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Assessment of the knowledge and attitude regarding magnetic resonance imaging safety among the general population in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess knowledge and attitude of the Saudi general population toward MRI safety and investigate the association between different participants' characteristics and their knowledge and attitude toward MRI safety. **Methods:** This cross-sectional survey included adult male and female Saudi participants. An online, self-administered questionnaire was designed and disseminated using social media. The knowledge and attitude scores were calculated. The percentage of correct responses for each participant was computed. The participant with a percentage of correct responses above 50% was considered to have adequate knowledge/attitude. **Results:** The study included 385 responses from the participants. The median knowledge score was 6. The median attitude score was 13. Having a medical profession, receiving information and history of undergoing MRI scan were significantly associated with adequate knowledge. Multivariate analysis revealed that secondary school education, university education, post-graduate studies and medical profession were significantly associated with a higher probability of having an adequate attitude. **Conclusions:** Nearly half the patients had adequate knowledge and 86% exhibited a good attitude regarding MRI safety. Both knowledge and attitude had a significant association with having a medical profession.

Keywords: Magnetic Resonance Imaging, Safety, Knowledge, Attitude, Saudi Arabia

1. INTRODUCTION

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is widely used in medicine as a non-invasive imaging tool. Compared to compute tomography, MRI creates 3D images, hence providing superior anatomical and physiological information about the imaged body part. In addition, ionizing radiation is not used, thus MRI can be safely used for follow-up without exposing the patients to radiation hazards (Tsai et al., 2015; Beek et al., 2019).

The technique of MRI depends mainly on exciting the nuclei of hydrogen within the molecules of water and recording the changes in their rotational axis direction. This technique makes MRI an ideal diagnostic tool for human body soft tissues due to the provided high contrast resolution of soft tissues, without injecting a contrast agent (Shu et al., 2022).

Reporting the occurrence of some adverse events with MRI usage raised concerns about its safety (Muranaka et al., 2011; Hawkinson et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2015). These adverse events during MRI scans may result from the strong static magnetic field, the radiofrequency field or the excessive noises (Hoff et al., 2019; Stafford, 2020). To ensure patient safety, some measures must be considered before MRI scanning (European Society of Radiology and European Federation of Radiographer Societies, 2019).

Knowledge of the public about a medical technique affects the person's behavior and attitude. Therefore, patients' knowledge and attitude play an essential role in improving the effectiveness of the provided care. Having sound knowledge and attitude for persons undergoing any medical procedure is crucial to reduce patients' anxiety and ensure cooperation (Ajam et al., 2020). Before undergoing an MRI scan, the patients should be notified about the technique and how to protect themselves from all potential MRI-related hazards (Bolejko and Hagell, 2021). In addition, patients' understanding and cooperation can reduce the image artefacts that result from movement during imaging (Havsteen et al., 2017). This study aimed to evaluate the knowledge level and explore the attitude of the general population in Saudi Arabia toward MRI safety and to investigate the association between different participants' characteristics and their knowledge level and attitude toward MRI safety.

2. METHODS

Ethical considerations

The study protocol obtained approval from the Ethics Committee of King Salman Armed Forces Hospital of Tabuk (KSAFH-REC-2022-485). The participants were informed about the study objectives, methodology, risks and benefits. Participants were asked to give an informed consent before starting to fill the questionnaire. Subjects who agreed to fill the questionnaire implied that they agreed to join in the study. The study conserved the participants' privacy and each subject got a unique identifier code. The investigators were responsible for keeping the security of the data and they confirm that the participants' data would not be used for any other purpose outside this study. Personal data (e.g., name, contact info) were not included in the study data entry software to conserve the participants' privacy.

Study design, setting and data

This cross-sectional survey study was conducted all over Saudi Arabia during a period of two months (September and November 2022). The study included adult male and female participants. All adult populations of Saudi Arabia were invited to participate. We excluded subjects who refused to participate and those with incomplete data.

