



HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY  
Pro Bono Physical Therapy Clinic

## DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

### BACKGROUND

- Musculoskeletal pain is a distinctive, personal, and complex experience influenced by cultural constructs.<sup>1</sup>
- Studies have shown that pain descriptors on self-report outcome measures are not easily translated from English to other languages and the translations are not always valid.<sup>2,3</sup>
- Implicit biased care can occur in linguistically diverse patient populations.<sup>4,5,6</sup>
- Understanding how patients' primary language can influence pain description to better inform and minimize biased care.

### PURPOSE

- The purpose of this study is to explore differences in pain descriptors chosen by patients who speak English and those that speak Spanish.

### SUBJECTS

- Medical records (n=505) of patients with chronic pain attending a pro bono physical therapy clinic were reviewed.

### METHODS

- A retrospective chart review of (n=331) medical records that met inclusion criteria.
- Standard practice included intake forms with questions regarding demographics, preferred language, and pain descriptors using items from the Short-Form McGill Questionnaire (SFMQ).<sup>7</sup>
- Analysis was at the epidemiological level
- ANOVA was used to determine significance with a  $p < 0.05$ .

# MORE THAN WORDS: DO PATIENTS OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS CHOOSE DIFFERENT WORDS TO DESCRIBE THEIR PAIN?

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### RESULTS

- Patients speaking Spanish indicated that their country of origin was in North, Central, and South America, as well as the Caribbean.
- Pain Severity varied between patients with a majority selecting a pain of 6-10 out of 20
- Significant differences were observed in four pain descriptors between patients that speak English and those that speak Spanish respectively ( $p < 0.05$ ).
- Apparent gender differences were found where Spanish-speaking males consistently selected fewer pain descriptors (med=2) compared to Spanish-speaking females (med=3), English-speaking males (med=4) and females (med=4).
- No apparent differences were observed between groups in the selection of emotional-affective pain descriptors.

Demographics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	119	36.0
	Female	221	64.0
Race	White/Non-Hispanic	135	40.8
	Black/African American	146	44.1
	Latino/Latinx	50	15.1
Preferred Language	English	287	86.7
	Spanish	44	13.3
Total		331	

