Original Research Article

Association Between Self-Esteem and Empathy in Physiotherapy Students

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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem and empathy are important factors which are needed to enhance the therapist- patient communication skills. The objective of this study is to find out the relationship between self-esteem and empathy in physiotherapy students.

Introduction : Self-esteem and empathy are two of the most important factors that contribute to the effective patient - healthcare provider relationship. Individuals with high self-esteem are more capable of handling stress, reducing anxiety and developing better communication skills and interpersonal relationships. Few characteristics can lead to decline in empathy: hidden curriculum, unsuitable learning environment and constant need of detachment. A 2018 study showed that students with higher self-esteem and empathy levels had lower burnout rates. This paper briefly describes the research carried out especially regarding association of self-esteem and empathy in physiotherapy students.

Methodology: A cross-sectional-questionnaire based study was conducted among physiotherapy students. A total of 134 students completed this survey and were included in the analysis. The rate of self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg scale of self-esteem, along with Jefferson scale of empathy (health professional student) HPS version questionnaire to measure empathy of students. The study group consisted of 134 students, ages 19–23 years. Each participant was asked to complete two questionnaires; Rosenberg scale of self-esteem containing 10 questions, and the Jefferson scale of empathy (HPS version) containing 20 questions.

Result: Statistical Analysis was done by using SPSS 20.00 version and Spearman's rho test was applied. For the correlation between self-esteem and empathy r value was found out to be moderately correlated ($r_= -0.403$) and level of significance was found to be $p<0.05$. Level of significance was kept at 5% and confidence level 95%.

Conclusion: Hence from this study we concluded that moderate correlation was found between self-esteem and empathy was found out in physiotherapy students.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Empathy, Physiotherapy students

INTRODUCTION

Empathy is the ability to consider a situation from someone else's point of view, to understand the feelings of others, and to communicate this understanding to them[1] Factors that may affect empathy include age, family background, culture, intelligence, education, personality, and specialty interests.[2] Empathy is an important attribute for health care providers in general because it is associated with improved clinical outcomes[3] Patients who feel understood are more likely to be able to clearly explain their complaints. In physiotherapy, particularly, interpersonal skills and concern for others are of key importance. [4] Self-esteem is an effective personal factor on students' academic achievement. In our educational system, there are problems that merely emphasize academic ability and ignore components such as self-reflection that is immensely important for the fate of

individuals. [5]

Self-esteem is the most decisive factor in psychological development, and indicates the judgment of that individual about his value. In fact, self-esteem is the degree and value that a person attribute to him. On the other hand, low self-esteem has many negative consequences. A person with low self-esteem does not, in fact, have the power of expressing one's self, the ability to justify the right, the ability to express interest and express the feelings. As a result, he feels frustrated, self-deficiency, and distress. People who have high self-esteem are more likely to succeed in their tasks than those with little self-esteem. [6] While self-esteem and empathy are both influential psychological factors in medical student performance, there have been few studies on the relationship between self-esteem and empathy in medical students. [7] This research study consequently examines the relationship between self-esteem and empathy in physiotherapy students in Ahmedabad.

MATERIALS & METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional observational study was undertaken among college students. The study recruited those who were willing to participate and between the ages of 19 and 25. A total of 134 students completed the survey and were included in the analysis. All the students were explained about the study and consent was taken for those who were asked to fill the Questionnaire for empathy and self-esteem which was a valid and responsive instrument that can serve as a diagnostic tool to determine the level of self-esteem and empathy. The Rosenberg scale of self-esteem for self-esteem and Jefferson scale of empathy (HPS) questionnaire for empathy.

