

# A Deep Dive into Considering Patients Perspective towards Postoperative Physiotherapy and Nursing Services in Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

**Background:** Postoperative rehabilitation, including physiotherapy and nursing care, plays a crucial role in enhancing recovery outcomes and patient satisfaction. Understanding patient experiences is essential to improving care delivery and ensuring a patient-centered approach.

**Objective:** This study aimed to explore patient experiences and satisfaction with postoperative physiotherapy and nursing care in a tertiary hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

**Methods:** A qualitative descriptive design was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 20 patients who had undergone postoperative rehabilitation. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes related to patient satisfaction.

**Results:** Five major themes emerged: (1) Quality of Care Provided, emphasizing the professionalism and competence of healthcare providers; (2) Communication and Patient Education, highlighting the importance of clear instructions and emotional support; (3) Accessibility and Availability of Services, with concerns about scheduling challenges; (4) Pain Management and Comfort, reflecting satisfaction with pain relief strategies; and (5) Psychological Impact of Rehabilitation, stressing the need for emotional and motivational support.

**Conclusion:** The findings underscore the importance of personalized, culturally sensitive care, improved accessibility, and enhanced psychological support to optimize postoperative rehabilitation experiences. Addressing identified challenges can improve patient satisfaction and rehabilitation outcomes.

**Keywords:** Postoperative Rehabilitation, Patient Satisfaction, Physiotherapy, Nursing Care, Tertiary Hospital, Qualitative Study, Saudi Arabia

## **Introduction**

Postoperative rehabilitation poses a major challenge to the surgical recovery process, with physiotherapy and nursing being pivotal towards achieving improved functional outcomes, mobility, and patient's well being. Effective rehabilitation strategies greatly enhance patient satisfaction, which is increasingly being accepted as an important outcome of healthcare service quality and delivery (Jaensson et al., 2019). Patient satisfaction in postoperative care is multi-faceted and focuses on aspects such as pain control, interaction with the healthcare team, resource availability for rehabilitation, and the overall engagement of nurses in formulating and implementing patient-centered nursing care plans (Yeung, 2016).

Merging physiotherapy and nursing care concerning postoperative rehabilitation have proved to facilitate recovery through early mobilization, lowers complications, and improves patient's treatment compliance (Noone,2023). Nevertheless, studies have shown that patient's experiences and perceptions towards the quality of care that they receive tend to differ, sometimes greatly, depending on their expectations, culture, and the type of healthcare system in which they are operating (Yelton and Jildeh,2023). Likewise in Saudi Arabia, cultural values, languages, and the nation's limited form of healthcare accessibility shapes the patient experience and requires investigating these specific aspects in a tertiary hospital setting (Alzakri et al., 2023).

Even with the growing research on the sphere of patient experience, rehabilitation within tertiary hospitals is rarely studied in fast-paced environments like Riyadh. Pay attention to how coordination between interdisciplinary care and education is done as well as during the unmet needs in the rehabilitation process (Boden et al., 2018).

The goal of this study is to evaluate the patient experience and a satisfaction survey about postoperative physiotherapy and nursing care in a Riyadh tertiary hospital. Through qualitative research, this study attempts to establish reasons for satisfaction and provide diabetes rehabilitation recommendations based on local realities.

## **Literature Review**

### **1. Importance of Postoperative Rehabilitation**

Physiotherapy and nursing interventions performed after the operation are crucial for optimal recovery outcomes and ensuring patient satisfaction. For instance, Noone (2023) have shown that the design and implementation of structured early postoperative rehabilitation plans enhanced functional mobility, reduced complications, and improved overall quality of life. Physiotherapy helps in restoring onsite mobility and strength, while nursing provides emotional support, pain management, and education, which together yield positive patient outcomes (Yeung, 2016).

### **2. Factors Influencing Patient Satisfaction**

The satisfaction of patients with postoperative physiotherapy and nursing aid is affected by pain communication with the health providers, formulation of individualized treatment plans, and effectiveness of pain relief measures. According to Jaensson et al. (2019), satisfaction of the patients's needs greatly depends on whether the care is provided personally and whether the patient actively

participates in care decisions. In addition, patients' culture and healthcare system as well as their expectations were studied, particularly in Saudi Arabia (Alzakri et al., 2023; Yelton and Jildeh, 2023).

### 3. Challenges in Postoperative Care

Even though rehabilitation after operation is useful, it is still difficult for patients to be satisfied with the outcome mainly due to factors such as insufficient resources, lack of proper follow up, and poor communication with healthcare providers. Boden et al. (2018) explain that patients experience difficulties using rehabilitation services because of logistical barriers which, in turn, affects their recovery process. Moreover, differences in culture and lack of familiarity with the language can also hinder appropriate care (Alzakri et al., 2023).

