

Physiotherapists and Communication Skills

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Communication is important in most aspects of health care, from history taking to providing information & treatment to the patient. Communication skills impacts physical therapy treatment outcome and its competence require being assessed throughout training for physiotherapists given the increasing need to improve patient outcomes. There is a growing interest in communication training within the profession of physical therapy, consequently, communication skill is central to engaging patients in a therapeutic relationship, and significantly put the patient at the middle of the care as an active participant in decision-making (Al-Juwair, 2020). A physiotherapist should possess a positive mindset and outstanding communication abilities to create a welcoming environment, cultivate trust with patients, and motivate them throughout difficult recovery journeys. **Aim:** The study aims to determine the knowledge and attitude of the physiotherapist towards communication skills within physical therapy sessions. **Method:** A quantitative, descriptive cross-sectional survey using a knowledge and attitudes questionnaire used in this study. The study was conducted among physiotherapists who are working in hospitals and centers in Khartoum State, Sudan. A purposive sampling method was used. The total number of participants was Eighty-Nine (Females 78; Males: 11). Data analysis used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23. The data is presented in the next chapter using tables, pie charts and columns. Study aim were explained to all participants and informed written consent form signed by participants before participating in the study. **Results:** Merely 6% of the participants possessed over 7 years of experience, qualifying them as experienced physiotherapists. The study revealed the total knowledge and attitude evaluation. Regarding knowledge, 11% (10/89) had moderate knowledge about communication skills while majority 89% (79/89) had high knowledge about communication skills. Regarding attitude, only 1% (1/89) has low (poor) attitude towards communication skills while 6% (5/89) has moderate attitude towards communication skills. Finally, and higher, there are 93% (83/89) has high (positive) attitude towards communication skills. **Conclusion:** The study had shown prevalence of high knowledge and positive attitude toward using communication skills in physical therapy sessions among Sudanese physiotherapists. Hence this study concludes that communication skills is very important for physiotherapy profession for achieving better treatment outcome. Further professional development courses related to communication skills should provide by Sudanese physiotherapists associations. Other recommendations are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: Physiotherapy, communication, knowledge, attitude, Khartoum State, Sudan.

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INTRODUCTION

Physiotherapy, also known as physical therapy, is a branch of healthcare dedicated to enhancing and preserving movement, functionality, and overall quality of life through various physical methods such as exercise, massage, and other physical interventions (World Physiotherapy, 2023). Physiotherapy has seen significant changes over the last 25 years and become one of the important medical health professions (Femiak *et al*, 2025; Osman *et al*, 2024). Physiotherapists are one of the health professions who spend longer period of time with the patients (Bushra *et al*, 2023: World Physiotherapy, 2023). Therefore, physiotherapists are expected to communicate effectively over each space in their program to produce an efficient practice. In other words, relationships between patients and physiotherapists requires specific social skills, including communication skills (Femiak *et al*, 2025).

Communication is the way of transferring idea or knowledge between people (Schnettler *et al*, 2025; Qiu *et al*, 2025). Communication can be accomplished through various methods such as verbal, non-verbal, visual and written communication (Rahman *et al*, 2023). The significance of communication has grown, making it an essential skill in both academic and practical domains. As a result, it is incorporated into numerous academic curricula and training initiatives (Alwi & Karim, 2024). In communication cycle, messages are transmitted from a sender to a receiver. The receiver interprets the message then provides feedback to the sender. Communication with the patients is important to urge the best results out of the treatment. The security

of the patients, the standard of care they received, furthermore as the satisfaction they derived from health care services is greatly influenced by communication skills of the health caregivers.

Knowledge encompasses the understanding, skills, awareness, or information gained through education, experience, reasoning, or exploration (Ainge *et al*, 2025). To build trust, ensure patient understanding, promote collaborative decision-making, and ultimately improve health outcomes, physiotherapists must excel in both verbal and nonverbal communication, active listening, cultural awareness, patient education, and written documentation (Al-Juwair, 2020). Effective communication goes beyond simply sharing information; it also includes fostering participation, asking questions, and aligning expectations between the patient and the physiotherapist.

Attitude refers to a sentiment or perspective regarding something or someone, as well as a way of acting (Rosdiana *et al*, 2024). The attitude of physiotherapists towards communication skills is crucial. It indicates the potential for fostering a positive atmosphere in the physiotherapy rehabilitation process. A physiotherapist should possess a positive mindset and outstanding communication abilities to create a welcoming environment, cultivate trust with patients, and motivate them throughout difficult recovery journeys (Harrison *et al*, 2025).