Study tool and its validation

An online, structured, self-administered questionnaire was designed and presented to the participants to collect data. The questionnaire was reviewed by three consultants. Then, a pilot study was carried out on a small number of participants. Finally, the questionnaire was applied to the estimated sample of participants. The knowledge score was calculated by assigning 1 point for each correct answer and zero for an incorrect response or "I do not know". The score was calculated by adding the points of the 13 questions assessing knowledge. The responses to the attitude questions were similarly graded (1 point for correct behavior and zero for incorrect behavior) and the sum of all questions assessing the attitude constituted the attitude score. The percentage of correct responses for each participant was computed by dividing the score by the total number of questions used in score calculation and then multiplying by 100. The participant with a percentage of correct responses above 50% was considered to have adequate knowledge/attitude.

Data collection

The online survey was created using Google Forms for data collection. It was disseminated to the community using several social media platforms. The survey collected data about the participants' socio-demographics as well as their knowledge about and

attitude toward MRI safety. The outcome measures were the level of participants' knowledge toward MRI safety, the participants' attitude toward MRI safety and the determining factors for the participants' knowledge and attitude.

Sampling and sample size

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to collect the predetermined response rate. The sample size was estimated with an online sample size calculator (Raosoft, <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>) using a margin of error of 5% and a confidence interval of 95%, assuming an average response for most of the questions of 50% and depending on an average population size of nearly 23.3 million adult population in Saudi Arabia (Statistics, 2022). The required sample size was 385.

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS program (IBM SPSS Statistics), version 26 for Windows (IBM Corp., Armonk, N.Y., USA). The questionnaire responses consisted of categorical variables that were summarized as counts and percentages. Numerical variables were computed including the calculated scores and the percentages of correct responses. These numerical variables did not follow the normal distribution and were summarized as the median and interquartile range (IQR; expressed as the 25th – 75th percentiles). Spearman's rank-order correlation was performed to evaluate the relationship between the knowledge and attitude scores. Logistic regression analysis was conducted to assess the association between the participants' characteristics and their knowledge and attitude concerning MRI. A p-value<0.05 was selected to interpret the statistical significance.

3. RESULTS

The present study included 385 responses from the participants regarding their knowledge and attitude towards MRI scanning. The age of most participants ranged between 18 and 29 years (61.6%). Female participants outnumbered male participants (68.8% vs. 31.2%). Most participants had a university degree (68.6%) and 12.7% had postgraduate degrees, thus most participants were highly educated. Most participants had no jobs, as students, housewives and non-employed individuals accounted for 41.3%, 11.2%, and 8.3% of the studied sample, respectively. The participants who had a job belonged to a non-medical profession in 24.2% and a medical profession in 15.1% of cases. Only 29.4% of participants underwent MRI scanning before and 77.7% received information about MRI before (Table 1).

Table 1 Characteristics of the participants (total n = 385)

| Characteristics of the participants | | Total participants = 385 |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Age (years) | 18 – 29 | 237 (61.6%) |
| | 30 – 39 | 68 (17.7%) |
| | 30 – 49 | 40 (10.4%) |
| | 50 – 59 | 31 (8.1%) |
| | 60 – 70 | 8 (2.1%) |
| | >70 | 1 (0.3%) |
| Sex | Male | 120 (31.2%) |
| | Female | 265 (68.8%) |
| Educational level | Primary | 5 (1.3%) |
| | Intermediate | 3 (0.8%) |
| | Secondary | 64 (16.6%) |
| | University | 264 (68.6%) |
| | Postgraduate | 49 (12.7%) |
| Occupation | Housewife | 43 (11.2%) |
| | Student | 159 (41.3%) |
| | Non-employed | 32 (8.3%) |
| | Non-medical profession | 93 (24.2%) |
| | Medical profession | 58 (15.1%) |

| | | |
|--|-----|-------------|
| Have you received information before about MRI | No | 86 (22.3%) |
| | Yes | 299 (77.7%) |
| Have you undergone an MRI scan before? | No | 272 (70.6%) |
| | Yes | 113 (29.4%) |

The main source of information about MRI scanning was healthcare providers (33.8%), followed by medical websites (15.1%), family and friends (11.7%), media (8.4%) and lastly the non-medical websites (7.7%) (Figure 1).