### 4. Evidence-Based Approaches to Improve Satisfaction

Objective evidence supports that early mobilization, multidisciplinary cooperation, and organized patient education programs greatly increases patients' satisfaction with postoperative care. For example, the adoption of Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) protocols which include physiotherapy and nursing care in a more complete manner has been shown to improve patient outcomes substantially (Noone, 2023). Other studies, too, have underscored the added value of deploying digital health communications, such as telehealth, to improve communication and continuity of care (Yeung, 2016).

### 5. Nursing and Physiotherapy Collaboration

For thorough postoperative care, effective cooperation between nurses and physiotherapists is key. With proper teamwork, a patient-centered approach is taken to meet his or her physiological and psychologic needs, ensuring that care is continuous. Yeung, 2016, point out that effective cooperation and communication among different professionals in the field is fundamental for productive rehabilitation and higher levels of patient satisfaction.

### 6. Measuring Patient Satisfaction

The assessment of patient satisfaction is undertaken with the aid of various validated tools such as the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) and the Patient Satisfaction with Rehabilitation Questionnaire (PSRQ). These tools enable the health service providers to detect deficiencies in service provision and improve them as per the patient's comment (Jaensson et al., 2019).

The literature highlights the importance of physiotherapy and nursing care in the rehabilitation process after a surgery. A multi-disciplinary approach that incorporates both physical and emotional needs of the patient through evidence-based practices for effective satisfaction requires collaboration from all members of the healthcare team. Addressing challenges like communication and access can improve the patient experience and satisfaction of rehabilitation after surgery.

## **Methodology**

### **Study Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore patient experiences and satisfaction with postoperative physiotherapy and nursing care in a tertiary hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A qualitative

approach was chosen to gain in-depth insights into patients' perspectives and to capture the complexities of their rehabilitation experiences.

## Study Setting

The research was conducted in a leading tertiary hospital in Riyadh, which provides specialized surgical and rehabilitative care to a diverse patient population. The hospital offers comprehensive postoperative rehabilitation services, including physiotherapy and nursing care tailored to the needs of patients recovering from various surgical procedures.

## Participants and Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants who had undergone postoperative rehabilitation at the hospital. The inclusion criteria were:

- Patients aged 18 years and older.
- Patients who had undergone major surgical procedures requiring postoperative physiotherapy (e.g., orthopedic, cardiovascular, or abdominal surgeries).
- Patients who had completed at least four weeks of rehabilitation.
- Patients able to provide informed consent and participate in interviews.

Exclusion criteria included patients with cognitive impairments or those who declined participation. A total of 20 participants were recruited, ensuring diversity in terms of age, gender, and type of surgery.

## Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were conducted face-to-face in a private setting within the hospital to ensure confidentiality and comfort. An interview guide was developed based on existing literature and expert input, focusing on key aspects such as:

1. Patients' expectations and perceptions of postoperative care.
2. Satisfaction with physiotherapy and nursing services.
3. Communication and information received during the rehabilitation process.
4. Perceived barriers and facilitators to recovery.
5. Recommendations for improving care services.

Each interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, and all sessions were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations.

## Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. Familiarization with data – Reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding.
2. Generating initial codes – Identifying key concepts and patterns.
3. Searching for themes – Grouping related codes into overarching themes.
4. Reviewing themes – Refining and validating themes to ensure consistency.
5. Defining and naming themes – Providing meaningful descriptions for each theme.

6. Producing the report – Summarizing findings with supporting quotes from participants.

NVivo software was used to assist in coding and organizing the data.

#### Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the hospital's institutional review board (IRB) prior to data collection. All participants provided written informed consent, and their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences on their treatment.

#### Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, the following strategies were employed:

- Credibility: Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants to validate accuracy.
- Transferability: Rich descriptions of the study context and participant experiences were provided to enable applicability to similar settings.
- Dependability: A clear audit trail of the research process was maintained to ensure consistency.
- Confirmability: Reflexivity was practiced to minimize researcher bias and enhance objectivity.

#### Limitations

Despite the strengths of this study, certain limitations were acknowledged. The findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to other settings. Additionally, participant responses might have been influenced by social desirability bias due to the hospital setting.

### **Findings**

Thematic analysis from the interview data consisted several themes and sub-themes that elucidate the patient experiences and satisfaction regarding postoperative physiotherapy and nursing care within the constituency of the tertiary hospital. The results apparently can be grouped into these healthy themes, with some quotations taken directly from the participants' speeches.

