



## **Nurses' Perception of Physiotherapists in Selected Hospitals in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria.**

<sup>1</sup>Rabiu, S. Y., <sup>1</sup>Naziru B. Mukhtar<sup>1\*</sup>, Muhammad A. Abba<sup>1</sup>, Aisha Shittu<sup>1</sup>.

*Department of Physiotherapy, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria.*

### **Abstract**

*Perception may differ considerably from one professional group to another. The inter-professional perception the Nurses have of Physiotherapists (PTs) may likely impact on work efficiency as health care team members. The purpose of this study is to evaluate Nurses' perception of physiotherapists as colleagues in health care practice. The methods used in this study are; a total of 150 Nurses were recruited to participate in this study using purposive sampling technique from different Hospitals (Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Murtala Muhammad Specialist Hospital and National Orthopaedic Hospital Dala) in Kano, Nigeria. Inter-professional perception scales (IPS) questionnaire was administered to the Nurses after their consents were obtained. A total number of 137 (91.33%) nurses responded. Descriptive statistics of mean, frequency and percentages were used to summarise the data (SPSS version 16.0). The results obtained were: The findings showed that majority (70.7%) of the respondents were females and 73.7% of them were certificate/diploma holders with only 13.9% having a first degree. The mean age of all participants was 36.9±2 years. Specifically all the respondents reported good perception of Physiotherapists in areas of competency, autonomy, understanding capabilities of nurses, being defensive of their prerogatives and cooperative in relating with Nurses. Most of them perceive PTs to be concerned with patients' welfare, highly ethical, fully utilise their capabilities, do not encroach on their professional territories, do not expect too much from them and are well trained. All the respondents (100%) however, disagree that PTs have a higher professional status and 83.2% of them do not trust PTs professional judgement. It was concluded that most Nurses had a positive perception of Physiotherapists in most areas of professional practice except in professional status and judgement.*

**Keywords:** Nurses, Perception, Physiotherapists

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<sup>1\*</sup>Corresponding Author: Naziru B. Mukhtar, Department of Physiotherapy, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, College of Health Sciences, Bayero University Kano. Mobile: +2348069442044; nazirpt@yahoo.com, nbmukhtar.pth@buk.edu.ng

### **Introduction**

The delivery of primary health care requires the skills and resources of many different professionals working in coordinated fashion (Zorbas, Barraclough, Rainbird & Luxford, 2003). In recent years, it has been noticed that the boundaries between different groups of health professionals are constantly shifting and there has been a discernible move in recent years towards the twin notions of skill mixing and the team approach in health care delivery (Bodenheimer, 2008).

Atwal and Caldwell (2006) stated that inter-professional working refers to interactions between team members, whereas multi-professional or multi-disciplinary working refers more readily to a group of people who come from different health and social care professions. They identified differing perceptions of teamwork, different levels of skills acquisitions to function and dominance of medical power as the major barriers to achieving team work among health care providers.

The nursing profession plays a very important role in the delivery of health care. However, various social issues are bound that may affect their role; the relationship between physicians and nurses is well captured in the literature, and most of the outcomes of the studies reveal areas of consistent professional conflicts between nurses and doctors (Svensson, 1996; Snelgrove & Hughes, 2000; Fagin & Garelick, 2004; Tabak & Koprak, 2007). Poor self-esteem has also been reported among nurses (Randle, 2003) and this may have impact on various factors such as their perception of other health professionals which was also reported to entail negative stereotypes. The nurses mostly viewed themselves more positively than they do to other professionals (Dalley & Sim, 2001).

Another dynamic is the expanding scope of physiotherapy profession, PTs are taking new roles even within hospital outpatient clinics (Durrell, 1996), and these roles are well documented to be effective even in primary care settings (Holdsworth, Webster & McFadyen, 2007). Most of the times, the role of PTs in the in-patient management is often dependent on the nurse, as the latter spends more time with the patient on admission. The relationship between doctors and nurses has been known to be influenced by the former's status and need for omnipotence, because it was mostly a relationship which did not allow open and frank communication. This study aims to provide additional information on the perception nurses have on physiotherapists in the tertiary health institutions of Kano state.