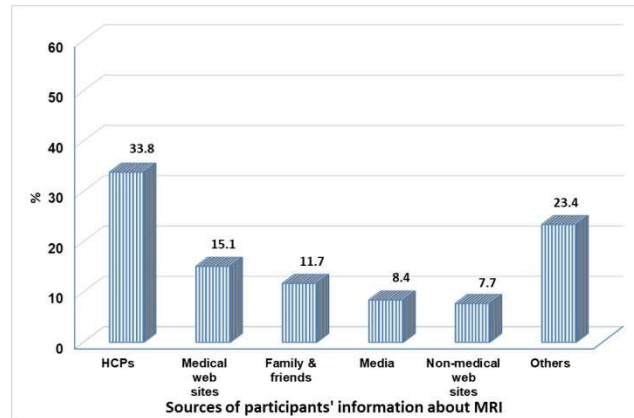


Figure 1 Sources of the participants' information about MRI (total n = 299)

HCP: Healthcare providers

The participants' responses to questions assessing knowledge are presented in Figure 2. The questions that were answered correctly by most participants were "removing all metallic objects before the MRI scan (84.9%), remaining still during the scan (82.6%) and resuming normal activities after the MRI scan (71.7%). However, correct answers for the other questions were provided by less than 60% of participants. The questions with the least correct responses were about undergoing an MRI scan during pregnancy (24.9%) and the inability of the people with tattoos to undergo MRI scanning (18.2%).

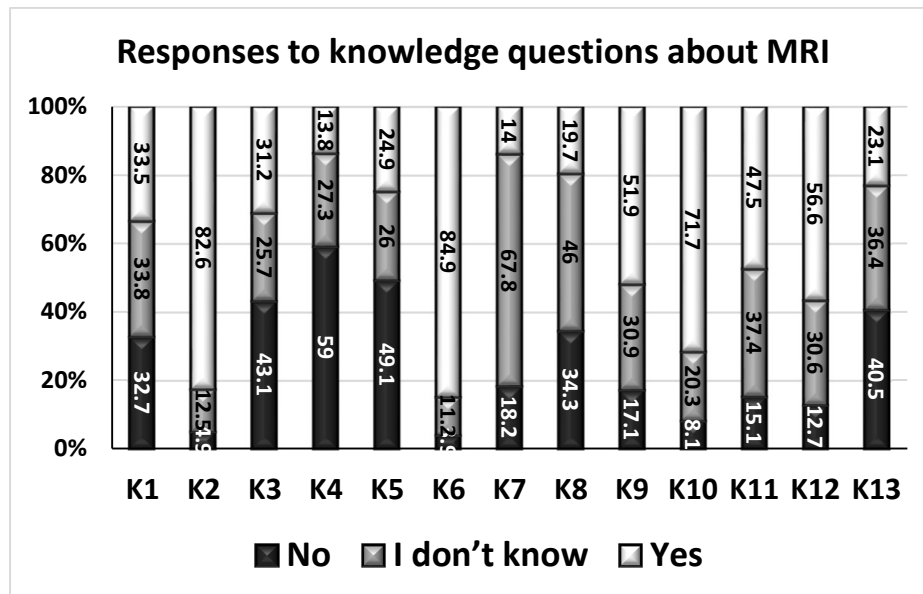


Figure 2 Bar chart showing the percentage of responses to questions assessing knowledge about MRI (total n = 385)

K1: Does MRI use harmful ionizing radiation like radiography and computed tomography scan?; K2: During the MRI scan, you need to remain still; K3: Will you be able to talk to the person carrying out the scan during imaging?; K4: All MRI examinations require injection with a dye; K5: Can pregnant women undergo an MRI scan at any time during pregnancy?; K6: Before the MRI scan, you must remove all metallic objects; K7: All people with tattoos cannot have an MRI examination; K8: Are pacemakers and metallic implants safe for the MRI scan?; K9: A loud noise is produced by the MRI scanner; K10: After the MRI scan, you can immediately resume your normal activities; K11: Should renal function tests be checked before undergoing MRI scanning with contrast agents?; K12: Should you remove makeup, nail polish or other cosmetics that may contain metallic particles applied to the body part to be examined by MRI?; K13: Can you enter the MRI room in a wheelchair?

