CONTENTS 🔼

Balancing body and health: The impact of obesity on oral health condition

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ABSTRACT

Aim: This paper explores the relationship between obesity and oral diseases. Early detection and prevention of risk factors are essential for indispensable for promoting long-term health and elevating the quality of life in affected patients.

Materials and Methods: A search of PubMed and Google Scholar on November 10, 2024, retrieving 48 articles from 2016-2024. After screening criteria, 45 articles were included. All authors verified the final content.

Conclusions: Evidence suggests a notable association between obesity and oral health issues, including periodontitis, peri-implantitis, and other gum diseases. Certain research point to the possibility that patients who undergo bariatric surgery could also experience worsening dental health. Inadequate oral hygiene and excessive sugar consumption, along with obesity, contribute to the worsening of dental problems in both children and adults.

Further studies are required to better elucidate the underlying mechanisms of this association, which remains insufficiently explained in literature.

KEY WORDS: obesity, tooth condition, periodontitis, oral health, bariatric surgery

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INTRODUCTION

It is well known that an unhealthy lifestyle is the cause of many civilization diseases. Along with hypertension and diabetes, obesity is one of the primary lifestyle-related conditions. Obesity is becoming more common around the world and is increasingly recognized as one of the primary health dangers. It is an escalating global health issue with significant effects not only on general health but also on oral health. Defined as excessive fat storage in adipose tissue, obesity involves larger and more numerous adipocytes. It's classified by BMI: 30 and more for obesity and 25-29.99 for overweight. Recent studies suggests a correlation between oral health and obesity/overweight. This paper explores the relationship between obesity and oral diseases. Early detection and prevention of risk factors are essential for indispensable for promoting long-term health and elevating the quality of life in affected patients.

AIM

This paper discusses the impact of obesity and its connections with the most prevalent oral conditions.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The materials used in this work were selected through open-access databases such as PubMed and Google Scholar. The literature search was performed November 10, 2024, using the query string "(obesity) AND (oral health) AND (periodontitis) AND (tooth condition)" to retrieve relevant articles. The search criteria covered the years 2016 to 2024, yielding a total of 48 articles. In order to expand the search, we reviewed the reference lists of retrieved publications to capture additional relevant studies, some pre-2016 studies were included as exceptions. The inclusion criteria were the publication type (original research, review, systematic review, case report, observational studies) and published in English. Following a detailed evaluation, 45 articles met the inclusion criteria and were ultimately included. The final version of the review was read, verified, and revised by all authors. Any unclear parts were discussed as a group and adjusted to ensure accuracy.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

If it comes to obesity, it is defined as accumulation of abnormal or excessive fat in the adipose tissue [1] in which the number and size of adipocytes are enlarged [2]. The indicator describing obesity is BMI (Body Mass Index), which is determined using the formula: body weight (in kilograms) divided by height (in meters)² [2,3,4,5]. Obesity is classified as having a body mass index (BMI) of 30 kg/m² or more, while overweight is classified as having a BMI between 25 and 29.99 kg/m² [2]. Recent studies suggests a correlation between oral health and BMI, as both are impacted by shared risk factors, such as diet, genetics, lifestyle choices and socioeconomic conditions [6]. Obesity is caused by an unhealthy diet high in sugars, which promotes the accumulation of excess plague, leading to the development of various oral health problems, such as gingivitis, periodontitis, and dental caries [7].

According to the World Health Organization, in 2022, one out of every eight people globally was affected by obesity. Additionally, the WHO states that 43% of adults aged 18 and older (43% of men and 44% of women) were overweight in 2022 marking an increase from 1990, when 25% of adults in this age group were overweight. Each year, around 3.4 million people die due to obesity and overweight [3, 6].

ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN OBESITY AND PERIODONTAL DISEASES

The association between obesity and periodontitis is a frequently discussed topic in the literature. In research conducted by Leena Alsalihi et al., it was found that periodontitis was highly prevalent (97%) among obese patients [8]. Periodontitis is an inflammatory disorder of the tissues that support the teeth, caused by certain groups of microorganisms. This leads to progressive destruction of the gingival tissue, periodontal ligament, cementum and alveolar bone. [9,10]. The chronic inflammatory condition caused by periodontitis can result in various systemic issues, including, for example, cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis, and type 2 diabetes [9, 11, 12]. Obesity, as defined in the introduction, is an excess of fat in the adipose tissue. The adipose tissue located around the visceral organs (visceral adiposity) secretes specific proteins known as adipokines. These proteins are classified to two groups: pro-inflammatory mediators: leptin, resistin, visfatin and anti-inflammatory mediators: adiponectin and omentin-1 [9]. Obesity results in higher production of pro-inflammatory adipokines and reduced synthesis of anti-inflammatory adipokines [2, 13], leading to an imbalance between them and, consequently, a state of low-grade inflammation [2, 14, 15].

