

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND DEMANDS OF PRACTISING
HEALTHY EATING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS AGED 18 TO 29:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

Background and aims: The transition from adolescence to adulthood, especially for individuals aged 18 to 29, involves numerous challenges and demands. This period is crucial as young adults navigate essential aspects of life such as education, career, relationships and personal development. This research aims to explore the key challenges and demands of the lived experiences of young adults aged 18 to 29.

Method: A qualitative research methodology was employed, using a phenomenological approach to deeply investigate personal and subjective experiences. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 young adults aged 18 to 29. The phenomenological analysis identified significant themes from the interview data.

Result: The analysis revealed 22 themes reflecting the multifaceted nature of the challenges and demands faced by young adults. Key themes included mental health struggles, financial instability, education development pressures, social relationship dynamics and personal growth challenges. Despite a good understanding of these issues, young adults often struggle to navigate them due to the complexities of modern life. **Conclusion:** The study highlights the need for targeted support systems and interventions to assist young adults in managing these challenges. Addressing these issues can help young adults achieve a balanced and fulfilling life during this pivotal stage of their development.

Keywords: young adults; challenges; demands; healthy eating; community

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Healthy eating is currently a growing concern in many countries due to the rising rates of overweight and obesity worldwide. A recent study in 2019 by Fox et al., reported that countries all over the world are currently going through a "nutrition transition," which is defined as a shift in the composition of diets, a sedentary lifestyle and a sharp rise in the rate of obesity. Malaysia is not an outlier. Contemporary lifestyles are prevalent these days, with an increase in families dining out and younger generations heavily reliant on fast food (Sharkawi et al., 2014). A growing number of restaurants that are open 24 hours a day are offering spaces for people to hang out at night, making late-night suppers a trend. Mete et al., (2019) highlighted that the complexity of the world has made it difficult for people to stay informed about health-related news and find evidence-based guidance, leading to a lack of consensus in the field of science. Consequently, Silva et al., (2023) asserted that confusion can lead to unhealthy decisions when people are unaware of their actions.

A previous study in 2017 by Singh et al., pointed out that modern lifestyles and lifestyle adjustments make life more comfortable, while food security increases the amount of food consumed by the middle and upper classes in both developed and developing countries. In that vein, researchers Mamun et al., (2020) listed whole grains, fruits, vegetables and legumes as important for promoting good health and lowering the risk of certain diseases. Here, the young adults who make poor dietary choices most frequently eat irregularly, skip breakfast (Baszczyk et al., 2019), consume unbalanced diets and consume a lot of highly processed foods and beverages (Rodrigues et al., 2017; Gustafson et al., 2017). These findings aligned with an earlier study (Wang et