### **Method**

This was a descriptive survey design and the population for this study consisted of all nurses working in public hospitals having physiotherapy

departments in Kano state, Nigeria. Three major hospitals selected for data collection were Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital (AKTH), Murtala Mohammed Specialist Hospital (MMSH) and National Orthopaedic Hospital Dala (NOHD). Prior to the study, ethical clearance was sought from the ethical committees of the participating Hospitals. Thereafter, one hundred and fifty (150) nurses were recruited from all the three selected canter (50 each) during working hours. Immediately, their written consents were obtained, the Inter-professional Perception Scale [IPS] (Hansson and Jansson 1998) was administered to them. The questionnaires were then retrieved after completion for data analysis. The returned copies of the questionnaires were examined for proper completion and sorted for data analysis. One hundred and thirty seven questionnaires were properly completed and used for analysis. Each of the statement in the second section of the IPS was analysed individually. All these analyses were carried out using descriptive statistics of mean, frequency distribution tables and percentages, using SPSS version 16.0.

#### ***Questionnaire (Scale) Description***

The questionnaire comprised of two parts. The first part with eight questions sought for demographic information (age, gender, qualifications and years of working experience) while the second part has fifteen questions revolving around perception. The statements in the second part demand only one level of response which describes how a professional views another professional from another profession. The content validity of the IPS has been previously documented (Hansson & Jansson, 1998). The responses are rated as either negative or positive perceptions based on the content of the questions; if greater (>) than 50% agree to questions 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14 and 15 it is considered a positive perception, a score of exactly 50% is neutral while less than (<) 50% is considered a negative perception for the above questions. For questions 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 13 if >50% disagree is a positive perception, 50% is neutral and <50% is negative. The overall perception is obtained by summing the positive/negative responses and then divided by the number of question 15 and multiplied by 100.

#### **Results**

A total of one hundred and thirty seven Nurses' responses across the three selected hospitals were finally used for analysis based on the usable return questionnaires.

**Table1:** Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables		n	(%)	M±SD
Age (years)				
	21-30	33	24.1	36.9±2.0
	31-40	58	42.3	
	41-50	40	29.2	
	> 50	6	4.4	
Qualification				
	Degree	19	13.9	
	Higher ND	17	12.4	
	Diploma	80	58.4	
	certificate	21	15.3	
Gender				
	Male	36	26.3	
	Female	101	73.7	
Work experience (years)				
	< 5 years	37	27	
	5 -10	48	35	
	10-15	37	27	
	15-20	6	4.4	
	>20 years	9	6.6	

**Key:** M±SD=Mean ± Standard deviation, n= Frequency, %=percentage

The findings revealed that the mean age of the participants was 36.9±2 years, and majority of them were between the age ranges of 31-40 years. There was a preponderance of female participants (73.7%), however in terms of qualification majority of the nurses had diploma (58.4%) as their highest professional qualification while degree holders in nursing accounted for 13.9 % only. The result has also shown that most of the participants had practised nursing profession for less than 10 years as presented in Table 1 above.

**Table 2:** Nurses' perception of physiotherapists

S/N	QUESTION	AGREE- n (%)	DISAGREE - n (%)	RESPONSE RATING(-/+)	TOTAL
1	PTs are competent	137(100)	0(0)	+	137
2	PTs have little autonomy	0(0)	137(100)	+	137
3	PTs understand nurses capabilities	137(100)	0(0)	+	137
4	PTs are concerned with patients welfare	111(81)	26(19)	+	137
5	PTs encroach on nurses' territory	13(9.5)	124(90.5)	+	137
6	PTs are highly ethical	135(98.5)	2(1.5)	+	137
7	PTs expect too much from nurses	23(16.8)	114(83.2)	+	137
8	PTs have higher status than nurses	0(0)	137(100)	-	137
9	PTs are defensive of their prerogatives	137(100)	0(0)	+	137
10	I trust professional judgement of PTs	23(16.8)	114(83.2)	-	137
11	PTs seldom ask for your advice	23(16.8)	114(83.2)	+	137
12	PTs fully utilise their capabilities	135(98.5)	2(1.5)	+	137
13	PTs do not cooperate well	0(0)	137(100)	+	137
14	PTs are well trained	132(96.4)	5(3.6)	+	137
15	PTs have good relations with nurses	137(100)	0(0)	+	137
General positive perception is $13/15 * 100 = 86.7\%$					