Checa-Ros et al. described, that there is an inverse relationship between the level of adiponectin and periodontitis [9]. Adiponectin is a strong inhibitor of osteoclasts, so its low levels lead to the exacerbation of periodontitis [16, 17]. What is more, reduced salivary omentin-1 levels were observed in patients with chronic periodontitis, correlating with elevated periodontal parameters, whereas increased salivary omentin-1 levels following non-surgical periodontal therapy were associated with improvements in periodontal health. [9]. As far as pro-inflammatory adipokines are concerned, leptin impairs the regenerative ability of periodontal ligament cells and additionally activates the secretion of proinflammatory cytokines, such as Tumor Necrosis Factor Alpha (TNF- α) and IL-6 which are recognized as mediators of tissue damage [9]. Resistin affects the metabolism of soft and hard tissues in the periodontium by decreasing alkaline phosphatase activity and markers associated with bone tissue and matrix development [9]. Visfatin could enhance periodontal inflammation and bone degradation through the production of matrix metalloproteinase-1 (MMP-1) and chemokine ligand 2 (CCL2). [9, 18]. Obesity is associated with an increase in waist circumference. Recker EN et al. identified a positive correlation between waist circumference and the severity of periodontitis in their study [19]. Ling Liu and Lin Yu Xia et al. also found a similar relationship, stating that with each 1-unit increase in waist circumference, the incidence of periodontitis rises by 1% [20]. On the other hand, Leena Alsalihi et al. noted a positive correlation between waist circumference and periodontitis in men, but no such correlation was found between waist circumference and periodontitis in women [8]. If additional studies confirm the connection between waist circumference and the severity of periodontitis, waist circumference could become an important indicator for monitoring the progression of periodontitis [21].

The study by L. Martens et al. states that, among children and adolescents, there is a positive correlation between obesity/overweight and various periodontal issues, including increased plaque and calculus accumulation, gingivitis, probing pocket depth (>4 mm), and a higher presence of bacterial oral microbiota. What is more, age (17–21 years) and gender (male) were factors that positively impacted the risk of periodontal disease in obese/overweight children [1].

PREGNANCY, OBESITY AND PERIODONTITIS

The prevalence of obesity and excessive weight gain are frequently observed issues in the context of pregnancy. Elevated hormones can compromise connective tissue remodeling, which may raise inflammation and bacterial growth in periodontal tissues, heightening the risk of periodontal diseases in pregnancy [22-24]. Over the past few years, research has focused on confirming or rejecting a potential association between obesity in pregnancy and periodontitis. In their 2018 publication, Gomes-Filho et al. demonstrated that the association was found to be statistically non-significant. Periodontitis prevalence was observed at 17.24% using the Gomes-Filho, et al. criteria and at 66.92% according to the Center For Disease Prevention and Control and American Academy of Periodontology (CDC/AAP) criteria [25]. However, an extensive systematic review and meta-analysis by Foratori-Junior, et al. did not substantiate these findings in 2022. The study found a positive link between obesity/overweight and periodontitis, showing that, an average 61.04% of overweight or obese women also presenting with periodontitis [23]. Additional studies have also established a relationship between excess weight and periodontitis in pregnancy, showing a more pronounced connection in overweight pregnant women who suffer from both tooth loss and periodontitis [22].

GINGIVAL INFLAMMATION AND OBESITY

Gingivitis refers to an inflammatory condition that develops from the patient's immune response interacting with the biofilm of dental plaque. This inflammatory process can be reversed with a reduction in plaque presence [26, 27]. Both periodontitis and gingivitis arise from the same mechanism of inflammation, however gingivitis does not lead to periodontitis in every case [26, 28]. Evidence supporting the thesis that elevated BMI leads to a greater incidence of gingivitis includes studies indicating increased salivary cytokine concentrations in obese patients compared to those with overweight or normal statuses [29]. Such cytokines contribute to chronic systemic inflammation, which potentially weakens the immune system and predisposes individuals to infections [26,30]. It is noteworthy to mention that the systematic review and meta-analysis by da Silva et al. indicated that obesity is associated with an increased level of gingivitis among patients diagnosed with periodontitis against to those without obesity [26].