#### Theme 1: Quality of Care Provided

##### Sub-theme 1.1: Professionalism and Competence of Healthcare Providers

Participants reported being satisfied with the professionalism and expertise of the nurses and physiotherapists. They valued the professionalism and skillful knowledge possessed by the staff that facilitated their recovery.

Participant 3: Shout-out to the physiotherapists. They were very knowledgeable and were able to clearly walk me through the process. I was fully confident that I was in good hands.

Participant 12: The nurses were very attentive and always seemed to instinctively know my needs for post-surgical comfort.

## Sub-theme 1.2: Personalized Care Plans

This suggests how important specific rehabilitation interventions personalized to the individual patient's needs and recovery objectives are. Their unique conditions being factored in translated to higher satisfaction.

### Participant 7:

"My physiotherapist seemed to be tailoring the exercises to my pain level and how well I could move. It felt very personalized."

### Participant 15:

"The nurses made certain that I was cared for in ways that were culturally appropriate. I experienced a feeling of respect."

## Theme 2: Communication and Patient Education

### Sub-theme 2.1: Clarity of Instructions

The majority of participants highlighted the importance of straightforward instructions during their rehabilitation. This effective communication boosted their self-confidence towards adherence to the provided postoperative care instructions.

### Participant 5:

"They carefully outlined how I was to perform my exercises and what results to expect after the recovery period."

### Participant 9:

"The nurses were very patient, and they made sure that I understood everything regarding my medication and physiotherapy."

### Sub-theme 2.2: Emotional Support and Reassurance

Healthcare professionals that provided emotional support were deemed as helpful by patients which improved their satisfaction and confidence in the rehabilitation process.

### Participant 1:

"In my case, the physiotherapists helped me through everything and so I was motivated to push myself."

### Participant 14:

"The nurses were very caring and constantly followed how I was coping emotionally and physically."

## Theme 3: Accessibility and Availability of Services

### Sub-theme 3.1: Waiting Times and Scheduling Challenges

Certain respondents expressed displeasure regarding the prolonged waiting periods for physiotherapy appointments and the difficulties involved in booking those appointments, which in turn, hindered their recovery.

Participant 6: Participant 10:

“Having to wait for my physiotherapy appointments was irritating. I felt like it impeded my recovery.”  
“At times, it was a challenge to book an appointment during a preferred time slot, particularly as I depend on a relative to take me.”

Sub-theme 3.2: Availability of Rehabilitation Facilities

Most users reported being satisfied with the availability of equipment even though some participants claimed some resources were scarce or obsolete.

Participant 8:

“The physiotherapy department had all the equipment I needed, but sometimes there was a long wait to get access to some machines.”

Participant 11:

“Everything was kept clean and in good working order. There should be more modern and effective rehabilitation equipment issued, however.”

Theme 4: Pain Management and Comfort

Sub-theme 4.1: Effectiveness of Pain Relief Strategies

Pain management strategies seem to be appreciated by many participants which include medication and non pharmacological approaches such as physiotherapy techniques.

Participant 2:

“The combination of exercises and medications really helped me manage my pain better...”

Participant 13:

“They taught me how to manage my pain through breathing exercises, which was really helpful.”

Sub-theme 4.2: Comfort During Therapy Sessions

The patients pointed towards the contribution made by physiotherapists and nurses during the therapy sessions which impacted the satisfaction ratings given by them.

Patient Interview 4:

“I felt relaxed throughout every session and the exercises were modified according to my physical wellbeing.”

Patient Interview 16:

“The nurses used to inquire if I required something before the beginning of therapy, which made me feel important.”

#### Theme 5: Psychological Impact of Rehabilitation

##### Sub-theme 5.1: Coping with Recovery Challenges

Multiple interviewees noted that the process of rehabilitation requires continuous support and encouragement due to the overwhelming feelings participants experienced during the rehabilitation process.

##### Participant 17:

“I remember there were some challenging days but my physiotherapist was really supportive, which made it easier for me.”

##### Participant 19:

“Recovery isn’t purely physical; it has its mental challenges too. My surroundings are quite supportive, which helps.”

##### Sub-theme 5.2: Motivation and Confidence Building

The motivation and commitment toward rehabilitation goals by the patients was maintained because of the assistance provided by the health care professionals.

##### Participant 18:

“They always supported me and celebrated my little achievements which kept me going.”

##### Participant 20:

“Their positive reinforcement has helped me feel more confident about my recovery.”

