



ANALYSING HELPING ATTITUDE & EMPATHY AMONGST OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS

Occupational Therapy

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ABSTRACT

Background- Occupational therapists are primary healthcare professionals whose role is to assist their clients develop adaptive and compensatory strategies & achieve maximum independence in their daily lives. The attitudes of healthcare professionals towards people with disabilities have been found to be among the most significant factors contributing to the achievement of intervention goals, including successful rehabilitation and re-integration into the community **Objective -** To find the correlation between Helping Attitude & Empathy amongst Occupational Therapy Students.**Method-** fifty-five Students of Occupational Therapy Undergraduate and Postgraduate was included in the study. Paper based version of Empathy - A Self-Assessment Scale & Helping Attitude Scale were given to the students **Result -** Helping Attitude of Occupational therapy students demonstrated higher scores (>60) that is Favourable. Empathy of Occupational therapy students demonstrated medium (33-56) & There is moderate positive correlation between Helping Attitude and Empathy among Occupational Therapy students ($r=0.423$, $P=0.001282$). **Conclusion** – Occupational therapy students shows Helping Attitude and Empathy as they matured

KEYWORDS

Occupational Therapy, Empathy, Helping Attitude.

INTRODUCTION

The term *Empathy* was a first attempt to translate the German word *Einfühlung*, meaning the “feeling within” a person, which the used in his works⁽¹⁾. Empathy is an important attribute for Occupational therapists in establishing rapport and in better understanding their clients. However, empathy can be compromised by high workloads, personal stressors and pressures to demonstrate efficacy. Helping Attitude is willingness and concern for the welfare of others. It refers to voluntary actions intended to help others, may be in lieu of money or some returns or purely selfless help. Helping Attitude can promote physiological changes in the brain linked with happiness this heightened sense of well-being might be the byproduct of being more physically active or because it makes us more socially active⁽²⁾. Occupational therapists are primary healthcare professionals whose role is to assist their clients develop adaptive and compensatory strategies & achieve maximum independence in their daily lives. The attitudes of healthcare professionals towards people with disabilities have been found to be among the most significant factors contributing to the achievement of intervention goals, including successful rehabilitation and re-integration into the community⁽³⁾. Occupational therapy students require establishing rapport with clients in an empathetic manner for better understanding & Maintaining a Helping Attitude with patients in order to pursue meaningful Occupational and therapeutic outcomes for each individual so that this study aimed to find Empathy and Helping Attitude among undergraduate and post graduate Occupational therapy students⁽⁴⁾.

METHOD

Research design–

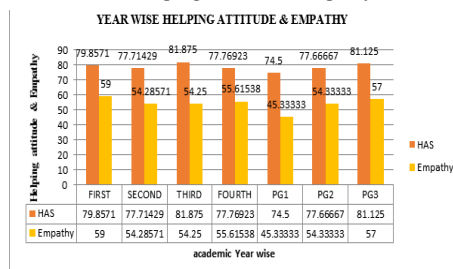
A cross-sectional survey design was used to conduct the research. The study was conducted adhering to the principles of 'Declaration of Helsinki'. Total 55 Students of Occupational Therapy Undergraduate and Postgraduate was enrolled in the study using Convenient sampling and explained the purpose and nature of the study. A consent letter was taken from them in the language best understood by them. Paper based version of first Empathy - A Self-Assessment Scale with Overall Level Of Empathy grading is – Low, Medium, High & second Helping Attitude Scale were given to the students According to the author the interpretations are 60 is a neutral score, <60 unfavourable , >60 favourable. Any queries regarding the study were explained to the students. The scores were calculated & data was analysed using appropriate statistics tests.

RESULTS

In this study the majority of participants are females (85.5%) than

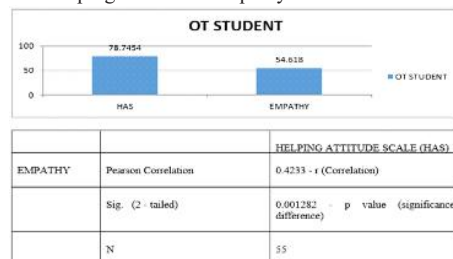
Males (14.5%) and the Helping Attitude of Females > Males (79.44681 > 74.625), & Empathy of Females > Males (55.44681 > 49.75). Total mean age of OT students are 22.7 years with mean age of female & male OT students are 21.7 & 23 years respectively. Helping Attitude (Favourable) & Empathy (Medium) of OT UG (79.11429 & 55.71429) & OT PG student (>78.1 & 52.7) respectively.

