

Professional Values and Perception of Knowledge regarding Professional Ethics in Physiotherapy Students in Navi Mumbai: An Observational Study

Anwiksha Mahadik¹, Rincy Sibi Joseph²

Intern, YMT College of Physiotherapy

Abstract: ***Background:** Professional values have been described as the 'basic and fundamental beliefs, the unquestioned premises upon which its [a profession's] very existence rests'. Over the past decade, physiotherapy practice has moved increasingly into wider and more diverse contexts. Patients have the right to equal, respectful treatment. Nowadays, one third of patient complaints concern health care staff's behavior towards patients. **Objective:** To find out the awareness about professional values among physiotherapy students and to find out the awareness about perception of knowledge regarding professional ethics in physiotherapy students. **Methods:** A total of 388 students participated in the study. Axiologic estimation of professional values questionnaire and Perceptions of knowledge regarding professional ethics in physiotherapy questionnaire were given to the participants. Data was collected and analysis was done using Ms Excel. **Results:** 90% of the students considered responsibility and simplicity as highly compulsory professional values and abnegation as the lowest compulsory. The level of importance of other professional values varies with respect for life being highly important. In addition, physical therapy students have moderate perception about the knowledge regarding moral values, bioethical principles and behavioral rules. More than 90% of students have least knowledge regarding the methods used to analyze the problems and ethical dilemmas of the profession. **Conclusion:** Study concluded that professional values and ethics are one of the key pillars for good practice in the physiotherapy profession.*

Keywords: Professional values; ethics; moral values; autonomy

1. Introduction

Professional values have been described as the 'basic and fundamental beliefs, the unquestioned premises upon which its [a profession's] very existence rests'. [1] Medical professionalism is a multi - dimensional construct that refers to a set of skills and competencies that the professionals are expected to practice. Professional virtues and behaviours illustrate the processes of how the professionals enact their role, while professional identity involves an oath for adhering to the values and ethics of medical profession associated with the profession such as being trustworthy, competent, and safe medical practitioner. [11] Students come to university with their own personal values, which are the result of their life experience. However, these will not guarantee the development of professional values. The first contact that students have with professional values is during their university education. [9] The values of a profession are attained through professional socialization, where an individual develops the knowledge, skills, behaviours, attitudes and values of a particular profession and develops a professional identity. [1]

Any professional group has primary standards called professional values. These values are considered as the guidelines and motivation of professional behavior for the members of a certain profession. [2] Professional values are necessary to reinforce individuals' professional identity and performance. [2] The values of a profession should ideally be upheld by all members of the profession, forming part of their professional value system and guiding clinical decisions and professional behaviours. Thus, they also unite practitioners across various areas of expertise and organizational cultures. [1] Professional values are rooted in personal values, which are influenced by family, culture, environment, religion and

ethnicity. [2] Acquisition of these values is a gradual and evolutionary process which happens throughout people's life. [3]

Professional identity formation and professionalism are hallmarks of health care professionals. Professionals establish their professional identity through assimilation into the profession by immersing themselves in the practice of the discipline. Professional formation as a process that incorporates change within an individual, as well as social and professional enculturation, thus providing a scaffold for the achievement of professional competence grounded in social and moral engagement within the community of practice. Professionalism and professional identity emerge as essential elements in the educational preparation and careers of health care professionals. [12] The acquisition and where internalizing professional values are necessary in care setting for professional development and providing a common framework for meeting professional expectations and standards besides increasing ethical dilemmas. [3] Professional identity manifests as professionals develop consistent behaviors reflecting shared professional values as consistent expectations are met. These shared professional values and expected behaviors provide a strong foundation for the profession. Shared professional values are the cornerstone in most health care professions and define a distinctiveness within each group. [12]

Ethics is a key competence to be acquired by physiotherapy students to ensure quality care. [4] In the last four decades, physiotherapists have acquired greater autonomy within the health system which has led them to assume greater responsibility and face ethical problems, and greater number of ethical situations. [4] Professional values are the essential elements that build the ethics of a profession and guide the

development of the profession. Professional ethics refers to the set of codes of professional conduct, as well as the legitimate purpose of the profession and the way of dealing with ethical conflicts. [9] Ethics is ever - present in all aspects of human interaction and, in any physiotherapy situation there is an inherent claim to act and care for the patient in the best possible way. [13] Knowledge of ethics is important amongst the physical therapists as they are expected to have thorough knowledge, professionalism, good skills and polite behavior to achieve a good rapport with the patient because this is a field we deal with the patient hands - on. [5] Thus, the growing recognition of the profession of physiotherapy in the health system, leads to the need of evaluating how ethics is being implemented in the university environment. [4] As moral agents, physical therapists are required to make autonomous clinical and ethical decisions based on connections and relationships with their patients, other health care team members, and health institutions and policies. [6] It has been defined in terms of character strength, ethical awareness, moral judgment skills in decision - making, and willingness to do good. [7]

