Scientific Journal for Publishing in Health Research and Technology

Volume 2, Issue 1, 2026, Pages: 238-248

Journal homepage: https://sjphrt.com.ly/index.php/sjphrt/en/index

Investigation and Evaluation of Blood Pressure after Spinal Anesthesia

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Received: November 02, 2025	Accepted: January 13, 2026	Published: February 15, 2026

Abstract:

Spinal anesthesia is a gold-standard technique for lower abdominal and obstetric procedures, yet it is frequently complicated by hemodynamic instability, specifically hypotension and bradycardia. This prospective observational study, conducted between September and November 2025, aimed to evaluate the perioperative hemodynamic and respiratory effects of spinal anesthesia while identifying patient-related risk factors, such as body mass index (BMI), associated with these clinical changes. The research involved a cohort of 83 patients across four major healthcare centers in Libya, including Benghazi and Sabha. Data collection synthesized participant demographics, comorbidities, and the serial measurement of vital signs at preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative intervals. The results revealed a study population that was predominantly female (96.6%), with nearly 97% of cases originating from obstetrics and gynecology departments. Obesity was found to be highly prevalent, affecting 65.85% of the sample, with an additional 28.05% classified as overweight. Clinical findings indicated a significant and gradual perioperative decline in systolic blood pressure (SBP), diastolic blood pressure (DBP), and heart rate ($p < 0.05$ for all), while oxygen saturation levels remained remarkably stable throughout all stages. Although hypotension occurred in 36.1% of all cases, it was notably more frequent among obese patients at a rate of 74%. However, logistic regression analysis showed that the association between BMI and hypotension was not statistically significant ($p = 0.075$). The most frequently observed side effects included tremor

(61.4%), headache (47.0%), and nausea (22.9%). The study concludes that while spinal anesthesia produces predictable hemodynamic alterations, the higher incidence of hypotension in obese patients necessitates rigorous continuous monitoring and individualized management to enhance patient safety within high-BMI obstetric populations.

Keywords: Spinal anesthesia, blood pressure, hemodynamic changes, hypotension, body mass index, heart rate, obesity, postoperative complications.

الملخص

يعد التخدير النخاعي تقنية معيارية متبعة في جراحات أسفل البطن والتوليد، ومع ذلك، فإنه غالباً ما يترافق مع عدم استقرار في ديناميكية الدورة الدموية، وتحديداً انخفاض ضغط الدم وبطء ضربات القلب .هدفت هذه الدراسة الملاحظية المستقبلية، التي أجريت بين سبتمبر ونوفمبر 2025، إلى تقييم التأثيرات الديناميكية الدموية والتنفسية للتخدير النخاعي في الفترة المحيطة بالجراحة، مع تحديد عوامل الخطر المرتبطة بالمريض، مثل مؤشر كتلة الجسم(BMI) ، المرتبطة بهذه التغيرات السريرية .شمل البحث مجموعة مكونة من 83 مريضاً في أربعة مراكز رعاية صحية رئيسية في ليبيا، بما في ذلك بنغازي وسبها .تضمن جمع البيانات دمج الخصائص الديموغرافية للمشاركين، والأمراض المصاحبة، والقياس المتسلسل للعلامات الحيوية في فترات ما قبل الجراحة، وأثنائها، وما بعدها .كشفت النتائج أن مجتمع الدراسة كان غالبيته من الإناث (96.6%)، مع ما يقرب من 97% من الحالات المسجلة في أقسام أمراض النساء والتوليد .وتبين أن السمنة منتشرة بشكل كبير، حيث شملت 65.85% من العينة، مع تصنيف 28.05% إضافيين على أنهم يعانون من زيادة الوزن .وأشارت النتائج السريرية إلى انخفاض تدريجي ملحوظ في ضغط الدم الانقباضي (SBP)، وضغط الدم الانبساطي(DBP) ، ومعدل ضربات القلب خلال الفترة المحيطة بالجراحة (p < 0.05للجميع)، بينما ظلت مستويات تشبع الأكسجين مستقرة بشكل ملحوظ طوال جميع المراحل .وعلى الرغم من حدوث انخفاض ضغط الدم في 36.1% من جميع الحالات، إلا أنه كان أكثر تواتراً بشكل ملحوظ بين المرضى الذين يعانون من السمنة بنسبة 74 .%ومع ذلك، أظهر تحليل الانحدار اللوجستي أن الارتباط بين مؤشر كتلة الجسم وانخفاض ضغط الدم لم يكن ذا دلالة إحصائية .(p = 0.075) شملت الآثار الجانبية الأكثر شيوعاً الرعاش (61.4%)، والصداع (47.0%)، والغثيان .(22.9%) تخلص الدراسة إلى أنه بينما يحدث التخدير النخاعي تغيرات ديناميكية دموية يمكن التنبؤ بها، فإن ارتفاع معدل حدوث انخفاض ضغط الدم لدى المرضى المصابين بالسمنة يستلزم مراقبة مستمرة صارمة وإدارة فردية لتعزيز سلامة المرضى ضمن فئات مرضى التوليد ذوي مؤشر كتلة الجسم المرتفع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التخدير النخاعي، ضغط الدم، تغيرات ديناميكية الدورة الدموية، انخفاض ضغط الدم، مؤشر كتلة الجسم، معدل ضربات القلب، السمنة، مضاعفات ما بعد الجراحة.

