodal approach to care that includes OT for rehabilitation and the restoration of functional abilities can greatly assist individuals affected by these debilitating conditions. To achieve this, occupational therapists (OTs) must work collaboratively within multidisciplinary teams alongside other healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, physiotherapists (PTs), and social workers (SWs) [5].

Research on OT knowledge among medical professionals and the public is also lacking in Nigeria. In the early 1950s, two British chartered occupational therapists introduced OT into Nigeria's healthcare system at the University College Hospital in Ibadan. The Nigerian Association of Occupational Therapists (NAOT) was established in 1965. Following the Nigerian Civil War, which lasted from 1967 to 1970, there was a surge in OT practice, with many occupational therapists from around the world providing services, primarily in military hospitals and a few civilian ones [6].

Saudi Arabia is one of 73 full members approved by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) (2018). Currently, there are only five undergraduate OT programs integrated within the rehabilitation departments of four public universities and one private university in Saudi Arabia. According to Sarsak (2020), these OT programs aim to produce qualified and competent occupational therapists for Saudi Arabia and the broader Arab region. As a result of these programs, individuals with disabilities can improve their independence, safety, and overall quality of life [7].

One reason for the lack of public awareness and understanding of OT is the absence of an active role for OT representative organizations. To define and protect the scope of OT practice and the rights of OTRs,

professional associations must establish legislative standards. The current study aims to assess awareness and understanding of OT specifically among residents of Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia. OTRs assist individuals across all age groups, from newborns to the elderly, as well as those dealing with physical disabilities, health issues, and mental illnesses. Individuals with mental, emotional, and cognitive challenges may find it difficult to perform daily activities such as eating, dressing, driving, or writing. It is essential for other professionals to understand OT services, as occupational therapists can help individuals achieve greater independence. Therefore, the presence of OT in healthcare facilities is vital for enhancing care quality and reducing readmission rates through investment in OT. Based on our review of existing research and studies on OT, we propose to conduct a survey to evaluate the knowledge and awareness of OT among residents of Al-Ahsa.

The questionnaire will include several questions designed to gauge their understanding of OT and its significance in society.

Aim and Objective of the study:

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the knowledge and awareness of Occupational Therapy (OT) among the public in Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the general knowledge and awareness of OT among the public in Al-Ahsa.
2. To explore the perceived importance of OT as a profession and its impact on society.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area/Setting:

Study Subjects	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Location		
Al Ahsa, Saudi Arabia	15 years and older	Occupational therapists
	Male and female	Health care professionals

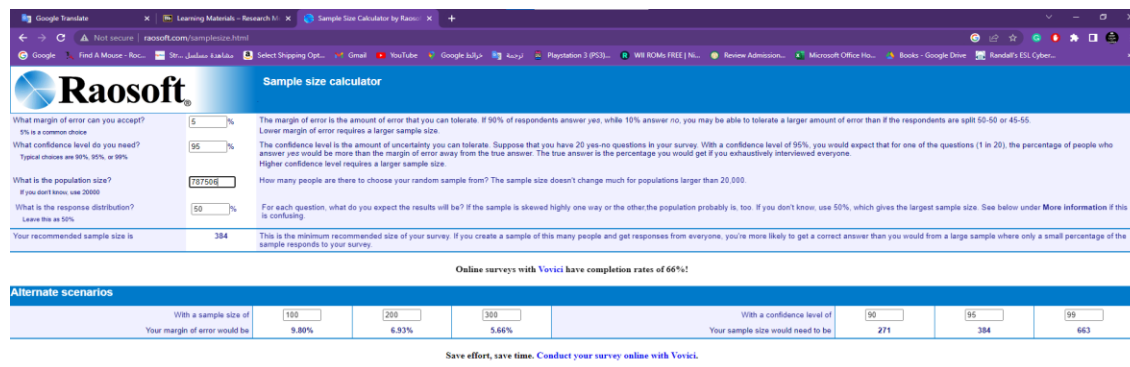
Study Design: This study was utilized a quantitative, descriptive survey design. The quantitative research approach is widely used to assess human thoughts and functions. The descriptive design was involve observing and describing patient behavior through a questionnaire. The survey design was be employed to collect data from participants. Statistical tools were be applied for the analysis of the survey data.