During their educational years and clinical practice, physical therapists encounter a variety of scenarios where a conflict may arise between patient and therapist or between therapist and the other members of the healthcare team, or even amongst the therapists themselves. They negotiate the complexities of participation in multi - professional teams and organizations. In all these relationships and activities, an appropriate understanding of ethics seems to be essential, and there may occur potential situation where conflicts of ethical values may arise. Patients, relatives, and professionals may have quite different views about which interests are the most important ones for each patient. In this regard, the different members of multi - professional teams may value different aspects, and healthcare organizations may appear to value financial targets over quality of care. Professional values may therefore present conflicts with organizational or managerial values. These factors may imply the promotion of professional values as a crucial aspect in the education of physical therapists; thus, they can provide health professionals with answers to the ethical dilemmas they face. [9]

To develop the decision - making capacity in the face of ethical problems, a theoretical framework is necessary that allows, step by step, to analyse and solve the ethical conflicts that may arise from the practice of physiotherapy. Decision - making processes therefore refer to methods that systematically favour the analysis of the conflict from all perspectives in order to reach an ethical solution. However, students may not be aware of the importance of ethics for the development of their clinical practice, in the same way that their attitudes towards Professional Ethics are unknown within their curriculum. [4]

The profile and reach of physiotherapy practice has expanded along two conceptual axes. Along a vertical axis, physiotherapists have increasing clinical authority in areas of extended scope of practice and in the growing evidence base for specific clinical practice areas. Along a horizontal axis,

responding to evidence of the social determinants of health, physiotherapists have more broadly engaged with clients beyond the individual treatment encounter, to develop primary healthcare or population - based models of healthcare and social justice in health. [8]

2. Aim and Objectives of the study

Aim

To study the awareness about professional values and perception of knowledge regarding professional ethics in physiotherapy students.

Objectives:

- 1) To find out the awareness about professional values among physiotherapy students using axiologic estimation of professional values questionnaire.
- 2) To find out the awareness about perception of knowledge regarding professional ethics in physiotherapy students using perception of knowledge regarding professional ethics questionnaire.

3. Methods

Study Type - Cross sectional observational study

Study Setting - Physiotherapy colleges in Navi Mumbai

Study population - Physiotherapy students

Sampling method - Convenient sampling **Sample size** - 389 (open EPI)

Inclusion criteria - Age - 19 - 23year students from I - IV YEAR, gender - Female and Male, physiotherapy students (UG)

Exclusion criteria - College teaching staff, interns and PG, practitioners, any other medical profession

Material - Questionnaire

4. Methodology

Approval from ethical committee was taken. Visit to the setup was done. Participants were informed about the aim and objectives of the study. Inform consent was taken prior to data collection. Participants were screened as per the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Axiologic estimation of professional values questionnaire and Perceptions of knowledge regarding professional ethics in physiotherapy questionnaire was given. Data was collected. Data analysis was done. Results were obtained.

Statistical Method

Statistical method used is MS Excel for data entry and statistic. Graphical representation is used.

5. Result

From the 389 students, a total of 388 agreed to participate and the data was analyzed. Mean age group between 19years - 23years.