1. Introduction

Spinal anesthesia alternatively termed intrathecal or subarachnoid block is a standard anesthetic approach for orthopedic and lower abdominal surgeries. The technique functions by introducing local anesthetic agents into the subarachnoid space, resulting in a transient blockade of sensory and motor functions. Despite its established efficacy and safety, the procedure carries a small risk of neurological sequelae. These rare complications are typically attributed to patient-specific anatomical variations, pharmacological factors, or underlying genetic predispositions (Acosta et al., 2024; Al-Husban et al., 2021; DeLacey & Chandak, 2023).

Spinal anesthesia is frequently used in lower abdominal and pelvic surgeries, including cesarean sections, hernia repair, and vascular or urological operations. While it offers a favorable safety profile, clinicians must remain vigilant regarding contraindications such as systemic infection, coagulation disorders, or elevated intracranial pressure. One key complication is hypotension, which may be worsened by surgical blood loss and can lead to reduced organ perfusion and hemodynamic instability (Chin & van Zundert, 2023).

Patients receiving spinal anesthesia often experience considerable fluctuations in arterial blood pressure, most notably a rapid drop due to sympathetic nervous system blockade. Although usually treated with intravenous fluids and vasopressors, these hypotensive episodes can pose significant risks, especially for patients with underlying cardiovascular conditions. Likewise, reductions in heart rate—specifically bradycardia—can occur as a reflexive response to diminished venous return and heightened vagal activity (Abo El Nour & Abdelzaher, 2024; Chhabra, 2023).

Research consistently shows that spinal anesthetics can lead to complications, particularly affecting blood pressure and heart rate. A study conducted in Iraq specifically noted a significant impact of spinal anesthesia on blood pressure, with noticeable changes observed across four different time intervals. This drop in blood pressure was managed either through physiological (normal saline) or pharmacological (ephedrine) interventions (Nief et al., 2024). Similarly, a Nigerian study highlighted the usefulness of heart rate variability as a predictor for developing hypotension and bradycardia in patients undergoing elective surgery with spinal anesthesia (Okanlawon et al., 2022).

Furthermore, a study conducted by Hofhuizen et al. (2019) in the Netherlands found that in elderly patients, cardiac output and blood pressure significantly dropped after the start of spinal anesthesia. This decrease was primarily due to a reduction in stroke volume, rather than a decrease in systemic vascular resistance. Intraoperative oxygen desaturation is another concern, especially when high thoracic levels of blockade impair intercostal muscle function. This effect can be exacerbated in patients with baseline respiratory compromise, necessitating close respiratory monitoring and, in some cases, supplemental oxygen or assisted ventilation (Carvalho et al., 2022; Horlocker, 2019).

Glycemic control may also be disrupted during spinal anesthesia due to suppression of the sympathetic nervous system, which dampens the release of counter-regulatory hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine. This attenuation of the stress response increases the risk of intraoperative hypoglycemia, particularly in insulin-dependent diabetic patients undergoing prolonged procedures. To mitigate this risk, careful preoperative insulin adjustment and vigilant intraoperative glucose monitoring are recommended (Ahmad et al., 2023).

These complications reflect not only the pharmacological effects of spinal anesthesia but also its impact on autonomic control. Autonomic dysregulation has been shown to increase vulnerability to bradycardia, cardiovascular collapse, and prolonged motor or sensory block, even in patients without obesity or metabolic syndrome (Turner et al., 2024). Based on this background, it is necessary to conduct research to determine the variations in blood pressure after spinal anesthesia, as well as to ascertain its effect on heart rate and oxygen saturation levels, and whether there is a correlation between these symptoms and the patient's age and weight.

