

**Manuscript Title:**

*The Anatomy of Assessment: Competency-Based Educational Outcomes in a Physical Therapy Anatomy Course*

**Reviewer's Comments: Is the manuscript important for the scientific community? (Few sentences)**

The manuscript addresses a timely and underexplored topic in physical therapy education: implementing competency-based education (CBE) assessment strategies at the course level, with a focus on anatomy. As Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) programs increasingly adopt CBE models, this study provides valuable empirical data and learner perspectives to inform assessment design, balancing educational rigor, learner autonomy, and faculty workload. The findings contribute meaningfully to the expanding body of scholarship on CBE implementation in physical therapy education.

**Strengths:**

1. **Clear Research Objective:** The study's purpose is clearly articulated and directly addresses gaps in the current CBE literature. The three assessment strategies are well defined and align with established competency-based education principles.
2. **Methodological Rigor:** The mixed-methods approach, which integrates quantitative correlations and qualitative thematic analysis, is well-suited to the research questions. Statistical analyses are clearly described, and the qualitative methodology adheres to an established framework (Braun & Clarke), thereby enhancing credibility.
3. **Clinical Relevance:** The assessment strategies reflect authentic clinical reasoning and National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE)-style preparation, thereby increasing the relevance of the findings to physical therapy education and licensure.
4. **Comprehensive Literature Review:** The manuscript engages with current literature on CBE, assessment, and health professions education. References are current and well-integrated into both the rationale and discussion.
5. **Well-Organized Structure:** The manuscript demonstrates logical structure with clear transitions. Tables effectively support the narrative and enhance readability.

**Area of improvement:**

1. **Title:** The title is clear and informative. Adding "Doctor of Physical Therapy" would

- clarify the target population for a broader readership.
2. **Abstract:** The abstract is strong overall. Minor tightening of language, particularly in the methods section, would improve conciseness. Explicitly stating the study design (retrospective cohort, mixed methods) would enhance clarity.
  3. **Introduction:** The introduction is thorough but would benefit from streamlining by reducing repetition regarding CBE frameworks. This adjustment would improve flow while maintaining necessary context.
  4. **Methodology Clarity:** Although the methods are well described, clarifying how learners selected their approach to formative assessments (guidance versus complete autonomy) would strengthen the interpretation of the null findings on formative assessment engagement.
  5. **Figures:** No figures are included. Incorporating a conceptual figure of the assessment model or window structure could enhance reader understanding and integration.
  6. **Tables and Study Data Integration:** Tables are clear and well-labeled.
  7. **Discussion:** The discussion is thoughtful and well supported. Consider adding a brief comparison to similar findings in other health professions, such as medical or nursing education, to broaden interdisciplinary appeal.
  8. **Limitation:** The limitations section is appropriate. Briefly acknowledging that learner self-selection into formative assessments may represent a confounding factor would strengthen this section.
  9. **Conclusion:** The conclusion is straightforward and aligns with the results. Consider adding a brief, concrete recommendation for educators considering CBE implementation to strengthen practical implications.
  10. **References:** References are current, relevant, and appropriately formatted; no significant concerns.

### **Minor Suggestions:**

#### **1. Clarity & Conciseness**

Condensing sentences in the methods and discussion sections would improve readability. Eliminating repetitive phrases about “flexibility” and “learner autonomy” would improve concision.

#### **2. Minor Typographical & Formatting Issues**

Maintain consistent capitalization of competency-based education (CBE) throughout the manuscript.

### **Recommendations for Publication:**

### **Guideline:**

- **Minor Revision:** This manuscript is well designed, methodologically sound, and makes a meaningful contribution to physical therapy education scholarship. The suggested revisions are minor and focus on clarity, conciseness, and contextual framing rather than substantive methodological concerns.