Perception of knowledge regarding professional ethics

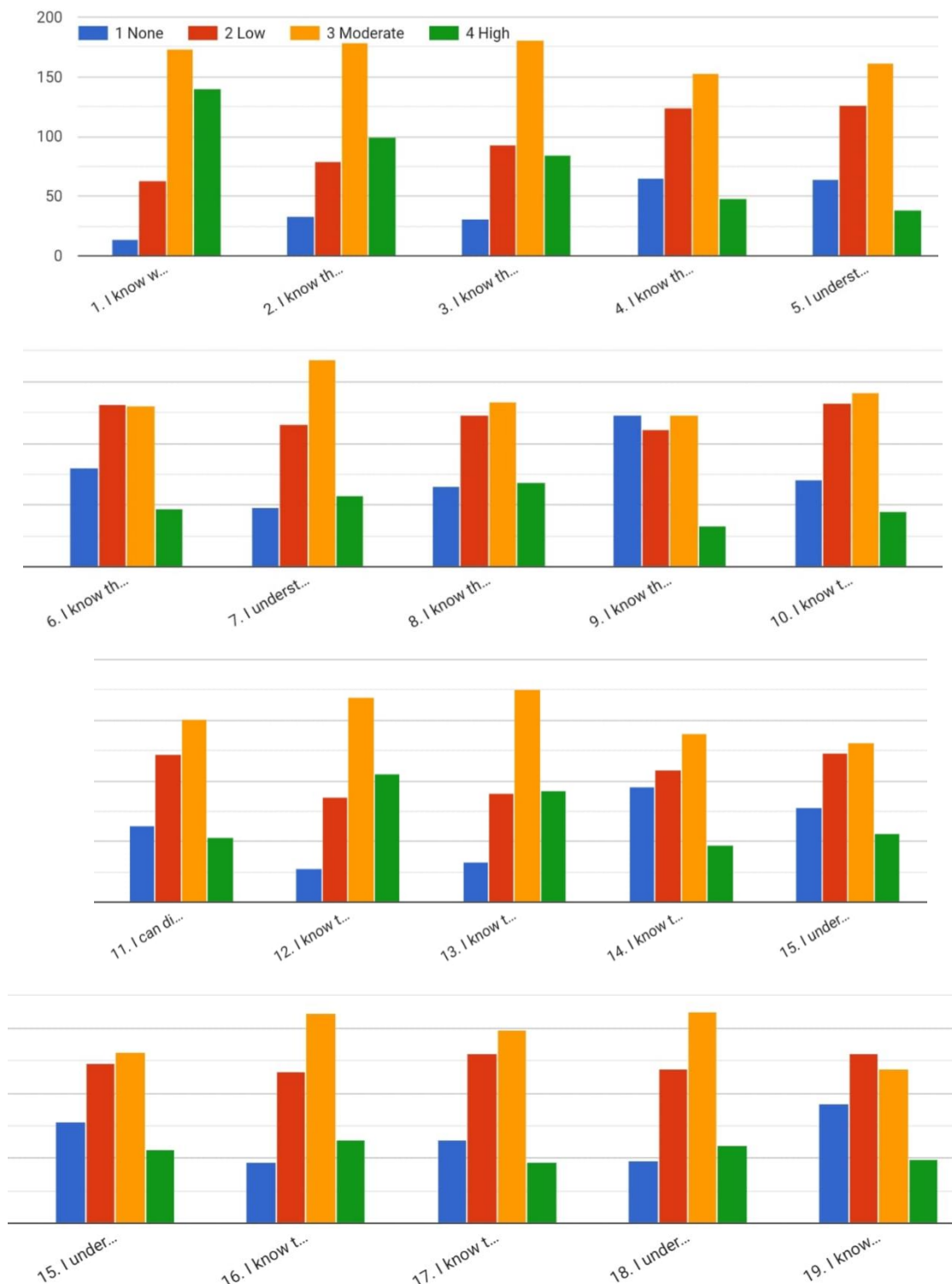


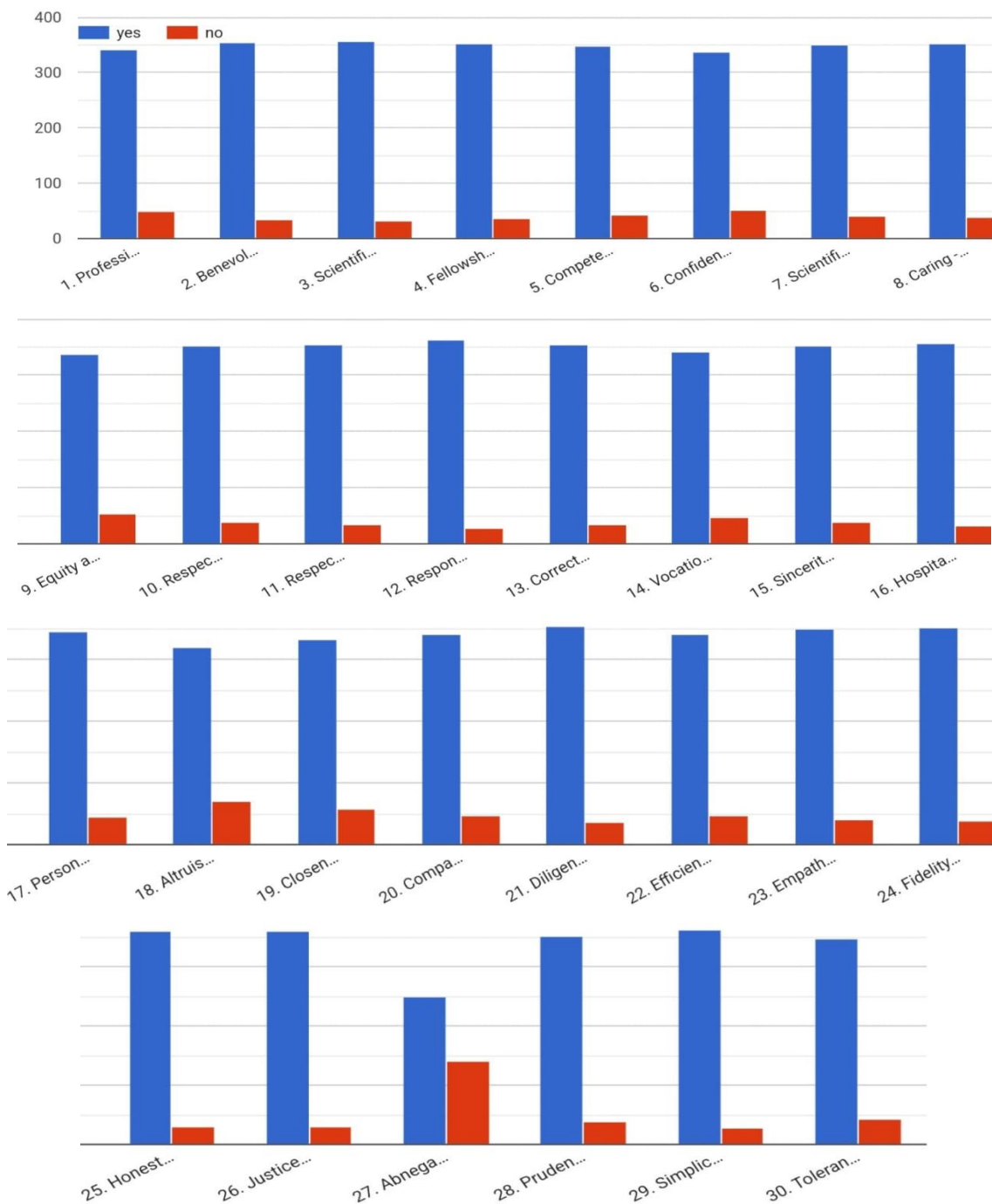
Figure 1

Students have moderate knowledge about what moral values are, the difference between moral and non - moral values, difference between ethics and moral, fields that bioethics studies, difference between bioethics and professional ethics, principles of professional ethics, consequences of non - compliance with principles of professional ethics, the skills that characterize a good professional, professional values of physical therapy, meaning of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence and justice principles, ethical problems faced

in profession and difference between ethical principles and behaviour rules.

Students have low knowledge regarding inseparable dimensions of professional ethics and the methods used to analyze the problems and ethical dilemmas of the profession.

