

APOL2 COPY NUMBER VARIATION AND *APOE*
POLYMORPHISMS IN SCHIZOPHRENIA WITH
OBESITY

BY

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree of Master's of Health Sciences (Medical Genetics)

Kulliyyah of Medicine
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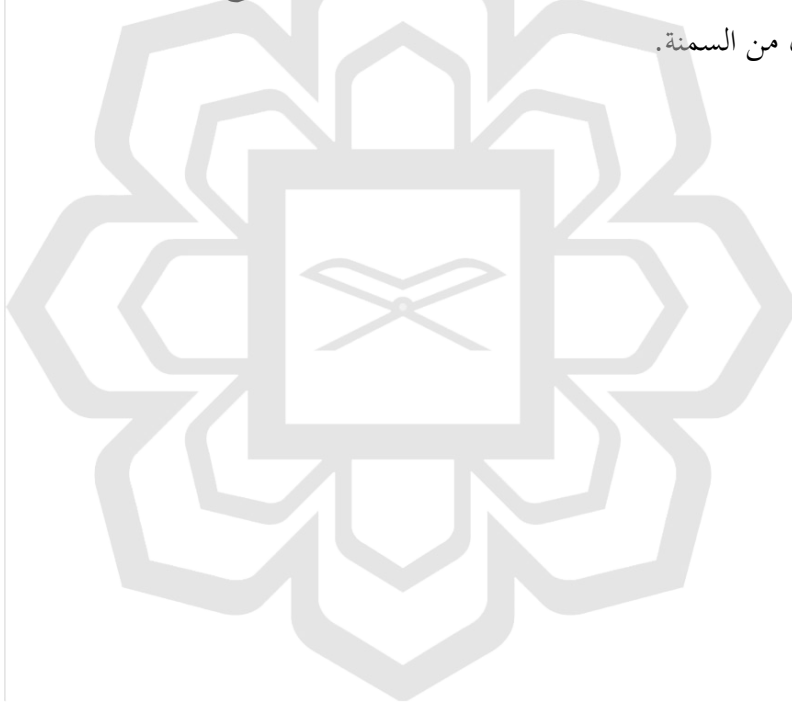
ABSTRACT

Obesity is a major health issue among individuals with schizophrenia, contributing to increased morbidity, premature mortality and reduced quality of life. Emerging evidence suggests that the biological mechanisms linking obesity and schizophrenia may be influenced by shared genetic susceptibility. Since both conditions involve disruption in lipid metabolism and inflammation, apolipoprotein genes such as apolipoprotein L2 (*APOL2*) and apolipoprotein E (*APOE*) have been proposed to play a role in susceptibility to neuropsychiatric and metabolic disorders. However, the contribution of these genetic variations to schizophrenia and obesity in the Malaysian population remains unclear. This study aimed to assess the association of apolipoprotein genetic variants with schizophrenia and obesity. The research was carried out in two stages. Firstly, a pilot study was conducted to investigate the candidate genes in three schizophrenia patients with a strong family history. Their DNA samples were subjected to whole-genome sequencing, focusing on structural variations. The identified variants, including *CHRNA7*, *NRG1*, *NRXN1* and *APOL2*, were cross-referenced with Ensembl, ClinVar and UniProt. Although *CHRNA7* and *NRG1* were detected in two out of three patients, *APOL2* copy number variation (CNV) was prioritised for further analysis based on cross-reference findings due to its role in lipid metabolism, which provides a biological link between schizophrenia and metabolic dysregulation. In parallel, the *APOE* polymorphisms were included as an additional candidate variant of interest. In the second stage, a case-control association study on *APOL2* CNV and *APOE* polymorphisms was conducted involving a total of 185 schizophrenia patients and 222 controls stratified by obesity status (70 and 92 obese, respectively). The BMIs were classified based on the Malaysian Clinical Practice Guideline, Management of Obesity (2023), with obesity defined as BMI ≥ 27.5 kg/m². Both variants were analysed using the TaqMan RT-PCR assays. This study showed no association of *APOL2* CNV with schizophrenia or obesity. However, the *APOE* polymorphisms were found to be linked with the risk of schizophrenia and obesity in a gender-dependent manner. Specifically, the *APOE* $\epsilon 4$ allele increased the risk of schizophrenia in females (OR = 2.377, 95% CI: 1.225 – 4.613, $p = 0.009$), even after controlling for obesity (OR = 2.950, 95% CI: 0.997 – 8.727, $p = 0.043$) and also associated with an increased risk of obesity in schizophrenia (OR = 1.896, 95% CI: 1.090 – 3.298, $p = 0.002$), with this association retaining statistical significance only among males (OR = 2.660, 95% CI: 1.266 – 5.591, $p = 0.008$). In contrast, the *APOE* $\epsilon 2$ allele reduced the risk of obesity in schizophrenia (OR = 0.291, 95% CI: 0.109 – 0.775, $p = 0.009$), with statistical significance retained only among females (OR = 0.206, 95% CI: 0.043 – 0.990, $p = 0.032$). These findings suggest a complex genetic interplay between neuropsychiatric and metabolic disorders, especially regarding gender-specific effects. Therefore, these findings may contribute to future investigations exploring genetically informed therapeutic strategies to address schizophrenia and obesity. Further understanding of the role of these genes and their interactions may contribute to potential therapeutic targets, allowing personalised treatments in schizophrenia patients with obesity.