Table 1: Demographics

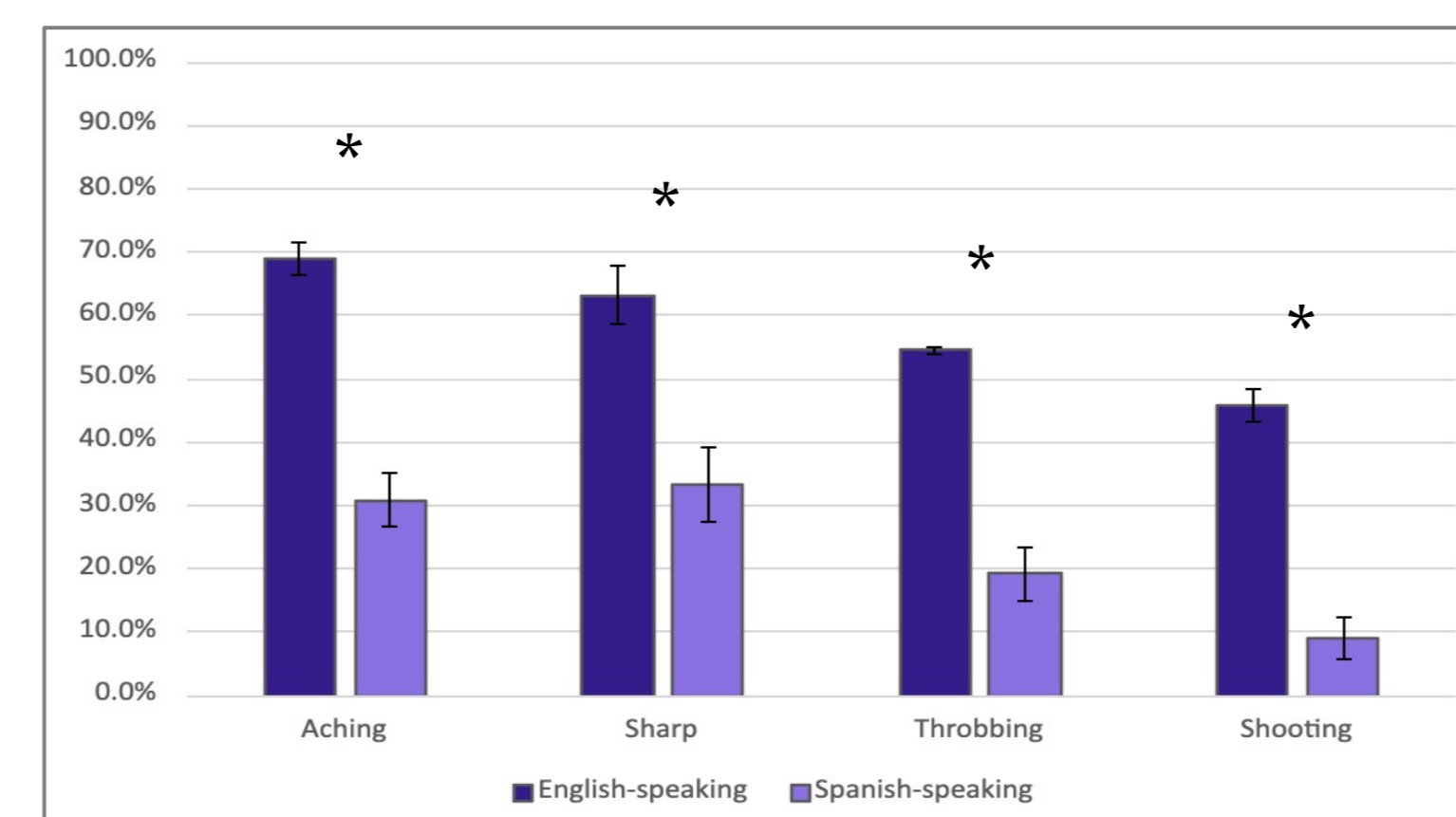


Figure 2: Frequency of chosen pain descriptor between English- and Spanish-speaking patients ( $p < 0.05$ )