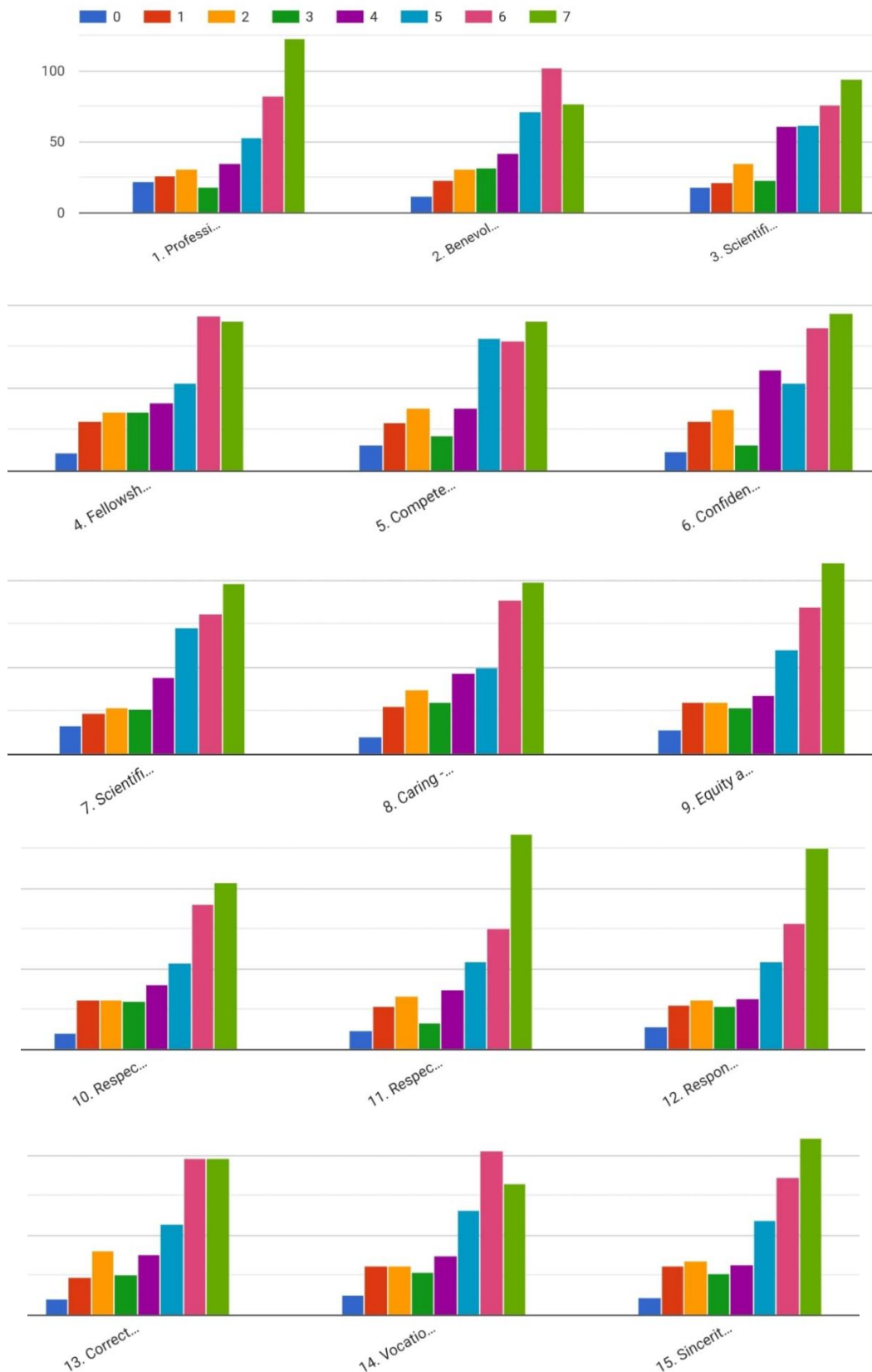
Professional values

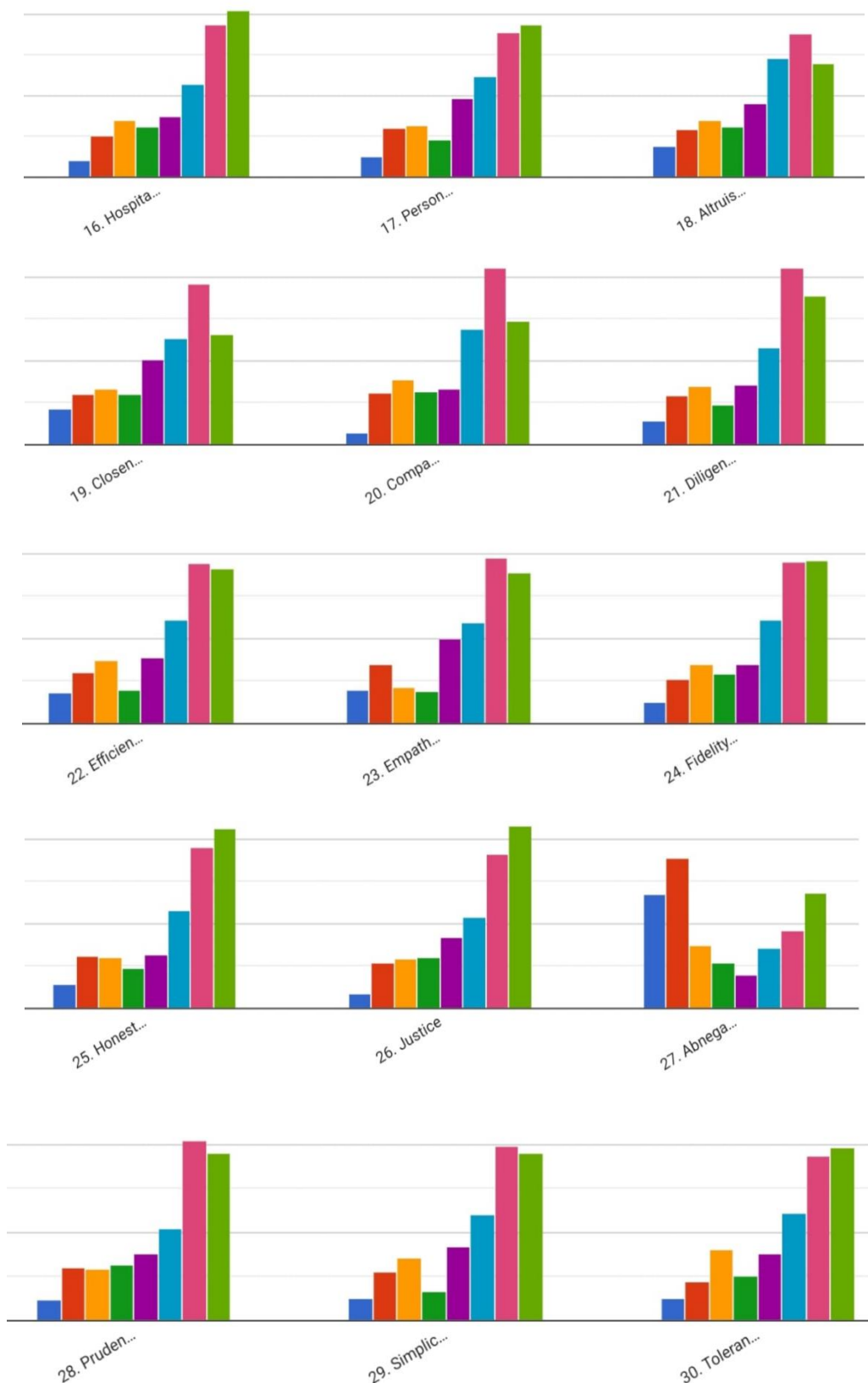


Professional values – professional autonomy, benevolence, scientific quality, fellowship, competence, confidentiality, scientific knowledge, caring, equity, respects to patient’s autonomy, respect for life, responsibility, friendly relationship, sincerity, hospitality, attention, altruism, closeness, compassion, diligence, efficiency, empathy,

fidelity, honesty, justice, prudence, simplicity and tolerance were considered compulsory.

Professional value abnegation was considered not so compulsory.





According to degree of importance,

Professional autonomy, scientific quality, competence, confidentiality, scientific knowledge, caring, equity, respect to patient’s autonomy, respect for life, responsibility, sincerity, hospitality, personalized attention, honesty, justice and tolerance were considered as highly important.

Benevolence, fellowship, vocation to serve, altruism,

closeness, compassion, diligence, efficiency, empathy, prudence and simplicity as more important.

Abnegation is not considered important as professional value.

6. Discussion

This study analyzed physiotherapy students’ professional

values and perception of knowledge regarding professional ethics from first to fourth year students.

In this study about 90% of the population were aware about the professional values in physiotherapy profession. A study done by Danielle Reimer et al stated that students drawn to medical education recognized fundamental core values of medical profession even at the earliest level of their medical education. It appears that student arrive to medical school with a preconceived notion of professional expectation of a physician. [22]

Results suggested that those professional values considered highly important by the students, were mainly shared professional values, with responsibility and simplicity ranked highest, and abnegation ranked lowest. A study done by Cui X et al stated that this can be due to responsibility and compassion that are common aspect of humanism, which is generally recognized and expected by the society for medical careers. [23]