GRAPH A: Year Wise Helping Attitude & Empathy.



Graph A: demonstrates highest Helping Attitude in 3rd year Postgraduate & Undergraduate students which is 81.125 % & 81.875 % respectively which is favourable & highest Empathy of 3rd year Postgraduate & 1st year Undergraduate students which is 57 % & 59 % respectively (High). The graph demonstrates lowest Helping Attitude & Empathy of 1st year Postgraduate students among all Occupational Therapy students which is 74.5% (favourable) & 45.33 % (medium) respectively.

GRAPH B: Helping Attitude & Empathy in OT Students



		HELPING ATTITUDE SCALE (HAS)
EMPATHY	Pearson Correlation	0.4233 - r (Correlation)
	Sig. (2 - tailed)	0.001282 p value (significance difference)
	N	55

Graph B: shows Helping Attitude and Empathy among overall Occupational therapy students. Helping Attitude of Occupational therapy students demonstrated higher scores (>60) that is Favourable. Empathy of Occupational therapy students demonstrated medium (33-

56) & There is moderate positive correlation between Helping Attitude and Empathy among Occupational Therapy students ($r=0.423$, $P=0.001282$).

DISCUSSION

Occupational therapy students often work with people with mental health problems, disabilities, injuries, or impairments. They provide intervention for helping children with disabilities to participate fully in school and social situations, and also providing supports for older adults experiencing physical and cognitive changes. For establishing rapport and in better understanding their client's, Empathy and Helping Attitude are the important attribute for Occupational therapists. So the present research is attempted to find correlation between Helping Attitude and Empathy amongst Occupational therapy students by using Helping Attitude scale and Empathy - A Self-Assessment Scale.

In this study numbers of female students are more than male students, this could be because Occupational therapy is female dominant profession in India and worldwide. This is supported by the study of Dennis Robert Jones^[5]. (1997) in his study Perceived Differences between Male and Female Occupational Therapists Treatment and other Related Gender Issues who mentioned in his article that Occupational therapy has traditionally been a career which, much like nursing, attracted mostly females. The career requirements of a caring, patient, and empathetic practitioner were often stereotypically thought of as better suited to females. While occupational therapy is a profession of interest primarily to women, there are certain positions in the field for which it is desirable to have male therapists. For this reason a limited number of men may be admitted to the professional course (Thompson, 1942).

The Helping Attitude and Empathy are more in females > males but Helping Attitude & Empathy of the male and female are favorable & medium respectively, this could be because Occupational Therapy female students demonstrated more emotional, they sense great joys and feels wonderful to assist others in need and empathetic, they express their emotions with concerns and put extra efforts with concerns and they learn in their curriculum to build rapport with the patient for effective intervention, while Occupational Therapy male students demonstrated less emotional and more practical way to handle the situations. This is supported by the study of Leonardo Christoy-Moore, Elizabeth A. Simpson et al (2015) and is published in Neuroscience & Bio behavioral Reviews, who mentioned in his article that evidence suggests that there are differences in the capacity for Empathy between males and females^[6]. Stereotypically, females are portrayed as more nurturing and empathetic, while males are portrayed as less emotional and more cognitive. Another study supported with our study conducted by Tinbergen (1963) in his study on Gender differences in human Empathy, they concluded that the masculine hormone testosterone is shown to inhibit Empathy, while the feminine hormone oxytocin promotes empathic reactions to others^[7]. Another study supported with our study of Helping Attitude by Bobbi Hupp-Wilds (April 2014) in his study on Gender Roles and Helping Behavior, this research studied 3 hypotheses to examine the relationship of gender roles, life experiences, personality, and helping behavior intention. It was hypothesized regardless of sex, masculine individuals help more in dangerous helping situations, and feminine individuals help more in emotional situations^[8]. An interesting trend that was uncovered is that females are helped first in both dangerous and emotional situations, while men are helped last if it is an emotional based help.