ملخص البحث

تُعدُّ السُّمنة من المشكلات الصحية الكبرى لدى مرضى انفصام الشخصية (والذي يُعرف أيضاً بالفُصام)، حيث تساهم في زيادة نسبة انتشار المرض، وحالات الوفاة المبكرة، وتدني جودة الحياة. تُشير الأدلة الناشئة إلى أنَّ الآليات البيولوجية المرتبطة بالسمنة والفُصام من الممكن أن تتأثر في القابلية الجينية المشتركة للإصابة بالمرض. بما أن كلا المرضين يتضمنان اضطراب في عملية أيض الدهون، والالتهاب، فقد تم اقتراح أنَّ جينات البروتين الدهني مثل أبوليپروتين إل ٢ (*APOL2*)، وأبوليپروتين إي (*APOE*) قد تلعب دوراً في القابلية الجينية للإصابة بالاضطرابات العصبية النفسية، والأيضية. ومع ذلك، لا تزال مساهمة هذه التغيرات الجينية في الإصابة بكلٍ من السمنة والفُصام في السكان الماليزيين غير واضحة. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم الرابطة بين المتغيرات الجينية للأبوليپروتين وبين مرضي الفُصام والسمنة. تم إجراء البحث في مرحلتين. في المرحلة الأولى، أُجريت دراسة ارشادية أولية لفحص الجينات المرشحة لدى ثلاثة من مرضى الفُصام، والذين لديهم تاريخاً طبياً عائلياً للإصابة بالمرض، حيث خضعت عينات الحمض النووي الخاصة بهم لتسلسل الجينوم الكامل، مع التركيز على التغيرات الهيكلية. تم مقارنة المتغيرات الجينية المحددة بما في ذلك *APOL2*, *NRXN1*, *NRG1*, *CHRNA7* مع قواعد البيانات Ensembl, ClinVar, UniProt. على الرغم من اكتشاف جينات *CHRNA7* و *NRG1* في اثنين من أصل ثلاثة مرضى، إلا أنَّه أُعطيت الأولوية لاختلاف عدد نسخ (*APOL2* (CNV) وذلك لإجراء المزيد من التحاليل اعتماداً على نتائج المقارنة، وذلك بسبب دوره في عملية أيض الدهون، الذي يوفر رابطاً بيولوجياً بين مرض الفُصام واختلال عملية التنظيم الأيضي. بالتوازي مع ذلك، أُدرجت تعددات أشكال *APOE* كمتغير مرشح ذا أهمية. في المرحلة الثانية، تم إجراء دراسة ارتباط الحالة والضابطة على تغير عدد نسخ *APOL2* CNV وتعدد أشكال *APOE*، والتي شملت ١٨٥ مريضاً بالفُصام و ٢٢٢ من الضوابط، والذين تم تصنيفهم حسب حالة السمنة إلى ٧٠ و ٩٢ مصاباً بالسمنة على التوالي. تم تصنيف مؤشرات كتلة الجسم وفقاً إلى الدليل الإرشادي الماليزي للممارسة السريرية لإدارة السمنة، حيث عُرفت السمنة على أنها مؤشر كتلة الجسم ≤ 27.5 كغم / م^٢. تم تحليل كلا المتغيرين باستخدام اختبارات TaqMan RT-PCR. أظهرت هذه الدراسة عدم وجود ارتباط بين متغير عدد نسخ *APOL2* وبين الفُصام أو السمنة. ومع ذلك وُجدَ ارتباط بين تعدد أشكال *APOE* وبين خطر الإصابة بالفُصام أو السمنة بطريقة تختلف باختلاف نوع الجنس. وعلى وجه التحديد، زاد أليل *APOE* $\epsilon 4$ من خطر الإصابة بالفُصام عند الإناث $p = 0.009$ ، حتى بعد ضبط متغير السمنة $OR = 2.377$, 95% CI: 1.225 – 4.613, $p = 0.009$ ، حتى بعد ضبط متغير السمنة $OR = 2.950$, 95% CI: 0.997 – 8.727.

