

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, PRACTICES, AND DIETARY  
PATTERNS RELATED TO SUGAR-SWEETENED BEVERAGE  
INTAKE AND THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH GENDER AND BMI  
AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN POLITEKNIK SULTAN SALAHUDDIN  
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## ABSTRACT

The high consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) is acknowledged as a significant factor in the increasing rates of obesity and non-communicable diseases, especially in young adults. This research sought to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) concerning SSB consumption, identify dietary trends in sugar intake, and analyse the relationship between KAP, gender, and body mass index (BMI) among young adults at Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah (PSA). A cross-sectional study involved 121 participants utilizing a validated KAP questionnaire along with a food frequency questionnaire (FFQ) to evaluate sugar consumption. BMI was classified according to Asian cut-off standards. Descriptive statistics, non-parametric tests, and correlation analyses were conducted with SPSS Version 29. The findings indicated elevated levels of knowledge (median = 10.0, IQR = 3.0), attitude (median = 5.0, IQR = 0.0), and practice (median = 4.0, IQR = 3.0). Most respondents 92.6% exhibited strong knowledge, whereas 80.2% demonstrated a positive attitude and good practices. Nevertheless, the intake of SSBs and foods high in sugar remained moderate, with commonly consumed items like flavoured beverages, isotonic drinks, and traditional Malaysian desserts. No significant statistical relationships were identified between KAP domains and gender or BMI ( $p > 0.05$ ), although trends indicated that male students exhibited marginally greater knowledge while female students engaged in healthier behaviours. Even with favourable KAP scores, 58.7% of participants were either overweight or obese, highlighting a gap between knowledge and real dietary habits. These results emphasize the necessity for holistic health promotion approaches that extend beyond education to incorporate behavioural, environmental, and institutional measures designed for the student demographic. Additional qualitative and longitudinal studies are suggested to investigate the fundamental factors affecting SSB consumption and to create sustainable solutions.

**Keywords:** sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), knowledge, attitudes, practices (KAP), gender, body mass index (BMI), sugar consumption, dietary behaviour, non-communicable diseases, young adults, Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah (PSA)

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Research Background**

Malaysia is currently confronting a significant public health emergency characterized by rapidly rising levels of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. The National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2023 states that over 54.4% of Malaysian adults are categorized as overweight or obese, positioning Malaysia among the countries with the highest obesity levels in Southeast Asia. This concerning statistic highlights the immediate requirement for specific health measures and preventive tactics.

A significant factor in this escalating epidemic is the high intake of sugar, especially via sugar-sweetened drinks (SSBs) and foods that contain high sugar contents. These items are easily available, extensively promoted, and frequently comprise a major portion of the contemporary Malaysian diet, particularly for younger adults. SSBs are rich in calories but low in nutrients, and frequent intake is closely linked to weight gain and a higher likelihood of metabolic issues. Students in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) constitute an essential demographic, as they are in a transitional life stage where lasting dietary habits are developed. The college or university setting frequently presents irregular eating habits, easy but unhealthy food choices, and a higher intake of sugary foods and drinks. Although some students may recognize the health risks of high sugar consumption, many may not fully grasp the suggested daily limits for sugar intake or the existence of concealed sugars in common foods and beverages. This lack of understanding and awareness can result in unhealthy eating habits that can have lasting health effects.