Sudan is an African country located in the north east Africa sounded by many countries like Egypt, Ethiopia, Eretria, South Sudan, Chad, Libya, and Republic Central of Africa (Abdelnour *et al*, 2025). It is one of the developing countries with health sector challenges including Physiotherapy (Almalty *et al*, 2024; Abdelnour & Bolis, 2023; Abdalmagid *et al*, 2023). Physiotherapy is an established but low-status profession in Sudan, facing challenges with a shortage of well-trained professionals and limited resources, though efforts are underway to expand educational programs and improve the quality of services (Almalty *et al*, 2024). Educational institutions such like Ahfad University for Women (AUW) and Al Neelain University provide degrees in physical therapy, and professional bodies like the Sudanese Physiotherapy Association (SuPTA) promote awareness and advocate for the profession (Alkazaleh *et al*, 2024; Almalty *et al*, 2024). While the profession is growing, there's a significant need for increased professional status, awareness, and resources to meet the needs of the Sudanese population (Abdelnour & Bolis, 2023).

In Sudan there is lake of researches regarding the communication skills as core competence for all the medical staff including the physiotherapists. Therefore, there are a need to point this topic, and open up the track for further researches.

METHODOLOGY:

A cross-sectional, quantitative, descriptive study design was used. The research was carried out in Khartoum State, the capital of the Republic of Sudan.

A total of 89 physiotherapists were available to take part in the study, comprising 78 females and 11 males. Participants were reached in the Military Hospital, Organismo di Volontariato per la Cooperazione Internazionale (OVCI), Savanna Rehabilitation Center, and Aliaa Hospital.

Self-administered questionnaires used for data collection. The questionnaires were segmented into three distinct sections. The first section focused on (Socio-demographic data), the second section addressed (Knowledge), and the third section pertained to (Attitude). Likert-3 and pinar scales were used to count the participants level of knowledge and attitude. The comprehensive assessment of knowledge and attitude was established by evaluating the responses of the participants. Those who provided more than five correct answers were deemed to possess adequate knowledge, whereas those with more than five favorable responses were regarded as having a positive attitude.

The data collected from the questionnaire were inputted into Microsoft Excel 2011, numerically coded, and subsequently transferred to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 for analysis. A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to illustrate the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as their knowledge and attitudes.

The administrators of the chosen institutions within were approached to request permission to conduct the study within their facilities. Prior to the commencement of the research, the objectives and purpose of the study were communicated to all participants, who were then asked to provide informed written consent before engaging in the study. The informed consent document clarified that participation was voluntary and that all information collected would be kept anonymous and confidential. Participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any adverse consequences. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, no names were included on the questionnaires, which were collected and securely stored. Access to the questionnaires was restricted solely to the researcher.

RESULTS:

Table. 3.1 & 3.2 below shows some demographic information’s specifically working place and qualifications while Figure 3.1 & 3.2 below shows gender and experience.

Table.3.1. Working Place:

Working Place	Frequency	%
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Military Hospital.	30	34%
Aliaa Hospital.	23	26%
Savanna Rehabilitation Center.	21	24%
OVCI.	15	17%
Total	89	100%

Figure 3.1. Gender:

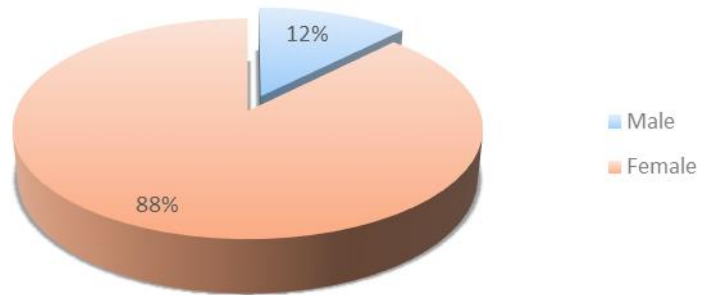


Table 3.2. Qualifications:

Categories	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's degree in physiotherapy.	78	88%
Diploma.	6	7%
Masters in physiotherapy.	4	4%
PhD in physiotherapy.	1	1%
Total	89	100%

