

DEMENTIA AWARENESS AND RISK FACTORS ASSESSMENT: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF THE IRISH POPULATION

EPH271



Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Atlantaigh

Atlantic Technological University



N. RASMUSSEN^{1,2}, K. COUGHLAN^{1,2}, and R.M. BURNS^{1,2}

1 Department of Health and Nutritional Science, Atlantic Technological University, Sligo, Ireland

2 The Health and Biomedical (HEAL) Research Centre, Atlantic Technological University, Sligo, Ireland.

INTRODUCTION

Dementia encompasses a variety of conditions which negatively affect cognitive function (1). In Ireland, there are approximately 64,000 people diagnosed with dementia and 1 in 10 are under the age of 65 years, having implications for families, employers, and society (2). With population growth and increased longevity, the clinical and economic burden of dementia is unsustainable. Several modifiable risk factors for dementia have been identified (3). However, poor knowledge of dementia risk factors has been demonstrated (4,5,6).

OBJECTIVE

This research sought to investigate population-level understanding of dementia risk and protective factors in a representative sample of the Irish population.

METHOD

- Ethical approval was obtained from the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Institute Ethics Committee.
- An online anonymous study was conducted, targeting a sample of the adult public in the Republic of Ireland between November and December 2022.
- A modified version of a pre-existing dementia knowledge survey was utilized (5) with additional themes explored in the study instrument (7,8).
- A statistical analysis of the measured dementia awareness levels, and how individual and environmental factors contributed to these awareness levels was performed.
 - ☐ Awareness levels were grouped into high, middle and low and a series of multivariate logistic regression models were estimated.

RESULTS

A total of 289 people were recruited for this study, with 241 responses available for analysis (28.6% 55-65+ years, 68% female, 43.2% tertiary education, 57.3% lived in rural areas, 63.9% exposed to dementia, 50.6% medium self-reported dementia knowledge level).

Figure 1. Knowledge of dementia risk and protective factors.