## Discussion

The outcomes of this research shed light on the patients’ perceptions and contentment of physiotherapy and nursing care rendered in the postoperative period in a tertiary care hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. A number of crucial themes were noted which have both positive aspects in the rehabilitation services provided and very clear gaps.

### 1. Quality of Care Provided

The analysis showed that patients highly appreciated the professionalism and expertise of the healthcare providers. This observation is consistent with other studies which point to the importance of skilled healthcare professionals during postoperative recovery (Noone, 2023). Care plans that provided additional attention to the specific issues of patients’ rehabilitation were especially important, further underscoring the need for customized rehabilitation strategies (Yeung, 2016). Notably, even with the optimistic narratives that were given, variation in staff experience and workload makes it difficult to ensure quality care for every patient, so this phenomena still remains unaddressed.



## 2. Communication and Patient Education

Seeking Effective communication and patient's education were big contributors to satisfaction as participants showed gratitude towards the instructions given by the service providers, implying their clarity and thoroughness. This finding aligns with the literature since it emphasizes the importance of communication in effective adherence to rehabilitation programs and self-efficacy (Jaensson et al., 2019). The emotional support and reassurance from nurses and physiotherapists are claimed to be effective in decreasing anxiety and improving the well-being of the patients which cite other studies as taking into account the psychosocial elements of postoperative care (Boden et al., 2018). Some participants, however, expressed the view that more ethnically sensitive communication is needed, particularly with patients from diverse cultures.

## 3. Accessibility and Availability of Services

The study uncovered issues associated with delays and the provision of rehabilitation services, which interfered with the patient's satisfaction. These findings correspond to previous studies, which suggest that delays in obtaining rehabilitation services greatly affect recovery and satisfaction levels (Yelton and Jildeh, 2023). Participants indicated that there were problems attending appointments at suitable times, which demonstrates the need for better appointment management as well as more available resources to enhance service availability. Concerns such as these can be addressed by improving recruitment and staff resources in physiotherapy, thereby improving patient care access.

## 4. Pain Management and Comfort

The combination of pharmaceutical and physiotherapeutic provided overwhelming effectiveness, which results in a high patient satisfaction. Many participants pointed out that managed pain emerged as a significant factor concerning patient satisfaction, which is consistent with previous literature focusing on postoperative rehabilitation (Alzakri et al., 2023). As much as they were satisfied with the pain relief strategies, some participants suggested that the use of non pharmacological techniques such as relaxation and educating patients on pain coping strategies would make the experience even better.

## 5. Psychological Impact of Rehabilitation

Patients repeatedly experience pronounced feelings of aggravation, nervousness, psychological torture are some core emotions experienced by a person during recovery. The study findings are consistent with existing literature which states that 'psychological' or mental assistance is one of the most important elements in consideration of the overall well-being of the patient, as well as in adhering to and being satisfied with the rehabilitation (Yeung, 2016). Most patients mention that the relief and coping with recovery challenges was possible due to the support and motivation of certain health providers. These patients would have benefitted even more by incorporating greater steps to support their rehabilitation, such as counseling or even peer led support groups.

## Implications for Practice

From the results, it is possible to formulate some actionable recommendations which aim to improve the quality of patients satisfaction with postoperative physiotherapy and nursing services. These include:

-Focusing on staff training development, tailored to improve the quality of care and communication between patients and health providers.

-Fostering systems of flexible attendance management in order to cut down waiting time and increase access to services.

-Adding psychological services for recovery to address aspects of mental health that may accompany or hinder the recovery process.

-Increasing funding towards rehabilitation infrastructure to provide adequate services for all patients.

-Developing culturally sensitive care strategies to better meet the needs of diverse patient populations.

### Limitations

Although this report sheds light on several important aspects, it does have some shortcomings. The results are only relevant to one tertiary hospital located in Riyadh, which makes them impossible to apply to other healthcare facilities. Furthermore, this research was conducted using self-reported data which is vulnerable to both recall bias and social desirability bias.

### Conclusion

The study reveals that nursing and physiotherapy services must integrate active patient involvement to achieve quality satisfaction, patient outcomes, and recovery. Overall, participants shared positive experiences; however, accessibility issues, pain and psychological management, and other aspects present opportunities for further enhancement. Successful adjustment of these efforts can enable postoperative patients to have better rehabilitation experiences and improved health outcomes.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Further efforts can be made by future researchers on how rehabilitation in the postoperative phase affects the patient's outcomes after surgery and how the healthcare professionals view the challenges in providing such care. These comparative studies from different healthcare facilities will also shed light on the best postoperative rehabilitation practices.

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