

Abstract Title:-

"Empowering Neurodiverse Individuals: Strategies for Inclusive Employment in the MENA Region; Drivers and Inhibitors to Successful Inclusion at Workplace"

Keynote Speaker – Christine DerSarkissian – Ed.D, BCBA, QBA, IBA

Abstract:



The integration of neurodivergent individuals into the workforce represents both a social justice imperative and an economic opportunity. This doctoral research investigates and proposes strategies for fostering inclusive employment practices for neurodiverse talent in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This study, titled "**Empowering Neurodiverse Individuals: Strategies for Inclusive Employment in the MENA Region; Drivers and Inhibitors to Successful Inclusion at Workplace,**" aims to explore the unique educational, socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers that hinder the recruitment, retention, and career advancement of neurodivergent individuals in the region.

Drawing on a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, this research provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors shaping the employment experiences of neurodivergent individuals. The study also identifies and adapts best practices from other regions, offering evidence-based recommendations tailored to the MENA context.

By addressing the current gaps in knowledge and practice, this research seeks to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within regional workplaces, ultimately contributing to the development of educational materials, workshops, and advocacy campaigns. The eventual goal is to create more equitable and supportive environments that celebrate the unique strengths and contributions of all individuals.

This dissertation is motivated by both personal and professional commitment to enhancing community integration for neurodiverse populations. The findings aim to inform policymakers, employers, and other stakeholders, providing actionable insights to drive systemic change and harness the untapped potential of neurodiverse talent in the MENA region.

Short Professional Biography:

Christine DerSarkissian is a behavior analyst by nature, (BCBA), (QBA), and (IBA). She completed her Doctorate in Education (Ed.D) in March 2026 from UCAM (Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia). Her doctoral research is titled: *“Empowering Neurodiverse Individuals: Strategies for Inclusive Employment in the MENA Region; Drivers and Inhibitors to Successful Inclusion at Workplace.”*

Christine is the project manager at PuzzleMeBoo and co-founder and managing director of EBISA, a center dedicated to training paraprofessionals in evidence-based behavioral services to enhance the abilities and independence of individuals with special needs.

She served as President of Association for Behavior Analysis Lebanon (ABAL) in 2019 and was re-elected President in March 2025. Through this role, she works to advance ethical practice, professional standards, and dissemination of behavior analysis in Lebanon and the region.

Christine previously held the role of Program Supervisor in Maharat Arabia Learning Center in KSA, where she trained and supervised therapy teams and designed individualized intervention programs. She also works as a project coordinator and consultant with Autism-MENA in Jordan, focusing on developing Autism Technician training programs and supporting special educators.

She graduated from Université Saint Joseph de Beirut with a degree in Clinical Psychology in 2000. She completed her BCaBA course sequence at Florida Institute of Technology in 2014 and earned her MS in Psychology with an emphasis in Behavior Analysis from Capella University in 2016, becoming a BCBA in 2017.

With over 27 years of international experience in education and behavioral services, Christine collaborates with schools and organizations to oversee specialists implementing individualized programs for students with special needs. She has extensive expertise in assessment, intervention planning, supervision, and training.

Christine has delivered lectures and seminars across Lebanon, Syria, Armenia, Dubai, Jordan, and KSA. Her ultimate mission is to support the integration of neurodivergent individuals into society as independent, functional, and valued members of the community.

Shorter Bio: Christine DerSarkissian, Ed.D, BCBA, QBA, IBA, is the re-elected President of Association for Behavior Analysis Lebanon (ABAL) and project manager at PuzzleMeBoo. She co-founded and directs EBISA, training paraprofessionals in evidence-based behavioral services. Christine has extensive experience supervising therapy teams, developing individualized programs in Lebanon and KSA, and consulting with Autism-MENA in Jordan. She earned her Ed.D in March 2026, holds a degree in Clinical Psychology from Université Saint Joseph de Beyrouth, and an MS in Psychology with emphasis in Behavior Analysis from Capella University. Christine lectures internationally, aiming to empower neurodiverse individuals toward independence and inclusion.