

7TH INTERNATIONAL NURSING CONFERENCE

December 14, 2020 | Virtual Conference

The Association between Body Weight, Mental Flexibility and Dementia among Older Adults

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Dementia is a huge public health challenge as the increase in aging rates worldwide in tandem with the increasing rates of dementia incidences. The link between body weight and mental flexibility and development of dementia is a challenge.

The aim of the study: was to assess and analyze the association between body weight, mental flexibility and dementia among older adults.

Subjects and Methods: Analytic cross sectional study design was used in this study. This study was conducted in 7 Residential Elderly Settings and 7 Private Neurological Clinics. 249 elders were included in the study including two groups, Dementia group (118 elders) and Normal Elderly group (131 elders). Four tools were used; tool I questionnaire sheet contain socio-demographic data and medical history; Tool II Cognitive impairment assessment using Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) and Eight-item Interview to Differentiate Aging and Dementia (AD8); Tool III Body Mass Index (BMI) assessment ;Tool IIII:- Mental Flexibility Assessment Using the Trail Making Test (TMT).

Results: dementia group performed significantly poor on MMSE ($t=47.499$, $P=.000$) and on AD8 ($t=-41.780$, $P=.000$). There was a significant correlation between cognitive function (AD8 and MMSE) and overweight, obesity and mental flexibility (TMT); significantly higher correlation was obtained between MMSE and obesity. Recommendations: The inclusion of weight loss and promoting mental flexibility in any future preventive trials carried out in mid-life to prevent dementia could be supported. Further researches are recommended for investigating the role of mental flexibility in the progress of dementia.

Key words: Dementia, cognitive function, Body mass Index, Mental Flexibility.