Helping Attitude & Empathy of Occupational therapy Undergraduate & Postgraduate students & overall Occupational Therapy students are favourable & medium respectively. There is strong correlation between Helping Attitude and Empathy in Occupational therapy students, This could be because Occupational therapy Undergraduate & Postgraduate students are trained by experienced professors and getting practical experiences in the same settings & intervening patients under supervision of expertise therapists also students get maximum practical exposure, and also from Professors, Clinical Therapist, and Seniors and also through their syllabus they learn Therapeutic use of self, Helping Attitude and Empathy which is also included in their curriculum. This is supported by the study of Rosa M in his study of Empathy in occupational therapy students: a cross-sectional study at a Spanish University, although high levels of Empathy among occupational therapy students are observed in all degree courses, no significant differences were found between them^[9].

And one of the studies by Terry Petti john in his study of Gender Roles and Helping Behavior, that people with more life experiences, age, maturity, and responsibilities would be more likely to help in all situations^[10]. This is supported by Mohammed Ali, Mehdi conducted study on experiences of Occupational Therapy students in the first field work education, they concluded that students experience is valuable source to explore the nature on fieldwork training and plan more efficient curriculum in the future under expertise. This is supported by the (2020) values provide a foundation to guide Occupational therapy personnel in their interactions with others. One more study supported with our study by Ren Padilla (2003) by an article of Occupational therapy fieldwork education: value and purpose which explains that the purpose of fieldwork education is to propel each generation of Occupational therapy practitioners from the role of student to that of practitioner^[11]. Through the fieldwork experience, future practitioners achieve competence in applying the Occupational therapy process and using evidence – based interventions to meet the occupational needs of a diverse client population.

Graph A shows year wise Helping Attitude and Empathy among Occupational therapy Undergraduate and Postgraduate students. This graph demonstrates highest Helping Attitude of 3rd year Postgraduate & Undergraduate students respectively & highest Empathy of 3rd year Postgraduate & 1st year Undergraduate students respectively. This could be because the 3rd year Postgraduate students holds maximum experience and exposure in handling patients with greater level of Helping Attitude & Empathy through their thesis work, ward work, they also have awareness that in clinical postings certain Undergraduate students and Postgraduate students are posted under them so they understand their responsibility of doing the needful rehabilitation work in wards for further imbibing similar professional behaviour in the students who observe them, also Undergraduate experiences from the respective institutes. Also, the Helping Attitude of 3rd year Undergraduate students have demonstrated higher this could be because in their current 3rd year they get an exposure to attend clinics where they learn how to examine the patients and further demonstrate to examine the patients this could be the major reason of patient handling techniques they have learned with application of proper Helping Attitude skills. Also, the Empathy of 1st year Undergraduate students has been demonstrated to be higher this could be because they hardly get to attend ward work due to their busy lecture schedule, so whatever minimum time they attend their ward work they have demonstrated to be more Empathetic towards patients and also because they have less workload clinically. This is supported by the study of Rosa M in his study of Empathy in occupational therapy students: a cross-sectional study at a Spanish University, although high levels of Empathy among occupational therapy students are observed in all degree courses, no significant differences were found between them^[9]. This is supported by Terry Petti john in his study of Gender Roles and Helping Behaviour, that people with more life experiences, age, maturity, and responsibilities would be more likely to help in all situations.^[10]

LIMITATIONS

The population was less in number. There was unequal proportion of Occupational Therapy UG and PG students male and female. The results cannot be generalized. It was an Unicentric study.

RECOMMENDATION

Similar long-term studies can be conducted with larger sample size. Larger data from multiple institutes can be compiled and analysed together. There is also a need to investigate the Empathy levels of Occupational therapist working in different client groups such as pediatric, neurology, mental health geriatrics and physical disabilities. Persons with other occupations can be studied. Persons with other personality traits can be studied. Intervention can be given to students those showing low Empathy & Helping Attitude.

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Place of Study: Occupational Therapy Training School & Centre, Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College and General Hospital, Sion, Mumbai-22.

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