Figure 3.2. Experience:

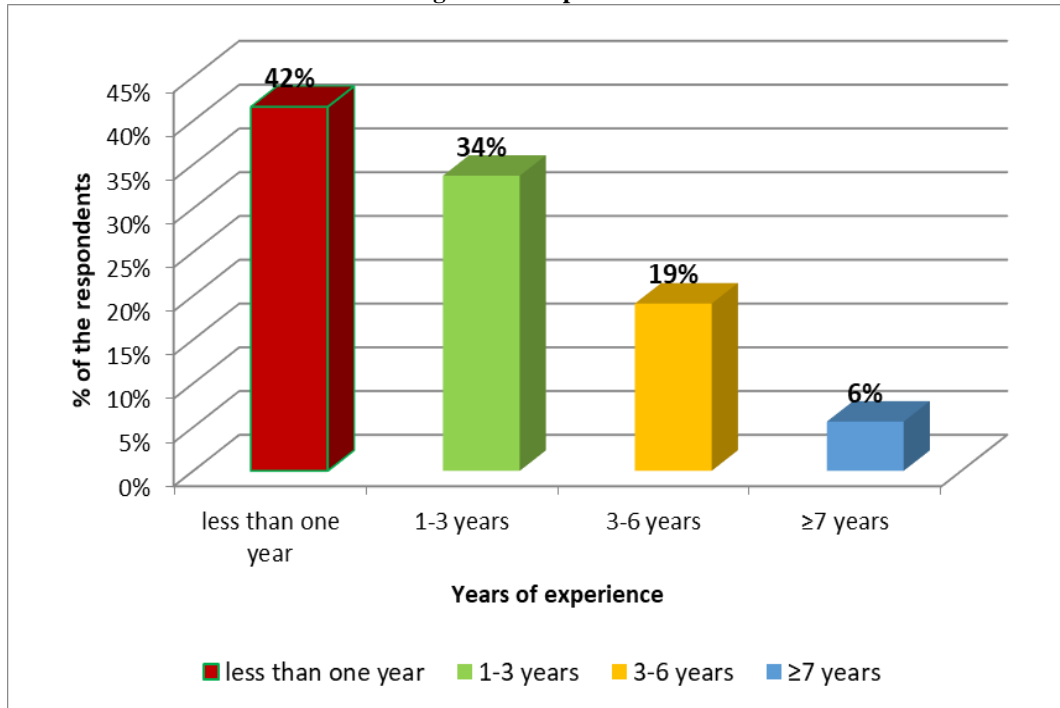


Figure 3.3. Total Knowledge and Attitude of Participants:

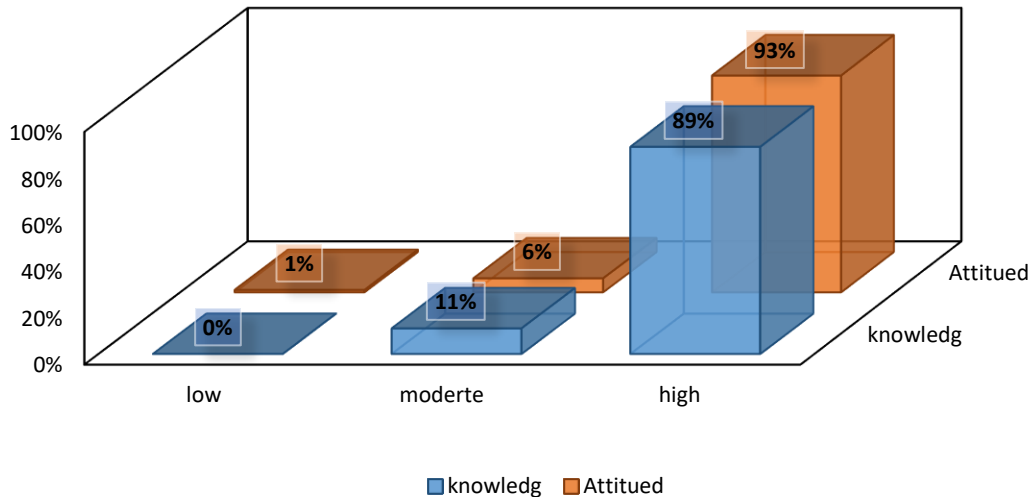


Figure 3.3. above shows the total knowledge and attitude evaluation. Regarding knowledge, 11% (10/89) had moderate knowledge about communication skills while majority 89% (79/89) had high knowledge about communication skills. Regarding attitude, only 1% (1/89) has low (poor) attitude towards communication skills while 6% (5/89) has moderate attitude towards communication skills. Finally, and higher, there are 93% (83/89) has high (positive) attitude towards communication skills.