The responses to the questions assessing the participants' attitudes regarding MRI scanning are demonstrated in Figure 3. The question with the highest percentage of correct responses was informing the technologist about any metallic objects before entering the MRI scanner room (90.9%), followed by informing the radiologist of any heat or discomfort while undergoing an MRI scan with a contrast agent (90.6%). The responses were generally reflecting a good attitude. However, the responses to the last question (about the items that should be removed before the scan) showed a lower percentage of correct responses as none of the participants was able to recognize all the items. The least recognized item was "shoes" (17.4%).

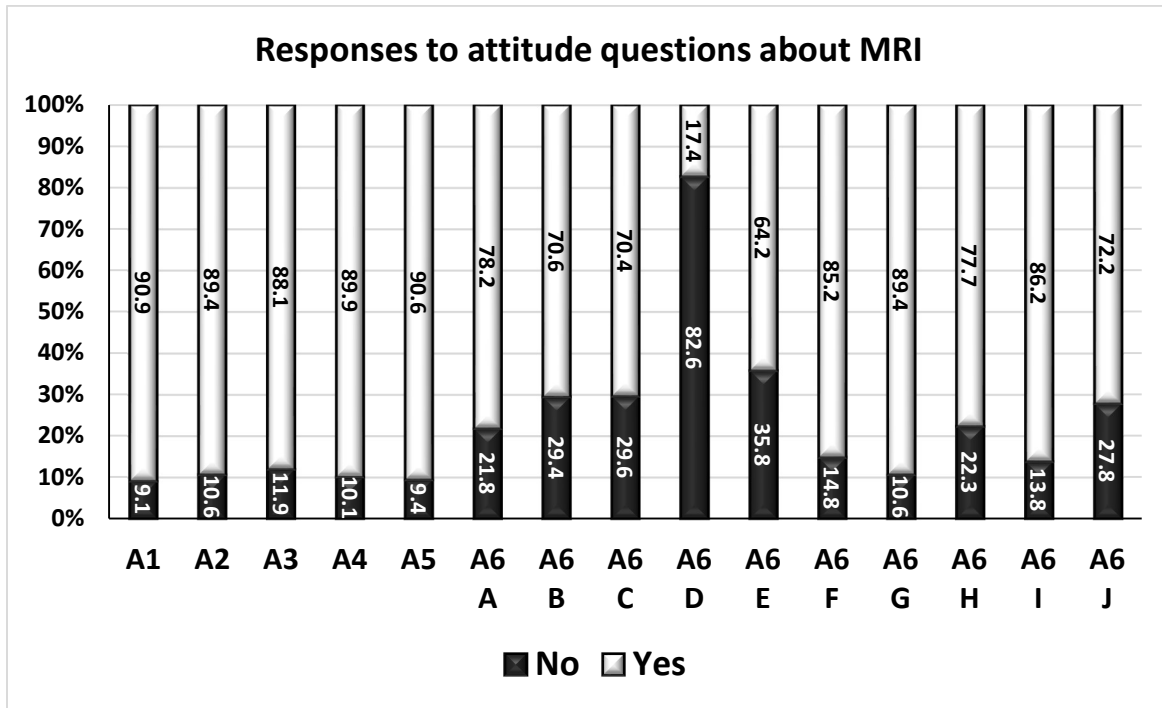


Figure 3 Bar chart showing the percentage of responses to questions assessing attitude about MRI (total n = 385)