($p = 0.043$)، بالإضافة إلى أنه ارتبط بزيادة خطر الإصابة بالسمنة لدى مرضى الفصام ($OR = 1.896$, 95% CI: 1.090 – 3.298, $p = 0.002$)، مع احتفاظ هذا الارتباط بدلالة إحصائية فقط بين الذكور ($OR = 2.660$, 95%CI: 1.266 – 5.591, $p = 0.008$). وعلى النقيض، ارتبط أليل $APOE \epsilon 2$ بتقليل خطر الإصابة بالسمنة ($OR = 0.291$, 95% CI: 0.109 – 0.775, $p = 0.009$)، مع احتفاظ هذا الارتباط بدلالة إحصائية فقط بين الإناث ($OR = 0.206$, 95% CI: 0.043 – 0.990, $p = 0.032$). تُشير هذه النتائج إلى وجود تفاعل جيني معقد بين الاضطرابات العصبية النفسية والاضطرابات الأيضية، خاصةً فيما يتعلق بالتأثيرات المرتبطة بنوع الجنس. ولذلك، من الممكن أن تساهم هذه النتائج في الدراسات المستقبلية؛ لاكتشاف استراتيجيات علاجية تستند إلى المعرفة الجينية لمعالجة الفصام والسمنة. وبالتالي يساهم المزيد من الفهم لدور هذه الجينات، وتفاعلاتها في تحديد أهداف علاجية محتملة، مما يتيح توفر علاجات مخصصة لمرضى الفصام الذين يعانون من السمنة.



APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Health Sciences in Medical Genetics.



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Supervisor

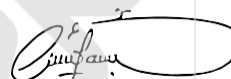


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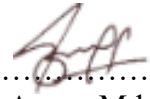
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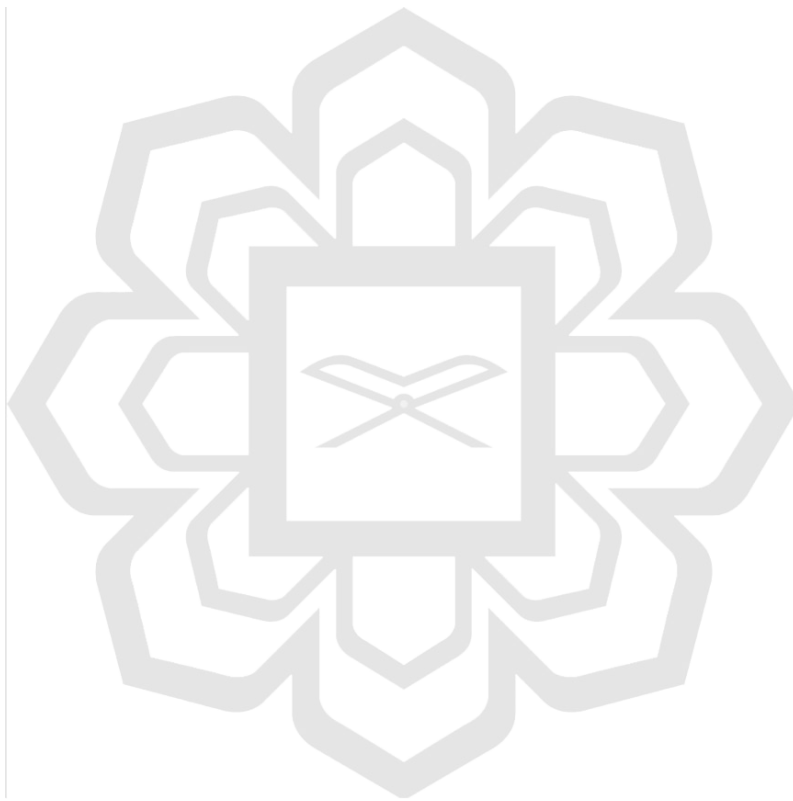