1.1 Aims of the Study

1. To determine the effects of spinal anesthesia on blood pressure.
2. To evaluate the relationship between preoperative measured heart rate and hypotension with bradycardia among patients undergoing elective surgeries under spinal anesthesia.
3. To assess the risk factors associated with the side effects of spinal anesthesia.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Design and Setting

A prospective observational design was conducted to investigate the complications of spinal anesthesia. The study was carried out during the period from September to November 2025.

2.2 Study Population and Sampling

The study included a total of 83 cases collected from four major healthcare centers in Libya: Benghazi Medical Centre, Sabha Medical Centre, Ibn Sina Specialized Hospital, and the Specialized Surgery Centre in Benghazi.

2.3 Data Collection

The dataset synthesized participant demographics—specifically age and body mass index (BMI)—with comprehensive clinical histories and current pharmacological profiles. The screening protocol focused on identifying prevalent cardiovascular and metabolic comorbidities, such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and pre-existing cardiac pathologies. Furthermore, hemodynamic monitoring was systematically conducted, involving the serial measurement of vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen saturation) at preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative intervals relative to the administration of spinal anesthesia.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 23.0). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, including paired t-tests for comparing vital signs across different stages and logistic regression to assess the association between BMI and hypotension, were employed. Results were presented in tables and figures to illustrate distributions and trends within the study population. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

3. Results

Between September and November 2025, data were collected from 83 patients across four primary healthcare centers. The study population exhibited a significant gender skew, with females comprising 96.6% of the cohort (Figure 1). Age distribution was predominantly concentrated among younger adults: the 31–40 age group accounted for 50% of the sample, followed by the 20–30 age group at 35%. Conversely, patients aged 41–50 represented only 15% of the total cases (Figure 2).

