

PREVALENCE OF ABNORMAL EATING ATTITUDES AND ITS RELATED
FACTORS AMONG FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Body image, pressure to be thin, depression, anxiety and stress play important role in eating attitudes among female university students. This study aimed to identify the prevalence of abnormal eating attitudes among female university students and to determine the association of eating attitudes with sociocultural and psychological factors among female university students. This study involved 363 female students age 19 to 25 years old in UiTM Puncak Alam. Weight and height were measured to determine the body mass index (BMI) of respondents based on World Health Organisation (WHO), (2007). Respondents were required to complete a self-administered questionnaire on demographics, eating attitudes, body image perception, pressure to be thin and depression, anxiety, stress. There were 75(20.7%) underweight respondents, 194(53.4%) normal respondents and 94(25.9%) overweight/obese respondents. The results revealed that 13.5% of respondents had abnormal eating attitudes. Number of respondents who had abnormal eating attitudes is increased when body weight increase. In underweight respondents, 1.9% had abnormal eating attitudes, meanwhile in normal and overweight/obese respondents both are 5.8% had abnormal eating attitudes. 42.1% respondents dissatisfied with their body image and 11.3% from it had abnormal eating attitudes. Body image dissatisfaction may cause abnormal eating attitudes as relationship between both is significant ($p < 0.05$). In addition, eating attitudes and body image are correlated ($p < 0.05$). Total respondents who were depressed are 52.9% and 7.8% from it had abnormal eating attitudes. Depression is significant with eating attitudes and correlated ($p < 0.05$). 10.3% of respondent with abnormal eating attitudes had anxiety from total respondents 74.9% had anxiety. Even though, highest percentage of respondents had anxiety is 27% with moderate level, there is no significant between eating attitudes and anxiety. For stress, 6.1% of respondents who were stress are having abnormal eating attitudes as well. Stress can be one of the factor that lead to abnormal eating attitude as both were significant ($p < 0.05$). Eating attitudes and pressure to be thin is significant as well. In conclusion, body image dissatisfaction reported as the higher percentage in abnormal eating attitudes respondents. This may become one of the factors that can lead in engaging with abnormal eating attitudes among female university students. Educational efforts on healthy eating attitudes and body image are recommended in order to have better quality of life among female university students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The healthy diet composed of a well balanced food and nutrients distribution together with balanced eating behaviour (Michels et al., 2012). A healthy eating behaviour comprises eating when the cues of hungry arise and at constant time to permit physiological growth and usage of energy. However, this habit become more unhealthy when the person continue eating while not feeling hungry and keep snacking thus causing an unbalanced in intake of foods and nutrients (Michels et al., 2012). Chin and Mohd Nasir, (2009) reported that in adolescents, healthy eating habits is important for physical and psychosocial growth and development also the cognitive performance to prevent the diet-related disease in adulthood.

The person between the age of 18 to 25 years old were categorised as young adults and these young adults tend to have unhealthy dietary habits as they leave home and start to become independent when living far from family (Moy et al., (2009). In making decision on food choices, most of the university students decide by themselves (Gan et al., 2011a) and these may result in bad eating behaviour as they lack the skills in selecting healthy food on their own. Besides that, the eating behaviour may be unhealthy among students due to high cost of healthy foods coupled with easy access for fast food (Gan et al., 2011a).

Kayano et al., (2008) reported that biological, psychological and sociocultural factors were related with eating disorders among young Japanese women. Occurrence of disorder eating attitudes was identified as a global phenomenon that have