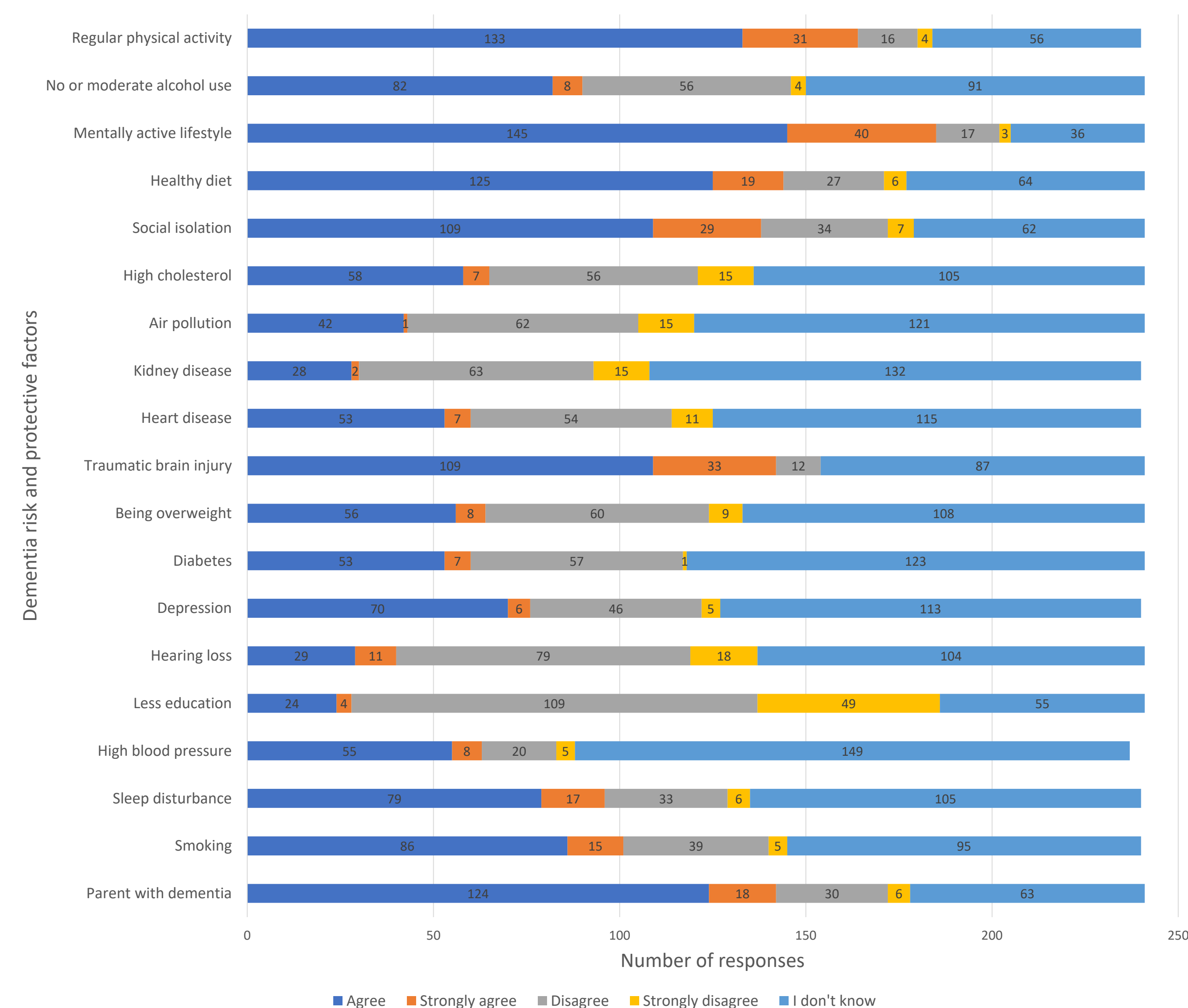


Table 1. Multivariate logistic regression assessing the factors driving variation in dementia risk literacy.

Predictive Factor	Model 1: Low dementia knowledge Odds Ratio (95% CI)	P-value
Age	1	-
18-34	2.478 (1.001, 6.132)	0.050**
35-44	2.906 (1.210, 6.982)	0.017**
45-54	1.431 (0.574, 3.573)	0.442
55-65+		
Gender	1	-
Male	1.840 (0.915, 3.697)	0.087*
Female		
Living status	1	-
Urban	1.194 (0.651, 2.189)	0.567
Rural		
Education	1	-
Secondary	1.282 (0.543, 3.026)	0.571
Tertiary	0.826 (0.335, 2.038)	0.678
Postgraduate/doctorate		
Dementia exposure	1	-
No	0.386 (0.188, 0.793)	0.010***
Yes		
Self-reported dementia knowledge level	1	-
Low	0.495 (0.232, 1.057)	0.069*
Medium	0.225 (0.084, 0.603)	0.003***
High		

* 90% Confidence Level

** 95% Confidence Level

*** 99% Confidence Level

CONCLUSIONS

- This analysis highlighted notable variation in knowledge of dementia risk factors with overall levels reported highlighting cause for concern in terms of population-level health literacy.
- Contributory factors to low dementia knowledge levels included age, gender, self-reported dementia knowledge level and dementia exposure.
- Evidenced limited understanding of dementia risk and protective factors warrants an examination of engagement in dementia risk awareness campaigns and their impact.
- Further evidence is needed in effective communication strategies targeting at-risk sub-groups within the population.

REFERENCES

- Gale SA, Acar D, Daffner KR. Dementia. Am J Med. 2018; 131(10):1161-1169
- The Alzheimer Society of Ireland. Dementia in the Media [Internet]. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland [reviewed 2024]. Available from : <https://alzheimers.ie/creating-change/awareness-raising/dementia-in-the-media/>
- Livingston G, Huntley J, Sommerlad A, Ames D, Ballard C, Banerjee S et al. Dementia prevention, intervention and care: 2020 report of the Lancet Commission. Lancet. 2020; 396(10248): 413-466
- Glynn, RW, Shelley E, Lawlor BA. Public knowledge and understanding of dementia - evidence from a national survey in Ireland. Age Ageing. 2017; 46(5): 865-869
- Heger I, Deckers K, van Bostel M, de Vugt M, Hajema K, Verhey F et al. Dementia awareness and risk perception in middle-aged and older individuals: baseline results of the MijneBreincoach survey on the association between lifestyle and brain health. BMC Public Health. 2019; 19(1): 678
- Dukelow T, Lawrence EG, Jacobson L, Vassiliev P, Koychev I, Muhammed K et al. Modifiable risk factors for dementia, and awareness of brain health behaviors: Results from the Five Lives Brain Health Ireland Survey (FLBHS). Front Psychol. 2023; 13: 1070259
- Carpenter BD, Balsis S, Otilingam PG, Hanson PK, Gatz M. The Alzheimer's Disease Knowledge Scale: Development and Psychometric Properties. Gerontologist. 2009; 49(2): 236-247
- Annear MJ, Toye C, Elliott KEJ, McInerney F, Eccleston C, Robinson A. Dementia knowledge assessment scale (DKAS): confirmatory factor analysis and comparative subscale scores among an international cohort. BMC Geriatr. 2017; 17(1):168

CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: naoise.rasmussen@research.atu.ie