A1: You must inform the MRI technologist about any metallic internal or external object that you may have before entering the MR scanner room; A2: You must inform the MRI technologist about any claustrophobia that you may have before entering the MR scanner room; A3: Before undergoing an MRI scan with contrast, you should inform the radiologists if you have any renal problems; A4: Before undergoing an MRI scan with contrast, you should inform the radiologists if you have any allergy to dyes; A5: During an MRI scan with contrast, you should inform the radiologists if you have any heat or any discomfort; A6: If you are going to undergo an MRI scan, you should remove the following objects; A6-A: buckle belts; A6-B: Ext hearing aids; A6-C: Clothes with metallic threads; A6-D: Shoes; A6-E: Credit cards; A6-F: Coins; A6-G: Jewellery; A6-H: Hair clips & pins; A6-I: Keys; A6-J: Safety pins.

Figure 4 and 5 shows the calculated scores and percentages of correct responses per participant. The knowledge score was found ranging between 0 and 13, with a median value of 6. The attitude score ranged between 0 and 14, with a median value of 13. The median percentage of correct responses per participant was lower for knowledge than attitude questions (46.2 and 86.7, respectively). This was reflected in the categorization of the participants into groups based on their knowledge and attitude, as 49.4% of participants had adequate knowledge while 86% exhibited a good attitude. The knowledge score correlated positively, significantly and moderately with the attitude score ($r_s = 0.405$, $p < 0.001$) (Figure 6).

Binomial logistic regression analysis was conducted to assess the contribution of the participants' characteristics to their knowledge about MRI scans. Univariate analysis showed that having a medical profession, receiving information and undergoing an MRI scan before were significantly associated with having adequate knowledge ($p < 0.001$). On multivariate analysis, having a medical profession, receiving information and undergoing an MRI scan before were significantly associated with a higher probability of having adequate knowledge by 4.313, 3.307 and 3.316 times, respectively (Table 2).

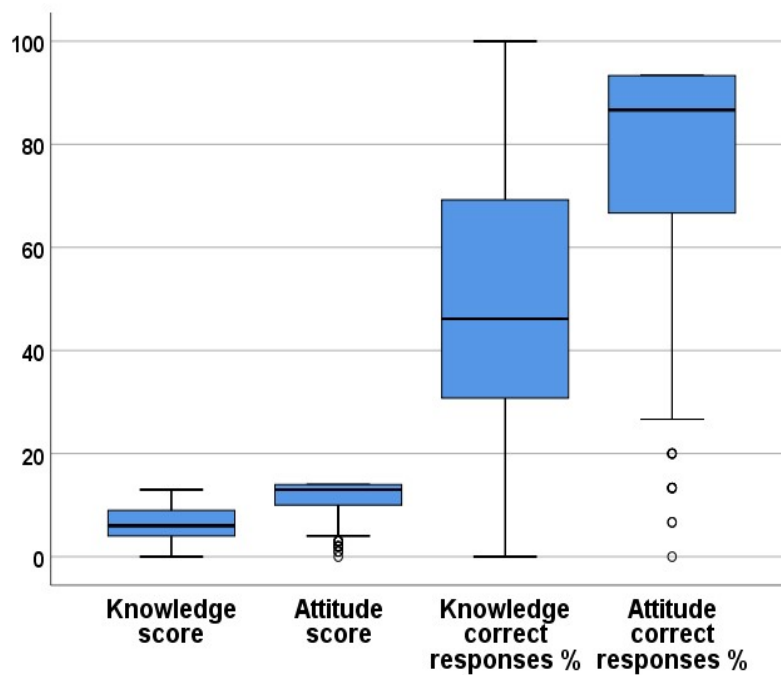


Figure 4 The distribution of the scores as well as the percentages of the correct responses of knowledge and attitude (total n = 385)

