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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - No support.
Review Stage at time of this submission - Data analysis.
Conflicts of interest - None declared.
INPLASY registration number: INPLASY202670110

Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 28 July 2026 and was last updated on 28 July 2026.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective To map and synthesize the literature on the cultural adaptation of physical therapy interventions and related rehabilitation approaches. Specifically, this scoping review aimed to identify and describe: (1) the characteristics of the evidence base; (2) populations, intervention types, and outcomes represented in the literature; (3) cultural adaptation strategies used in physical therapy and adjacent rehabilitation contexts; and (4) gaps in the evidence relevant to physical therapy education, research, and clinical practice.

Background CALD populations experience significant health disparities and barriers to healthcare engagement. Cultural adaptation has been recommended as a strategy to improve the relevance and accessibility of healthcare interventions, yet its application in physical therapy remains underexplored. Given the importance of communication, patient participation, treatment expectations, and cultural beliefs within physical

therapy, a scoping review was conducted to map the literature on culturally adapted physical therapy interventions, identify adaptation strategies, and characterize the existing evidence base.

Rationale Although cultural adaptation has been widely recommended to improve the accessibility and relevance of healthcare interventions, the physical therapy literature has not been comprehensively mapped. The available evidence is limited, heterogeneous, and inconsistently reported. This scoping review was conducted to describe the extent and characteristics of the literature on culturally adapted physical therapy and identify adaptation strategies and evidence gaps relevant to research, education, and practice.

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis Data were synthesized descriptively using evidence tables and narrative thematic summary. Studies were categorized by design, population, intervention type, outcomes, and cultural adaptation

approaches. Consistent with scoping review methodology, the review mapped the characteristics and scope of the literature rather than assessing study quality or conducting meta-analysis. Cultural adaptation strategies were grouped into thematic categories and summarized narratively.

Eligibility criteria Included studies were peer-reviewed articles (2000–2024) addressing the cultural adaptation of physical therapy or related body-based rehabilitation interventions. All article types and study designs were eligible, including experimental, non-experimental quantitative, qualitative, review, theoretical, and conceptual publications. Articles published before 2000, non-English publications, non-peer-reviewed literature, and studies focused exclusively on cultural adaptation of measurement instruments were excluded.

Source of evidence screening and selection Sources identified through database searching and backward and forward citation tracking were screened through title/abstract review followed by full-text assessment against predefined eligibility criteria. Three reviewers independently assessed final full-text articles for inclusion. Disagreements were resolved through discussion and consensus. Articles meeting all eligibility criteria were included in the review.

Data management Data were managed using a standardized data extraction form. Included articles were independently reviewed by members of the review team, with each article reviewed by at least two reviewers. Extracted data were compiled into evidence tables and reviewed by one author. Missing information was clarified through author contact when possible, and inconsistencies were verified against original source materials.

Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence Evidence was analyzed descriptively and synthesized narratively. Studies were categorized by design, population, intervention type, outcomes, and cultural adaptation approaches. Findings were reported in evidence tables and narrative summaries. Cultural adaptation strategies were synthesized thematically to identify common adaptation practices and gaps in the literature. No formal quality appraisal or meta-analysis was conducted because the objective was to map the scope and characteristics of the evidence base.

Presentation of the results Results will be presented through a PRISMA flow diagram, evidence tables, and narrative summaries. Studies

will be described according to design, population, intervention, outcomes, and cultural adaptation approaches. Cultural adaptation strategies will be organized into thematic categories, and evidence gaps will be identified.

Language restriction English only.

Country(ies) involved United States.

Other relevant information This scoping review was not prospectively registered. The review was conducted and completed before registration was pursued. At the time the review was undertaken, the authors did not plan to register the review protocol. Retrospective registration is being completed to enhance transparency, provide a public record of the review methods, and facilitate access to methodological information associated with the review. The registered information reflects the methods that were used to conduct the review and has been prepared based on the completed review and manuscript.

Keywords Cultural adaptation; Physical therapy; Physiotherapy; Rehabilitation; Cross-cultural healthcare; Cultural competence; Cultural responsiveness; Culturally and linguistically diverse populations; Migrant health; Refugee.

Dissemination plans Dissemination will include peer-reviewed scholarly publication, conference and professional presentations, blog posts, newsletters, and other knowledge translation products intended to inform research, education, and clinical practice related to cultural adaptation in physical therapy.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Jennifer Esala - Led the conceptualization and design of the scoping review, developed the methodology, participated in literature identification and review, oversaw data extraction and synthesis, resolved data inconsistencies, interpreted findings, supervised the review process, managed project administration, and led manuscript preparation and revision.

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