Results suggested that students had moderate perception of knowledge regarding moral values, bioethical principles and low knowledge regarding analysis of problems and ethical dilemmas of the profession. This can be due the fact that the students as compared to interns and PGs spend less or no time with patients and donot interact with them directly which prevent them from experiencing clinical and ethics related situations. It is often seen they obey commands of their interns or faculties.

Physiotherapy students gain ethical knowledge required for their profession through clinical posting and interaction with the colleagues, patient and their relatives which plays a vital role. During this clinical practice and postings they face different situations in which they need to analyse problems and make ethical decisions.

A study done by Ashfaq T et al stated that this can be due to the fact that even though the medical students are involved in patient care but they are not allowed to make independent decisions. Instead, they are continuously monitored by their mentors, for decisions regarding patient care. This can be a factor for being unable to identify the ethical dilemmas. [24]

A study done by Marmol - Lopez MI et al stated that this can be due to the fact that the ethical training and professional attitudes received by physiotherapy students, there is low homogeneity in the curriculum, and, in general, teachers are not sufficiently qualified; and students do not perceive it as important within the curriculum. It also states that there is currently more ethics education available than before still the ethics education seems to be poorly integrated into the respective curriculum and often taught in non - standardized way. The physiotherapists rarely take part in further ethics education. [25]

Strength: Sample size is large and validated questionnaire was used.