DISCUSSION:

The research indicated a significant majority of female participants, with findings showing that 88% were female, while males constituted 12%. This aligns with the overall trend observed in the profession. In Sudan, the prevalence of females more than males in the physiotherapy profession been found in several studies. The study of Osman *et al* (2024), stated that 63.7% of physiotherapists working in different physiotherapy facilities in Khartoum State are females. According to Rai & Prakash (2025), most patients indicated that the physiotherapist's gender was not a significant factor for them, demonstrating the variability in gender preferences.

Most of the study participants got less than one year of experience as physiotherapists. In Japan, physiotherapists with around 5 years of work experience are classified as 'experienced' and are acknowledged as individuals who have spent a considerable amount of time in the profession, irrespective of their level, effectiveness, or quality of training (Okayama & Daikuya, 2023). On the other hand, it was believed that the number of years of experience of therapists does not inherently relate to their physiotherapy skills, particularly when participants had six or more years of experience. Significant variations were noted among institutions concerning the attributes of physiotherapy skills (Okayama & Daikuya, 2023). In Estonia, the study of Suits *et al* (2025), shows that less experience physiotherapists facing more challenges such as deficiency in psychosocial skills, along with a lack of abilities pertaining to time management, conflict resolution, and handling increased caseloads. In this study, merely 6% of the participants possessed over 7 years of experience, qualifying them as experienced physiotherapists. The limited duration of experience did not reveal any negative issues in the present study, as there was no evidence indicating that knowledge and awareness of communication skills were affected.

In Sudan and around the world, it is essential for physiotherapy qualifications to incorporate comprehensive training in communication skills within the curriculum (Abdalmagid *et al*, 2023). This integration is crucial to ensure that graduates are equipped to practice safely and effectively, as communication plays a direct role in patient assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and ultimately, patient satisfaction and outcomes. In this study, most of participants got BSc degree in physiotherapy same as several study done before in the physiotherapy fields (Abdelnour *et al*, 2025; Desmeules *et al*, 2012). On the same time, there were no evidence of showed that qualification affect the awareness and knowledges of physiotherapists about importance of communication skills during the physiotherapy sessions in Khartoum State. Conversely, certain sources indicated a relationship between the qualifications of physiotherapists and the average salary. According to World Salaries (2025), the salary of physiotherapists in Sudan, categorized by educational attainment, is as follows: 571,300 SDG for a Bachelor's degree, 852,600 SDG for a Master's degree, and 1,235,600 SDG for a Doctorate degree. Additional details regarding the socioeconomic status of Sudanese physiotherapists in the forthcoming studies may clarify whether this average is deemed satisfactory or not.

In this study, Sudanese physiotherapists were distributed across various workplaces in Khartoum State, including governmental hospitals, private hospitals, physiotherapy clinics, and Non-Governmental Originations (NGOs). In this study, Military Hospital considered as a governmental hospital, Aliaa Hospital as Private hospital, Savanna Rehabilitation Center as physiotherapy clinic, and OVCI as an NGO. The average distribution among workplaces did not exhibit significant variations or negative impacts on the awareness and attitudes of Sudanese physiotherapists regarding the use of communication skills during physiotherapy sessions in Khartoum State.

Finally, it was revealed that, in general, physiotherapists in Khartoum State have a strong comprehension and a positive attitude towards the implementation of communication skills during physical therapy sessions. This is clearly stated in the previous section of this study as most of participants got high scores in knowledge and attitude towards using communication skills in physiotherapy sessions in Khartoum State.

CONCLUSION:

The objective of the study was to ascertain the knowledge and attitudes of physiotherapists regarding the use of communication skills in physical therapy sessions in Khartoum State.

The research was carried out among physiotherapists employed in selected institutions. The findings and discussion illustrated the general perspective on the knowledge and attitudes of physiotherapists towards communication skills, revealing that, overall, and physiotherapists in Khartoum State possess a solid understanding and a favorable attitude towards the application of communication skills in physical therapy sessions.

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