

Culturally Informed Approaches to Understand and Manage Chronic Pain in Lebanon: A Co-Designed Exploration

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Chronic pain is a complex phenomenon that significantly impacts individuals' lives, encompassing sensory, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. Culture, defined as the set of distinctive features of a society or social group, profoundly influences how individuals perceive, express, and cope with pain. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for developing practical and culturally sensitive approaches to chronic pain management. This thesis explores the intricate relationship between culture and chronic pain, particularly chronic low back pain within the Lebanese context. This thesis uses a multi-dimensional research framework grounded in bounded relativist ontology, subjectivist epistemology, descriptive phenomenology, and co-design methodology to uncover the interplay between culture and pain experiences and to design culturally sensitive interventions tailored to the Lebanese population, such as pain neuroscience education. This thesis provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between culture and chronic pain, offering a holistic understanding of pain management within the Lebanese context. By integrating cultural sensitivity into interventions like pain neuroscience education, this thesis aims to improve patient outcomes and enhance healthcare practices that honor the diversity of human experiences.

Charbel Najem, born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1981, completed his undergraduate education with a bachelor's in physical therapy from the Lebanese University in 2003. He advanced his studies with a master's in physical therapy from Universite Catholique de Louvain, Belgium, in 2004. Demonstrating a continued commitment to professional development, he obtained a Clinical Doctorate in Physical Therapy from Saint Joseph University, Beirut, in 2019. Furthermore, he pursued a PhD in Health Science at Ghent University, Belgium, starting in 2019 under the guidance of Prof. Mira Meeus and Prof. Barbara Cagnie.

Dr. Najem's academic trajectory encompasses diverse roles, including Clinical Coordinator, Clinical Assistant Professor, and Scientific Committee Member at Antonine University, Lebanon. His academic and clinical teaching experience spans 17 years, beginning in 2007. He has mentored numerous research projects across various levels, including undergraduate and clinical doctoral research. Additionally, he has guided bachelor's and master's students through their thesis research in different universities in Lebanon.

In parallel with his academic pursuits, he has sustained an active clinical practice as the Owner and Founder of Rehab Zone Clinic in Beirut, which has specialized in sports and pain injury rehabilitation since 2006.



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