Limitation: Study was conducted only in Navi Mumbai and interns and practicing clinicians were not involved.

7. Conclusion

Study concluded that professional values and ethics are one of the key pillars for good practice in physiotherapy profession. Professional values like responsibility, simplicity, respect for life and autonomy being most important.

8. Future Scope

Further research can be done to find the difference in perception about knowledge regarding ethics and professional values between students and interns by comparing their views.

Educators can use these findings to alter or address their interaction with students regarding professionalism, ethics in work and inculcating values from the very first year of educational year.

References

- [1] Aguilar A, Stupans I, Scutter S, King S. Exploring the professional values of Australian physiotherapists. *Physiotherapy Research International*.2013 Mar; 18 (1): 27 - 36.
- [2] Poorchangizi B, Farokhzadian J, Abbaszadeh A, Mirzaee M, Borhani F. The importance of professional values from clinical nurses' perspective in hospitals of a medical university in Iran. *BMC medical ethics*.2017 Dec; 18 (1): 1 - 7.
- [3] Parandeh A, Khaghanizade M, Mohammadi E, Nouri JM. Factors influencing development of professional values among nursing students and instructors: a systematic review. *Global journal of health science*.2015 Mar; 7 (2): 284.
- [4] Marques - Sulé E, Arnal - Gómez A, Cortés - Amador S, de la Torre MI, Hernández D, Aguilar - Rodríguez M. Attitudes towards learning professional ethics in undergraduate physiotherapy students: A STROBE compliant cross - sectional study. *Nurse Education Today*.2021 Mar 1; 98: 104771.
- [5] Dhara Patel, Charmi Brahmabhatt and Sanjana Chauhan. The knowledge of ethical values in physical therapy practice amongst physical therapists: *J Nov Physiother* DOI: 10.4172/2165 - 7025 - C1 - 021.
- [6] Delany CM, Edwards I, Jensen GM, Skinner E. Closing the gap between ethics knowledge and practice through active engagement: an applied model of physical therapy ethics. *Physical Therapy*.2010 Jul 1; 90 (7): 1068 - 78.
- [7] Kulju K, Suhonen R, Puukka P, Tolvanen A, Leino - Kilpi H. Self - evaluated ethical competence of a practicing physiotherapist: a national study in Finland. *BMC Medical Ethics*.2020 Dec; 21: 1 - 1.
- [8] Delany C, Edwards I, Fryer C. How physiotherapists perceive, interpret, and respond to the ethical dimensions of practice: A qualitative study. *Physiotherapy Theory and Practice*.2019 Jul 3; 35 (7): 663 - 76.
- [9] Marques - Sule E, Baxi H, Arnal - Gómez A, Cortés - Amador S, Sheth M. Influence of Professional Values on Attitudes towards Professional Ethics in Future Physical Therapy Professionals. *International Journal*