ORAL MICROBIOTA IN OBESE PATIENTS

Porphyromonas gingivalis, Treponema denticola and Tannerella forsythia are a group of microorganisms located in the subgingival biofilm that induce the long-term inflammatory condition known as periodontitis [2]. Al-Rawi and Al-Marzooq observed that obese individuals had notably higher levels of Tannerella forsythia, Fusobacterium spp., and Porphyromonas gingivalis compared to those who were not obese, but further studies are required to clarify whether obesity leads to the overgrowth of these or other pathogenic microorganisms, contributing to periodontal damage [2, 31]. Tam et al. also recorded a variation in the composition of the oral microbiota between obese and nonobese individuals [2, 32].

The study by Fanny Le Sage et al. described how lipopolysaccharide (LPS) from *Porphyromonas gingivalis* influences the release of inflammatory adipokines. Their findings indicate that *P. gingivalis* LPS can modify the inflammatory condition of adipocytes by interfering with their adipokine secretion, leading to a decrease in adiponectin release, which is recognized as an anti-inflammatory factor inversely correlated with body fat mass [33].

OBESITY, SALIVA COMPOSITION AND ORAL HEALTH

It is widely known that saliva could be a potential source of biomarkers that may have associations with oral diseases. The markers analyzed in recent years have been assembled in Table 1. Recker et al. reported a positive association between body fat percentage and levels of Granzyme B and negative association between levels of sCD40L and BMI, but none of those correlations showed statistical significance after multiple comparison correction [19]. Some studies report elevated levels of interleukins in obese patients [29,30]. Al-Ameri et al. performed a study that examined Thy-1 (CD90) levels across four patient groups (obese, obese with periodontitis, healthy, and those with periodontitis). They found that periodontitis leads to higher salivary Thy-1 levels, independent of obesity [34].

BARIATRIC SURGERY

As the most effective approach to treating morbid obesity, bariatric surgery not only benefits individuals with related conditions, including hypertension,

Study	Biomarkers	Correlation with obesity
Recker et al. [19]	• sCD40L • Granzyme B • Interleukin-1 receptor antagonist (IL-1ra) • Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP)	 Positive association between body fat percentage and levels of Granzyme B Negative association between levels of sCD40L and BMI
Doğan et al. [29]	• IL-6 • IL-10	 IL-6 levels in saliva were elevated in obese patients Positive association between BMI and IL-6 levels Negative association between IL-10 levels in the gastro- intestinal tract and saliva
Vohra et al. [30]	• IL-6 • IL-1β	\bullet Significant differences in periodontal clinical measures and salivary IL-1 β and IL-6 were found between class I of obese and classes II and III (between class II and III values were found to be similar)
Al-Ameri et al. [34]	• Thy-1 (CD90)	 Periodontal inflammation increases salivary Thy-1 levels, independent of obesity status.

Table 1. Biological salivary markers of periodontitis and/or obesity



Fig. 1. Oral conditions that can potentially be affected by bariatric surgery [35-37]

diabetes, and sleep apnea but also enhances patients' quality of life [35-37]. According to certain studies, undergoing bariatric surgery could potentially lead to a decline in dental health [37-39]. Figure1 shows oral conditions that can potentially be affected by bariatric surgery. Alterations in the rate of salivary flow may constitute one of the mechanisms influencing oral cavity health. A decline in salivary flow is linked to an increased proliferation of microorganisms. In a cohort study conducted by Hashizume, et al. on 27 morbidly obese patients, documented a rise in mutans streptococci levels in the saliva of these patients six months post-bariatric surgery, as compared to the pre-operative baseline [36]. Moreover, de S Porcelli, et al., observed that bariatric surgery increases the risk of tooth erosion in patients [39]. It is worth noting that not all studies confirm the effect of bariatric surgery on dental health. Ferraz, et al., in an extensive systematic review and meta-analysis, determined that for patients undergoing bariatric surgery, the rates of missing teeth and caries remain unaffected [35]. This shows how important additional studies are for reaching unified conclusions.

