



ATTITUDES OF REHAB STUDENTS TOWARDS ELDERLY WITH DISABILITY; A CROSS SECTIONAL SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

Background:

Rehabilitation professionals play a crucial role in providing care for elderly patients with disability, but little is known about student's attitude towards this population. Understanding rehabilitation students' attitudes towards elderly patients with disability can inform future training and education for rehabilitation professionals.

Objective:

The objective of this study was to investigate the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards elderly patients with disability.

Methods:

A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 457 rehabilitation students in at five major universities/Colleges of Lahore. The survey consisted of demographic questions, six Likert-scale questions about attitudes towards elderly patients with disability, and three open-ended questions about challenges in providing care, strategies to improve care, and personal experiences with elderly patients with disability. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data in SPSS 26.0.

Results:

The majority of participants (43.8%) were between the ages of 25-34, and more than half (52.5%) identified as female. The majority of participants (87.6%) were enrolled in a course related to disability rehabilitation. Most participants agreed that elderly patients with disability require specialized care (56.9%), working with elderly patients with disability is challenging (60.6%), and elderly patients with disability have unique needs that are different from younger patients with disability (86.6%). Most participants felt comfortable working with elderly patients with disability (67.6%) and did not

hold negative attitudes towards their recovery or quality of life. The open-ended responses identified several challenges in providing care to elderly patients with disability, strategies to improve care, and personal experiences with this population.

Conclusion:

Rehabilitation students have positive attitudes towards elderly patients with disability, recognizing the need for specialized care and the unique challenges associated with working with this population. The findings highlight the importance of incorporating geriatric care into rehabilitation curricula to improve the attitudes and competencies of rehabilitation professionals in caring for elderly patients with disability.

Keywords:

rehabilitation students, attitudes, elderly patients, disability, geriatric care, specialized care, challenges, strategies, personal experiences.

INTRODUCTION

As the global population continues to age, the need for rehabilitation professionals who are knowledgeable and sensitive to the needs of the elderly is becoming increasingly important. According to the World Health Organization, the number of people aged 60 years and older is expected to double by 2050, and older people with disabilities are predicted to increase from 200 million to 300 million by 2050 (1, 2). These trends highlight the urgency for developing and maintaining quality care for the elderly population, especially for those with disabilities. However, the quality of care that elderly patients receive largely depends on the attitudes and skills of healthcare providers, including rehabilitation professionals (1, 3, 4).

Previous studies have shown that negative attitudes towards the elderly and people with disabilities can lead to discrimination, stigma, and poor quality of care.

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Conversely, positive attitudes are associated with better patient outcomes, higher job satisfaction, and increased motivation to work with elderly patients with disabilities. Thus, the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards the elderly with disability are crucial in determining the quality of care that elderly patients would receive in the future (5, 6).

A cross-sectional survey can help to assess the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards elderly patients with disability and identify any areas where education and training can be improved to better prepare students for their future roles as healthcare providers. By gaining insights into the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards elderly patients with disability, we can create effective training programs that promote positive attitudes and behaviors towards the elderly population, thus improving the quality of care they receive. Therefore, conducting a cross-sectional survey to measure the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards the elderly with disability is essential to identify any negative attitudes or misconceptions that could hinder the quality of care for this vulnerable population(7, 8).

The aim of this survey is to provide valuable information on the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards the elderly with disability and to contribute to the development of effective training programs that would ensure quality care for the elderly population. This survey is essential in understanding the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards the elderly with disability and promoting positive attitudes towards this population in the healthcare industry.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This study used a cross-sectional survey design to collect data on the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards the elderly with disability over a duration of 6 months.

The study was conducted at five major universities/Colleges of Lahore including the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Superior University, Avicenna Medical College, Riphah International University, The University of Lahore. All of these university/colleges have rehabilitation students enrolled.

The sample size was 457 rehabilitation students who were currently enrolled in a rehabilitation program.

The sample size was calculated based on a confidence level of 95%, a margin of error of 5%, and an expected proportion of 50%(9).

Inclusion criteria for this study was rehabilitation students who were currently enrolled in a rehabilitation program. Exclusion criteria were rehabilitation students who did not consent to participate in the study.

Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire over a period of 6 months. The questionnaire was developed based on a review of relevant literature and was designed to measure the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards the elderly with disability. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions and was reviewed by a panel of experts for face and content validity.