- of Environmental Research and Public Health.2022 Oct 27; 19 (21): 13952.
- [10] Arnal - Gómez A, Muñoz - Gómez E, Espí - López GV, Juárez - Vela R, Tolsada - Velasco C, Marques - Sule E. Professional values and perception of knowledge regarding professional ethics in physical therapy students: A STROBE compliant cross - sectional study. *Medicine*.2022 Sep 2; 101 (35): e30181.
- [11] Guraya SS, Guraya SY, Yusoff MSB. Preserving professional identities, behaviors, and values in digital professionalism using social networking sites; a systematic review. *BMC Med Educ*.2021 Jul 12; 21 (1): 381. doi: 10.1186/s12909 - 021 - 02802 - 9. PMID: 34247617; PMCID: PMC8273947.
- [12] Peer KS. Professionalism and Professional Identity in Athletic Training: Using Shared Professional Values as a Moral Compass. *J Athl Train*.2023 Jun 1; 58 (6): 488 - 490. doi: 10.4085/1062 - 6050 - 0039.22. PMID: 37659067; PMCID: PMC10496453.
- [13] Sviland R, Martinsen K, Nicholls DA. Løgstrup's thinking: a contribution to ethics in physiotherapy. *Physiother Theory Pract*.2022 Jan; 38 (1): 1 - 13. doi: 10.1080/09593985.2020.1741051. Epub 2020 Mar 13. PMID: 32166998.
- [14] Mármol - López MI, Marques - Sule E, Naamanka K, Arnal - Gómez A, Cortés - Amador S, Durante Á, Tejada - Garrido CI, Navas - Echazarreta N, Juárez - Vela R, Gea V. Physiotherapists' ethical behavior in professional practice: a qualitative study. *Front Med (Lausanne)*.2023 Jul 17; 10: 1158434. doi: 10.3389/fmed.2023.1158434. PMID: 37529240; PMCID: PMC10390221.
- [15] Cortés - Amador S, Arnal - Gómez A, Marques - Sule E, Hernández - Guillén D, Tolsada - Velasco C, Espí - López GV. Development of Advanced Competencies in Physiotherapy: Impact of a Single - Blinded Controlled Trial on Ethics Competence. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*.2022 Aug 25; 19 (17): 10590. doi: 10.3390/ijerph191710590. PMID: 36078306; PMCID: PMC9518481.
- [16] Ditwiler RE, Swisher LL, Hardwick DD. Doing things you never imagined: Professional and ethical issues in the U. S. outpatient physical therapy setting during the COVID - 19 pandemic. *Musculoskelet Sci Pract*.2022 Dec; 62: 102684. doi: 10.1016/j. msksp.2022.102684. Epub 2022 Oct 29. PMID: 36356408; PMCID: PMC9617680.
- [17] Ditwiler RE, Swisher LL, Hardwick DD. Professional and Ethical Issues in United States Acute Care Physical Therapists Treating Patients With COVID - 19: Stress, Walls, and Uncertainty. *Phys Ther*.2021 Aug 1; 101 (8): pzab122. doi: 10.1093/ptj/pzab122. PMID: 33956143; PMCID: PMC8136052.
- [18] Minicuci N, Giorato C, Rocco I, Lloyd - Sherlock P, Avruscio G, Cardin F. Survey of doctors' perception of professional values. *PLoS One*.2020 Dec 28; 15 (12): e0244303. doi: 10.1371/journal. pone.0244303. PMID: 33370373; PMCID: PMC7769469.
- [19] Roman N, Miclus R, Rogozea L. Ethical considerations about informed consent in physiotherapy in Romania. *Med Pharm Rep*.2019 Oct; 92 (4): 362 - 367. doi: 10.15386/mpr - 1223. Epub 2019 Oct 25. PMID: 31750436; PMCID: PMC6853042.
- [20] van Aswegen H, Patman S, Plani N, Hanekom S. Developing minimum clinical standards for physiotherapy in South African ICUs: A qualitative study. *J Eval Clin Pract*.2017 Dec; 23 (6): 1258 - 1265. doi: 10.1111/jep.12774. Epub 2017 May 26. PMID: 28548368.
- [21] Swisher LL. A retrospective analysis of ethics knowledge in physical therapy (1970 - 2000). *Phys Ther*.2002 Jul; 82 (7): 692 - 706. PMID: 12088466.
- [22] Reimer D, Russell R, Khallouq BB, Kauffman C, Hernandez C, Cendán J, Castiglioni A. Pre - clerkship medical students' perceptions of medical professionalism. *BMC Med Educ*.2019 Jul 1; 19 (1): 239. doi: 10.1186/s12909 - 019 - 1629 - 4. PMID: 31262283; PMCID: PMC6604300.
- [23] Cui X, Ding N, Jiang N, Li H, Wen D. Preliminary study of the relationship between career choice motivation and understanding of professionalism in newly enrolled medical students in China: a cross - sectional study. *BMJ Open*.2021 Feb 22; 11 (2): e041860. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen - 2020 - 041860. PMID: 33619186; PMCID: PMC7903090.
- [24] Ashfaq T, Ishaq A, Shahzad F, Saleem F. Knowledge and perception about bioethics: A comparative study of private and government medical college students of Karachi Pakistan. *J Family Med Prim Care*.2021 Mar; 10 (3): 1161 - 1166. doi: 10.4103/jfmpc. jfmpc_103_21. Epub 2021 Apr 8. PMID: 34041144; PMCID: PMC8140255.
- [25] Mármol - López MI, Marques - Sule E, Naamanka K, Arnal - Gómez A, Cortés - Amador S, Durante Á, Tejada - Garrido CI, Navas - Echazarreta N, Juárez - Vela R, Gea V. Physiotherapists' ethical behavior in professional practice: a qualitative study. *Front Med (Lausanne)*.2023 Jul 17; 10: 1158434. doi: 10.3389/fmed.2023.1158434. PMID: 37529240; PMCID: PMC10390221.