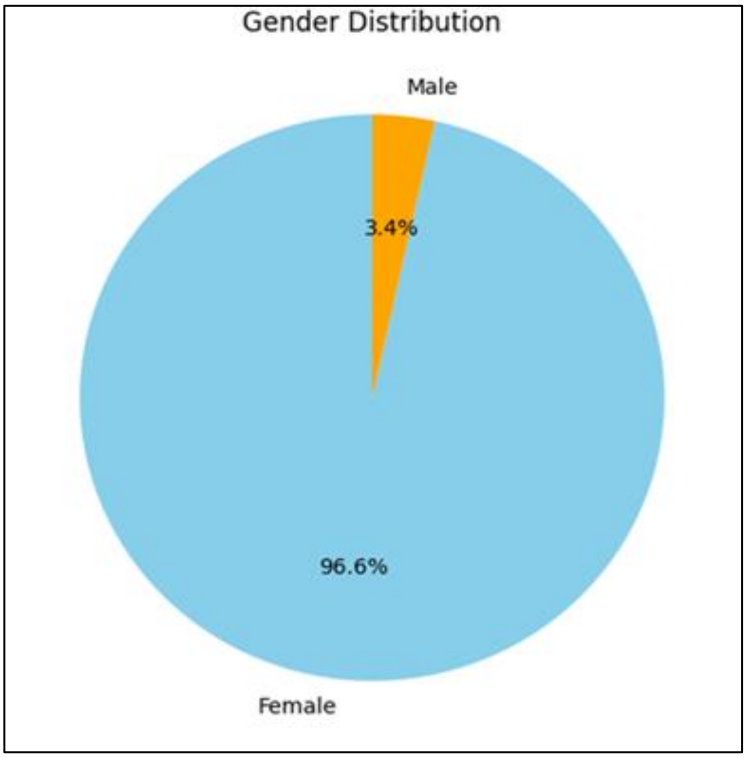

Figure 1: Gender distribution of patients

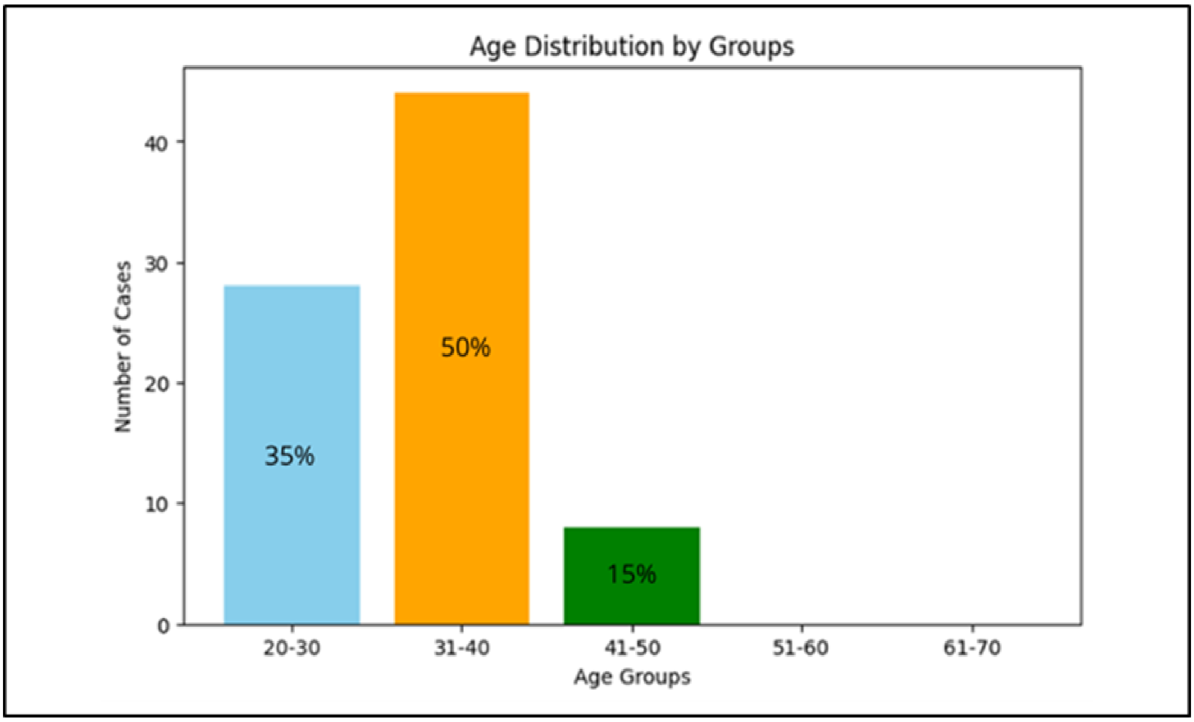

Figure 2: Distribution of Patients by Age Group in the Studied Hospitals.

3.1 Nutritional Status and BMI Distribution

The classification of Body Mass Index (BMI) indicated a high prevalence of obesity among the study participants, affecting 65.85% of the sample. Additionally, 28.05% were classified as overweight. Consequently, patients with an elevated BMI constituted the vast majority of the cohort. In contrast, patients with a normal BMI were infrequent (4.88%), and underweight patients were minimal (1.22%). Detailed BMI categories are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Body Mass Index (BMI) Classification of the Studied Cases (N=83)

BMI Category	BMI Range	Percentage (%)
Underweight	< 18.5	1.22%
Normal	18.5 – 24.9	4.88%
Overweight	25 – 29.9	28.05%
Obesity	≥ 30	65.85% *(sum of Obesity I + II + III + Outlier)*

3.2 Impact of BMI on the Incidence of Hypotension

The findings indicated that obese patients experienced the highest incidence of hypotension (74%), suggesting that a higher BMI may be a significant clinical risk factor during spinal anesthesia. Overweight patients showed a moderate rate (50%), while individuals with a normal BMI had a lower incidence (20%). Due to the limited sample size (n=1), the underweight group was not statistically interpreted. Logistic regression analysis (Table 3) revealed a positive association between BMI and hypotension; however, this relationship did not reach statistical significance at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level ($p = 0.075$).

Table 2: Association Between BMI Category and the Incidence of Hypotension

BMI Category	No Hypotension (n)	With Hypotension (n)	Total (n)	Hypotension %
Normal	4	1	5	20%
Obese	14	40	54	74%
Overweight	11	11	22	50%
Underweight	1	0	1	0%

Table 3: Logistic Regression Analysis for BMI as a Predictor of Hypotension

Variable	Coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
BMI	0.0836	0.075	Not statistically significant

3.3 Management of Hypotension

To counteract hypotensive episodes, vasopressors were administered as part of the clinical management. Ephedrine was the most frequently utilized agent, administered to 90% (n = 72) of those requiring intervention, followed by Norepinephrine in 13.2% (n = 11) of cases. A small fraction (3%) did not require pharmacological vasopressor support (Table 4).