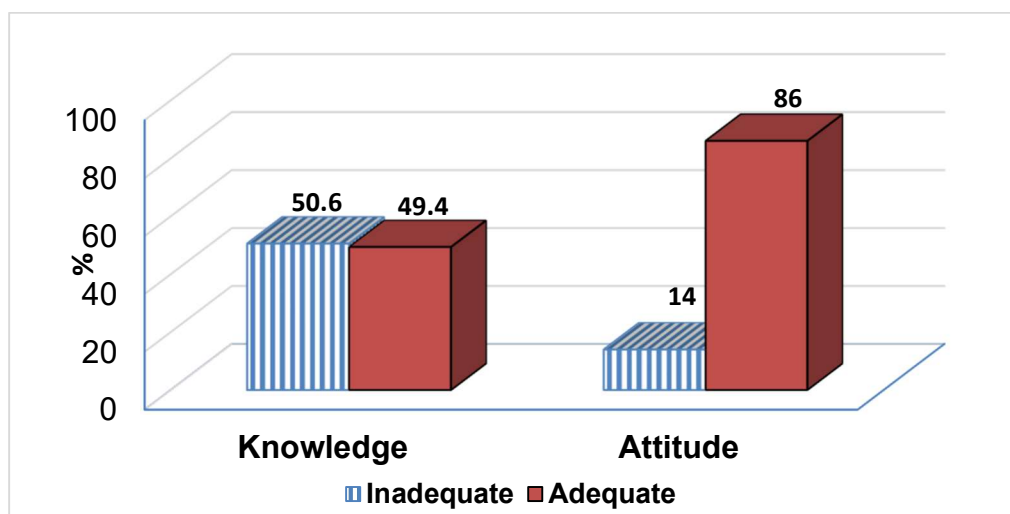


Figure 5 Bar chart showing the distribution of knowledge and attitude groups (total n = 385)

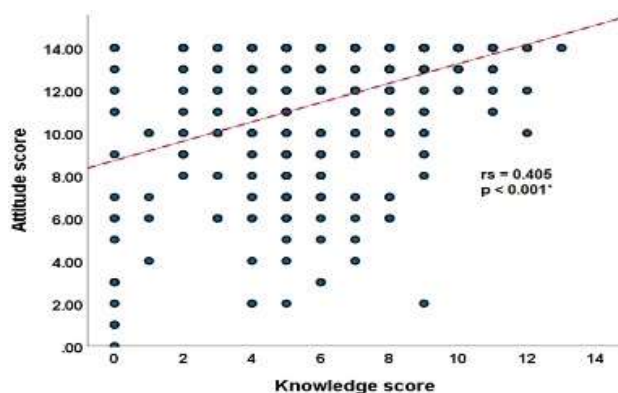


Figure 6 Spearman's rank-order correlation between the knowledge and attitude scores (total n = 385)

Table 2 Univariate and multivariate analysis for knowledge and attitude (total n = 385)

| Participants' characteristics | Univariate analysis | | | Multivariate analysis | | |
|---|---------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------|----------------|
| | P-value | OR | 95% CI for OR | P-value | OR | 95% CI for OR |
| Age (reference category: 18 – 29 years) | | | | | | |
| 30 – 39 | 0.950 | 0.983 | 0.573 to 1.686 | | | |
| 30 – 49 | 0.166 | 0.618 | 0.312 to 1.222 | | | |
| 50 – 59 | 0.299 | 0.669 | 0.314 to 1.428 | | | |
| >60 a | 0.285 | 0.463 | 0.113 to 1.896 | | | |
| Male sex (reference category: female) | 0.406 | 1.201 | 0.780 to 1.850 | | | |
| Educational level (reference category: primary school) | | | | | | |
| Intermediate school | 0.999 | 0.000 | | | | |
| Secondary school | 0.632 | 0.633 | 0.098 to 4.100 | | | |
| University | 0.601 | 1.618 | 0.266 to 9.842 | | | |
| Postgraduate degree | 0.280 | 2.824 | 0.429 to 18.567 | | | |
| Occupation (reference category: unemployed) b | | | | | | |
| Non-medical profession | 0.279 | 0.763 | 0.467 to 1.245 | 0.103 | 0.628 | 0.360 to 1.098 |
| Medical profession | <0.001* | 5.796 | 2.798 to 12.007 | <0.001* | 4.313 | 1.948 to 9.552 |
| Received information before about MRI (reference category no) | <0.001* | 4.349 | 2.509 to 7.539 | <0.001* | 3.307 | 1.832 to 5.968 |
| Underwent an MRI scan before? (reference category no) | <0.001* | 2.695 | 1.704 to 4.262 | <0.001* | 3.316 | 1.981 to 5.551 |

a: One case aged over seventy years was added to from 60 – 70 in the regression analysis; b: Unemployed include students, housewives and non-employed;