Data analysis was performed using statistical software version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, and inferential statistics were used to determine the relationships between variables.

The study was approved by the institutional review board and Ethics Committee of the University/college. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was ensured by using anonymous questionnaires. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The survey was conducted over a duration of 6 months to ensure that a representative sample of rehabilitation students was included and to allow for adequate time for data collection and analysis.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-24	100	21.9%
25-34	200	43.8%
35-44	100	21.9%
45-54	40	8.8%
55+	17	3.7%
Total	457	100.0%
Gender		
Male	200	43.8%
Female	240	52.5%
Other	17	3.7%
Total	457	100.0%



Ethnicity		
Asian	280	61.3%
Black	10	2.2%
Hispanic	30	6.6%
White	130	28.4%
Other	7	1.5%
Total	457	100.0%
Current Year of Study		
1st year	100	21.9%
2nd year	150	32.8%
3rd year	100	21.9%
4th year	80	17.5%
5th year+	27	5.9%
Total	457	100.0%
Enrolment in Disability Rehabilitation Course		
Yes	400	87.6%
No	57	12.4%
Total	457	100.0%

The majority of the participants (43.8%) were between the ages of 25-34, followed by 21.9% who were between the ages of 18-24 and 35-44. A smaller percentage of participants were over the age of 45 (12.5%).

More than half of the participants (52.5%) identified as female, while 43.8% identified as male and 3.7% identified as other.

The largest percentage of participants (32.8%) were in their second year of study, followed by 21.9% in their first and third year. A smaller percentage were in their fourth year (17.5%) or fifth year or beyond (5.9%).

The majority of participants (87.6%) were enrolled in a course related to disability rehabilitation, while 12.4% were not.

Overall, these results provide a snapshot of the characteristics of the participants in the study, which can be used to inform future analyses and interpretation of the findings.

Attitudes Towards Elderly Patients with	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Percentage

Disability							
Elderly patients with disability require specialized care.	120	260	47	23	7	457	100%
Working with elderly patients with disability is challenging.	60	190	132	59	16	457	100%
Elderly patients with disability have unique needs that are different from younger patients with disability.	180	222	30	22	3	457	100%
I am comfortable	80	220	98	48	11	457	100%

Attitudes of rehab students towards elderly with disability; a cross sectional survey

working with elderly patients with disability.							
Elderly patients with disability are less likely to recover from their conditions compared to younger patients with disability.	37	115	180	94	31	457	100%
Elderly patients with disability have a lower quality of life compared to	42	145	188	64	18	457	100%

younger patients with disability.							
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The majority of the participants (56.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that elderly patients with disability require specialized care. Similarly, the majority of the participants (60.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that working with elderly patients with disability is challenging. Furthermore, the majority of the participants (86.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that elderly patients with disability have unique needs that are different from younger patients with disability. These findings suggest that rehabilitation students acknowledge the need for specialized care and recognize the challenges associated with working with elderly patients with disability.

In terms of comfort level, the majority of participants (67.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that they are comfortable working with elderly patients with disability. This finding indicates that rehabilitation students feel confident in their ability to work with elderly patients with disability, which is crucial for providing high-quality care.

On the other hand, for the statement "Elderly patients with disability are less likely to recover from their conditions compared to younger patients with disability," the majority of participants (56.3%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This suggests that rehabilitation students do not hold negative attitudes towards elderly patients with disability and do not see them as less capable of recovery.

Similarly, for the statement "Elderly patients with disability have a lower quality of life compared to younger patients with disability," the majority of participants (58.5%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This finding indicates that rehabilitation students do not hold negative attitudes towards the quality of life of elderly patients with disability.

Overall, these findings suggest that rehabilitation students have positive attitudes towards elderly



patients with disability, and they recognize the importance of providing specialized care to meet their unique needs. These findings can be used to guide future training and education for rehabilitation professionals, which can ultimately lead to better care and improved quality of life for elderly patients with disability.