Sample Size: This study utilized a purposive sampling technique. We are including a population of 787,506 individuals who meet

the inclusion criteria for this study. We assessed a sample of 384 geriatric individuals.

- We used the Raosoft calculator to determine the estimated sample size.
- A 95% confidence interval was be applied, along with a 5% margin of error.

Based on the population size in the Al-Ahsa region, which is 787,506 people, we estimate that the required sample size is 384 geriatric individuals, as indicated in the accompanying figure.



Sampling Technique: This study will employ a random sampling technique to assess participants. This technique involves distributing a questionnaire to individuals who will be encouraged to share it with their peers for participation in the survey. All participants will be asked to complete all sections of the questionnaire. During meetings with participants, the study will be explained to them, and their questions will be addressed. The information sheet will clarify that informed consent is implied through voluntary participation in this survey.

Data Collection Methods, Instruments Used, Measurements: Surveys will be distributed to individuals in Al Ahsa to measure knowledge and awareness of occupational therapy among the public. The survey will consist of 20 questions, with participants responding to multiple-choice options.

Data Management and Analysis Plan: Descriptive analyses will be conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (version 24.0, Armonk, NY). Statistical analyses will include a summary of participant characteristics.

Ethical Considerations: Approval will be obtained from the King Abdullah International Medical Research Center (KAIMRC) IRB Committee, the authorized body for conducting research within MNGHA.

- Research procedures will ensure privacy during data collection.

- Data will be securely stored with appropriate measures to maintain confidentiality.
- All possible steps will be taken to ensure that participants' identities are not directly or indirectly disclosed. For secondary data analyses, the proposal will clearly state when and how de-identification will occur.

Here's a corrected and refined version of your results section:

RESULTS

1. Descriptive Statistics

A total of 385 residents of Al-Ahsa completed the general survey. Among them, 228 (59.2%) were male and 157 (40.8%) were female. Responses were collected through a survey link distributed to residents of Al-Ahsa. We found that 66.5% had heard of occupational therapy (OT), while 33.5% had not.

In terms of education levels, 59 (15.3%) of participants held a diploma, 151 (39.2%) had a bachelor's degree, 34 (8.8%) had a master's degree, 17 (4.4%) had postgraduate education, 105 (27.3%) had a high school education, and 19 (4.9%) were uneducated. Additionally, 284 (73.8%) participants expressed a desire to learn more about occupational therapy, 50 (13.3%) did not wish to learn about it, and 51 (13.2%) were uncertain.

Regarding their knowledge of the specialty, 71 (18.4%) of participants reported having sufficient information about occupational

therapy, 156 (40.5%) indicated they did not have sufficient information, and 122 (29.1%) believed their information might be sufficient. Furthermore, 46 (11.9%) were unsure about the adequacy of their knowledge.

When asked about the necessary tools for OT in Saudi Arabia, 94 (24.4%) of participants believed that OT has the necessary tools, 126 (32.7%) felt it does not, and 165 (42.9%) were uncertain.

2. Inferential Statistics

For hypothesis testing, statistical tests will be conducted with the corresponding p-values. The exact p-value should be reported if it is less than the significance level, along with an interpretation of the p-value and its statistical significance.

Figures and tables will be used to present the results clearly. The table number and title should be displayed above each table. Vertical and horizontal axes must be clearly defined, and each chart should have a title. For figures, the number and title should be placed below the figure.