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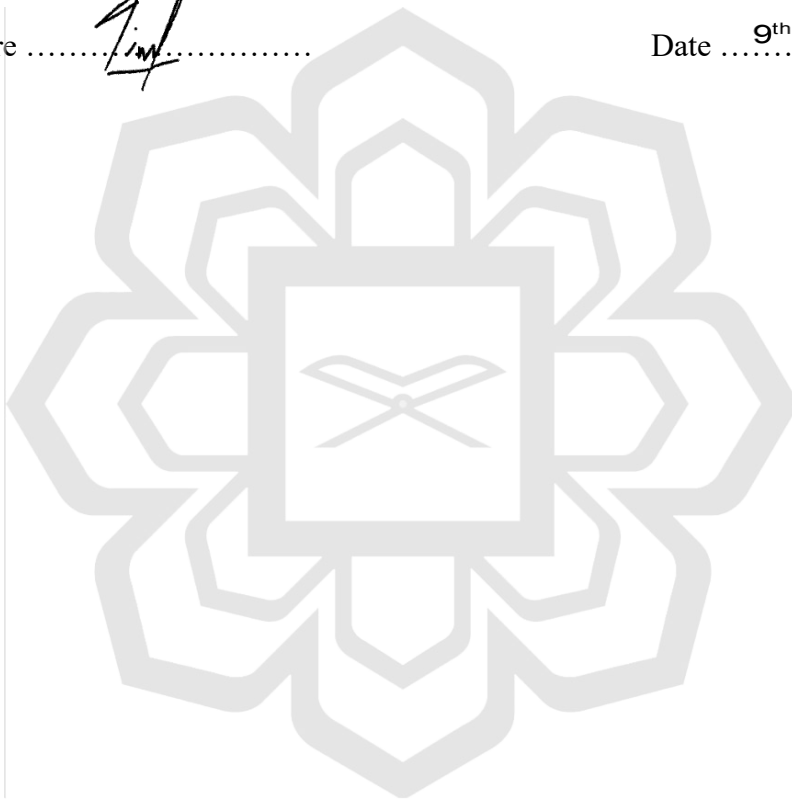
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Wan Noorainna Fatimi Wan Mohd Zani

Signature 

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*I dedicated this thesis to the people whose struggles with schizophrenia and obesity
inspired every page of this work*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Abstract in Arabic.....	iii
Approval Page	v
Declaration.....	vii
Copyright	viii
Acknowledgements	x
Table of Contents	xi
List of Tables	xvi
List of Figures.....	xix
List of Abbreviations	xxi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	24
1.1 Background of Study	24
1.2 Problem Statement	27
1.3 Research Questions	28
1.4 Research Objectives	28
1.4.1 General Objective	28
1.4.2 Specific Objectives	28
1.5 Research Hypothesis	29
1.6 Conceptual Framework	29
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	30
2.1 Schizophrenia.....	30
2.1.1 Neurodevelopment in Schizophrenia.....	31
2.1.2 Neurotransmitter Dysregulation in Schizophrenia	32
2.1.3 Neuroinflammation in Schizophrenia.....	32
2.2 Genetics in Schizophrenia.....	33
2.2.1 Copy Number Variations (CNVs) in Schizophrenia	34
2.2.2 Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) in Schizophrenia.....	35
2.3 Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS) in Schizophrenia.....	36
2.4 Antipsychotic Medications in Schizophrenia	37
2.4.1 First-Generation Antipsychotics (FGAs).....	38
2.4.2 Second-Generation Antipsychotics (SGAs)	38

2.4.3 Benzamide Antipsychotics	39
2.5 Obesity	40
2.5.1 Obesity in Schizophrenia	41
2.5.2 Health Outcomes of Obesity in Schizophrenia.....	43
2.6 Apolipoprotein	44
2.6.1 Apolipoprotein L2 (APOL2)	45
2.6.1.1 APOL2 in Inflammation.....	45
2.6.1.2 APOL2 in Schizophrenia	46
2.6.1.3 APOL2 in Lipid Metabolism.....	47
2.6.2 Apolipoprotein E (APOE)	48
2.6.2.1 APOE Polymorphisms.....	49
2.6.2.1.1 APOE Polymorphisms in Schizophrenia	50
2.6.2.1.2 APOE Polymorphisms in Metabolic Process.....	51
CHAPTER THREE: MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY	53
3.1 Study Design	53
3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	54
3.3 Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations.....	54
3.4 Sample Size Determination.....	55
3.4.1 Sample Size Calculation	55
3.5 Clinical Data Collection.....	56
3.5.1 Sociodemographic Data.....	56
3.5.2 Clinical Assessments	57
3.5.3 Anthropometric Measurements	57
3.6 Blood Sample Collection	58
3.6.1 DNA Extraction.....	58
3.6.1.1 Materials for DNA Extraction.....	59
3.6.2 DNA Concentration and DNA Purity Determination.....	60
3.7 Pilot Study of Whole Genome Sequencing in Familial Schizophrenia	60
3.7.1 Quality Control Assessment and Library Preparation	61
3.7.2 Next-Generation Sequencing.....	61
3.7.3 Bioinformatics Analysis	61
3.7.4 Cross-Checking Identified CNVs with Ensembl.....	62
3.7.5 Functions Verification using Universal Protein Resource (UniProt).....	62
3.7.6 Assessment of Identified CNV using ClinVar	62