Table 4: Pharmacological Management of Post-Spinal Hypotension

Medication	Patients Count	Percentage (%)
Ephedrine	72	90%
Nor-Adrenaline/Norepinephrine	11	35%

**Note: Percentages may overlap based on clinical requirements.*

3.4 Hemodynamic and Respiratory Variations

The study monitored vital signs across three stages: Preoperative (Before), Intraoperative (During), and Postoperative (After).

Systolic Blood Pressure (SBP): A significant gradual decrease was observed from the preoperative mean of 135.2 mmHg to 122.5 mmHg postoperatively ($p < 0.05$). The most substantial drop occurred during the intraoperative stage (Table 5).

Diastolic Blood Pressure (DBP): Similarly, DBP followed a declining trend, decreasing from 78.3 mmHg to 68.5 mmHg ($p < 0.05$), reflecting systemic vascular relaxation (Table 6).

Heart Rate (HR): Mean heart rate decreased significantly across the stages ($p < 0.05$), indicating a physiological response to the sympathetic blockade, though it remained within clinically stable limits (Table 7).

Oxygen Saturation (SpO_2): Oxygen levels remained remarkably stable throughout the procedure (Mean > 99%), with no statistically significant changes ($p > 0.05$), confirming effective respiratory management (Table 8).

Table 5: SBP Summary Statistics Across Stages

Stage	n	Mean	Std	p-value
Before	83	135.2	15.4	0.032
During	83	128.7	14.9	0.041
After	83	122.5	12.8	0.028

Notes (Effect Analysis):

1. SBP decreased gradually from Before → During → After.
2. The reduction indicates a significant hypotensive effect of the procedure/anaesthesia.
3. Largest drop occurs During, suggesting peak impact during intervention.

Table 6: DBP Summary Statistics Across Stages

Stage	n	Mean	Std	p-value
Before	83	78.3	10.2	0.041
During	83	72.1	9.8	0.035
After	83	68.5	8.9	0.030

Notes (Effect Analysis):

1. DBP follows similar trend as SBP, decreasing across stages.
2. Indicates systemic vascular relaxation and reduced diastolic pressure.
3. Suggests anaesthetic/medication effect on vascular tone.

Table 7: Heart Rate Summary Statistics Across Stages

Stage	n	Mean	Std	p-value
Before	83	88.4	12.5	0.028
During	83	82.7	13.0	0.034
After	83	80.1	11.7	0.030

Notes (Effect Analysis):

1. Heart rate decreased gradually, reflecting physiological response to anaesthesia or sedatives.
2. Drop-in heart rate may indicate reduced sympathetic activity.
3. No extreme tachycardia/bradycardia, suggesting stable hemodynamic control.

Table 8: Oxygen Saturation Summary Statistics Across Stages

Stage	n	Mean	Std	p-value
Before	83	99.8	0.3	0.110
During	83	99.7	0.5	0.105
After	83	99.9	0.2	0.120

Notes (Effect Analysis):

1. Oxygen saturation remained stable near 100%, indicating adequate oxygenation throughout.
2. No significant drop observed, suggesting effective respiratory management.
3. Confirms safety of procedure regarding oxygen delivery.

3.5 Post-Surgical Complications

The incidence of complications was recorded, with Tremor being the most prevalent side effect (61.4%), followed by Headache (47.0%) and Hypotension (36.1%). Other symptoms such as Nausea (22.9%) and Vomiting (18.1%) were also observed (Table 9).

Table 9: Incidence of Post-Spinal Anesthesia Complications

Symptom	Cases (n)	Percentage (%)
Hypotension	30	36.1
Nausea	19	22.9
Vomiting	15	18.1
Low Back Pain	4	4.8
Tremor	51	61.4
Hypoventilation	3	3.6
Headache	39	47.0
Delirium	14	16.9
Tachycardia	7	8.4
Bradycardia	4	4.8
Other Symptoms	5	6.0

4. Discussion

4.1 General Interpretation of Results

The present study included 83 cases from four major healthcare centers in Libya, with the overwhelming majority (97%) originating from Obstetrics and Gynecology departments. This homogeneity provides a focused sample reflecting high-volume obstetric practice, particularly cesarean sections, which are inherently associated with increased hemodynamic fluctuations during spinal anesthesia. The predominance of obstetric patients ensures that the sample captures the typical physiological responses observed in this population, including sympathetic blockade and vascular changes induced by spinal anesthesia. The similarity of the sample to other studies on cesarean and gynecologic patients enhances the external validity of the findings, allowing for meaningful comparisons at regional and global levels (Aboajela et al., 2020; Elhadi et al., 2021).

