

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM)

**THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DIETARY INTAKE AND
SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS WITH MENTAL
HEALTH AND WEIGHT GAIN STATUS AMONG PREGNANT
WOMEN AT SELECTED COMMUNITY CLINICS IN KUALA
SELANGOR**

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ABSTRACT

Alarming trend of poor dietary intake among pregnant women has been a global concern. Studies have discovered that individuals with poor dietary intake were associated with various outcomes including mental health issues and poor weight gain. Poor mental health and weight gain are said to be the most widely recognized complications during pregnancy. However, existing studies have yet to provide a better understanding on how these issues are associated with dietary intake of pregnant women. Thus, conducting a quantitative study becomes necessary to determine the association between dietary intake and sociodemographic characteristics with mental health and weight gain status in pregnant women. This was a cross-sectional study conducted on 204 pregnant women among five community clinics in Kuala Selangor. A face-to-face interview was conducted to assess dietary intake using Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ), followed by a self-administered questionnaire to obtain sociodemographic and anthropometric data, meanwhile mental health status was assessed using Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21). Findings in this study revealed that nutrients such as calorie intake, fat, magnesium and vitamin B12 as well as sociodemographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity, education level, household income and medical condition were associated with mental health status of pregnant women. Meanwhile, carbohydrate intake and BMI status pre-pregnancy were associated with abnormal weight gain in pregnancy. In conclusion, there is an association between dietary intake and sociodemographic characteristics with mental health and weight gain status in pregnant women. The results from this study suggest prospective intervention areas and direction of future quantitative and longitudinal studies aimed at identifying targets for interventions in managing poor dietary intake among pregnant women.

Keywords: *Pregnancy, mental health, dietary intake, weight gain, sociodemographic characteristics*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will cover the introduction about this research such as background of the research, problem statement, significance of this research, research questions, objectives of the research, hypothesis and research framework. The framework of the research will be presented in a mind map.

1.1 Research Background

Pregnancy is one of the most critical periods with considerable changes in mother's physical and mental balances, as well as her health behaviours and lifestyle (Bagherzadeh et al., 2021). It is a challenging period for women and is usually considered to be stressful for them and this indicates why having a healthy pregnancy is important during times like this (Hodgkinson E.L., 2014). The mother's health during pregnancy can directly affect the baby's health (Moshki et al., 2012). There are a wide range of negative pregnancy outcomes that are associated with an unhealthy pregnancy. These include an increased risk of miscarriage, chromosomal abnormalities, stillbirth, fetal growth restriction, preterm birth, pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes mellitus, cerebral palsy on infants and caesarean section (Frick A. P., 2021). These outcomes can be caused by several factors which are maternal dietary intake, weight gain, mental health status, maternal genetics, mother's age during pregnancy, social class and education level (Mate et al., 2021). The aforementioned factors can also be the contributors to ensure a healthy pregnancy, or to at least reduce the risk of adverse maternal and fetal outcomes during pregnancy and later in life. Hence, the characteristics of a healthy pregnancy are proper dietary intake, optimal weight gain and physical activity, a good mental health condition, avoidance of alcohol and other harmful substances, and safe food handling (Kaiser et al., 2008).