3.8 Genetic Analysis Procedures	63
3.8.1 Copy Number Variation (CNV) Analysis of <i>APOL2</i>	63
3.8.1.1 Primer and Probe Design.....	64
3.8.1.2 RT-PCR.....	64
3.8.1.3 Determination of Copy Numbers	66
3.8.2 Genotyping of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms.....	66
3.8.2.1 Primer and Probe Design.....	66
3.8.2.2 RT-PCR.....	67
3.8.2.3 Determination of APOE Alleles and Genotypes.....	68
3.9 Statistical analysis	71
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	72
4.1 Participant Characteristics.....	72
4.2 Sociodemographic Data and Clinical Characteristics	72
4.3 Clinical Characteristics of Schizophrenia Patients	74
4.4 Pilot Study of Whole Genome Sequencing in Familial Schizophrenia	76
4.4.1 Quality Assessment of Sequencing Data.....	76
4.4.2 Identification of CNVs with Known OMIM Associations.....	78
4.4.3 Cross-Referencing CNV Variants with Ensembl Genome Browser.....	80
4.4.3.1 <i>APOL2</i>	80
4.4.3.2 <i>CHRNA7</i>	80
4.4.3.3 <i>NRG1</i>	81
4.4.3.4 <i>NRXN1</i>	83
4.4.4 Verifying the Identified Genes from NGS According to UniProt...	83
4.5 Analysis of <i>APOL2</i> CNV	85
4.5.1 Distribution of <i>APOL2</i> CNV in the Study Population	85
4.5.2 Verification of <i>APOL2</i> CNV using ClinVar.....	85
4.6 Analysis of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms	86
4.6.1 <i>APOE</i> Alleles and Genotype Frequencies	86
4.6.2 The Relationship of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Schizophrenia and Controls.....	87
4.6.2.1 The Association of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between BMI and Schizophrenia Status	92
4.6.2.1.1 The Relationship of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Obese Schizophrenia and Non-Obese Schizophrenia.....	92

4.6.2.1.2 The Relationship of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Obese Schizophrenia and Obese Controls	96
4.6.3 Logistic Regression of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms in Schizophrenia and Obesity Sub-Groups.....	100
4.6.3.1 Association of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Schizophrenia and Controls	100
4.6.3.2 Association of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Obese Schizophrenia and Non-Obese Schizophrenia	102
4.6.3.3 Association of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Obese Schizophrenia and Obese Controls	104
4.6.4 Gender Differences in <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms Across Schizophrenia and Obesity Subgroups	106
4.6.4.1 Gender-Specific Association of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Schizophrenia and Controls.	106
4.6.4.2 Gender-Specific Association of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Obese Schizophrenia and Non-Obese Schizophrenia	109
4.6.4.3 Gender-Specific Association of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Obese Schizophrenia and Obese Controls	111
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	113
5.1 Overview of the Study	113
5.2 Sociodemographics in Study Populations.....	114
5.3 Role of <i>APOL2</i> CNV in Schizophrenia	115
5.4 <i>APOL2</i> CNV in the Study Population.....	116
5.5 <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms in the Study Population.....	117
5.5.1 The Distribution of <i>APOE</i> Alleles and Genotypes.....	117
5.5.2 The Reference Allele and Genotype.....	117
5.5.3 Hardy-Weinberg Equilibrium Analyses	118
5.6 The Relationship of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Schizophrenia and Controls	118
5.7 The Relationship of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Obese Schizophrenia and Non-Obese Schizophrenia	119
5.8 The Relationship of <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between Obese Schizophrenia and Obese Controls	121
5.9 Study Strengths, Limitations and Future Recommendations.....	122
5.9.1 Study Strengths.....	122
5.9.2 Study Limitations and Future Recommendations	122
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	124

REFERENCES.....	126
APPENDIX I: RESEARCH APPROVAL.....	158
APPENDIX II: ETHICAL APPROVALS.....	159
APPENDIX III: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (MALAY)	166
APPENDIX IV: CONSENT FORM (MALAY).....	173
APPENDIX V: PUBLICATION & PRESENTATION.....	177
APPENDIX VI: OTHERS	184

