

The "I" in Fibromyalgia: How does Fibromyalgia Shape Academic Identity?

What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a complex, invisible illness of unknown cause that is characterised by chronic, wide-spread pain, fatigue, sleep disturbances, cognitive dysfunctions, increased sensitivity and psychological disorders (White and Harth, 2001). It is also closely linked with other diagnoses such as chronic fatigue syndrome (Yunus, 2008). Globally, between 0.66% and 10.5% of the general population suffer from fibromyalgia (Queiroz, 2013).

References:

Queiroz, L. P. (2013). Worldwide epidemiology of fibromyalgia. *Current Pain and Headache Reports*, 17, 356.

White, K., & Harth, M. (2001). Classification, epidemiology, and natural history of fibromyalgia. *Current Pain and Headache Reports*, 5, 320-329.

Yunus, M. (2008). Central sensitivity syndromes: A new paradigm and group nosology for fibromyalgia and overlapping conditions, and the related issue of disease versus illness. *Seminars in Arthritis and Rheumatism*, 37, 339-352.

Why do I research fibromyalgia amongst academics?

Most research into fibromyalgia only considers the pain aspects of the syndrome rather than fibromyalgia in all its facets. There is no research focussing on academic sufferers although high prevalence of chronic fatigue syndrome has been confirmed amongst students, teachers and medical staff.

What are the aims of this research?

...to explore how academics make sense of and experience their lives whilst suffering from fibromyalgia

...to investigate which coping strategies academics employ

...to uncover how fibromyalgia with all its symptoms may or may not impact academics' private and public selves

How will I collect data?

The complexity and variability of fibromyalgia with its changeability of symptoms and the levels of severity require a holistic, corporeal, non-verbal approach in addition to more traditional interviewing techniques.

Identity boxes: Metaphors and visuals are used for specific representations. Participants are asked to fill a container with their chosen items in response to specific questions.

Timelines, critical incidents and diary extracts: These allow for a holistic insight into the academic's life-story.

Making representations: Research participants collaborate on making representations of life with fibromyalgia. These representations could be paintings, collages, installations, photographic projects, simulations, poetries, plays.

Discussions and interviews: As metaphors and representations require interpretation conversations are used to ensure the interpretations are truthful and meaningful.

Questions you may want to ask me:

- How will your research be different from other fibromyalgia studies?
- What is the idea behind the identity boxes?
- What do you hope to achieve with your research?
- What are your next steps?



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Scan the code for more information about the research and to watch simulations of what fibromyalgia feels like.

