State of Loneliness Among the Older Adults with Metabolic Syndrome in Tehran City

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Citation:
Talebian SF, Zanjari N. State of Loneliness Among the Older Adults with Metabolic Syndrome in Tehran City. *Iranian biomedical journal*. Supplementary (12-2024): 135.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The ageing population in Iran, like many developing countries, has coincided with economic, social and demographic challenges at the macro and micro levels. One of the most critical problems in the ageing field is feeling lonely. The loneliness may be due to reduced social-motivational resources, health capacity, and age-related diseases that can expose this group to more problems. Hence, this study aimed to examine the state of loneliness and its relation to metabolic syndrome among older adults in Tehran City.

Methods and Materials: This cross-sectional study was conducted in Tehran in 2022. The sample of this study consisted of community-dwelling individuals aged 60 years and older. A total of 1,020 older adults were selected using a multi-stage cluster sampling method. This study assessed feelings of loneliness using the De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale. In contrast, a single question was used to measure the presence of disease: "Do you have cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high blood lipid levels, and diabetes based on the doctor's diagnosis?". The data was analyzed using SPSS version 20 with descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

Results: The mean age of respondents was 70.28 (7.53±) years. According to the findings, 42.4% of the people were suffering from high blood pressure, 35.4% from high blood lipids, 30.2% from diabetes, and 27.0% from heart disease. Also, 49.4% of the older adults in Tehran experienced moderate and high feelings of loneliness. The sense of loneliness among the older adults with the disease was significantly higher (p = 0.001) than their counterparts. The highest average of loneliness was observed in older adults with cardiovascular disease (mean = 3.20) and high blood pressure (mean = 3.18). The lowest average feeling of loneliness (mean = 2.86) was found among the older adults suffering from high blood lipids. Individuals who were suffering from cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure felt lonelier in different emotional and social dimensions than others.

Conclusion and Discussion: The findings of this study show that loneliness is related to metabolic syndrome, especially cardiovascular disease. These diseases can jeopardize older adults' continued participation in social activities and make them feel lonelier. Therefore, it is recommended to promote self-care strategies and social presence among older people with cardiovascular diseases so that people can better manage their feelings of loneliness.

Keywords: Aged, Cardiovascular diseases, Iran, Loneliness, Metabolic syndrome

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[DOI: 10.61186/ibj.25th-11th-IACRTIMSS]