PERI-IMPLANTITIS

Lost teeth are increasingly replaced with dental implants. Due to the increase in life expectancy, the percentage of elderly patients who decide to have implants is growing. This implies an increase in the number of side effects of such a procedure [40]. Despite the effectiveness and high safety index, the incidence of complications such as peri-implantitis and crestal bone loss is escalating [12, 40, 41]. According to medical literature, this complication may affect up to 50% of implanted dental implants [41]. Peri-implantitis is a destructive inflammation around a tooth implant caused by numerous bacteria. It damages both soft and hard tissues surrounding the implants, causing bone loss [40, 41]. Untreated peri-implantitis may cause implant loss and even lead to permanent damage to the jaw bone [40]. Unfortunately, due to the lack of targeted and effective treatment, reducing the risk factors of peri-implantitis in patients is very important during treatment [12, 40, 41]. Many risk factors contribute to the development of the disease [12]. The authors mention, among others: smoking, drugs, old age, depression, and environmental factors [41]. Obesity, metabolic syndrome and diabetes are among the main modifiable factors that increase the risk of developing peri-implantitis. Inflammation and oxidative stress are mediators of metabolic disorders in the body, these mediators increase the incidence of peri-implantitis [40]. The relationship between obesity and an increased risk of developing inflammation around the implant is confirmed by Vorha's study. This study shows that people with normal body weight are less susceptible to developing inflammation around the implant than people with obesity. In the future, the number of patients with metabolic disorders will increase, which may elevate the risk of complications related to dental implants [41]. Appropriate treatment of obesity and other metabolic disorders and guitting smoking are the main factors that should be taken into account when planning dental implantation and treatment of peri-implantitis [40].

ASSOCIATIONS AMONG OBESITY AND TOOTH LOSS

Tooth loss may be due to periodontal disease caused by chronic inflammation. Obesity contributes to the development of such chronic inflammation and the increase in markers such as C-reactive protein (CRP) [42, 43]. According to the authors, it has been shown that obesity is a modifiable risk factor for tooth loss and there is a connection between obesity and an increased number of lost teeth [42, 43]. When talking about general obesity, it should be noted that central obesity itself also influences the development of systemic inflammatory diseases. Therefore, it will also predispose to the development of caries, periodontal diseases and ultimately lead to tooth loss. Studies have shown that patients with central obesity also have an increased risk of tooth loss. The impact of both central and general obesity is important and should become a key element in oral health prevention [42].

OBESITY AND ORAL HEALTH IN PAEDIATRIC PATIENTS

Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions worldwide, with its prevalence continuing to rise [1]. According to data published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2022, 160 million children and adolescents aged 5-19 suffered from obesity [3]. Some cross-sectional studies indicate that overweight and obese children and adolescents experience more dental caries in permanent teeth, greater plague accumulation, and increased gingival inflammation. Additionally, they have lower saliva flow rates and reduced buffering capacity compared to children of normal weight [44]. Often first observes in adults but typically beginning earlier in life in children. Among children and adolescents, plaque-induced gingivitis is the most commonly encountered periodontal disease. The prevalence of gingivitis in children can be as high as, or even exceed, that of dental caries, yet it has not received the same level of attention regreading its long-term effects on overall health [1].

Meta-analyses, which incorporated both descriptive and quantitative data, have revealed a positive association between obesity and the prevalence of periodontal diseases. Several theories have been proposed to explain the biological interactions between obesity and periodontal diseases. These include alterations in pro-inflammatory and immune responses, insulin resistance, changes in lipid profiles, modifications of the immune system, heightened activation of macrophages, impaired microvascular function, physiological responses to psychosocial stress, and the release of pro-inflammatory molecules from adipose tissue, such as TNF- α , IL-6, and C-reactive protein. Despite these insights, the precise molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying these associations remain unclear, and further research is needed to deepen our understanding of these processes. Such research could provide valuable insights into potential targets for prevention and treatment [1].

Studies have not demonstrated a clinically significant association between oral health factors, overweight/ obesity, and stress variables [44, 45]. However, a significant association exists between obesity and periodontal disease in children. Pediatric dentists should be mindful of potential periodontal changes related to obesity, recognizing them as a possible health risk [1].

Given the significance of overweight and obesity as major public health concerns, both medical and dental professionals should assess health-related behaviors and the connections between oral and overall health. Additionally, they should promote interdisciplinary communication to identify and address early signs of dental and periodontal diseases in children and adolescents [4]

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this review was to collect and evaluate existing data on the relationship between obesity and oral health. As a result, it was found that there is a significant association between obesity and the development of various oral health diseases, such as gum diseases, periodontitis, peri-implantitis. A diet high in sugar, combined with poor oral hygiene and obesity, promotes the occurrence of dental issues both in adults and children. Nevertheless, additional studies are needed to better understand the mechanisms of this relationship. Future studies should also consider the development of more effective preventive strategies that could help prevent oral diseases in obese individuals.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Authors declare no conflict of interest

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