**Key:** n=frequency, %= percentage

The table above shows participants responses to each question with corresponding percentages and ratings. The outcome of the Nurses' perception of physiotherapists revealed that the general perception was highly positive (*see* Table 2). However, specifically all the respondents reported positive perception of physiotherapists in areas of competency, autonomy, understanding capabilities of nurses, being defensive of their prerogatives, cooperation and in relating with the nurses.

Majority of the nurses perceive PTs to be concerned with patients' welfare; highly ethical, fully utilise their capabilities; do not encroach on their professional territories, do not expect too much from them and that the PTs are well trained. The respondents also disagree (100%) with questions on whether PTs have higher professional status than the nurses and the respondents (83.2%) agree on trusting PTs professional judgement as shown on in table 2.

### **Discussion**

This study was carried out to investigate the perception of nurses about physiotherapists in selected hospitals in Kano metropolis. One hundred and one (73.7%) of the participant in this study were females (*see* Table 1). This result reflects a proportionate population of nurses in Nigeria and globally as the profession is known to be largely dominated by female (Dalley & Sim, 2001). Seventy three percent of the participants (*see* Table 1) were either certificate or diploma holders which may not be unrelated with the fact that in Nigeria many certificate/diploma awarding institutions in Nursing science exist while only few degree awarding institutions are available.

The research tool sought the participants' responses at a level which gives the nurses' direct perceptions of physiotherapists. IPS was used in this study because it is specifically designed to study inter-professional perception, it is simple to administer and takes short time to complete. The outcome of this study has shown that the Nurses that participated in this study generally had positive perception of physiotherapists. This was evidenced from the high percentages of positive responses obtained. Majority of the nurses had a good perception of physiotherapists with regard to the issue of competence and concern and welfare of the their patients.' This is in conformity with earlier reports (Shepperd, 1994; Hansson & Jansson, 1998).

Similarly, Sheppard (1994) reported that even medical students perceived physiotherapists as professionals and highly competent with an important role in health care delivery. Furthermore, very high percentage (96.4% and 98.5%) of the respondents in this study perceives physiotherapists as well trained and highly ethical in their profession. This finding is in line with a previous study by Hansson and Jansson in 1998 and this may be due to the

expanding and evolving role physiotherapist continually play in different specialities of health sector.

This strong support of physiotherapists by nurses in the present study may be due to classification of both professions as allied health in many institutions, and in some clinical settings, the two professions belong to a common trade union, which subsequently bring about more interaction between them right from clinical training period extending to their clinical practice period. Another reason may be due to the independent physiotherapists-patients contact that exist between the dual party which is second only to the medical doctors.

None of the nurses perceived physiotherapists to have a higher professional status. This perception may be due to inter-professional rancour that exists within the health sector. A study by Turner and Whitfield in 1999 reported that within the medical field, physiotherapists were positioned below medical doctors but above nurses and chiropractor, and had high overall prestige standing.

#### **Limitation of the Study**

The major limitation of the study is the high percentage of nurses with lower academic qualification, relatively young with less than 10 years of work experience. Although, this is a result of work place setting in most public institutions, it could not be ascertained if the academic qualification, age and length of working experience had any influence on their perception. Future studies can assess the relationship between the two professions in work place with a view to enhancing health care. Based on the findings from this study, it was concluded that most nurses had a positive perception of physiotherapists.

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