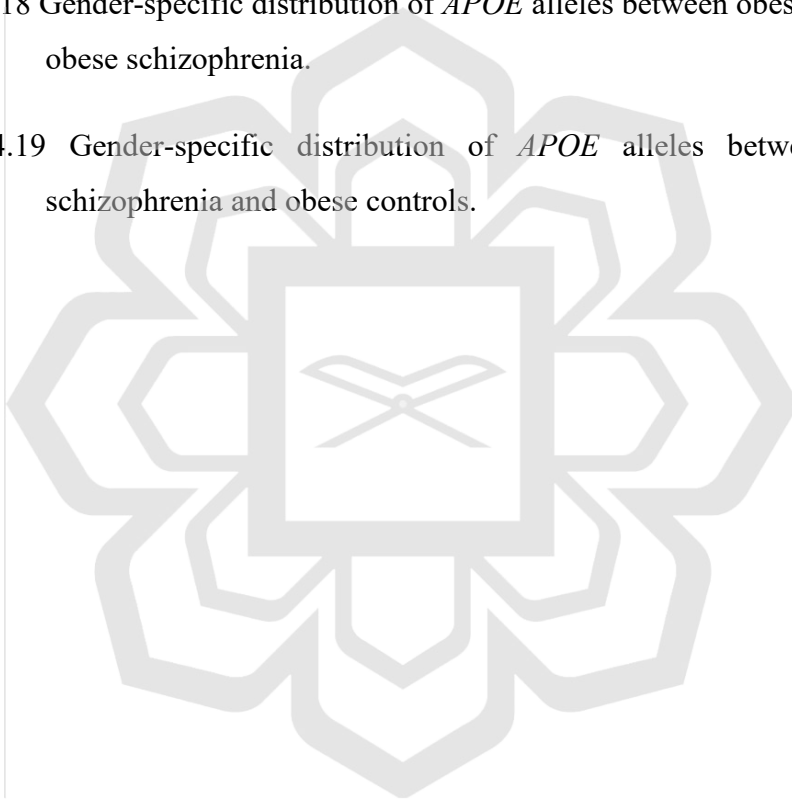


LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Classification of BMI (Management of Obesity, 2023; World Health Organisation, 2024).	40
Table 2.2	<i>APOE</i> polymorphisms at Codons 112 and 158 of Exon 4.	49
Table 3.1	Inclusion and exclusion criteria for schizophrenia patients.	54
Table 3.2	Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the controls.	54
Table 3.3	Sociodemographic characteristics.	57
Table 3.4	Distribution of the participants according to their BMI.	58
Table 3.5	List of QIAamp Blood Midi Kit components and additional reagents, along with consumables for blood DNA extraction.	60
Table 3.6	Pre-Designed TaqMan™ Copy Number Assay, <i>APOL2</i> (20X) and TaqMan™ Copy Reference Assay, <i>RNase P</i> (20X).	64
Table 3.7	Preparation of one reaction <i>APOL2</i> CNV Master Mix.	65
Table 3.8	The manufacturer's thermal protocol for copy number detection.	65
Table 3.9	Sequences for primers and probes used in the <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms genotyping assay (Zhong et al., 2016).	67
Table 3.10	Preparation of one reaction <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms Genotyping Master Mix.	68
Table 3.11	Thermal protocol of <i>APOE</i> genotyping by Zhong et al. (2016).	68
Table 4.1	Three different sociodemographics and clinical characteristics comparisons: schizophrenia vs. controls, non-obese schizophrenia vs. obese schizophrenia and obese schizophrenia vs. obese controls.	73

Table 4.2 Distribution of antipsychotic medications among schizophrenia patients.	75
Table 4.3 QC metrics on aligned sequencing reads, including clean reads and mapping data of three schizophrenia patients.	77
Table 4.4 CNVs associated with schizophrenia identified by WGS and matched to OMIM.	79
Table 4.5 The role of the discovered genes and their protein structure according to the Universal Protein Resource (UniProt).	84
Table 4.6 Distribution of <i>APOL2</i> CNV among schizophrenia patients and controls.	85
Table 4.7 Distribution of <i>APOE</i> alleles and genotype in schizophrenia and control groups.	89
Table 4.8 Allele and genotype distributions of <i>APOE</i> SNPs (rs429358 and rs7412) in schizophrenia and control groups.	91
Table 4.9 <i>APOE</i> alleles and genotype distribution in obese and non-obese schizophrenia patients.	93
Table 4.10 Allele and genotype frequencies of <i>APOE</i> SNPs (rs429358 and rs7412) and the HWE assessment in obese and non-obese schizophrenia.	95
Table 4.11 <i>APOE</i> alleles and genotype distribution in obese schizophrenia and obese controls.	97
Table 4.12 Allele and genotype distributions of two <i>APOE</i> SNPs and the assessment of HWE were compared between obese schizophrenia patients and controls.	99
Table 4.13 Adjusted analysis of the <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between schizophrenia and controls.	101