* CI: Confidence interval; OR: Odds ratio; significant <0.05

As regards the impact of the participants' characteristics on their attitude towards MRI scans, univariate analysis showed a significant association with the medical profession. The p-value for university and post-graduate degrees was above the selected level of significance ($p < 0.05$), but also below the p-value usually used for including the variables in regression analysis ($p < 0.1$). Therefore, both occupation and education were entered into the multivariate analysis. Multivariate analysis revealed that secondary school education, university education, post-graduate studies and the medical profession were significantly associated with a higher probability of having an adequate attitude by 2.916, 6.337, 6.690 and 4.681 times, respectively (Table 3).

Table 3 Univariate and multivariate analysis for attitude (total n = 385)

| Participants' characteristics | Univariate analysis | | | Multivariate analysis | | |
|---|---------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------|
| | P-value | OR | 95% CI for OR | P-value | OR | 95% CI for OR |
| Age (reference category: 18 – 29 years) | | | | | | |
| 30 – 39 | 0.446 | 0.755 | 0.366 to 1.557 | | | |
| 30 – 49 | 0.272 | 1.995 | 0.582 to 6.844 | | | |
| 50 – 59 | 0.741 | 0.841 | 0.302 to 2.345 | | | |
| 60 – 70 | 0.811 | 1.294 | 0.157 to 10.686 | | | |
| Male sex (reference category: female) | 0.792 | 1.088 | 0.58 to 2.04 | | | |
| Educational level (reference category: primary school) | | | | | | |
| Intermediate school | 0.851 | 1.333 | 0.067 to 26.618 | 0.571 | 2.000 | 0.181 to 22.056 |
| Secondary school | 0.469 | 2.000 | 0.306 to 13.062 | <0.001* | 2.916 | 1.637 to 5.195 |
| University | 0.084 | 5.011 | 0.805 to 31.174 | <0.001* | 6.337 | 4.133 to 9.716 |
| Postgraduate degree | 0.055 | 7.500 | 0.955 to 58.893 | 0.001* | 6.690 | 2.165 to 20.665 |
| Occupation (reference category: unemployed (including students, housewives and non-employed)) | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------|-------|-----------------|--------|-------|-----------------|
| Non-medical profession | 0.351 | 1.392 | 0.694 to 2.789 | 0.641 | 1.187 | 0.578 to 2.438 |
| Medical profession | 0.018* | 5.773 | 1.353 to 24.634 | 0.044* | 4.681 | 1.046 to 20.957 |
| Received information before about MRI (reference category no) | 0.982 | 0.992 | 0.497 to 1.982 | | | |
| Underwent an MRI scan before? (reference category no) | 0.711 | 0.889 | 0.478 to 1.655 | | | |

a: One case aged over seventy years was added to from 60 – 70 in the regression analysis; b: Unemployed include students, housewives and non-employed;

* CI: Confidence interval; OR: Odds ratio; significant <0.05.

4. DISCUSSION

There is a need to increase the knowledge about safety of MRI among healthcare professionals and patients because of the increased clinical demand for MRI (Feychting, 2005; Kanal et al., 2013). Magnetic resonance imaging is a diagnostic tool that uses magnetism and radio waves to produce high-resolution images of internal body structures. The powerful magnetic field can cause serious and possibly fatal injuries to patients and other personnel in the area (Gilk and Latino, 2011; Crisp and Dawdy, 2018). Our study explored the knowledge level and attitude of the Saudi population toward MRI safety and to investigate the association between participants' characteristics and the level of their knowledge and attitude. An online questionnaire was disseminated through social media for this purpose.