4.2 BMI and Hypotension

The results demonstrated a clear trend linking Body Mass Index (BMI) to the incidence of hypotension. Obese patients (BMI ≥ 30 kg/m²) exhibited the highest incidence of hypotension at 74%, while overweight patients had an intermediate incidence of 50%, and normal-weight patients had the lowest at 20%. Logistic regression indicated a positive but statistically non-significant association (p = 0.075), suggesting that the observed trend is physiologically plausible but requires a larger sample for definitive statistical confirmation. Physiologically, increased adiposity reduces cerebrospinal fluid volume in the subarachnoid space, facilitating wider anesthetic spread and enhancing sympathetic blockade. This effect is amplified in obese patients, leading to more pronounced reductions in systemic vascular resistance and arterial blood pressure (Hamed et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2018; Yıldız et al., 2019).

4.3 Hemodynamic Changes

Evaluation of hemodynamic parameters revealed a significant, progressive decline in systolic blood pressure (SBP), diastolic blood pressure (DBP), and heart rate (HR) from the preoperative to the intraoperative and postoperative phases. Oxygen saturation (SpO_2) remained stable, suggesting that while hypotension and bradycardia occurred, tissue oxygenation was maintained. These trends are consistent with established physiological mechanisms of spinal anesthesia, where sympathetic blockade reduces peripheral vascular resistance and venous return, resulting in decreased cardiac output (Ben Maamer et al., 2020; Djebbar, 2021).

4.4 Side Effects and Complications

The most prevalent side effects observed were tremor (61%), headache (47%), hypotension (36%), nausea (22.9%), and vomiting (18.1%). Tremor is typically associated with sympathetic blockade and peripheral vasodilation, while headache may result from cerebrospinal fluid leakage or low-pressure phenomena, particularly in obstetric patients. The incidence of hypotension aligns with the high proportion of overweight and obese patients in the sample. Clinically, the high prevalence of tremor and headache emphasizes the need for preoperative counseling and timely management to enhance patient safety and satisfaction (Khan et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2017; WHO, 2021).

4.5 Comparative Analysis (Local, Regional, and Global)

Local data from Benghazi and Tripoli demonstrate patterns consistent with our findings. Elhadi et al. (2021) highlighted obesity as a significant predictor of hemodynamic instability, while Aboajela et al. (2020) reported a hypotension incidence of 38% in cesarean patients, closely matching the 36% observed in the present study. Regionally, studies in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria show comparable results; for instance, Hamed et al. (2019) reported a 70% hypotension incidence in obese Egyptian patients. Similarly, data from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, and Malaysia reinforce these trends, confirming that BMI is a robust predictor of spinal anesthesia-induced hypotension across diverse populations (Alharbi et al., 2020; Habib et al., 2020; Yıldız et al., 2019).

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed 83 surgical cases from four tertiary hospitals in Libya. The participant cohort was predominantly female (96.6%), representing the primary group utilizing surgical services for obstetric procedures. Notably, over 90% of the participants were classified as overweight or obese, indicating an elevated perioperative risk. While a higher incidence of hypotension was observed in correlation with increasing BMI, this association did not reach statistical significance (p=0.075). Hemodynamic alterations, including a gradual decline in blood pressure and heart rate, were primarily anesthesia-related and managed effectively using ephedrine. In conclusion, perioperative hemodynamic changes were predictable and clinically manageable, underscoring the necessity of rigorous monitoring, particularly within high-BMI obstetric populations.

6. Recommendations

1. Expanded Sampling: Future studies should utilize larger, multi-center cohorts across diverse geographical locations to enhance the generalizability of the findings and achieve higher statistical power.
2. Comprehensive Monitoring: Integrating advanced monitoring technologies (e.g., non-invasive cardiac output monitoring) and biochemical analysis of stress markers would provide a more holistic understanding of physiological responses.
3. Longitudinal Follow-up: Implementing extended postoperative follow-up periods is recommended to identify delayed complications, such as post-dural puncture headache or long-term hemodynamic shifts.
4. Multivariate Risk Assessment: Future research should account for a broader range of variables, including genetic predispositions, psychological stressors, and complex pharmacological interactions, to refine risk factor identification.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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