UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

PREVALENCE AND FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH LIMITED HEALTH LITERACY AMONG ORANG ASLI ADULT WITH NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES IN OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENT AT HOSPITAL ORANG ASLI GOMBAK, SELANGOR

ABDUL KHALIQ BIN ABDUL JALIL

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Health literacy (HL) is the ability to access, understand, and apply health information to make informed decisions. Limited HL is associated with poor health outcomes and increased healthcare utilization. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of limited HL and its associated factors among Orang Asli patients with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) at Hospital Orang Asli Gombak (HOAG), Selangor.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted over six months using self-administered questionnaires. Sociodemographic and clinical data were collected. The validated Malay versions of the Health Literacy Survey Questionnaire (HLS-M-Q18) and the Malay version of International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) - Short Form were used. Participants with HLS-M-Q18 scores of 33 and below were classified as having limited health literacy. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and logistic regression.

Results: A total of 244 Orang Asli participants were included. The prevalence of limited HL was 48.4%. Majority of the participants were 40–49 years old (31.6%), female (51.6%), and from Semai sub-ethnicity (32.8%) had at least a primary school education (47.1%) and have at least 2 number of non-communicable diseases (39.8%)Significant associations were observed with age 60–69 years [aOR 6.262 (95% CI: 1.95, 20.06; p-value = 0.002)], male gender [aOR 2.82 (95% CI: 1.47, 5.41; p -value = 0.002)], limited English proficiency [aOR 2.856 (95% CI: 1.16, 7.03; p -value = 0.022)], and no access to either internet or television [aOR 3.274 (95% CI: 1.63, 8.54; p-value = 0.005)] with limited HL

Conclusion: This study highlights a high prevalence of limited health literacy among Orang Asli adult with NCD in Malaysia. Addressing these gaps require targeted, culturally sensitive health literacy interventions, particularly those tailored for older adults and men. Expanding infrastructure to gain access to digital media, advocating for health education resources that use simple language such as infographics, and strengthening outreach programs in Orang Asli languages are essential to improve health understanding and chronic disease management among the Orang Asli population

Keywords: Health Literacy, Orang Asli, Noncommunicable diseases, Indigenous People

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Health literacy holds significant importance as it empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. The definition of health literacy by the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes the cognitive and social skills that influence an individual's motivation and ability to access, comprehend, and apply information for the promotion and maintenance of good health (1). Numerous studies highlight the crucial role of health literacy in contributing to existing health disparities (2, 3). Individuals deemed health literate possess the competence to access, understand, assess, and apply health information in areas such as healthcare, disease prevention, and health promotion, indicative of their ability to make informed health-related decisions (4). In contrast, those with limited health literacy are associated with reduced engagement in health-promoting and disease detection activities, a tendency for riskier health choices, suboptimal chronic disease management, low adherence to medication, increased hospitalization and readmissions, and overall poor health outcomes, leading to heightened morbidity and premature mortality (4). In the National and Health Morbidity Survey 2019 (NHMS 2019), a validated and comprehensive Health Literacy Survey Malaysian Questionnaire 18 (HLS-M-Q18) was employed to address self-reported difficulties in tasks related to decision-making in healthcare, disease prevention, and health promotion (5). Findings from the study indicate that 35% of the population has limited health literacy. Numerous studies conducted in Malaysia have reported the prevalence of limited health literacy rate among NCD ranging from 19.1% to 43.4% (6-8) depending on population studied and assessment tools used. However, there is limited study in regard to prevalence of limited health literacy rate among Orang Asli people in Malaysia

The well-being of Orang Asli the Indigenous populations in Malaysia varies across different stages, patterns, and developments. In many countries, there exists a significant disparity between Orang Asli peoples and non-Orang Asli populations concerning socioeconomic status, education, and health status. Compared to non-Orang Asli counterparts, Orang Asli peoples generally experience poorer health outcomes, with evident health disparities persisting (9). Additionally, Orang Asli populations undergoing epidemiological and socioeconomic transitions are confronted with