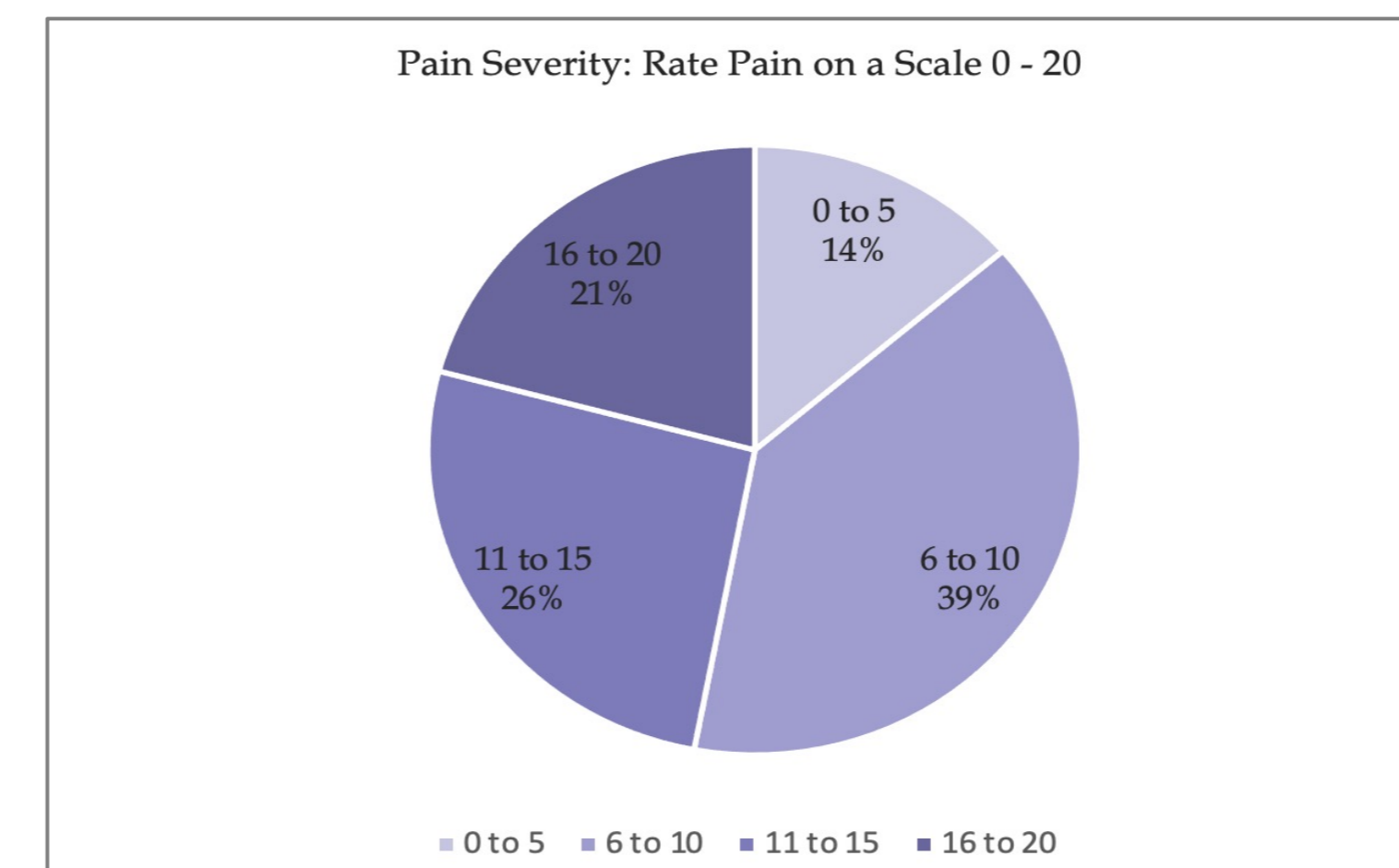


Figure 1: Intensity of Pain Severity for all patients

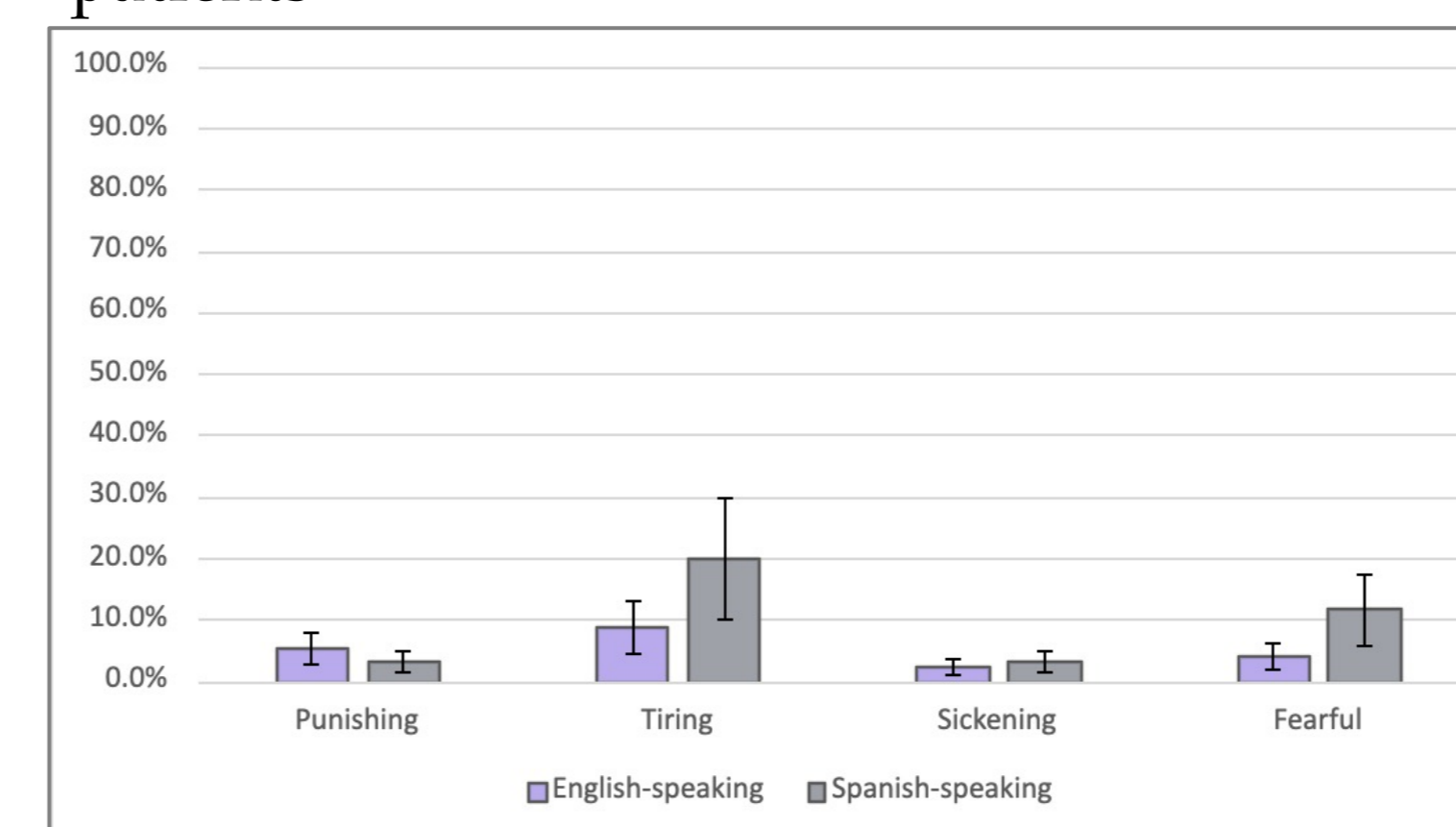


Figure 3: Emotional-affective pain descriptors chosen between English- and Spanish-speaking patients

### CONCLUSION

- Results indicated that patients that speak English used the pain descriptors throbbing, aching, shooting, and sharp more.
- Males that speak Spanish did not select as many pain descriptors.
- Emotional-affective pain descriptors were not selected at apparent varying rates between groups.
- Future research should investigate the cultural differences that may underpin these contrasts in the description of pain.

### CLINICAL RELEVANCE

- Linguistic diversity may exist in the perception and expression of pain.
- There appear to be difference is the way patients select their descriptors; Physical Therapists need to use caution when interpreting these results
- To improve inclusivity and minimize implicit biases in the field, clinicians should carefully consider linguistic differences in pain descriptors.

### REFERENCES

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