

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**PERCEIVED BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS
FOR ADHERENCE TO HEALTHY EATING PRACTICES
IN WEIGHT MANAGEMENT AMONG
COLLEGE STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

Obesity and overweight are global health issues with significant implications for non-communicable diseases. College students, in the transition from adolescence to early adulthood, face unique challenges in maintaining a healthy weight due to lifestyle changes. While weight loss research is abundant, there is a dearth of qualitative studies exploring the factors that influence adherence to healthy eating practices among this population. Understanding the factors influencing healthy eating practices among college students is crucial for addressing the obesity epidemic early. This study aims to identify the barriers and facilitators for adherence to healthy eating practices in this population. The study employed a qualitative approach which involves individual interviews using a semi-structured guide based on the COM-B Model and Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF). Interviews, lasting 30 minutes to one hour were voice recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically using NVivo14 software. Twenty participants, aged 18 to 25 years old, from UiTM Puncak Alam in Selangor, were recruited through flyers, social media, and email. The analysis utilized the COM-B Model and the TDF to categorize and rank these factors based on their frequency of mentions. Key facilitators include physical, psychological capability, and reflective motivation which consists of various skills and knowledge related to healthy eating. In contrast, barriers were predominantly associated with reflective and automatic motivation, and physical and social opportunity which consist of beliefs about consequences and reinforcement. The study's findings can contribute to a better understanding of how college students perceive and navigate the challenges and opportunities for maintaining a healthy diet and managing their weight, ultimately aiding in the development of targeted interventions to promote long-term weight control among this population.

Keywords: College Students, Healthy Eating Practices, Theoretical Domain Framework, Barriers, Facilitators, Weight Management

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Obesity is characterized by an excess accumulation of fat, elevating the likelihood of health issues and premature mortality (Fock & Khoo, 2013). Body mass index is a simple weight-for-height indicator that is extensively used in adult groups and individuals to classify overweight and obesity (Fock & Khoo, 2013). Obesity and overweight are significant health issues both globally and in Malaysia as a result of lifestyle changes such as decreased physical activity (PA), increased sedentary behavior, and poor eating habits. Numerous studies have linked overweight or obesity to a variety of non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes mellitus, hypertension, dyslipidemia, and some kinds of cancer, which can increase disease burden and mortality (Chan et al., 2017). Weight loss can help prevent and manage these illnesses, but it can be difficult to maintain long-term weight loss due to both behavioral and biological compensatory variables that encourage weight regain, such as changes in appetite and energy expenditure (Tay et al., 2023). Weight loss is a common research focus however sustaining weight loss over extended periods is equally crucial and may not be adequately explored. There are limited qualitative studies that investigate the factors that contribute to adherence to health behavior interventions and the challenges they face. Therefore, this qualitative study aimed to better understand barriers and facilitators for adherence to healthy eating practices in the context of weight control among college students as the shift from adolescence to early adulthood is acknowledged as a pivotal period for the formation of eating and exercise patterns.