Table:1

Yes	No	Maybe	I Don't Know	I Know a Lot	I Know a Little
66.5%	33.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
51.2%	16.1%	32.7%	0%	0%	0%
59.7%	10.6%	29.6%	0%	0%	0%
18.4%	40.5%	29.1%	11.9%	0%	0%
73.8%	13%	0%	13.8%	0%	0%
0%	0%	0%	34.8%	18.4%	46.8%
0%	0%	0%	37.4%	17.4%	45.2%
0%	0%	0%	51.9%	14%	34%
59.5%	40.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
52.2%	13%	0%	34.8%	0%	0%
46%	13%	0%	41%	0%	0%
53.5%	13%	0%	33.5%	0%	0%
67%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%
42.3%	21%	0%	36.6%	0%	0%
20.3%	43.6%	0%	36.1%	0%	0%
22.3%	46.8%	0%	30.9%	0%	0%
13.5%	52.7%	0%	33.8%	0%	0%
21%	47%	0%	31.9%	0%	0%
24.4%	32.7%	0%	42.9%	0%	0%

Table 2: Occupational Therapist Work Settings

Questions	General Hospital	Home Health Care	Schools
Where does an occupational therapist work?	83.9%	53.0%	33.5%

This table illustrates the percentage of respondents who identified different work settings for occupational therapist.

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to assess the awareness and knowledge of individuals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, particularly in Al-Ahsa, regarding occupational therapy. Our findings indicate a

significant gap in previous research on this topic, highlighting the necessity of this investigation to understand the level of public awareness and knowledge about the specialty. Notably, 73.8% of participants expressed a desire to learn more about occupational therapy. This high interest underscores the urgent need for studies, workshops, and events aimed at educating the public about the

role and benefits of occupational therapy in healthcare.

The results further revealed that nearly 50% of participants recognized a lack of sufficient information regarding occupational therapy. This gap emphasizes the need for accessible resources and effective information dissemination strategies. Insights gained from the questionnaire suggest that promoting an accurate understanding of occupational therapy as a distinct and essential healthcare profession is crucial.

To address these challenges, further research and educational initiatives are imperative. By enhancing awareness and knowledge of occupational therapy, we can improve public understanding of its significance and increase its utilization in treatment processes. Such efforts will ultimately contribute to the overall quality of healthcare services provided to patients.

It is vital to conduct additional studies and research, organize courses and seminars, and develop educational resources that clarify the principles and practices of occupational therapy. Awareness-raising initiatives should be implemented in schools and community settings to broaden public knowledge about occupational therapy and its advantages. Professionals in occupational therapy should actively engage in these outreach efforts, offering information, guidance, and support to the community.

Additionally, fostering collaboration between health and educational institutions is essential. Providing ongoing training and continuing education opportunities for occupational therapy professionals will help ensure they remain knowledgeable about the latest practices and developments in the field. Expanding scientific research in this area will further contribute to evidence-based information that can guide practice and policy.

In conclusion, it is imperative that information about occupational therapy is

made accessible and comprehensible to the general public. Promoting awareness of its importance and benefits in enhancing health, well-being, and quality of life is essential. By improving public knowledge of occupational therapy, we can make significant strides in advancing healthcare and enriching the lives of individuals and communities.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights a significant disparity in awareness of occupational therapy among residents of Al-Ahsa, with many individuals lacking knowledge about this important healthcare profession. During our research, we encountered challenges in locating existing studies that specifically assessed knowledge of occupational therapy in the Al-Ahsa region. Consequently, we cannot definitively conclude that there is no awareness of occupational therapy among the population until further research is conducted. We recognize that the findings may not represent the complete picture of public awareness, and caution should be taken when interpreting the results. Nonetheless, we endeavored to gather the most accurate and comprehensive data possible to evaluate the extent of knowledge and awareness regarding occupational therapy in Saudi Arabia, specifically in Al-Ahsa. Continued research is essential to gain deeper insights into public perceptions and to develop effective educational strategies that can enhance understanding and appreciation of occupational therapy's role in healthcare.

Declaration by Authors

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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