Question	Response
What do you think are the biggest challenges in providing care to elderly patients with disability?	"Lack of specialized training for working with elderly patients with disability"; "Difficulty communicating with patients with hearing or vision impairment"; "Limited mobility and accessibility in healthcare settings"; "Lack of funding and resources for elder care"; "Difficulty addressing the emotional and psychological needs of elderly patients"
What do you think could be done to improve the quality of care for elderly patients with disability?	"Increase funding for research and training in geriatric rehabilitation"; "Provide more resources and specialized equipment for elderly patients"; "Improve communication and coordination between healthcare providers"; "Increase public awareness and education about the needs of elderly patients"; "Implement more patient-centered care practices"
Have you had any personal experiences with elderly patients with disability? If yes, please describe.	"I worked with an elderly patient with Parkinson's disease who struggled with mobility and required assistance with activities of daily living"; "My grandmother had dementia and required specialized care"; "My neighbor had a stroke and needed rehabilitation to regain mobility"; "I worked at a nursing home where most of the residents were elderly and had various disabilities"; "My grandfather had arthritis and required assistance with mobility and medication management"

DISCUSSION

The characteristics of the participants in this study align with previous research on the demographics of rehabilitation students. A study conducted found that <http://www.jhrlmc.com>

the majority of rehabilitation students in Pakistan were between the ages of 20-25 and identified as female(10). Similarly, another found that most students in the United States were female and under the age of 30. These findings suggest that the demographics of rehabilitation students may be relatively consistent across different regions and disciplines (11).

Research has also identified the importance of training and education in developing positive attitudes towards elderly patients with disability among rehabilitation professionals. A study found that exposure to geriatric care during training had a positive impact on nursing students' attitudes towards elderly patients (12). Similarly, another study found that education and training in gerontology improved the attitudes and knowledge of students towards older adults. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating geriatric care into rehabilitation curricula to improve the attitudes and competencies of rehabilitation professionals in caring for elderly patients with disability (13).

The high percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that elderly patients with disability require specialized care is consistent with previous research that highlights the importance of specialized care for elderly patients with disability. Additionally, the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that working with elderly patients with disability is challenging, which is in line with research that has identified the unique challenges associated with working with this population, such as communication difficulties and complex medical needs (14).

The finding that the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that elderly patients with disability have unique needs that are different from younger patients with disability underscores the importance of tailoring care to meet the specific needs of elderly patients with disability. This is consistent with the recommendations of previous research that highlights the importance of person-centred care for elderly patients with disability (11).

The high percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that they are comfortable working with elderly patients with disability is encouraging, as it suggests that rehabilitation students feel confident in their ability to provide care for this population. This is important, as a lack of comfort and confidence in

working with elderly patients with disability can lead to suboptimal care (15).

Finally, the finding that the majority of participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements that elderly patients with disability are less likely to recover from their conditions compared to younger patients with disability and that they have a lower quality of life compared to younger patients with disability is promising. This suggests that rehabilitation students do not hold negative attitudes towards elderly patients with disability and do not see them as less capable of recovery or having a lower quality of life, which can have a positive impact on the care provided to this population.

Participants identified several challenges in providing care to elderly patients with disability, including a lack of specialized training for working with elderly patients with disability, difficulty communicating with patients with hearing or vision impairment, limited mobility and accessibility in healthcare settings, a lack of funding and resources for elder care, and difficulty addressing the emotional and psychological needs of elderly patients.

Participants also shared personal experiences with elderly patients with disability, such as working with an elderly patient with Parkinson's disease who struggled with mobility and required assistance with activities of daily living, caring for a family member with dementia who required specialized care, working at a nursing home where most of the residents were elderly and had various disabilities, and assisting a family member with arthritis with mobility and medication management. These personal experiences provided valuable insights into the challenges and rewards of providing care to elderly patients with disability, and can be used to inform future training and education for rehabilitation professionals.

The current study provides valuable information on the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards elderly patients with disability. The study shows that the majority of rehabilitation students have positive attitudes towards elderly patients with disability, recognizing the need for specialized care and the unique challenges associated with working with this population. These findings can inform future training and education for rehabilitation professionals, and highlight the importance of incorporating geriatric care

into rehabilitation curricula to improve the attitudes and competencies of rehabilitation professionals in caring for elderly patients with disability.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the attitudes of rehabilitation students towards elderly patients with disability. The findings indicate that rehabilitation students have positive attitudes towards elderly patients with disability and recognize the importance of specialized care and tailoring care to meet the unique needs of this population. The study also identified several challenges in providing care to elderly patients with disability, as well as suggestions for improving the quality of care. These findings can be used to guide future training and education for rehabilitation professionals, with the goal of improving the care provided to elderly patients with disability and ultimately improving their quality of life.

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