The Rosenberg scale of self-esteem is a widely used self-report instrument for evaluating individual's self-esteem. It is a 10-item self-report, the items are scored on a 4-point scale ranging from 1(strongly agree) to 4(strongly disagree). Scoring involves a method of combined ratings. Low self-esteem responses are "disagreed" or "strongly disagree "on items 1,3,4,7,10 and "strongly agree" or "agree" on items 2,5,6,8,9. Two or three out of correct responses to items 3,7 and 9 are scored as one item. One or two out of two correct responses for items 4 and 5 are considered as a single item; items 1,8 and 10 are scored as individual items and combined correct responses (one or two out of two) to items 2 and 6 are considered to be a single item. The Rosenberg scale of self-esteem has an intra-class reliability of 0.88.[8]

The Jefferson scale of empathy is a 20-item self-report tool that is developed to measure empathy in the context of health professions education and patient care. Jefferson scale of empathy questionnaire has an intra-class reliability of 0.82.[9] The empathy score for an individual is calculated from the responses to the 20 items. Half of the items are reverse scored (e.g. strongly agree=1,. strongly disagree=7). Other items are directly scored based on their Likert weights (e.g., strongly agree=7…strongly disagree=1)

INCLUSION CRITERIA:
- Both Male & Females
- Age = 19-23 years
- Willing to participate in study.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA:
- Any student with lack of clinical exposure
- Any incomplete survey forms were eliminated
- Neurological disorder
- Any student priorly diagnosed with depression or anxiety
- Current Illness like cough, cold, etc.
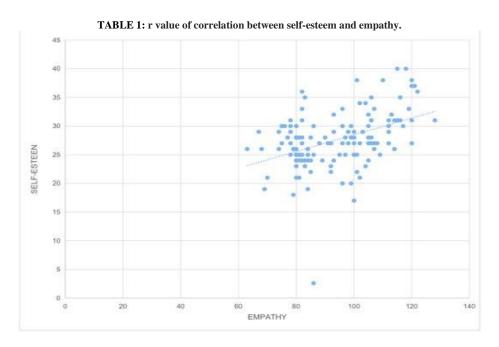
RESULT

Data was analyzed using SPSS software version 29. The normality of the data was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Since the data was found to be not normally distributed, it is appropriate to use non-parametric tests.

To determine the correlation between self-esteem and empathy. Spearman's correlation test was applied. A moderate positive

correlation found between self-esteem and empathy. [r value= -0.403, p value=0.000] The chosen significance level for the study was set at p < 0.05. This indicates that a correlation coefficient with a p-value below 0.05 would be considered statistically significant.

		Empathy
Self esteem	Correlation co-efficient (r value)	0.403
	Level of significance (p value)	0.000

Nonparametric Correlation

TABLE 1: r value of correlation between self-esteem and empathy.

DISCUSSION
The present study's findings indicate that significant moderate positive relationship is found between self-esteem and empathy amongst physiotherapy students. The findings of this study can have significant implications for patient communication interventions and educational programs aimed at promoting good awareness about inculcating importance of empathy and balancing self-esteem while dealing with patients to provide effective treatment and satisfaction to the patients amongst physiotherapy students in India.

In the year 2019, Lei Huang et al conducted a study amongst Chinese medical students and concluded the positive association between self-esteem and empathy amongst them. [10]

In the year 2019, Melel carmen et al confirmed that a significant proportion of health care professionals have a positive relationship between empathy, emotional intelligence and self-esteem. [11]

In the present study we found that moderate positive correlation is present between self-esteem and empathy amongst physiotherapy students. Students with high level of self-esteem are associated to have more empathy levels which is an important factor to consider in patient - health care professional communication skills and helps understand the problem better.

CONCLUSION
The present study showed that moderate positive correlation is found between self-esteem and empathy amongst physiotherapy students. Study has found that the correlation

between empathy and self-esteem in physiotherapy students is highly significant. It is widely recognized that high level of self-esteem and empathy are a contributing factor towards effective communication with the patients. This study has some limitations that the research is done across Ahmedabad city, Further research with larger sample size with different years of clinical experience from different zones of Ahmedabad can be taken. Gender wise association can also be taken. Future research could explore the underlying factors affecting self-esteem and empathy which will be helpful to determine their effectiveness in better ways.

Declaration by Authors
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