Table 4.14 Adjusted analysis of the <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between obese and non-obese schizophrenia.	103
Table 4.15 Adjusted analysis of the <i>APOE</i> Polymorphisms between obese schizophrenia and obese controls.	105
Table 4.16 <i>APOE</i> allele distributions in different comparison groups.	106
Table 4.17 Gender-specific distribution of <i>APOE</i> alleles between schizophrenia and controls.	108
Table 4.18 Gender-specific distribution of <i>APOE</i> alleles between obese and non-obese schizophrenia.	110
Table 4.19 Gender-specific distribution of <i>APOE</i> alleles between obese schizophrenia and obese controls.	112



LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework illustrating the hypothesised genetic link between schizophrenia and obesity. This framework depicts the potential role of apolipoprotein genetic variants in the shared pathophysiology of schizophrenia and obesity. Genetic factors (green) influence apolipoprotein variants, including *APOL2* and *APOE* (yellow). These apolipoproteins regulate lipid metabolism and inflammatory processes (blue), which are implicated in both schizophrenia and obesity (red). The dashed arrow represents the hypothesised genetic mechanism by which *APOL2* CNV and *APOE* polymorphisms may be associated with alterations in these biological processes that contribute to both conditions. Black arrows indicate proposed directional relationships between components. 29
- Figure 2.1 The cluster of APOL family on chromosome 22q12.3, located near the loci for VCFS and the *COMT* gene, which are strongly associated with schizophrenia. Adapted from Mimmack et al. (2002). 46
- Figure 2.2 Structural comparison of the three APOE isoforms ($\epsilon 2$, $\epsilon 3$, $\epsilon 4$), showing amino acid differences in the mature APOE protein. $\epsilon 2$ contains cysteine (Cys) at both positions (Cys176, Cys130), $\epsilon 3$ contains cysteine at position 130 and arginine at 176 (Cys130, Arg176), and $\epsilon 4$ contains arginine (Arg) at both positions (Arg176, Arg130). Codons 112 and 158 correspond to amino acid residues 130 and 176 in mature APOE proteins. Adapted from Miao et al. (2023). 50
- Figure 3.1 Grouping of study participants. 53
- Figure 3.2 Sample size calculation using OpenEpi, based on Al-Asmary et al. (2015). 56
- Figure 3.3 Workflow for *APOL2* CNV determination and *APOE* polymorphisms genotyping. 63

Figure 3.4 Amplification curves for <i>APOE</i> and <i>ACTB</i> in determining the alleles and genotypes. The green amplification curve represents the amplification of <i>ACTB</i> , while the blue amplification curve represents the amplification of <i>APOE</i> ($\epsilon 2$, $\epsilon 3$ and $\epsilon 4$) alleles.	70
Figure 4.1 Pie charts illustrating the medication distribution among schizophrenia patients.	75
Figure 4.2 Ensembl Genome Browser view of the <i>APOL2</i> deleted region (Chr22: 36,637,001–36,638,400).	80
Figure 4.3 Ensembl Genome Browser view of the <i>CHRNA7</i> duplicated region (Chr15:32,457,501-32,459,000).	81
Figure 4.4 Ensembl Genome Browser View of the six different <i>NRG1</i> genomic regions affected in two patients (A): Chr8:31,899,601-31,902,800; (B): Chr8:31,794,601-31,800,500; (C): Chr8:31,889,101-31,894,500; (D): Chr8:32,029,901-32,033,700; (E): Chr8:32,304,601-32,317,800; (F): Chr8: 32,337,701-32,345,000.	82
Figure 4.5 Ensembl Genome Browser view of the <i>NRXNI</i> duplicated region (Chr2:50,259,901-50,262,100).	83
Figure 4.6 Genomic region of <i>APOL2</i> CNV (Chr22: 36,637,000 – 36,638,400) from the NCBI Genome Data Viewer.	86
Figure 4.7 Distribution of <i>APOE</i> alleles ($\epsilon 2$, $\epsilon 3$ and $\epsilon 4$) (A), and genotypes ($\epsilon 2/\epsilon 2$, $\epsilon 2/\epsilon 3$, $\epsilon 2/\epsilon 4$, $\epsilon 3/\epsilon 3$, $\epsilon 3/\epsilon 4$ and $\epsilon 4/\epsilon 4$) (B) in the study population.	87

