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**PREFERENCE OF PAIN INTENSITY
RATING SCALES IN INDIVIDUALS WITH
CHRONIC MUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN: A
CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

Study Design: A Cross-Sectional Study

Background: Chronic musculoskeletal pain is a distressing health problem with a significant negative impact on the physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and vocational function. The pain perception is altered in chronic pain making the assessment more challenging than that of acute pain. The culture, ethnicity, age, and literacy levels also influence the perception and expression of pain. Therefore, no single scale is recommended for all patient groups or in all settings. Majority of the current available literature comparing the utility of pain intensity scales is from western and developed countries. We therefore aim to study the preference of four pain intensity rating scales in individuals with chronic musculoskeletal pain in an Indian setting.

Methods: One hundred and fifty participants diagnosed with chronic musculoskeletal pain as per the ICD-11 definition, and aged equal to or above 18 years were asked to rate their pain intensity on Verbal Rating Scale (VRS), Numerical Rating Scale (NRS), Faces Pain Scale-Revised (FPS-R), and Visual Analog Scale (VAS). Participants then had to identify the scale that they found the easiest to understand or use and would prefer using in the future.

Results: The NRS is the most preferred scale followed by VRS for pain intensity in patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain in an Indian setting. The FPS-R has the highest error rate in the Indian population. The educational background is significantly related to pain scale preference.

Conclusions: Further studies including multiple centres and regions, having an equal distribution of participants from all educational backgrounds need to be conducted to confirm our finding in a non-western, developing country. Furthermore, a study of the preference of pain scales in relation to socio-economic factors can be undertaken.

Keywords: Chronic musculoskeletal pain, pain intensity rating scales, observational study.