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Sugary Drinks, Hidden Risks: Knowledge, Behaviour, and BMI Patterns Among Young Malaysian Adults

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Introduction:
High consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) plays a significant role in the rising burden of obesity and noncommunicable diseases, especially in young adult populations. Hence, this study aimed to assess knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) related to sugar- sweetened beverages (SSBs), describe dietary sugar intake patterns, and examine their associations with gender and body mass index (BMI) among young adults.

Methods:
A cross-sectional study was conducted among 121 students at Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah. Data was collected using a validated self-administered questionnaire comprising sections on knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) related to sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), alongside a food frequency questionnaire (FFQ) to assess dietary sugar intake patterns. Anthropometric data were obtained to calculate body mass index (BMI), which was classified according to Asian-specific BMI cut-off points. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise participant characteristics, KAP scores, dietary patterns, and BMI categories. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to examine associations between KAP, sugar intake patterns, gender, and BMI. All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$.

Results:
High levels of knowledge (92.6%), positive attitudes (80.2%), and good practices (80.2%) were observed. However, moderate intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and sugary foods, particularly flavoured drinks, isotonic beverages, and local desserts, remained common. No significant associations were found between KAP and gender or BMI ($p > 0.05$), although males showed slightly higher knowledge and females reported healthier behaviours. Despite favourable KAP, 58.7% of participants were overweight or obese, highlighting a gap between awareness and actual dietary habits.

Conclusion:
Despite favourable knowledge and attitudes, persistent sugar-sweetened beverage intake highlights the need for integrated behavioural, environmental, and institutional strategies to support healthier beverage choices among young adults.