According to our study, almost half the participants had adequate knowledge and 86% showed a good attitude towards MRI safety. This was different from the reported poor knowledge of MRI safety aspects shown in previous studies. In Saudi Arabia, an earlier survey on 200 randomly selected patients requiring MRI (2022) concluded that patients did not have sufficient knowledge about the procedure. Another research was carried out at King Khalid hospital. The participants had poor knowledge about MRI safety (Alelyani et al., 2021). It is worth mentioning that the previous two studies were conducted among patients while our study included all population not exclusively patients. In fact, 15.1% of our participants had a medical profession. However, a Malaysian study conducted on a group of healthcare workers showed low awareness of MRI safety (Abd-Aziz et al., 2022).

Metal objects are subject to translational attraction and torque when exposed to strong magnetic forces, possibly leading to dislodgement or unnecessary heating (Gianesin et al., 2015). The majority of our participants correctly answered the questions regarding the necessity to remove and inform the technologist about any metallic objects prior to MRI scanning. On the other hand, the questions with the least correct answers were about the possibility of pregnant women and people with tattoos to have MRI scan. Pregnant women can undergo an MRI scan in any stage of pregnancy if the requested data could not be obtained by ultrasound, the needed data would affect the outcome of the patient or fetus and the physician believes that waiting until the patient is no longer pregnant is not the best option (Sammet, 2016). Patients with cosmetic and traditional tattoos can undergo routine MRI (Alsing et al., 2020). The results of the answers to the aforementioned questions are comparable to the results of earlier studies (Prezzia et al., 2013; Abd-Aziz et al., 2022; Alahmari et al., 2022).

According to our study, having a medical profession, receiving information and undergoing a previous MRI scan were significantly associated with better knowledge. Attitude towards MRI scans was also associated with medical profession. While it is expected that medical personnel would have good knowledge about the imaging method they would request for the patient, several studies demonstrated a need to increase awareness and knowledge about radiological modalities and safety among physicians (Sadigh et al., 2014; Qutbi et al., 2021; Alyahyawi et al., 2022). A Turkish study on health professionals revealed that emergency physicians had better knowledge on radiological imaging than other specialties (with the exception of radiologists). However, very few physicians provided information regarding the risks of imaging methods to the patients (Demir and Akkas, 2019).

The present study concluded that age and gender were not significantly associated with knowledge and attitude scores. Abd-Aziz et al., (2022) found no association between participants' knowledge of MRI safety and any of their demographic data. The lack of significant association with gender was in accordance with Alelyani et al., (2021), even though they stated that knowledge scores were higher in patients younger than 29 years compared with the other groups. On the other hand, Alahmari et al., (2022) concluded that male participants above 40 years were less knowledgeable than younger participants. The majority of our study participants were highly educated. Interestingly, educational level did not significantly associate with higher knowledge scores. Knowledge level also showed no significant association with the education level of the participants in (Alelyani et al., 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

Our study showed that almost half of the participants had adequate knowledge and 86% had good attitude towards MRI study. Safety information of MRI must be disseminated for health workers as well as patients. Health facilities should implement MRI safety programs to avoid unnecessary hazards.

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We thank the participants who were all contributed samples to the study.

Author Contributions

All authors shared in the study conception as well as the study design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were carried out by Shouq Abdullah O Alwabisi, Lama Mueysh M Aljohani, Amal Naif Muidh Althobaiti, Mei Khalid S Alfaqiri and Shahad Ali M Rfadh. The first draft of the manuscript was prepared by Abdullah Dhafer A Alshehri, Afnan Saleh M Alsaari, Amal Ayedh S Alenazi, Abdullah Mohammed A Al Madshush and Rahaf Naif A Alenezi. The manuscript was revised by Siraj Fahad Wally and Sarah Muqbil B Altmimi. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical approval

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of King Salman Armed Forces Hospital of Tabuk (KSAFH-REC-2022-485).

Informed consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Funding

This study has not received any external funding.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

Data and materials availability

All data sets collected during this study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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