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMI	Body mass index
LDL	Low-density lipoprotein
SGA	Second-generation antipsychotic
APOA	Apolipoprotein A
APOB	Apolipoprotein B
APOC	Apolipoprotein C
APOD	Apolipoprotein D
APOE	Apolipoprotein E
APOF	Apolipoprotein F
APOH	Apolipoprotein H
APOL	Apolipoprotein L
APOM	Apolipoprotein M
APOO	Apolipoprotein O
<i>APOE</i>	Apolipoprotein E (gene)
<i>APOL2</i>	Apolipoprotein L2 (gene)
CNS	Central nervous system
MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
<i>DISC</i>	Disrupted-In-Schizophrenia 1 (gene)
<i>NRXN3</i>	Neurexin 3 (gene)
GABA	Gamma-aminobutyric acid
ROS	Reactive oxygen species
NMDA	N-methyl-D-aspartate
IL-1 β	Interleukin-1 beta
Indel	Insertion and deletion
CNV	Copy number variation
SNPs	Single-nucleotide polymorphisms
NGS	Next-generation sequencing
BWA	Burrows-Wheeler Aligner
WGS	Whole genome sequencing
WES	Whole exome sequencing
RNA-seq	RNA sequencing
ChIP-seq	Chromatic immunoprecipitation sequencing
ATAC-seq	Accessible chromatic sequencing
bp	Base pairs
Mb	Megabase pairs
<i>COMT</i>	Catechol-O-methyltransferase (gene)
<i>ZDHHC8</i>	Zinc finger DHHC-type containing 8 (gene)
<i>DGCR8</i>	DiGeorge syndrome critical region gene 8 (gene)
<i>PRODH</i>	Proline dehydrogenase 1 (gene)
Glx	Glutamate and Glutamine
GWAS	Genome-wide association study
<i>ZNF804A</i>	Zinc finger protein 804A (gene)
<i>CCACNA1C</i>	Calcium voltage-gated channel subunit alpha1 C (gene)
<i>GRM1</i>	Glutamate metabotropic receptor 1 (gene)
<i>GABBR2</i>	Gamma-aminobutyric acid type B receptor subunit 2 (gene)

<i>GRIN2A</i>	Glutamate ionotropic receptor NMDA type subunit 2A (gene)
FGA	First-generation antipsychotic
WHO	World Health Organisation
CPG	Clinical Practice Guidelines
<i>FTO</i>	Fat mass and obesity-associated (gene)
<i>RalA</i>	Ras-related protein Ral-A (gene)
<i>DLK1</i>	Delta-like non-canonical Notch ligand 1 (gene)
IL-6	Interleukin 6
CRP	C-reactive protein
SNV	Single-nucleotide variants
<i>MCR4</i>	Melanocortin-4-receptor (gene)
CM	Chylomicrons
VLDL	Very-low-density lipoprotein
IDL	Intermediate-density lipoprotein
HDL	High-density lipoprotein
Lp(a)	Lipoprotein (a)
LCAT	Lecithin-cholesterol acyltransferase
hs-CRP	High sensitive C-reactive protein
MPO	Myeloperoxidase
LDL-C	LDL-cholesterol
MAD	Membrane-addressing domain
PFD	Pore-forming domain
SID	SRA-interacting protein-like domain
IRG	Interferon-regulated gene
ER	Endoplasmic reticulum
VCFS	Velocardiofacial syndrome
OMIM	Online Mendelian Inheritance in Man
HTAA	Hospital Tengku Ampuan Afzan
DSM-5	Diagnostic and statistical manual for mental disorders-5
EDTA	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic
BGI	Beijing Genomics Institute
LM-PCR	Ligation-mediated polymerase chain reaction
RCA	Rolling circle amplification
DNB	DNA Nanoball
RT-PCR	Real-time polymerase chain reaction
<i>RNAse P</i>	Ribonuclease P (gene)
NTC	No template controls
FAM	Fluorescein amidites
Ct	Cycle threshold
RQ	Relative quantity
ACTB	β-actin
TE	Tris-EDTA
HEX	Hexachlorofluorescein
HWE	Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium
QC	Quality control
<i>CHRNA7</i>	Cholinergic receptor nicotinic alpha 7 subunit (gene)
<i>NRG1</i>	Neuregulin (gene)
<i>NRXN1</i>	Neurexin (gene)
Mb	Megabase
kb	kilobase

TF	Transcription factor
CCDS	Consensus coding sequences
ErbB	Erythroblastic Leukaemia Viral Oncogene Homolog
AMPA	α -amino-3-hydroxyl-5-methyl-4-isoxazole-propionate
χ^2	Chi-squared
OR	Odds ratio
B	Regression coefficient
SE	Standard error
df	Degree of freedom

